

# Romania's Danube Delta & Carpathian Mountains

Naturetrek Tour Report

15th – 24th September 2025

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Black Woodpecker



Brown Bears



Spurge Hawk-moth caterpillar



Fire Salamander

Tour report by Josh Phangurha



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## Summary

The Carpathian Mountains and the Danube Delta both contain a wealth of wildlife, from Europe's mammalian megafauna and amazing bird diversity to delicate plants, fascinating herpetofauna and intriguing invertebrates. We were elated by great views of Brown Bears, and although we did not see the elusive Wallcreeper in the Zărnești Gorge, the conditions were ideal to find the striking Fire Salamander, which the group thoroughly enjoyed. Botanists also enjoyed the Autumn Crocuses (*Colchicum autumnale*) and the true Balkan Crocus (*Crocus banaticus*), among other excellent and some endemic botanical sightings.

The Danube Delta treated us to a plethora of bird species including superb views of White-tailed Eagles, Hobbies, Great White and Dalmatian Pelicans, Squacco Herons, Pygmy Cormorants, Black and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, Penduline Tit and Bearded Reedling, to name just a few. We even saw two Otters.

We completed the trip with visits to the surrounding area, where we had excellent views of Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Hawfinch, Bittern and more as well as herpetological finds such as Caspian Whip Snake, Eastern Tree Frog, Yellow-bellied Toad and Balkan Wall Lizard. Entomological highlights included the dazzling caterpillars of Spurge Hawk-moth, European Mantis, Violet Carpenter Bees, Queen of Spain Fritillaries and more. Wonderful hospitality and fun company added to this most enjoyable trip.

## Day 1

**Monday 15th September**

### Bucharest airport to Zărnești

After a three-hour flight from London Heathrow to Bucharest, we gathered as a group before meeting up with local guide, Cristi. We then travelled four hours to our first base in Zărnești, in our minibus driven by another Cristi! The drive took us out of the flat plains surrounding the capital and into the cool, forest-clad mountains of the Carpathians. Along the way, we spotted bird species which would feature almost daily throughout the trip, including Collared Dove, Common Buzzard, Common Kestrel, Hooded Crow, Raven and White Wagtail. As we started to drive through the Carpathian region, two of the group had an unexpected glimpse of a Brown Bear in the roadside vegetation! We based ourselves for three nights in Zărnești, a small Transylvanian town backed by the mountains of the Piatra Craiului National Park. We arrived at our comfortable guesthouse mid-evening, in time for a delicious dinner.

## Day 2

**Tuesday 16th September**

### Piatra Craiului – Bran

We awoke to a gorgeous, sunny morning, and the forested hills gradually became drenched in golden light. Some of us rose earlier to do some birdwatching in the guesthouse garden, spotting a pair of Black Redstarts which would feature frequently throughout our stay here. We also watched a flock of the humble House Sparrows, and heard Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers calling in the distance. We had breakfast at 7.30am, to be ready to leave by 8.30am.

We drove through Zărnești and up to the start of our walk in Piatra Craiului. Moments after getting off the bus and embarking on our hike, we were admiring Clouded Yellow and Small Copper butterflies attracted to wildflowers such as Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*), Carpathian Flax (*Linum extraaxillare*), Balkan Clary (*Salvia menorosa*) and more. Red Admirals would make fleeting yet frequent appearances too. As we continued to admire butterflies and plants, a European Hare suddenly dashed out of the undergrowth and disappeared over the hill, providing a nice view of the white spots contrasting against black on the back of its huge ears. Before we reached the forested parts of the track, Common Buzzards and Ravens flew overhead, and an impressive Black Stork made the most of the strong thermals on this sunny day and glided past us. Other raptors such as Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Common Kestrel started to show themselves as we continued walking.

As the track became more forested, a beautiful display of Autumn Crocuses (*Colchicum autumnale*) and the deeper purple Balkan Crocuses (*Crocus banaticus*) became more intense, some growing among the soil churned up by Wild Boar. The rasping call of the Northern Nutcracker gradually became more noticeable in the forest, with occasional views possible at the tops of conifer trees and as they flew overhead. Within these conifers, we also spotted Crested Tit, Eurasian Treecreeper, Bullfinch, Nuthatch, Goldcrest and Coal Tit, and Firecrest was heard. Further up the track, in more deciduous woodland, the sunny rides provided ample basking opportunities for reptiles, and we soon spotted a tiny juvenile Sand Lizard using a patch of bare earth to warm up. Other herpetofauna included a Yellow-bellied Toad (*Bombina variegata*) living in a puddle in the middle of the track. Cristi captured it to reveal the striking black and yellow markings on the underside. Close to the toad were the tracks of Brown Bear, and we found multiple signs of them in the form of droppings and broken logs throughout the walk. Soon after, we were alerted to the call of a Willow Tit in dark understorey habitat. We waited and eventually had a good view of two Willow Tits, a first for many of the group.

About half way through our walk, we stopped for a break in a sunny opening with insect-rich meadows. In this habitat, we saw sizeable Littoral Dark Bush Crickets bounding through the grasses, and a worn yet still attractive Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary showed well as it collected nectar. This was likely an individual from a second brood, which is possible in especially warm summers. A Wasp Spider waited patiently on its low-lying orb web for one of the many grasshoppers to land in its trap, while we tried to get photographs in awkward positions. Close to the spider was a freshly-emerged Parasol mushroom, an edible species recognised by its heavily patterned stipes.

