

# Romania's Danube Delta & Carpathian Mountains

Naturetrek Tour Report

14th – 23rd September 2021

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Great White Pelicans (Mike Unwin)



Little Crake (Tony Marsh)



Spurge Hawk Moth caterpillar (Sheila Wright)



White-tailed Eagle & Black Stork (Mike Unwin)

Report by Andy Bunten



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Tour participants: Andy Bunten (Leader), Florin Palade (Local Guide) with 12 Naturetrek clients.

## Summary

“I’ve met the most interesting people while flying or on a boat. These methods of travel seem to attract the kind of people I want to be with.” – Hedy Lamarr

Well, I think we all agreed with Hedy on this one – what a great time we had on our Flotel and in wider Romania.

Migration was all around us with huge flocks of White Pelicans; swirling ‘kettles’ of Levant’s Sparrowhawks; pulses of Honey Buzzards; scuttlings of fabulous waders; the dazzling black and white of terns and even a very late Common Cuckoo.

Our early adventures included close ups of 15 Brown Bears, Chamois gazing at us from nearby mountain pathways, a whistling Wallcreeper and great views of seven different woodpecker species. We had a fascinating insight into shepherding in the National Park and the alertness of the dogs guarding these flocks. Goshawks and huge green bush-crickets entertained us as we explored this area of Transylvania.

Heading across to the Danube and Dobrogea areas we started to see an astonishing array of water birds. Great White Pelicans were everywhere, every now and again with a Dalmatian among them. We must have seen a good proportion of the world’s population of Pygmy Cormorants.

Kingfishers became commonplace, Squacco Herons abundant and every lake or creek we sailed into had its own special delights. Here we’d see swarms of Migrant Darters pursued aerobically by Hobbies, there Little Crakes picking their way weightlessly across water lilies, here groups of dazzling Great White Pelicans feeding in perfect synchrony, there thousands of Barn Swallows whirling to roost in reeds to the backdrop of gorgeous delicate peach sunsets.

Walks through the steppe woodland areas of Dobrogea turned up wonderful butterflies including Fiery Coppers and Great Banded Graylings, ferociously huge Predatory Bush-Crickets and a tiny, polished, Snake-eyed Skink.

Sombre Tits showed themselves well as did various woodpeckers while overhead migrating birds of prey continued to make it impossible to know whether to look up, down or sideways.

This area kept giving right up to the very end with a Spotted Redshank vying for photographic attention with a huge Wolf Spider complete with a cloak made up of her babies.

A fantastic trip with fantastic wildlife!

Noroc

## Day 1

## Tuesday 14th September

Our departure from Heathrow was scheduled for 09.15 and ten of our group met up at various parts of the airport before boarding our Blue Air flight which left, just a few minutes late, to Bucharest.

We all negotiated the entry requirements of passports, declarations and proofs of vaccinations easily enough and headed off to meet the two people who’d flown in from Manchester.

Soon we’d found our smiling Romanian guide Florin who bore a disturbing resemblance to a young Gregory Peck (or perhaps Robert de Niro – opinion was divided)

With Florin at the fore and Andy bringing up the rear our crocodile snaked its way through various parts of the airport to meet our driver Cristian and clamber into our Mercedes bus.

Our drive was a smooth and easy one with lots of Common Buzzards, Kestrels and Western Marsh Harriers as we gradually gained altitude from the lowlands into the foothills of the Carpathians.

We were only a few miles from our destination of Vulcan when sharp eyes spotted some different looking falcons dancing around in the fields. The cry of “Red-footed Falcons!” went up and we tumbled from the bus to get our first view of these beautiful small raptors.

We watched as a group of mainly juveniles, with at least one adult female, swooped and twisted around us plucking invisible insects out of the sky with an adroitness that would be the envy of slip cordons around the world.

High above them any escaping insects were being pursued by a couple of large bats. We were fortunate to have a mammal expert in our midst who felt Serotine was the likely species.

Adrenaline pumping, we tried to turn the Common Buzzards in the fields into mole-hunting Lesser Spotted Eagles – but had to be content with Buzzards.

Our Vulcan guest house was splendid and soon the calls of “Noroc” resounded as we toasted each other with the powerful Palinka provided by our hosts to welcome us to Romania.

Wonderful food swiftly followed and, deeply content, we were soon off to our beds after a long day of travelling.

## Day 2

## Wednesday 15th September

Even those without alarm clocks couldn't miss the gentle dawn filtering into our rooms at 06.45 and the rural routine of numerous cockerels, followed a little later by the less sonorous, but equally energetic, support from various local dogs.

Our start was a leisurely one this morning anyway so those not tempted to explore the local village could snooze contentedly until our 08.00 breakfast and 09.00 departure to the nearby Zarnesti Gorge.

The day was clear and the forecast good and even before we'd boarded our bus, we'd recorded Whinchat (via our early riser), Black Redstarts calling from nearby roofs, a Fieldfare perched on top of a distant tree and a brief view of a fly-by spotted woodpecker – Syrian given our village location? It went down as a possible.

We'd scarcely left Vulcan before Florin called for the bus to do a rapid volte-face so we could check out a raptor he'd noticed.

It proved to be our first Lesser Spotted Eagle, nobly silhouetted as it perched on a pylon. We had good views of its profile and could see its feathered trousers clearly against the bright sky.

After a while it moved on to a different pylon causing consternation among a number of Common Buzzards which were loitering nearby and took distinct umbrage at its presence.

Then it was into Zarnesti and along the bouncy track to the gorge. The valley was dry but there was still some water in the lower stream where we found some Grey Wagtails and a White-throated Dipper.

We left our bus and started a slow, gentle walk up this beautiful gorge.

Various tits, including Willow and Marsh, called as they moved around in small flocks accompanied occasionally by the whistling of Eurasian Nuthatches.

A Hummingbird Hawk Moth hovered around the Salvia and we found stands of Yellow Ox Eye at the sides of the rocky path.

The gorge became ever more dramatic, towering above us and forming a narrow passage way that reminded some of the approach to Petra and others of the famous Cretan Samaria Gorge.

Some former overhangs of limestone had given up the unequal struggle with gravity and, doubtless during one of the impressive storms, had collapsed in a heap.

We were scouring the higher parts of the cliffs where they broadened out to allow trees and bushes to gain footholds in search of movement before we had success and found a distant Chamois lurking in the stillness behind a tree.

While we watched it through the telescopes, a Peregrine Falcon shot high over our heads across the narrow line of sky above us— a bit like a single Red Arrow zooming over a tight street of skyscrapers.

Our plan of coming out a little later was paying dividends as the sun was penetrating parts of the gorge and encouraging butterflies like Scotch Argus, Comma, Red Admiral and Small Heaths to emerge and feed on the Scabious and other plants.

At a particularly impressive limestone rock face a Wallcreeper shot by, briefly landed and then appeared to vanish into thin air. Seen by some but sadly not by all. We developed cricked necks searching the honey-coloured cliffs and though croaking Northern Ravens added much atmosphere and a single clump of Edelweiss had others humming a familiar tune, the Wallcreeper remained hidden.

We made our lunch stop a little farther on and contentedly sat in the sun consuming the sandwiches, cake and fruit we'd collected at breakfast. A Black Woodpecker called with its eerie 'rain' call and a little later looped across the narrow gorge in front of us.

We retraced our path to where we'd seen the Wallcreeper before and once again one flipped past and disappeared behind some protruding rock. We heard its characteristic call and when a bird emerged from the rocks assumed we were on it but this one turned out to be a female Black Redstart! A little later a male Black Redstart appeared as well but frustratingly the Wallcreeper would not play ball and so we had to leave feeling slightly frustrated.