As we reached the monastery at the end of our walk, we sat down to eat our packed lunch. While we relaxed in the sun, a Hummingbird Hawk-moth visited the ornamental flowers next to the monastery, and a Queen of Spain Fritillary visited Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) at the edge of the woods. On the way back down towards our bus, we spotted a few different species which hadn't been present earlier. These included a Spotted Flycatcher perched conspicuously on a dead conifer branch, Brimstone and Speckled Wood butterflies patrolling the sunny rides, and four Whinchats perched in the scrub just before we reached the bus.

During the second half of our day, we visited the busy town of Bran. Here, we had the opportunity to visit Bran Castle, which is famed for its link to Vlad the Impaler and loose association with the fictional Dracula. Half of the group visited the castle, while others wandered the busy streets and went birding in the park and along the river. Not much was seen in the form of wildlife, but it was an interesting cultural visit. We returned to the hotel at 5.30pm, meeting at 6.45pm to do the checklists, before our delicious 7.30pm dinner.

## Day 3

## Wednesday 17th September

### Zărnești Gorge – Strambă Valley Bear hide

We woke to predicted rainy weather and gathered our wet weather gear after breakfast. However, the rain soon eased off as we started our drive to the Zărnești Gorge. Before we reached the start of our walk, Cristi spotted a dark figure on the steep, misty slopes at the side of the road. It was a Carpathian Chamois, a goat-antelope which specialises in navigating precarious mountainsides in the region. We stopped to observe it in the scope and through our binoculars, taking photographs as the rain gradually stopped.

As we arrived at the start of our hike between the imposing vertical limestone rock faces of the Zărnești Gorge, we soon found multiple Common Frogs hopping around in the leaf litter and enjoying the wet conditions. Some of the group also got a brief glimpse of Willow Tit on the edge of the Beech forest. Our main target here was Wallcreeper, and we slowly walked towards two rock faces where they have been seen in the past. Along the way, the rocks either side of the path displayed interesting flora, including the attractive Carpathian Bellflower (*Campanula carpatica*). Suddenly, our attention was drawn to a striking black and yellow pattern in the leaf litter at the base of a limestone rock. The rain had brought out another amphibian, the jaw-dropping Fire Salamander. This individual was close to 20cm in length, and its bright yellow spots advertised its toxicity to predators. We soon found another (smaller) salamander a few metres down the path. Up above us, a white candy-floss like structure protruded out of a decaying beech tree. Upon closer inspection through the binoculars, it was a Coral Tooth fungus. This is a seldom-seen fungus and was a great find.

Unfortunately, we failed to find the elusive Wallcreeper, and bird life was generally difficult to find. However, the common woodland species were ever-present, including Nuthatch, Robins, Coal Tits, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Common Buzzard and more. The creek running through the gorge also provided great habitat for the Grey Wagtail, which we saw for the first time on this trip. Clouded Yellow was the only butterfly to make an appearance on this overcast day.

After a hearty lunch back at the nearby guesthouse, we prepared for our late afternoon visit to a bear hide in the Strambă Valley. We drove to meet the ranger before he then led us up a gravel road to the bear hide. We walked a short distance to the wooden hide from the bus, and already we could see bears in the distance! Maize and other food is put out every evening for the bears, so they come to expect it, making a feeding stop here as well as feeding elsewhere. This region has some of the highest densities of Brown Bears in Europe, and we had a surreal experience watching these impressive beasts from a remote hide in the forest. We even managed to see a female bear with her young cubs, and a different female with larger cubs! Additional lone adults also visited, including a pregnant female and a large, old male with a conspicuous battle scar on his face. Prior to going into the hide, we had found various signs of bears on our walks in the mountains, such as tracks, droppings and torn open logs, which provided the perfect build up to this special moment. We could see seeds of various plants clinging to the dense fur of some bears, showcasing their importance as seed dispersers, just one of the many vital ecosystem functions they deliver. Altogether, we saw eleven bears, and at one point we had our eyes on nine bears at once!

After an incredible experience for all, we returned to the bus and made our way back to the guesthouse.

## Day 4

Thursday 18th September

### Transfer Zărnești to Tulcea

After saying our goodbyes to our lovely guesthouse, it was time to embark on the six-hour drive from Zărnești to Tulcea. Tulcea is the main gateway to the Danube Delta, where our floating hotel ('floatel') awaited us. Along the way, we had frequent sightings of Common Kestrel, Common Buzzard and White Wagtail from the bus and at service stations, where we stopped for coffee breaks. One service station treated us to many Eastern Bath Whites nectaring in vegetation at the edge of the carpark. This was a great opportunity to see the cryptic mossy-green patterning on the underside of their wings. Small and Large Whites, and Red Admiral were frequently seen too. We even had a brief sighting of a Red-backed Shrike in the scrub beside one of the service stations, and Black and White Storks were spotted in flight.

Just over half way through the journey, we stopped at Hazarlâc Lakes, which were full of waterfowl and waders. At close range and without walking far from the bus, we were able to feast our eyes upon species such as Curlew Sandpiper, Ruff, Ruddy Shelduck, Little Stint and Green Sandpiper. The first of what would be many Whiskered Terns, Caspian Gulls and Black-headed Gulls hunted in the distance as they flew over Mute Swans, Mallards, Eurasian Teal and Greylag Geese. Other waders such as Lapwing, Dunlin, Little Ringed Plover, Black-tailed Godwit and Common Snipe were also seen in good numbers. Great Cormorants frequently flew over and hunted in the lake, while Grey Heron, Little Egret and Great Egret skulked around the edge of the reeds. Two hirundine species, Barn Swallow and House Martin, gathered in large flocks over the lake as they snatched up insects invisible to us. This was an incredible haul of species at this single location, and the perfect way to warm up for the Danube Delta.