We were back by the area of rockfall when we found two more Chamois. This time a great deal closer and often appearing in the open and illuminated in the sunshine. We enjoyed wonderful views of these beautiful animals, an adult and a youngster, as they moved around seemingly untroubled by our relative proximity. They probably knew we couldn't cover forty vertical metres with great rapidity.

We were nearly back to our bus and some were examining a bear print that had been found when an urgent call went up "White-backed Woodpecker!"

Paw track forgotten we hastened to the spot where this rare woodpecker was showing very well. We watched it hopping up a Spruce before doing the usual woodpecker trick of sidling round to the far side of the trunk. Thereafter we only had glimpses but it had stayed long enough for some to get very decent images of this exciting bird. Who doesn't love woodpeckers?

The next part of the day took us back down the gravelly gorge and then onwards towards the small town of Bran. On the way we stopped at roadside overlooking a large, shallow valley. We had found a Red-backed Shrike perched in a bush and were settling down to give that a good seeing to when out of nowhere a male Goshawk came from stage right barrelling along at shrub height, all muscle, streamlined bulk and white eyebrow. A very impressive bird and one to scare the daylights out of any pigeon in the area.

With about an hour to spend looking around Bran and the group split up with some going to an open area at the side of the castle grounds where a Red Squirrel (a dark individual as often in this part of Europe), Grey-headed and Great Spotted Woodpecker, Spotted Flycatcher and Song Thrush were all added to our list.

A short drive later we had driven a little south of Bran on the main road and now overlooked a long valley containing the small Cheia settlement.

We sat in this Bran Pass area at the top of a lovely flower-filled meadow, pale-yellow Toadflax prominent and Clouded Yellows flitting by in the warm sunshine. Some impressive Bush-crickets included Roesel's with its broad creamy thorax stripe encompassing a rich chocolate-brown patch. A very impressive beast indeed. Chiffchaffs were moving in the near bushes and a Eurasian Sparrowhawk flew beneath us giving the rare opportunity to look down on a bird of prey.

Back through Bran we made a brief stop for us all to take pictures of the impressive Bran Castle -though sadly it was in beautiful blue skies and bright sun rather than the towering black cumulonimbus with flashes of lightning and rumbling thunder that tradition demands.

We made our way back to Vulcan but had one further stop in an old orchard within Vulcan itself. What a fabulous place this was with a mixture of old, gnarled, Walnut, Apple, Damson and Plum trees. Autumn crocuses were scattered around and in the rides we found Blood-vein and White Plume moths. A female Goshawk was in a low tree before rapidly flying away and a Black Woodpecker called from the adjoining area of woodland.

On our way back to the bus we found a rather unexpected Middle-spotted Woodpecker high up in a Spruce tree. It behaved very nicely for us staying long enough for good views through our telescopes. We had nearly made the bus when Florin's sharp ears detected a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and, behold! One appeared out of an apple tree and undulated away into the distance.

A six-woodpecker day (or even seven if our earlier bird was a Syrian....!)

So, we finally made our way back to our lovely guest house for another great meal and even a celebratory beer or two

## Day 3

Thursday 16th September

Another clear blue and sunny day dawned with the cockerels unabated in their desire to get us up and out there to enjoy this glorious countryside.

Those who had a short pre-breakfast walk found Black Redstarts, with their ball bearing crunching song, perched on the apex of the attractively tiled roofs. Chiffchaffs sang from low street trees and Great and Blue Tits scoured these same trees for autumn insects.

The breakfast table nearly buckled under the weight of fruit, cold meats, cheeses, tomatoes and cereal and following the lead of two very determined members of our group, we tackled this cornucopia with enthusiasm!

We constructed our own packed meal for later in the day and off we went back to the Piatra Craiului National Park; though this time on the footpath that leads up to the monastery of Coltul Chiliilor.

As always, the fields were full of crows and Common Buzzards, doubtless hunting worms and other invertebrates and occasionally more serious looking Northern Ravens were sitting close by waiting impassively for their opportunity.

After we'd driven past the impressive National Park building, we parked our bus and made our way slowly up the hill on the well-marked track to the monastery.

The low bushes and abundance of insects provided a perfect habitat for shrikes and we quickly found both Red-backed and Great Grey. The latter was particularly impressive perching first on a small bush and then a large grey rock, remaining still long enough to provide close-up views through the telescopes.

Shrikes will, of course, store insects, lizards and even small mammals impaled on the thorns of Hawthorns and we searched a number to try to find one of these larders. Sadly, no luck this time though they will be here somewhere.

Coal Tits were calling from nearby tall Spruce trees and on finding them we noticed they were accompanied by even smaller birds – Common Firecrests. Sometimes difficult to see properly these little birds were often in full view, their crests shining in the lovely sun.

We were hearing various birds. A Corn Bunting sang distantly, a Willow Tit uttered its nasal scolding call, Fieldfares chacked from afar and a Chiffchaff ignored the autumn to sing valiantly. Then we saw the first of our spectacular sightings of Spotted Nutcrackers.

The birds were flying from lower down the hill back up into the Spruce trees. Some spectacularly successful photographs showed that they were clearly visiting Hazel trees and flying back with nuts carefully held in their bills.

Bird after bird flew past us as we made our way slowly up the track. Occasionally one would land in a tree top but they always timed their stay to be just less than the time to set up the telescope and get focussed.

Their example was then followed by a Red Crossbill.

Greenfinches and a Crested Tit made their way onto our list as did a dashing Eurasian Hobby before we came across a group of languid guard dogs resting out of the sun under the shade of a large tree.

They eyed us with distaste doubtless suspecting us of harbouring ill-will to their sheep and our stand-off was only broken when a very friendly shepherd appeared to explain to the dogs that we were pretty harmless.

We chatted to him and found he had 227 sheep in his care (comprising small flocks collected from a number of farms) and he, and another shepherd, would milk all these sheep twice a day down in the valley leaving a third person to convert this into cheese.

After studying a very, very distant raptor on a far peak and coming to no definite conclusion we started to make our way back down the hill through the Autumn Crocus studded fields where Meadow Lizards sunbathed and Pearl-bordered Fritillaries perched.

We were discussing our wonderous Nutcrackers when one of our party did a passable impersonation of a Sugar Plum Fairy when slipping on mud and going head over heels. Fortunately, he was none the worse for his tumble but the sudden movement transformed the apparent comatose guard dogs into instant action and the shepherd had to step in to calm them down. Woe betide any wolf that came near these animals.

Some nice examples of Willow Gentian (*Gentiana asclepiadea*) lined the path as we approached the bus and a hazel nut shell the Nutcrackers had missed was found opened by a vole of some sort and the nut itself neatly removed.

We were going on a bear hunt this evening so had flipped our meals and went back to the guest house for a full cooked lunch, and some time to digest it and re-organise ourselves, before we headed out again. This time heading north out of Zarnesti through Sinca Noua and into the Stramba Valley.

We arrived in the mid-afternoon and everything was fairly quiet from a bird perspective. A nice Common Redstart was found in an old Willow and a low line of willow branches near the road held both Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler. The hot sun had brought out various butterflies including Painted Lady, Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Meadow Brown as well as numerous *Sympetrum* dragonflies which we took to be mainly Ruddy Darters.

At a little after 17.00 we made our way to the bear hide disturbing a Red Fox on the way which was lounging like duchess relaxing after the paying guests have gone and then shocked to find some still there. It trotted off occasionally stopping to look disgustedly at us over its shoulder.

We arrived close to the hide and started our walk into the site when we had to stop as a few bears had already anticipated our arrival and were watching from a little way away. The rangers monitored proceedings very carefully to make sure everything was safe before we were allowed to quickly cross the small bridge, walk up the stairs and into the hide.

The guides put out the fruit, biscuits and seed with a few bears watching carefully from the depth of the wood before advancing once the coast was clear.

All the bears were intent on eating but the interaction between them was fascinating to watch. Near our hide was a female bear known as Clown who had two young cubs. They were very wary and spent all the time in one area at the edge of the open feeding site. The cubs watched their mother intently and scampered up trees when other bears came close or when warned by their mother.

Another female bear, Emily, had only one cub having lost one previously to an attack by a male. She was extremely wary and at one stage chasing another bear away with teeth bared and real intent in her charge.

Later when another bear was near her, Emily was clearly tense, her body stiffened and her head moving from side to side. One did not need to be an expert in animal behaviour to see there was tension out there.

All in there were 15 bears that came out to feed and interact just yards in front of us – it was a real spectacle and a real privilege to watch them.

Eventually it was time for us to leave and we carefully crept out of the hide and, flanked by our guides, walked back to the bus and took the drive home.

Once at our guest house we found some snacks had been thoughtfully provided for us and so, like the bears, we fed and interacted and chatted about yet another fabulous day in this wonderful part of Romania

## Day 4

## Friday 17th September

Sadly, this was our day to leave Transylvania, to leave this lovely guest house and our friends the cockerels.

We had a fairly long journey before us so left around 08.30 and making our first meaningful stop around midday at Radanu Lake a little way before the town of Urziceni.

This proved a very fruitful stop. It was a fairly large reed fringed lake but with muddy shallows at the edge; perfect for waders. As soon as we'd scrambled out of the bus we'd found Little Stints, Dunlin, Spotted Redshanks and Ringed Plovers. A Collared Pratincole was heard calling but we weren't able to pick it up.

Further out on the lake there were numerous duck which included Northern Shoveler and Pintail, Eurasian Teal and Common Pochard. Little Grebes were dotted around amongst the duck and there were also a handful of Black-necked Grebes – some looking very white in the light.

Towards the back of the lake a group of 22 Greater Flamingos stood in a pale pink line bursting into scarlet and black when they took off and flew.

A Western Osprey appeared to our right and flew across the lake while below it several Western Marsh Harriers quartered the distant reeds.

Reed and Sedge Warblers called harshly from the reeds and the distinctive squeaky call of Red-Throated Pipit drew attention to a group of six of these beautiful birds.

A shower started which drove us back to the bus but the sight of some close-range waders stayed our desire for shelter. These birds paraded in front of us like models in a beauty pageant displaying their finery.

Little Stints with their smart white 'braces', Temminck's Stint with elegant pale back and smart brown breast making it look like a miniature Common Sandpiper, Spotted Redshanks all legs and bills and a Ruff with its orange-red legs and a head which looks a little too small for the body.

We continued our journey through Urzicena heading eastwards when we saw there were a group of Black Storks in a field to our right. Unfortunately, we were on a stretch of road where we couldn't stop so had to make do with tantalising glimpses as we sped past.

Turning off the main road towards Tulcea, we stopped at the wonderful lake Chiolui Harsarlac.

As we pulled up there were a mass of Greylag Geese swimming near the shore which slowly but steadily swan out to the lake centre before taking off in a cacophony of pale wings and outstretched necks. Ruddy Shelducks took flight too their white wing patches shining in the sun. We were like kids in a sweet shop. Everywhere we looked there were different and exciting birds. Pygmy Cormorants lurked by the reeds; Great White Egrets flapped their way low across the water; Whiskered Terns, some in near perfect summer plumage, called with

their raspy tone and landed on patches of emergent vegetation; Ferruginous Duck, their white wing bars easy to pick out, flew around the far side of the lake and a Grey Plover flew in and plonked itself on the area of mud in front of us its large dark eye giving a look of mild astonishment.

There was still more to find on the water including Common Shelduck, Common Pochards and both Little and Great Crested Grebe but the passerines were calling too. A couple of Crested Larks hopped around in front of us and best of all we found a Red-breasted Flycatcher living up to its name in a pale grey Willow. This was a beautiful bird with its red front very evident and it spent time flipping out to snare an insect before darting back to another branch in the tree. Each time it zipped out and carried out the aerial gymnastics we had great views of the white sides of the tail.

Behind us were a low ridge of hills and over these appeared three Long-legged Buzzards, one of them hovering while intently searching the ground below. As we were leaving a Little Owl popped up on the roof of an adjacent barn, scampering along the ridge as our bus pulled out for the last short leg of our journey.

We arrived at our Flotel in Tulcea at around 18.30 where we were greeted with some delicious plum brandy before locating our rooms and meeting again to do our ever-burgeoning list and have our first delicious floating meal of the trip.

## Day 5

## Saturday 18th September

This morning we woke up to gentle lapping of water against the bows of our floating hotel, the 'chacking' of Western Jackdaws and cooing of Collared Doves.

It was Saturday but the river was still busy at 07.00 with fisherman, local tourists and workmen scudding across the river among the many leaping fish.

After our substantial breakfast we boarded the smaller boat and sailed away from the slightly insalubrious surroundings of Tulcea and headed downstream on the Danube.

Our trip quickly provided both Pygmy and Great Cormorants followed by views of Eurasian Hobbies, Western Osprey and a Grey Heron with an enormous fish in its beak.

The Willows either side of the smaller channel we'd entered showed extensive exposed roots and gave the impression of a European Mangrove swamp.

Common Kingfishers regularly darted in front of us though never quite settling long enough for a decent photograph. We started to see the first of our ubiquitous Squacco Herons.

A Common Sandpiper bobbed on the bank and a Black Woodpecker bounded across our bows before landing out of sight and mocking us with its eerie rain call.

Our route was taking us off the main Sulina branch, along the Canal Mila 36 then off again north onto another even smaller branch and we sailed gently past tangles of Willow and Poplar swathed in Wild Vine and punctuated by colourful stands of Purple Loosestrife.

The edges of the waterway were lined with various water plants including the Yellow and White Water-lilies; Spotted Flycatchers did their figure of eight flights and yet more Common Kingfishers flashed along ahead of us.

We entered Lake Cotete where there were Squacco Herons on every piece of emergent vegetation, Wood Sandpipers scoured the water lily pads and a Purple Heron lurked in the luxurious bank-lining reeds.

Our first White-tailed Eagle was seen flying in the distance. We were confident that more would appear. And we were right.

We moved into another lake as the sun came strongly out and shone on two warring Mute Swans and another fly-by Western Osprey. The sun must have brought out more dragonflies as a Eurasian Hobby cut through the sky disappearing behind the bankside screen of trees.

Experiencing migration is always a theme of this Romanian trip and we were treated to a very special site of a spiral of around 60 Black Storks above the boat. As we watched they were joined by two White Pelicans and a young White-tailed Eagle all sharing the thermal – a wonderful binocular full.

A Dalmatian Pelican flew past given an excellent opportunity to see the difference in the underwing of this bird compared with the White Pelicans we'd been seeing.

Another Western Osprey flew overhead, this time carrying a fish and one of the group got a fantastic photograph clearly showing the aerodynamic way the fish was being held.

We were starting to get increasing numbers of White-tailed Eagle now too. Birds were flying in the near distance and being seen perched by the side of the water where we could float gently up to them. Annoyingly they always seemed to be back lit by the sun so we had wonderful views of their patriarchal silhouette but not quite the perfect photo opp.

Our first Night Heron sighting, a juvenile, was quickly followed by a second before we sailed into Lake Baclanestii which was alive with birdlife. A flock of around 50 White Pelicans were huddled together feeding in that cooperative way of plunging their heads and necks in together as if at a signal.

We sailed, engine off, and in the lovely silence watched Little and Great Crested Grebes with Mute Swans and swooping Caspian Gulls and Whiskered Terns that followed the boat to pick up anything we were disturbing from the shallows. It was a blissful scene.

We were almost become blasé now about White-tailed Eagles as we slowly and silently floated towards one on a tree, cameras clicking furiously.