Upon arrival, in Tulcea we saw our first Jackdaws of the trip; they are common in the town. Some have particularly light-grey colouration, making their black wings more distinct than the typical Western Jackdaw. The birds we saw looked like the eastern subspecies *soemmeringii*, but Tulcea falls within a transition zone between the western and eastern subspecies.

The friendly staff from Ibis Tours helped get our luggage on board, and we sat down for our first dinner on the Danube after a long day. A gorgeous sunset backdrop and distant flocks of Common Starlings made dinner sweeter. We then settled into our rooms and fell asleep to the gentle rocking of the boat; it was a great way to rest before our first day on the delta.

## Day 5

Thursday 19th September

### The Danube Delta

After a breakfast in the sunlit dining room, we prepared for our first venture into the Danube Delta. Our plan was to board a smaller, yet spacious boat through Canal Sontea, Canal 22, and to finish in Canal Solina, where we would meet with the big boat. As we boarded the smaller boat, we had the option to sit under a shady shelter, or to sit/stand at the front or back. The temperature was a pleasant 20°C+.

As we set off, commoner birds such as Wood Pigeon, Moorhen, Caspian Gull, Black-headed Gull and more were abundant. Upon closer inspection, Whiskered Terns were hunting among the Black-headed Gulls, and we got our first view of the significantly larger Caspian Tern with its large carrot-like bill. One Caspian Tern flew down the channel towards us, allowing great views of the world's largest tern species, which has a wingspan similar to a Herring Gull. A Kingfisher alerted us with its sharp, high-pitched whistle, and we soon saw a flash of electric blue as it darted down the river from one perch to the next. This would be the first of many Kingfishers that we would see, some of them perching close to the boat where we could admire them in all their splendour. Tree Sparrows called within the woods either side of the river, but we failed to get our eyes on them.

It was not long until we had our first falcon sighting of the day; a Eurasian Hobby perched in fantastic light on a low tree in the riparian woodland. It stayed for several minutes, allowing great views, and this would be the first of several throughout the day. The larger Peregrine Falcon soon made an appearance too, flying high in the sky and more difficult to view. A few hundred metres from the Hobby, a pair of Turtle Doves perched on a branch overhanging the water as they soaked up the morning sun. Another few hundred metres down the channel, our first Black-crowned Night Heron appeared on the riverbank. It remained motionless and partially shaded by overhanging willow carr, as the reflections in the water rippled over its body. We were able to view it at close range, which provided fantastic photographic opportunities. Another sought-after heron on this trip is the Purple Heron, which we saw flying over nearby. Grey Heron, Little Egret and Great Egret were abundant in the delta too.

Occasionally, we went down narrower channels through vast reed-beds to reach open lakes where we could scan. Here we saw frequent flocks of the sought-after Great White Pelican flying over in a remarkable triangular phalanx. The size of these birds was evident; they have a wingspan of around three metres. They were easily identified by their contrasting black and white wings when viewed from underneath. Most of the Great White Pelicans here would soon migrate to tropical Africa for the winter, but they were still present here in good numbers during September. The rarer, resident Dalmatian Pelican remained elusive.

Moving on and further down the main channels, we had a brilliant view of a Red-necked Grebe cruising past our boat at close range. As it was not the breeding season, it was half way through moulting into its winter plumage, but the 'red neck' was still slightly visible. This grebe and many of the birds we saw were not frightened of the boat, which allowed for great viewing. This certainly proved to be the case when we saw the mightiest raptor in the Danube Delta perching at the edge of the channel. As we slowly approached, we found ourselves eye-to-eye (through binoculars of course!) with an impressive White-tailed Eagle. It stayed for a few minutes, showcasing its huge, hooked yellow bill; it eventually took off, displaying its massive wingspan and characteristic white tail. This was a cracking sighting!

Other raptors had been seen soaring through the day, including Common Buzzard, Marsh Harrier and Eurasian Sparrowhawk. We carefully examined each sparrowhawk for the features of Levant Sparrowhawk, but to no avail. However, we saw our first Red-footed Falcon flying high over our boat. It was a male, showing slaty-grey plumage and distinctive saturated orange feet. Its commoner relative, the Common Kestrel, was abundant here. As we reached peak temperatures around midday, Migrant Hawker dragonflies were showier, and the odd Red Admiral butterfly flew past our boat.

It was now time to meet our floatel, which had sailed up a different channel while we explored, at Gorgova on the Solina branch. As the floatel chugged slowly onwards, we tucked into a hearty lunch to keep us going.

We were soon back on the smaller boat for wildlife watching, and our first wading birds made an appearance as they walked over rafts of Floating Fern (*Salvinia natans*), Water Soldier (*Stratiotes aloides*), Yellow Water Lily (*Nuphar lutea*), White Water Lily (*Nymphaea alba*) and Yellow Floating Heart (*Nymphoides peltata*). Common Snipe and Greenshank showed themselves briefly, with particularly nice views of the latter. Nearby, a couple of the group thought they may have seen a Little Crake skulking at the edge of the reeds, but without certainty we could not count it, unfortunately.

Great Cormorants had been seen flying over throughout the day, but eventually we sailed towards a group of dead trees which were decorated with perhaps a hundred of them. As we got closer, we could see that half of these birds were the rarer Pygmy Cormorant, which is around half the size of the Great Cormorant and has a shorter, stubby bill, with a proportionally longer tail. The Pygmy Cormorant is common in the Danube Delta, but it is important to remember that the majority of the world population lives here. For all of the group, this was a new bird and to see so many was a joy. We continued to see Pygmy Cormorants scattered across this vast wetland.