By now we'd reached the Sulina Branch of the Danube and at Gorgova we were re-united with our mother ship which we boarded for lunch.

Seated around the table with a lovely meal in front of us we glided through the countryside seeing birds as we sailed – a European Roller on a low branch, a now commonplace White-tailed Eagle on a dead tree and a stationary Eurasian Hobby like a teardrop on a Willow branch.

A Little Bittern suddenly shot past our bow and disappeared into the reeds.

Best was to come though as we sailed through a whole collection of terns, bouncing, swirling and dipping over the Danube. Amongst the familiar Whiskered were fabulous White-winged Terns. Many of these birds still had adult plumage and their brilliant white wing patches stood out against the deep velvety black of their bodies.

We loafed on the observation platform of the flotel and watched a group of Caspian Terns, Gulls and Grey Herons doing likewise on the bank of the channel as we glided past.

The flotel moored up and we got back into the small boat to explore the nearby Swan's Nest (Cuibul Cu Lebede) and Jacob Lakes.

Various calls came from the reeds. A Little Crake, Penduline Tits and Bearded Reedlings and we searched, with mixed success, for the creators of these calls.

Both adult and young Caspian Terns were patrolling the waters of this lake and we listened the hugely different calls of the adults and young – the one a loud, fierce 'kreaak' and the other a rather pitiful squeak. A winter plumaged Common Tern added to our tern list and on the water a rather sad looking, lonely young Red-necked Grebe paddled past us.

Rain had been forecast and as we entered Jacob Lake it appeared and we clustered together under the shelter of the ship's canopy.

As is often the case this short period of rain seemed to revive things and we finally caught up with some 'pinging' Bearded Reedlings pecking around low in the *Phragmites* reed with Reed Warblers flitting around in the same bed. Night Herons kept popping up, Whiskered Tern numbers seemed to increase as, sadly, did mosquitoes.

Silently gliding on the lake our eyes became accustomed to the huge number of Marsh Frogs leaping from lily leaf to lily leaf and a Dalmatian Pelican swept in and gave us an excellent opportunity to compare and contrast with the nearby White Pelicans.

We were turning to head back when we noticed a 'V' in the water coming towards us. It was a Dice Snake which, for a while, looked like it wanted to join us on the boat but soon realised its error and swam rapidly back into the safety of the dense vegetation.

So, with more Night Herons appearing in the early dusk, we made our way back to the Flotel for more food, wine, listing and merriment

## Day 6

Sunday 19th September

flotel slowly burning the mist back – all soft-focus stuff.

Those of us who'd had an uninterrupted night's sleep had missed the calls of a Tawny Owl and the howling of nearby Golden Jackals. It pays to be alert 24/7

Cups of coffee in hand we gathered on the observation deck and watched this beautiful morning develop before fuelling up with golden omelettes and other delicacies and heading off on our small boat – this time to the Caraorman disused industrial complex.

A Purple Heron posed in the luxuriant Mint bushes and nearby a Grey Heron was up to his belly in the water patiently after his next meal. We then found a diminutive juvenile Little Crake pottering around on the floating vegetation feeding at the edges of reeds. It was a very obliging bird and as we watched it a group of 6 Bearded Reedlings landed nearby affording excellent views.

Common Kingfishers tantalised the photographers and a small flock of Eurasian Spoonbills flew overhead as we arrived Caraorman.

This slightly incongruous area of an abandoned Communist industrial project is fantastic for birds and we were quickly finding Black-winged Stilts and a wire-perching European Roller

A variety of waders were enjoying the small muddy pools, Common Greenshank, Spotted Redshank, Ruff and an elegant group of Pied Avocets.

Caspian Terns rasped away while we examined a large group of gulls which were mainly Caspian and Black-headed but contained a handful of Pallas's their dark masks and distinctive bills helping pick them out. Further back still two Black Storks.

The lovely sun was bringing out the butterflies and we chased after Eastern Bath Whites and a beautiful Queen of Spain Fritillary.

More signs of migration were evident with a few Honey Buzzards circling past us including a very dark juvenile whose yellow cere was very prominent. Most excitingly of all a plume of some 40 birds above the derelict houses proved to be Levant's Sparrowhawks some of which glided overhead and gave good views of the paler undersides and dark wing tips. Excellent!

In a damp area at the side of a old salt bed we found a very impressive Spurge Moth caterpillar and equally attractive tiny Fire-bellied Toads crawling unobtrusively among the rushes and *Salicornia*.

We had our only European Hare sighting while trying to find a Tawny Pipit which had flown into some low open scrub.

A long snake disappeared under a block of concrete, probably Grass Snake, as we dragged ourselves away from this fascinating and rewarding site and boarded our small boat.

As we sailed through the smaller channels we noticed, and frustratingly tried to photograph, very large numbers of dragonflies – mainly Migrant Hawkers it seemed. Not surprisingly we were also noticing more Eurasian Hobbies and Red-footed Falcons taking their share of this abundance.

We moved gently further east along the Vatafu channel to an area of floating reedbed where Florin clambered over the side to explain to us the way these reed beds develop and their vital importance to the ecology of the Delta – especially in providing the nesting sites for all of its Great White Pelicans. Plunging a pole into the reedbed Florin showed how this was a couple of metres thick and can reach three metres or more. This mass of vegetation also providing a huge and essential filtering system for the waters entering the delta.

Back to the Flotel for a slightly later lunch we then sailed north to re-join the Sulina Branch at Crisan before disembarking onto the smaller vessel to go along one of the old arms of the Danube. From here our route would take us through Lake Bogdaproste and into Trei Lezere

Our usual terns and herons were around in force, and we met up once more with a Little Crake going about his feeding at the reed edge. As before we watched this tiny little bird for some time as it hunted around and at one stage caught a fish.

Once again, we had some very close views of Bearded Reedling and, tantalisingly, could hear Penduline Tit but weren't able to catch sight of it.

As we sailed into our first large lake the glorious slanting evening light picked out a shining bright White Pelican on a floating log together with a handful of Great Cormorants. We drifted closer and closer getting wonderful views and, we hoped, award winning photos of these heavenly illuminated birds.

Gadwall, Ferruginous Duck and Eurasian Teal flew as our boat approached and we had views of a large roost of Cormorants arranged in a tree like a collection of black and white Christmas decorations.

Sailing on we noticed an impressive White-tailed Eagle perched, picked out by the sun, on a distant tree. Aware it could fly at any moment we crept ever closer taking photographs as we went. We waited for it to fly but in fact it remained gazing impassively down on us as we turned away and started our return to the main ship.

There was a gorgeous sunset as we neared our new home above Mila 23 on Canal Eracle and over the reed beds thousands upon thousands of Barn Swallows were gathering before dropping down into the vast reedbeds to roost.

A beautiful end to our day and we foregathered later for an equally beautiful meal and to talk through the day's events

## Day 7

## Monday 20th September

Another lovely morning dawned, though decidedly cooler than previously and a group of us met early on the observation deck to gaze across the reeds at squadrons of White Pelicans. Water Rail was seen briefly, a distant Little Crake crept out of the reeds and a much closer Western Osprey landed on a nearby tree.

We had our breakfast a little earlier than normal and moved off on our small boat for the last time on this trip.

Bearded Reedlings called from nearby reeds and, as ever, Squacco Herons lined the water's edge, resplendent in the early morning bright sunshine, begging to be photographed.

A Little Bittern was less cooperative and was only glimpsed as it melted back into the reedbeds.

We drifted into a smaller lake where we had some splendid views of Bearded Reedlings including some very fine males with impressive moustaches.

We were all well versed in the difference between the pelicans by now, so a close fly-by Dalmatian Pelican provided no problems in ID and plenty of admiration for its huge wingspan and impressive bill.

More Honey Buzzards were passing through on their migration south and again we had some excellent views of dark juvenile bird with that prominent yellow base to the bill gleaming in the lovely light.

We were gradually warming up in the sun and were helped in this by the excitement of a big flock of around 20 Bearded Reedlings ping-ponging around in the reeds near us.

The White Water-Lilies (*Nymphaea alba*) were looking particularly fine this morning and the water amazingly clear – and very shallow in parts.

Gazing into this gin-clear water we saw a myriad of small fish, a load of water snails of all different shapes and sizes and everywhere small floating patches of the fern *Salvinia natans*, floating fern, also known a little more poetically as floating butterfly wings.

In small floating islands, Water Soldiers stood out spikily and both Bulrush and Lesser Bulrush protruded proudly skywards.

We emerged into a large and beautiful lake where a Purple Heron took fright at our arrival and where the now familiar calls of adult and juvenile Caspian Terns punctuated the air.

Here there were hundreds of Eurasian Coot and Ferruginous Duck the latter taking flight and displaying their flashing white wing bars as they leapt from the water.

Once again, we came across a large number of White Pelicans feedings and were able to spend time watching their amazingly choreographed feeding dance. Densely packed together they plunged their heads in in perfect synchrony and with some force as we could see splashes of water rising into the air. Their feeding intensity was such that it was attracting other Pelicans and all the time more and more were flying in to join the feast.

Lesser mortals were present too to pick up the scraps – Greater Cormorants were in attendance at the fringes of this mass of Pelicans, Caspian and Whiskered terns hovered around the edges picking up such scraps as they could.

Even an Osprey appeared and circled the lake a while making a couple of abortive fishing attempts before a dramatic plunge and a triumphant exit with a fish. A young bird that was learning quickly.

As we progressed through the lake we saw another huge flock of White Pelicans, this time a great plume of them like a twist of smoke rising in the distance.

White-tailed Eagles were almost commonplace now but the sight of adult birds, their tails brilliant white in the clear sun was still enough to take one's breath away - they are magnificent!

Sailing through Fortuna Lake we found more large numbers of Great and Pygmy Cormorants and were reminded of the importance of the Danube Delta for this latter species holding around 60% of the world's population.

More Black-necked and another Red-necked Grebe were added to our list for the day and a distant flying Pallas's Gull gave us the chance to see the distinctive wing pattern of this bird.

We were approaching our flotel for lunch when we were treated to more signs of migration as a Montagu's Harrier flew high overhead with, a little while later, two more of this delicate raptor disappearing southwards.

Now it was back to our flotel for lunch and to relax as we headed back to Tulcea.

Over lunch we admired two hornets which had joined us for a while before most went on to the observation deck to see what else we could find on our last afternoon in this remarkable wilderness.

Birds of prey were certainly in evidence with more of our familiar friends like White-tailed Eagles, Hobbies and Marsh Harriers with less often seen Honey and Steppe Buzzards, a light morph Booted Eagle, Montagu's Harriers and even a juvenile Peregrine Falcon, perched menacingly on a tree top.

Grey-headed and Great Spotted Woodpeckers clung to dead trees either side of the channel and Black Woodpeckers called from the tangle of trees but only once appeared to fly ahead of us.

It was becoming cooler and wetter as we left the White Polar lined banks of canal 36 and joined the main branch and we retreated indoors to get ourselves ready for our last evening meal on this marvellous floating hotel.

## Day 8

## Tuesday 21st September

There had been heavy rain overnight and though the day was clear and bright and the visibility perfect there was a cool wind blowing.

After our last marvellous breakfast on this excellent Flotel we said our heartfelt thanks and goodbyes to the crew and headed west out of Tulcea.

We drove through a few small villages before turning towards the Delta Nature Resort in Somova and walking a short a distance to overlook a very impressive floodplain. This area is one of a very few along the Danube's length where more or less natural flooding processes are allowed to occur. The silt-accumulated lagoons here act as a natural buffer zone mitigating the impact of any major flood event. If only we'd learned this lesson elsewhere in Europe.

The steppe grassland on which we stood was very dry after the long, hot summer yet various flowers still added their splashes of colour – the deep purple of Forking Larkspur (*Consolida regalis*), the lively pink of Immortelle (*Xeranthemum annuum*) all offset by the spiky fawn and browns of Field Eryngo (*Eryngium campestre*).

Birds, of course, were arrayed out before us like looking down on the chessboard fields from Alice Through the Looking Glass. Large numbers of White Pelicans floated on the lakes, huge Great White Egret colonies lined the banks dotted with the blacks of Pygmy and Great Cormorants. An inevitable White-tailed Eagle perched, patiently waiting its opportunity, on a low dead tree.

Overhead, Barn Swallows and Sand Martins were a constant reminder of the autumn migration and higher up in the sky the same story was being told by the presence of a dark morph Booted Eagle and a Long-legged Buzzard.

The distinctive smell of Wormwood (*Artemisia*) infused the air as we walked through these plants on our way to our bus. We had only a short distance to drive and used the time wisely plucking the liberal coating of burrs (Spiny Cocklebur?) we'd been blessed with on our last stop.

We then took a walk of an hour or so into the wooded steppe habitat with Balkan Oaks and Wild Pear – it reminded us somewhat of the Spanish Cork Oak forests.

It quickly became apparent that there were a lot of birds moving around in small flocks. A Red-backed Shrike hid quietly behind a bush; Spotted Flycatchers flickered in and out of perches; Nuthatches whistled; various tits, including Sombre, called tantalisingly; Lesser Spotted and Syrian Woodpeckers showed themselves briefly to a few people before vanishing again into the luxuriant canopy.

When our attention wasn't drawn to the drama in the trees and shrubs we cast our gaze downwards to large flapping Great Banded Graylings and Cardinal Fritillaries or to the lovely Yellow Star Thistle that grew abundantly along the path edges.

Florin heard a slight rustle in dry vegetation at the base of an oak and dug around like an enthusiastic truffle hound emerging triumphantly with a beautiful Snake-eyed Skink - a Balkan speciality. This was a beautiful shiny reptile which looked freshly varnished and with tiny, almost vestigial, legs. One imagined if we returned in 100 years they would have vanished completely.

We found a trio of impressive Orthoptera all in the same square foot of grasses. A bright green Bush Cricket, a Cone-headed Grasshopper with its elongated head and the vastly impressive Predatory Bush Cricket or Spike Magician (*Sago pedo*). The latter was a good 10 centimetres long with spectacularly spiky legs – all the better to grab you with.

As we made our way back to the bus various Red-winged and Blue-winged Grasshoppers leapt out in front of us and Wall Browns and Common Blues flitted in the sunshine.

Our next stop was a short drive south to the area near Cilic Dere Monastery, although more correctly it's a nunnery.

We had a lovely al fresco lunch of salty white cheese, flavour-filled tomatoes, delicate courgette fritters, small patties and crispy fresh gherkins. Delicious.

Hawfinches called and then were seen flying from tree to tree while overhead Long-legged Buzzards gave a good clear show.

The air was full of dragonflies -mainly Migrant Hawkets – and the nearby ride was like an aerial dragonfly soup. It would be a foolhardy insect who tried to traverse that passage.

The biter-bit principle applied again of course with regular Eurasian Hobbies being seen dashing around in the sky with streamlined, swept-back wings.

We heard and caught glimpses of Sombre Tits but better was to follow when one of our group called us to a ridge where these birds were moving around between Hawthorn, Wild Pear and Oak. They showed well from time to time but were constantly on the move and cries of 'there, over by the red-leaves' were not entirely appreciated by those with red/green colour blindness.

On our return to the bus, eyes down to avoid stumbling over the tussocks we found Silver-studded Blue and a beautiful Fiery Copper as well as a very impressive Wolf Spider stalking her way through the undergrowth.