As the sun began to go down, we scanned one more area of open water, and were thrilled to see a new heron species for the trip. A Squacco Heron was devouring one of the many marsh frogs (*Pelophylax* sp.) we had seen and heard through the day. We watched this small, stout heron trying to arrange the frog in a suitable position to be swallows. After it got the frog down, it flew and landed on floating vegetation closer to our boat. It was an incredible, close encounter with a species many of the group were hoping to see. It then jumped up and perched on a dead branch in the water in the golden light of the low sun, offering fantastic opportunity for photographs.

On the way back to our floatel, we spotted a Grey-headed Woodpecker scaling the top of a dead tree in the distance. It paused at the top for about a minute, and we all managed to get our eyes on its mossy-green plumage and ashy-grey head. It lacked a red patch on top of its head, indicating that it was a female. Our woodpecker luck continued! As we returned and had a brief glimpse of a Red-backed Shrike from the floatel, a pair of Black Woodpeckers was heard calling to each other, and we soon spotted them in distant sunlit trees. To our astonishment, the male flew into a dead tree right next to our floatel, and the female soon followed. The female was less comfortable with our presence, and almost immediately flew back into the woods, but the male stayed and started to drum on the wood less than ten metres from us. We could now get a sense of the scale of Europe's largest woodpecker, which is similar in size to a Carrion Crow. As if this wasn't enough to satisfy our birding needs, a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (Europe's smallest woodpecker) flew into the same tree to forage as well! Seeing these starkly different yet closely related species side-by-side at such close range was something we would not forget in a hurry.

After calming down from that incredible sighting, we heard Eastern Tree Frogs calling in the reeds. We then enjoyed a delicious dinner, filled in our checklist for the day, and headed to our rooms to rest.

## Day 6

Thursday 20th September

### The Danube Delta

We rose to more gorgeous weather as the sunlight dappled the floatel dining table at breakfast. Not long into breakfast, we were amazed to see an Otter breaking the surface of the still water and hunting along the edge of the

reeds on the other side of the canal! Everyone managed to get a good view before it vanished into a dense carpet of lilies.

After the excitement at breakfast, we were keen to get out onto the delta again in search of its other inhabitants. We planned to head south along the Caraorman Canal, where we would have the opportunity to see the impressive Lake Jacob. After lunch, we planned to go north along the Lopatna Canal to reach Lake Trei Iezere.

As we boarded the smaller boat, a Tree Pipit perched in the golden light on a distant branch. As we slowly moved along the canals, Kingfishers were abundant, providing excellent close views. Raptors flew high and low over our boat, including Marsh Harrier, Common Buzzard and Eurasian Sparrowhawk. Again, we checked each sparrowhawk carefully in hope of seeing Levant Sparrowhawk, but to no avail. We had occasional views of White-tailed Eagles soaring over the delta or perching in dead trees. This time they were more distant. Falcons made fleeting appearances, including Common Kestrel and Hobby, but we managed to get great views of a male and female Red-footed Falcon perched side-by-side on a pylon wire. This provided an opportunity to see the difference between the sexes. Close to these falcons were a dozen grounded Caspian Terns on an area of shingle beside the canal. At this range, we could see details of these birds we could not see in flight, and we spent a few minutes admiring these huge terns.

As we reached Lake Jacob, the distant cackling of thousands of marsh frogs amplified as the sun rays became more intense. We saw them at the side of our boat too, boasting a wide range of shades in a brown-green spectrum. Our attention was immediately drawn to a huge white bird stood on a log above the water's surface. It was our first Dalmatian Pelican! We admired its characteristic scruffy 'hair-do' and overall shaggier plumage, using the Black-headed Gulls next to it to get a sense of its massive size. Close to it were a few Great White Pelicans on the water, which soon took off and glided ever so close to the water in single file. Larger flocks of Great White Pelicans flew overhead in their typical arrow-shaped formation, and we also saw the odd Dalmatian Pelican airborne as well. Gadwall and Mallard were present on the lake, but there were a dozen or so Ferruginous Ducks among them, boasting shimmering rusty red/brown plumage. The ivory-white iris of the males was just about visible through binoculars. Also in the lake were large groups of Little Grebes and the odd Great Crested Grebe, both of which were gradually moulting into their winter plumage. Caspian and Whiskered Terns were abundant here too, but among them we feasted our eyes on the first Black Terns of the trip. They too were half way between breeding and winter plumage. Another juvenile Black-crowned Night Heron flew past at close range, soon followed by other herons such as Little Egret, Great Egret and Grey Heron. A small passerine bouncing among the reeds to the left of our boat caught the eye of one member of the group. As we focussed our binoculars on the shaking reeds, we soon saw a Sedge Warbler pop out for a few seconds, before retreating behind its curtain of reeds.

After such a bird fest on Lake Jacob, the boat turned around and we got back on the channels. We saw a Black Stork glide briefly over our boat, and heard and saw Great Spotted, Lesser Spotted and Black Woodpeckers in the riparian forests either side of the water. A flock of Tree Sparrows came to the water's edge along the Lopatna Channel, and we stopped to admire them at close range. While we were stopped, Cristi heard the calls of two flycatcher species: Spotted and Red-breasted. We peered into the trees, seeing flashes of the both species in the shade, but the views were not ideal. Just as we thought about moving on, a female Red-breasted Flycatcher suddenly appeared on a branch overhanging the water. The group gasped, and it stayed for a few seconds before disappearing for good. We got it!