Our next stop was near Greci in the Muntii Macinulu National Park and we drove slowly through this magnificent Steppe habitat with low mountains as a backdrop.

Red-backed Shrikes were dotted about in bushes and Long-legged Buzzards soared in the thermals created by the ridge but sadly we couldn't find any Souseliks. They often will start their hibernation around the end of

August and particularly so if the summer has been, as this one was, long and hot. So we had to content our selves with knowing that they were tucked away from harm under the brown grassland punctuated by the delicate pink *Dianthus*.

We meandered through the stands of woodland with the lovely Oriental Hornbeam and when, we emerged, we found four Lesser Spotted Eagles soaring high overhead their bowed wings giving their identification away. As the sun dipped lower it illuminated the fawn steppe making it glow like a golden sea and also illuminated a couple in full wedding regalia going through a photographic session on the top of a low hill.

Then it was off to our new and final accommodation – a lovely lodge in Tulcea where we spent the next few happy hours performing our Covid tests and uploading confirmatory photographs.

## Day 9

## Wednesday 22nd September

Today was our last full day in the area of Dobrogea and we were going to spend it in areas alongside the Black Sea.

It was fairly cool but sunny and bright as we set off south listening to a fascinating account of the area's history from Florin and learning about the discovery of a fabulous 27,000 coins from the 13<sup>th</sup> century by a steppe-ploughing farmer.

We stopped at a hill which stood proud among the rolling steppe land; a sandstone hill called Deniscepe but known locally as Sleeping Elephant Hills. Here we hoped that the thermals generated by this rise would attract raptors and, sure enough, we'd hardly emerged from the bus before a Short-toed Snake Eagle was seen, looking very white underneath, moving away from us. A Common Kestrel and high Booted Eagle completed our birds of prey but a distant murmuration of Common Starlings together with a few butterflies, including Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper, kept us occupied until we resumed our travels further south.

We drove through the Forest of Babadag which is a very productive site earlier in the year but less so in the late autumn. Once again, we had an illuminating history lesson from Florin hearing how Babadag was the capital of Dobrogea for a 400 year period from the early 15<sup>th</sup> Century.

En route to our next stop, Sinoe, we saw around 20 Mediterranean Gulls fly past in pursuit of newly turned soil.

Yellow Wagtails bounced down the road in front of us as we emulated them through the plentiful potholes before clambering out for a walk alongside a very promising looking large wetland.

Around fifty Eurasian Golden Plovers shot past us, a fairly uncommon sight here, and a positive cornucopia of waders paraded around the shallow edges of the reed fringed lake. Around 200 Pied Avocets roosted in the centre of the lake, Black-tailed Godwits flew over and there were Eurasian Curlew among large numbers of Spotted and Common Redshank. Little Stints, Wood Sandpipers, Ringed Plovers, Common Greenshanks and a delicate Marsh Sandpiper all vied for our attention.

In the reeds there were Whinchat, Reed Bunting and hulking Great Reed Warbler. Birds everywhere!

A little further on against a bank we were teased by a flitting Wood and Willow Warbler as we tried to ensure that everyone had seen both birds

Away from the birds a miniature Crab Spider hid like a tiny white porcelain brooch in a flower awaiting a visit from an unwary insect.

Just before we found our way back to the bus we came across an old Sand Martin colony. We assumed all the birds would have left by now but one still clung on to the edge of its nest hole as we wished it a safe journey to Africa.

Our lunch was taken near a Golden Jackal den amid swirling mosquitoes – fortunately all male and thus benign – and Eurasian Hobbies entertained us with their aerial acrobatics.

Travelling further south we came across huge flocks of Mediterranean Gulls, hundreds strong, following earth-turning tractors.

We passed through a small village where a Syrian Woodpecker clung to a tree at eye level enabling a number of great photographs to be taken which clearly showed that distinctive face pattern.

Arriving at Vadu we found another wonderful little area of shallow wader and mud, once again alive with waders. Dunlin scuttled around and amongst them was a Curlew Sandpiper, expertly picked out by one of the group. Little Stints and Little Ringed Plovers fed on the edges and a delicate Red-necked Phalarope span around on the water picking at minute insects as it gyrated.

On an island a Little Gull was nearly invisible in its tucked-up position among vegetation while nearby a couple of winter plumaged Black Terns were obligingly showing their distinctive dark neck mark.

Onward to the next pool we found a Eurasian Curlew fairly close to us plus a nice chunky Gull-billed Tern perched on a sand bar.

Nearby male and female Red-footed Falcons held our attention until bigger game, in the shape of a beautiful male Pallid Harrier, gradually made its way across the sky above us its wing markings clear in the light.

Our final stop was at the edge of the Black Sea and there we found raucous, calling Sandwich Terns, another Mediterranean Gull and a small flock of Corn Buntings moving around the coastal bushes.

A pool behind the dunes held various grebes as well as Tufted Duck, Northern Shoveler and both Whiskered and Common Terns.

A female Montagu's Harrier flew low over a distant field before we picked up another lovely male Pallid Harrier gliding over the bushes and occasionally being dive-bombed by a Eurasian Hobby.

Our progress back to the bus was slowed firstly by a Spotted Redshank desperate to be photographed in close up and then a fabulous huge female wolf Spider its body covered in small babies. Closer examination showed that some of these young had left the safety of their mother and were roaming around a few inches away, presumably gradually developing their independence.

We needed to head home but our progress was slowed as a Common Cuckoo flew across the field in front of us landing in a small bush. A late bird indeed.

Then it was back to our home in Tulcea for a lovely final meal complete with sparkling wine, an amazing cake and the eager anticipation of completing our Passenger Locator Forms.

## Day 10

Thursday 23rd September

All too soon our final day had arrived and after profusely thanking our friendly and generous hosts we headed towards Bucharest.

We saw a few birds, including Marsh Harriers, Corn Buntings and Crested Larks, before we arrived at Lake Hasar for a more focussed look around.

It was fairly cool and windy here and, in contrast to when we came here on our way to Tulcea, seemed fairly wader free. However, as we watched a couple of White-tailed Eagles, an adult and a juvenile, flew low over the back of the lake. The usual Pygmy and Great cormorants plus Ruddy Shelducks, Great Crested Grebes, Ferruginous Ducks were all present and correct. A few Crested Larks plus a Woodlark hopped around the midden heap while overhead there were Long-legged Buzzards and a distant Lesser Spotted Eagle high against the clouds.

It was time now to push on and make sure we arrived in Bucharest Airport in time for our flights. Our journey was an uneventful one with various of the 'usual suspects' seen as we passed through the Romanian countryside.

We said a fond farewell to those catching a slightly later flight to Manchester while the rest of us boarded the plane following the various Covid induced checks.

A quiet flight followed and, after picking up our bags, we waved each other goodbye following what we all agreed had been a fantastic holiday.

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## Checklist

### Birds

	Common name	Scientific name	Date: 14th-23rd September									
			14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
1	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>				8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>				1					✓	
4	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>				50					8	
5	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>				2	3	6	20			
6	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>				✓					2	
8	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>				✓						
9	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>					2				3	
10	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
11	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>				✓			1			
12	Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>				20	4	30	40 0			60
13	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>				✓					3	
14	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>					2	2	H		✓	
15	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>				✓	✓	15	✓		✓	✓
16	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>					1		1			
17	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>				2	3	16	✓			4
18	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>				6			3			
19	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>				40	60	9				
20	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>							1			
21	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>						10			6	
22	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>				22						
23	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>					1		2			
24	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>					12	12	8			
25	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
26	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
27	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>				1	3	3	2	✓	1	
28	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
29	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
30	Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>					80	20	✓		✓	
31	Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>					6	1	1			
32	Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo pygmeus</i>				12	✓	✓	✓	✓	2	✓
33	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>				1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
34	Western Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>				1	3	5	4		✓	

	Common name	Scientific name	Date: 14th-23rd September										
			14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
35	European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>							1	8		4	
36	Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>										1	
37	Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga pomarina</i>		2							4		1
38	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>								1		1	
39	Levant Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter brevipes</i>							40				
40	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		4	1	2	1	1	1	1			
41	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>		2									
42	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	4			10	12	17	✓	✓	✓	✓	
43	Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>										2	
44	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>								4		2	
45	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>					15	4	8	✓		1	2
46	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>				3					6		2
47	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				
48	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>						H	1				
49	Little Crake	<i>Porzana parva</i>					1	2	2				
50	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>					2	8	4			4	
51	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>				✓	✓	20	✓			✓	✓
52	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>						2				1	
53	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>				30		1				200	
54	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>				1	2	6	✓			6	
55	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>				1							
56	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>				4							
57	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>				1						4	
58	Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>										20	
59	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>				1	1	6	✓			4	
60	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>										7	
61	Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>										1	
62	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>					1	1				20	
63	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>				12		6				✓	
64	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>										✓	
65	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>										1	
66	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>					4	4	1			6	
67	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>					4	2	✓			2	
68	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>				3	12	6	✓			6	
69	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>					1						
70	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>				1						4	
71	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>				1							

	Common name	Scientific name	Date: 14th-23rd September										
			14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
72	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>										1	
73	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>				6						20	
74	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>				8	2	6				30	
75	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>				H							
76	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
77	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>										1	
78	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>										200	0
79	Pallas's Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus</i>						6	1				
80	Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
81	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>				✓	1						
82	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>										1	
83	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>					12	50	8			6	
84	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>										2	
85	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>					1		1			1	
86	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>				6	✓	✓	✓			✓	
87	White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>					12						
88	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>										2	
89	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
90	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>							2	1	1		
91	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	1	5	✓	✓	✓		
92	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
93	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>										1	
94	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>						H					
95	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>				1							
96	European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>					3	4					
97	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>				H	20	20	✓				
98	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocoptes medius</i>		1							1		
99	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>		1				1			2		
100	Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>		?							2	1	
101	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		1	1		3	4	6	2	1		
102	White-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>		1									
103	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>		1			1		1				
104	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		H	1			1	H	H	H		
105	Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>		1					4				
106	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	1	1	3		1	✓	✓	
107	Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>	11			1		6	8		✓		

	Common name	Scientific name	Date: 14th-23rd September									
			14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
108	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>			1		15	✓	✓	✓	✓	
109	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		2	?				1			
110	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>		1	4	2	1	4		2	1	
111	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>			4							
112	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓	✓	✓	1				4	✓	
113	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	4	✓	✓
114	Spotted Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>			✓							
115	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
116	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
117	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
118	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		2	2			
119	Coal Tit	<i>Pariparus ater</i>		H	✓							
120	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>			H							
121	Sombre Tit	<i>Poecile lugubris</i>								3		
122	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>		✓	✓							
123	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>		H	✓							
124	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	H	6		
125	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓		1	H	H	6		
126	Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>					H	H	H			
127	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>					2	9	20			
128	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>										1
129	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>				2		1			4	4
130	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>						4		2	3	
131	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
132	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	12	✓	✓	✓						
133	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		H			6	6	H		1	
134	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>			✓					1	1	
135	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓	✓		H	2	H			
136	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>									1	
137	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>				1					1	
138	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>				1	1					
139	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>				1	2	1	H		1	
140	Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>		H	4							
141	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		✓	✓							
142	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓	1					6		
143	Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>		1								
144	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>		H								

	Common name	Scientific name	Date: 14th-23rd September									
			14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
145	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
146	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	1							
147	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>		✓	1	H						
148	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>										
149	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			2							
150	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>		2			4		1	6		
151	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		2	2				1	4		
152	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>				1						
153	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		✓	✓	✓						
154	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>			1							
155	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>		2							2	
156	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>		1								
157	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
158	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>					2	✓	H	✓	✓	
159	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>				1		3			✓	
160	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		✓						1		
161	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
162	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>						1				
163	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>				2						
164	Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>				6						
165	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
166	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>								10		
167	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>			✓					✓		
168	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>			1							
169	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>			✓							
170	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>			H					1	8	20
171	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		1	2							
172	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>						1			✓	

## Other Forms

Common name	Scientific name	14th-23rd September									
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
<b>MAMMALS:</b>											
Common Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>			✓							
Serotine Bat	<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	2									
Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>						H				
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>			1							1
European Brown Bear	<i>Ursus arctos arctos</i>			15							
European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>							1			
Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>		1								
Mouse sp				1							
<b>Chamois</b>	<i>Rupicapra rupicapra</i>		✓								
<b>AMPHIBIANS &amp; REPTILES:</b>											
Fire-bellied Toad	<i>Bombina bombina</i>							✓			
Green Toad	<i>Bufo viridis</i>							✓			
European Tree Frog	<i>Hyla orientalis</i>				H	H	H	H			
Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>		1	1							
Agile Frog	<i>Rana dalmatina</i>		?								
Marsh Frog	<i>Rana ridibundus</i>			1		✓	✓	✓			
European Pond Terrapin	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>					1					
Meadow Lizard	<i>Lacerta pratincola</i>			1							
Balkan Wall Lizard	<i>Podachis tauricus</i>									1	
Common Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis muralis</i>			1							
Grass Snake	<i>Natrix natrix persa</i>					1	1				
Dice Snake	<i>Natrix tessilata</i>					1					
Snake-eyed Skink	<i>Ablepharus kitaibelii</i>									1	

## Invertebrates

Common name	Scientific name	14th to 23rd September									
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
<b>BUTTERFLIES:</b>											
	<b>Pieridae</b>										
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>		✓	✓				✓		✓	✓
Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>		✓	✓						✓	✓
Eastern Bath White	<i>Pontia edusa</i>							✓			
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias sp</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Lesser Fiery Copper	<i>Lycaena thersamon</i>									1	
Silver-studded Blue	<i>Plebejus argus</i>									1	
Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>										
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>			✓				✓		✓	✓
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>			✓							✓
Comma Butterfly	<i>Polygonum c-album</i>		✓								
Cardinal Fritillary	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>									✓	✓
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Clossiana euphrosyne</i>			✓							

Common name	Scientific name	14th to 23rd September									
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Great Banded Grayling	<i>Kanetisa circe</i>								✓		
Scotch Argus	<i>Erebia aethiops</i>		✓								
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>			✓					✓		
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>		✓	✓					✓		
Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>								✓		
Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus armoricanus</i>									✓	
<b>MOTHS: (Micros)</b>											
White Plume Moth	<i>Pterophorus pentadactyla</i>		✓								
Box Tree Moth	<i>Cydalima perspectalis</i>			✓							
<b>MOTHS: (Macros)</b>											
Drinker	<i>Euthrix potatoria</i>		✓								
Blood-vein	<i>Timandra comae</i>		✓								
Lace Border	<i>Scopula ornata</i>									✓	
Humming-bird Hawk-moth	<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>		✓						✓	✓	
Spurge Hawk-moth	<i>Hyles euphorbiae</i>						✓			✓	
Vapourer	<i>Orgyia antiqua</i>						✓				
Silver-Y	<i>Autographa gamma</i>		✓								
Red Underwing	<i>Catocala sp</i>							✓			
<b>OTHER INVERTEBRATES:</b>											
Banded Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>					✓					
Common Blue-tail	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>					✓					
Blue Hawker	<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>						✓				
Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>						✓	✓	✓	✓	
Ruddy Darter	<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>		✓					?	?		
Nose Grasshopper	<i>Acrida ungarica</i>								✓		
Red-winged Grasshopper	<i>Oedipoda germanica</i>								✓	✓	
Blue-winged Grasshopper	<i>Oedipoda caeruleascens</i>								✓	✓	
Predatory Bush Cricket	<i>Saga pedo</i>								✓		
Great Green Bush-cricket	<i>Tettigonia viridissima</i>		✓						✓		
Field Cricket	<i>Gryllus campestris</i>			✓							
Rattle Grasshopper	<i>Psophus stridulus</i>			✓							
Praying Mantis	<i>Mantis religiosa</i>			✓							
Roesel's Bushcricket	<i>Roeseliana roeselii</i>		✓								
Shield Bug	<i>Eurydema sp</i>							✓	✓	✓	
Striped Shield Bug	<i>Graphosoma lineatum</i> (G. italicum)			✓							
Red and black Bug	<i>Spilostethus sp</i>		✓								
Common Wart Biter	<i>Decticus verrucivorus</i>		✓								
Common Pond Skater	<i>Gerris lacustris</i>					✓	✓	✓			
Drone-fly	<i>Eristalis sp</i>							✓			
Hornet	<i>Vespa crabro</i>							2			
Carpenter Bee	<i>Xylocopa sp.</i>									2	
Honey Bee	<i>Apis mellifera</i>										