We reached Lake Trei Iezere, and immediately spotted the lanky figure of Purple Heron hunting in the open, providing our first grounded view of this species. We heard Cetti's Warbler calling in the distance, and as we listened more carefully, we started to hear some other elusive reed-dwelling passerines. A Reed Bunting made a brief appearance, just before we started to hear the pinging calls of Bearded Reedlings. As we followed the sound, we were delighted to see a female hop out of the reeds and perch in clear view! This was a first for many of the group. Soon after, Cristi showed us the abandoned hanging nest of another elusive reed dweller, the Penduline Tit. The nest is similar to that of weaver birds, and swayed in the breeze in pendulum-like fashion (hence the species' name). We heard and saw a Penduline Tit soon after, hopping along the tops of the reeds. Its black mask contrasting with an ashy-white head and rufous back was clear to see. What a bird!

After what had been an enthralling day of birdwatching, we headed back to our floatel to have a much needed and delicious dinner. We then completed our busy checklists for the day, and got our heads down in preparation for our last full day on the delta.

## Day 7

Thursday 21st September

### The Danube Delta

We rose to another sunny morning. Today, we planned to visit Lake Ligheanca in the central-west area of the delta, and then go further west to the larger Lake Furtuna, taking the Vişina and Şontea Canals respectively. The canals provided the usual excellent views of Kingfisher, while the ever-present Migrant Hawkers and Red Admirals whizzed around our boat every few minutes. Commoner birds such as Moorhens and Coots skulked in the bankside vegetation, and Chiffchaffs, Chaffinches, Long-tailed Tits, Great and Blue Tits and the odd Blackbird were frequently heard and spotted in the riparian woods, as they had been throughout our stay on the delta. The same can be said for Grey and White Wagtails at the water's edge, as well as flocks of Starlings and hunting Barn Swallows in the more open areas of water and reedbed. We also had a rarer sighting of a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker in the riverside trees, just about visible as it scaled a trunk among the dense understorey.

As we approached Lake Ligheanca, we excitedly hurried to the front of the boat to watch our first Eastern Grass Snake dash across the water. It was a small juvenile, perhaps just a few months old and showing a distinctive creamy-yellow collar on its neck. This species gorges on the abundant *Pelophylax* frogs we had seen in the delta, as well as fish and the occasional bird nestling.

As we scanned over the lake, we spotted various ducks, including our first Shoveler among Teal and Ferruginous Duck. The abundant Pygmy Cormorant perched on various branches sticking out of the vast carpets of lilies, and a Water Rail was heard squealing deep inside the reedbeds. Some of the group even caught a glimpse of this elusive bird for a few seconds. A Squacco Heron was hunting in the floating vegetation at reasonably close range, and nearby both Purple and Grey Herons were hunting at the edge of the reeds, alongside Little Egrets and Great Egrets. Two female Marsh Harriers glided low over the lake and above them were large flocks of Great White Pelicans travelling in unison over the delta. Seeing pelicans like this had proved to be a frequent and always welcome sight during our stay.

After admiring the birdlife on Lake Ligheanca, we turned around and headed slowly west towards Lake Furtuna. As we set off, a European Hornet paid a visit to our boat, startling some of the group and fascinating others. After watching it groom its antennae for a few seconds, others begin to realise it was not a threat.

As we travelled along the channel, the usual raptors made appearances, including Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Common Buzzard and Common Kestrel. White-tailed Eagles were distantly spotted too, as well as our first Honey Buzzards soaring high above our boat. A Red-footed Falcon was fleetingly spotted flying over the boat, and Eurasian Hobby was the second-most frequently seen species, behind Common Kestrel.

Suddenly, we were alerted to the high-pitched chattering of a Eurasian Otter feasting on something on the river bank. It scarpered and was gone in seconds. It was not quite as good a view as yesterday morning, but we were thrilled to have yet another sighting of this elusive mustelid!

We arrived at Lake Furtuna, which provided much the same wildlife sightings as Lake Ligheanca. The journey back to the floatel in the late afternoon, however, provided an excellent view of a Grey-headed Woodpecker clinging to the side of a concrete pillar, right at the edge of the canal. It then flew towards a more distant tree, showing its 'bouncy' flight pattern, which it shares with other woodpeckers (except Black Woodpecker). It perched momentarily in the top of a sunlit tree, where we could admire its beautiful mossy-green and slate-grey plumage. Not far from here, we spotted a Purple Heron at close range hunting in the reeds. Comically, just its long neck and head were visible above the tall vegetation, and it repeatedly appeared and disappeared as it looked for prey. We got a cracking view of its piercing yellow eyes and spear-like bill through the binoculars.

We returned to the floatel early so we could have lunch before making our way back to Tulcea in good time for dinner. While on the way to Tulcea, we had an excellent view of two Black Storks soaring low over our boat, the sun illuminating their exquisite colours.

We arrived in Tulcea as the sun was setting, and enjoyed a steady walk along the water front of the town. We had dinner with a beautiful sunset backdrop and completed the busy checklist after our last day in the Danube Delta. We stayed on the floatel while in Tulcea, and would change accommodation tomorrow.

## Day 8

Thursday 22nd September

### Somova Oak Forest – Celic-Dere Monastery – Măcin Mountains

We woke to another beautiful day, and the forecast predicted unbroken sun all day. After our final breakfast on the floatel, we said farewell and thanks to the floatel staff, who had looked after us so well, leaving our bags to be transferred to the Ibis Tours Guest House in Tulcea. Cristi met us with the bus, and we set off west to explore the northern part of Dobrogea. Our first stop was in an area of open Pedunculate Oak Forest (*Quercus robur* ssp. *pedunculiflora*) with some Wild Pear (*Pyrus communis*).

Intersecting the trees were grassy meadows buzzing with life. Eastern Bath White butterflies basked atop the grasses in the low morning sun, while Tree Sparrows chattered and bounced around a dead oak, offering great views. A Hobby perched low in a dead oak, probably preparing to hunt the dragonflies whizzing around at speed. Greenfinches glowed in the sun's rays at the top of a distant tree, and close to them a Woodlark was heard singing,

and was briefly seen. We got our first good view of a Green Woodpecker scaling the bark of a large tree, but this nervous bird didn't stick around for long, and emitted its loud cackle while displaying its bouncy flight. A Red-footed Falcon and a Common Kestrel scanned the habitat in search of prey high above us in the sparsely clouded sky. Multiple Spotted Flycatchers were returning to a perch to snap up insects on the wing. The more elusive Red-breasted Flycatcher was briefly seen before it vanished into the dense foliage of a Wild Pear tree. Cristi managed to identify one of several buzzards hovering above as a Steppe Buzzard, a migratory subspecies which rarely if ever occurs in western Europe.

This change in habitat meant we found new invertebrates. The burrows of Tarantula Wolf Spiders were dotted along the main dirt track. We eventually saw a juvenile crossing the path and were able to take a closer look at this impressive arachnid. Other standout spiders include Flower Crab Spider, and Wasp Spider again. The meadows were also buzzing with various orthoptera, including the stick insect-like Cone-headed Grasshopper, Blue-winged Grasshopper and Red-winged Grasshopper. New butterflies for our trip started to appear, which included Silver-studded Blue, Brown Argus, Painted Lady and Common Blue. The huge Cardinal butterfly also showed well while nectaring on thistles, alongside Clouded Yellow and Small White. The striking Fire Bug was a welcome sight throughout our walk.

Movement in the grass grabbed our attention; whatever it was seemed to be larger than an insect. Upon closer inspection, we were delighted to lock our eyes on the Eastern Tree Frog for the first time! It seemed a strange place to find one, but it bounded through the grass conspicuously. It was probably hunting the abundant insect life here. This charming amphibian eventually stopped in the open, enabling great views and photo opportunities. Close to the frog was a pile of scrap metal, which included some corrugated sheets. This was an ideal place to find reptiles, and the first sheet we lifted revealed a stunning male Balkan Wall Lizard, showcasing the intricate black reticulations on its flanks and a bright green dorsal stripe. The next sheet we lifted revealed one of the Balkan Wall Lizard's main predators; a beautiful juvenile Caspian Whip Snake, which grows to be one of Europe's largest snakes, with the potential to exceed two metres in length. This one, however, was under thirty centimetres long! It is a fast, diurnal hunter with huge eyes and sharp eyesight. We lifted one more metal sheet to reveal an impressive Mediterranean Banded Centipede, Europe's largest centipede species.

In the late morning, we headed to our next location near the Celic-dere Monastery, where we aimed to explore the surrounding woodland and grassland habitats. As we arrived, we soon heard Nuthatches calling and Jays screeching in the shaded woods. We noticed a lot of avian activity around a muddy puddle on a forested track about forty metres in front of us. As we looked through our binoculars, we saw Chaffinches, Blue and Great Tits coming down to drink from the puddle. We got a jolt of excitement as we saw distinctly larger Hawfinches suddenly appearing to join them. Our luck then doubled, as a Middle Spotted Woodpecker appeared to utilise the puddle too! Cristi managed to set up the scope on both the Hawfinches and the woodpecker, offering close views of two species many of the group had never seen before. A small passerine bird caught our attention in the scrub to our right; the vegetation moved and we waited in anticipation. Gradually, a Marsh Tit revealed itself, hanging upside down just two metres from us as it foraged for insects in the foliage.

We moved to a more open area of shorter grass, where we decided to set up our picnic lunch. On the way, we saw a Grey-headed Woodpecker briefly perch at the top of a dead oak protruding from the canopy of the nearby forest. A Long-legged Buzzard also soared on the thermals high above us. As we looked down, we noticed an incredible Praying Mantis crawling through the short turf. It was a large, vibrant green female, which appeared to be full of

eggs. She was likely looking for a place to lay her ootheca, a cocoon structure containing eggs, a reproductive feature shared with the closely related cockroaches. She peered up at us with her alien-like 'expression' and triangular head, and we left her be after taking a few photos. Small Heath, Cardinal and Queen of Spain Fritillary butterflies fluttered past us and collected the nectar of thistles, knapweeds and Tormentil. While we settled down to eat our picnic lunch, we saw the magnificent, iridescent Violet Carpenter Bee visit a nearby thistle. It is one of Europe's largest bee species, and its size and colour surprised some of the group.

After the refreshing picnic, we continued for another half an hour to reach the western face of the Măcin Mountains. On the way, we spotted a White Stork flying over and just before we reached the start of our walk into the mountains a Red-backed Shrike was seen just a couple of metres from the bus window. It perched for several minutes as it devoured a beetle with its sharply hooked bill, providing our best view of this species. The Măcin Mountains are not very high, with the highest peak standing at only around 467m. However, they are the oldest mountains in Romania, and are made of granite rather than limestone. The vegetation is mostly steppe, with extensive grassland. Out on the steppe, we saw our first Crested Larks conspicuously perched on rocks while emitting their welcoming song.