Common name	Scientific name	14th to 23rd September									
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
White-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus lucorum</i>										
Ground Beetle	<i>Carabus sp</i>		✓								
Leaf Beetle	<i>Chrysolina sp</i>		✓								
Chafer	<i>Oxythyrea sp</i>					✓					
Seven-spot Ladybird	<i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i>					✓			✓		
Bloody-nosed Beetle	<i>Timarcha sp</i>		✓								
Crab Spider	<i>Misumena vatia</i>									✓	
Wolf Spider	<i>Lycosa sp</i>								✓	✓	
<b>MOLLUSCS:</b>											
Roman Snail	<i>Helix pomatia</i>		✓								

## Plants

Scientific name	Common name	TL	Location
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**Please Note:** Nomenclature contained within this list follows the taxonomic amendments, based on DNA analysis, made by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the Missouri Botanic Garden, and following **The Plant List**, an internationally accepted list of vascular plant families, published and maintained by these two Institutions.

**N.B.**

[ ] = Introduced or Planted

### PTERIDOPHYTES

#### Leptosporangiate Ferns

#### Salviniaceae

*Salvinia natans*

#### Pre-Dicots

#### Nymphaeaceae

*Nuphar lutea*

*Nymphaea alba*

#### Eu-Dicots

#### Adoxaceae

*Sambucus nigra*

#### Amaranthaceae

*Salicornia europaea* agg.

#### Apiaceae

*Eryngium campestre*

#### Araliaceae

*Hedera helix*

#### Balsaminaceae

### FERNS & ALLIES

#### True Ferns

#### Water-fern Family

Floating Fern

✓ Danube

#### Primitive Angiosperms

#### Water-lily Family

Yellow Water-lily

✓ Danube

White Water-lily

✓ Danube

#### True Dicotyledons

#### Moschatel Family

Elder

✓ Various

#### Pigweed family

Glasswort

✓ Danube

#### Carrot Family

Field Eryngo

✓ Dobrogea

#### Ivy Family

Common Ivy

✓ Piatra Craiului

#### Balsam Family

<i>Impatiens noli-tangere</i>	Touch-me-not	✓	Stromba Valley
<b>Betulaceae</b>	<b>Birch Family</b>		
<i>Carpinus orientalis</i>	Oriental Hornbeam	✓	Munti Macinulu -Dobrogea
<b>Campanulaceae</b>	<b>Bellflower Family</b>		
<i>Campanula carpatica</i>	Carpathian Bellflower	✓	Piatra Craiului
<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	Harebell	✓	Piatra Craiului
<b>Caprifoliaceae</b>	<b>Honeysuckle Family</b>		
<i>Scabiosa ochroleuca</i>	Yellow Scabious	✓	✓
<i>Scabiosa pallida</i>	-		
<b>Caryophyllaceae</b>	<b>Pink Family</b>		
<i>Dianthus carthusianorum</i>	Carthusian Pink	✓	✓
<b>Compositae (Asteraceae)</b>	<b>Daisy Family</b>		
<i>Cenraurea solstitialis</i>	Yellow Star Thistle	✓	Dubrogea
<i>Cichorium intybus</i>	Chicory	✓	Piatra Craiului
<i>Leontopodium nivalis</i> subsp. <i>alpina</i>	Edelweiss	✓	Piatra Craiului
<i>Telekia speciosa</i>	Yellow ox eye	✓	Piatra Craiului
<i>Xeranthemum annuum</i>	-	✓	Dubrogea
<b>Convolvulaceae</b>	<b>Bindweed Family</b>		
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field Bindweed	✓	Various
<b>Fagaceae</b>	<b>Beech &amp; Oak Family</b>		
<i>Quercus pedunculifolia</i>	-	✓	Dubrogea
<b>Gentianaceae</b>	<b>Gentian Family</b>		
<i>Gentiana asclepiadea</i>	Willow Gentian	✓	Piatra Craiului
<b>Geraniaceae</b>	<b>Geranium Family</b>		
<i>Geranium pratense</i>	Meadow Crane's-bill	✓	Various
<b>Lamiaceae</b>	<b>Mint family</b>		
<i>Mentha aquatica</i>	Water Mint	✓	Danube
<i>Salvia verticillata</i>	Whorled Clary	✓	Vulcan Orchard
<b>Leguminosae (Fabaceae)</b>	<b>Pea family</b>		
<i>Ononis arvensis</i>	a Restharrow	✓	Piatra Craiului
<b>Lythraceae</b>	<b>Purple-loosestrife Family</b>		
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	Purple-loosestrife	✓	Danube
<b>Plantaginaceae</b>	<b>Plantain Family</b>		
<i>Linaria vulgaris</i>	Common Toadflax	✓	Bran gap
<b>Ranunculaceae</b>	<b>Buttercup Family</b>		
<i>Consolida regalis</i>	Forking Larkspur	✓	Dobrogea
<b>Roseaceae</b>	<b>Rose Family</b>		
<i>Pyrus pyraister</i>	Wild Pear	✓	Dobrogea
<b>Salicaceae</b>	<b>Willow Family</b>		
<i>Populus alba</i>	White Poplar	✓	Danube
<i>Salix alba</i>	White Willow	✓	Danube
<b>Solanaceae</b>	<b>Nightshade Family</b>		

<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Woody Nightshade	✓	Danube
<b>Urticaceae</b>	<b>Nettle Family</b>		
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle	✓	Various
<b>Vitaceae</b>	<b>Grape-vine Family</b>		
<i>Vitis sylvestris</i>	Eurasian Wild Grape	✓	Danube
<b>Monocots</b>	<b>Monocotyledons</b>		
<b>Alismataceae</b>	<b>Water-plantain Family</b>		
<i>Sagittaria sagittifolia</i>	Arrowhead	✓	Danube
<b>Butomaceae</b>	<b>Flowering-rush Family</b>		
<i>Butomus umbellatus</i>	Flowering-rush	✓	Danube
<b>Hydrocharitaceae</b>	<b>Frogbit Family</b>		
<i>Hydrocharis morsus-ranae</i>	Frogbit	✓	Danube
<i>Stratiotes aloides</i>	Water-soldier	✓	Danube
<b>Juncaceae</b>	<b>Rush Family</b>		
<i>Juncus acutus</i>	Sharp Rush	✓	Danube
<b>Poaceae</b>	<b>Grass Family</b>		
<i>Phragmites australis</i>	Common Reed	✓	Danube
<b>Typhaceae</b>	<b>Bulrush Family</b>		
<i>Typha angustifolia</i>	Lesser Bulrush	✓	Danube
<i>Typha latifolia</i>	Bulrush	✓	Danube