In a wooded valley, a display of hedgerow plants including Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Privet, Dogwood and more provided a splash of colour and shade. Dragonflies hunting in wooded valley mostly appeared to be Moustached Darters. This wooded area also treated us to a pair of Blackcaps passing through, while Eastern Tree Frogs sporadically called from the heavily fruiting Hawthorn; they were seemingly impossible to spot. A Common Redstart also called from the depths of the wood, but was not seen. Great Banded Graylings, which some of the group understandably confused with White Admiral, were patrolling up and down the sunny areas of the ride.

As we reached higher elevations and came out of the wooded area, we found ourselves back in steppe habitat. Where the steppe meets the wood, we found botanical gold in the form of *Campanula romanica* and *Dianthus nardiformis*. Both are endemic to the region, and put on a stunning display of saturated pink and purple as they grew side by side. The large granite boulders were a sight to behold as the golden late afternoon light painted the landscape. Making good use of the granite textures here was a Grayling butterfly, which seemed to melt into the rocks with its cryptic patterning when it landed. A Wall Brown butterfly was also seen nearby, adding to our list of butterfly species for the trip. On the way back down to the bus, a Queen of Spain Fritillary was basking in the low sun, and Meadow Browns continued to flutter around in abundance, as they had done throughout most of the day. The final find of the day was a Bordered Straw moth, a migratory species disturbed from the grass.

After an exciting day, we headed back to the guesthouse to prepare for dinner and to complete the checklist, before getting some much-needed sleep.

## Day 9

Thursday 23rd September

### Enisala Fortress – Lake Razim – Vadu pools and beach

For our last day in the field, we headed south to the Black Sea coast. After breakfast, we left at around 9.00am and headed to our first stop at the Enisala Fortress. This fortress has been standing prominently in the landscape since the fourteenth century.

We arrived in thick fog, which made it difficult to see into the distance. However, we soon spotted Tree Sparrows in a nearby shrub, White Wagtails in the carpark, and a Common Kestrel coming in to land on the fortress itself. The nooks and crannies in this ancient building provide ideal nesting areas for birds. As we descended the hill, the fog began to clear and we saw signs of burrowing by European Sousliks (or ground squirrels), but no signs of the animal itself. A Little Owl briefly called from the fog too. A large *Xylocopa* bee landed on Josh's trousers, indicating a rise in temperature as insects became active. Among the Souslik burrows grew the attractive, deep-purple Forking Larkspur (*Delphinium consolida*), and Eastern Bath Whites started to flutter past. Crested Larks made their presence known with their characteristic calls, and their silhouettes were just about visible in the remnant fog. As the fog cleared completely, we began to see a wider diversity of birds, including a Red-backed Shrike hunting in the scrub at the bottom of the hill, alongside Stonechats and Reed Buntings. We stopped to watch these birds through our binoculars, and a Marsh Harrier soon cruised by at close quarters. Other raptors such as Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Common Buzzard and Long-legged Buzzard were also seen.

When we reached the bottom of the hill, we were blown away by an incredible display of thousands of dew-dropped spider webs glistening in the morning sun. Among these was a large female Wasp Spider. Migrant and Southern Hawkers, Blue Emperor and Moustached Dart dragonflies were now warm enough to hunt around a small pool, and butterflies began to emerge, including Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Red Admiral and Common Blue. Cristi was waiting for us in the bus at the side of the road, and as we reached the bus we sadly noticed a deceased large female Dice Snake on the road. A Corn Bunting began calling from a nearby telephone wire to cheer us up, and we got good views of it in the scope.

We headed to our next location near the town of Vadu, where nearby pools and marshes would offer a different variety of birds. But first we made a picnic stop at small monastery on the way. While eating our lunch, we had cracking views of a Hobby flying low overhead, and in the adjacent field. A Devil's Coach Horse beetle was then seen wandering along the concreted slabs, shortly before we noticed a clump of Mica Cap mushrooms standing proud at the base of a conifer.

Upon approaching the habitat around Vadu, we were welcomed by the eye-catching display of mature, red Glasswort (*Salicornia perennis*) carpeting the marsh, which is typical at this time of year. In the pools surrounding the Glasswort, ducks such as Teal, Shoveler and Mallards foraged alongside Mute Swans, Little Grebes and Great Crested Grebes. A flock of Great White Pelicans was seen distantly gliding together, in their typical formation. Wading birds such Black-tailed Godwits were a different and welcome sight in this area, and they were joined by many Common Snipe, while Whiskered Terns patrolled above. A Water Rail squealed in the reedbed habitat dividing the pools, and the unique 'pinging' call of a Bearded Reedling alerted us to the right-hand side of the path. Remarkably, a female Bearded Reedling suddenly appeared at the edge of the reeds just a few metres from us. And it was not just birds calling, as we heard Eastern Tree Frogs and, for the first time, the calls of European Fire-bellied Toads from within the reeds.

Exploring the edges of the Vadu Pools further brought our attention to spurges (*Euphorbia* sp.), and upon closer inspection a member of the group noticed one plant was covered in large, striking caterpillars. They were Spurge Hawk-moths, displaying an incredible burst of red, yellow, green and black speckling, with two rows of large white spots adorning their flanks. Each had a posterior spiked appendage, which is shared with many other hawk-moth species (family Sphingidae). In this species the spike is bright red and black-tipped. After admiring these exquisite insects, we hopped back in the bus and drove closer to the Black Sea coast.

As we drove along, we saw the rolling waves of the Black Sea in the distance. As we got closer, the horizon dropped and we saw a stunning beach. But before we looked out to sea for marine species, there was a large lake behind the beach to check. A Kingfisher hunted at the edge of this lake alongside the common herons such as Grey Heron, and Little and Great Egrets. Barn Swallows and Starlings gathered in large flocks here, as they had done since arriving in the Vadu area. However, the most spectacular find of all on this lake was a pair of Black-necked Grebes, which were at a very reasonable distance for this species. It was easy to see the unimaginably vibrant red iris of each bird through the binoculars as they foraged alongside Little Grebes and Great Crested Grebes. Both were in winter plumage.

As our attention turned to the Black Sea, we scanned out over the choppy water and the sandy beach, in the hope of finding some different maritime species. We started by observing Black-headed, Yellow-legged and Mediterranean Gulls, while we were surrounded by specialised coastal plants such as Sea Aster (*Tripolium pannonicum*), Sea-holly (*Eryngium maritimum*) and Sea Kale (*Crambe maritima*). Through the scope, we could see Sanderlings in the distance, foraging on the beach and running to and from the tide in typical fashion. A new tern species for the trip, Sandwich Tern, hunted out over the Black Sea too. However, the highlight of our scanning was the sudden appearance of an Arctic Skua patrolling with purpose from right to left.

After enjoying some down time on the beach, and having soaked up the sun and scenery, it was time to head back to our guest house. Little did we know, this would not be the end of the excitement for today. As we passed along the gravel road past Vadu Pools again, we moved slowly in search of wildlife as usual. This time, a large, brown and mottled bird popped out of the reeds to the glide over our bus and land at the edge of the reedbed on our left-hand side. It was the elusive Eurasian Bittern! As if it knew it was a special find for us, it stayed in view for a couple of minutes, its long beige neck snaking out of the top of the reeds as it perched oddly above the ground. It then slowly vanished in typical Bittern fashion, leaving us in awe. What a way to round up our last full day in the field.

We arrived back at the guesthouse for another delicious meal. We then completed a healthy checklist for the day, and got some rest before heading back to Bucharest Airport tomorrow.

## Day 10

Friday 24th September

### Tulcea to Bucharest Airport

After breakfast, we loaded the bus with our luggage and gave our thanks to the guesthouse staff. We set off on the four-hour drive to catch our afternoon flight in Bucharest. As usual on the longer drives, we made a few stops to refresh ourselves with ice creams and coffee. Along the way, we spotted Black Stork, Marsh Harrier, Goldfinch, Common Kestrel, Common Buzzard, Starling and the usual range of corvids through the bus windows.

Upon arriving at the airport, we all said our goodbyes to those of the group who were staying in Bucharest to explore Romania further, while the rest of us prepared for our flight back to London.

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## Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

		September 2025									
Common name	Scientific name	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>				✓						
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>							✓		✓	
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>					✓	✓	✓			
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>				✓			✓		✓	
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>						✓	✓			
Common Pheasant - I	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>				✓	H	✓	✓		✓	
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarpitis melba</i>			✓							
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓									
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓				✓				H	
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>						H	✓		H	
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>					✓	✓	✓			
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>					✓	✓	✓			
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>						✓	✓		✓	
Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>					✓					
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>						✓	✓		✓	
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>									✓	
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>				✓						
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>					✓	✓	✓			
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>				✓					✓	
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>				✓	✓	✓			✓	
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>				✓						
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>					✓					
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>				✓						
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>				✓						
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>									✓	
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>				✓						
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>				✓						
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>					✓	✓	✓			
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>						✓				
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>									✓	
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>									✓	
Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>									✓	
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>									✓	
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓			✓
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>				✓				✓		
Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo pygmaeus</i>					✓	✓	✓			
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>									✓	
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>					✓	✓				
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓



Common name	Scientific name	September 2025									
		15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>					✓		✓			
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>					✓	✓	✓			
Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>					✓	✓	✓		✓	
Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>						✓				
European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓		
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Eurasian Goshawk	<i>Astur gentilis</i>										
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>					✓	✓	✓			
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>									H	
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>					H					
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>					✓	✓	✓		✓	
Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocytes medius</i>								✓		
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>					✓	✓	✓			
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		✓	H		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>					✓	✓				
European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		✓						✓		
Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>					✓		✓	✓		
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>					✓	✓	✓			
Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>					✓					
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>				✓	✓			✓	✓	
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓						✓		
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Northern Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>		✓								
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>				✓	✓		✓	✓		
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		✓	H							
Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>		✓								
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>								✓		
Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>		✓	✓							
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓			✓	✓	H	H		
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>						✓				
Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>						✓			✓	
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>								✓		
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>									H	
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>								✓	✓	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>				✓	✓					
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>						H				
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>				H	H	✓	✓			
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		✓				✓		✓		
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓	H	H	H	H	✓		✓	

Common name	Scientific name	September 2025									
		15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>						✓				
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>								✓		
Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>		H								
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		✓								
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		✓								
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓	✓					H		
Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>		✓								
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		H			H	✓	H	✓	H	
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>		✓	✓			✓		✓		
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>			✓							
Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>						✓		✓		
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓	✓	✓							
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>								H		
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>		✓								
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>									✓	
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>									✓	
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>					H	✓		✓	✓	
Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>										
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>						✓				
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>								✓		
Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		✓								
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>								✓		
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓			✓			H		✓
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>									✓	
Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>									✓	

## Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	September 2025									
		15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
European Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>		✓		✓						
Eurasian Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>		✓								
European Sousek	<i>Spermophilus citellus</i>									S	
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>			✓							
Western Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	✓									
Carpathian Chamois	<i>Rupicapra carpatica</i>			✓							
Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>		S								
Grey Wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>		S								
Brown Bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>		S	✓							
Eurasian Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>						✓	✓			

## Amphibians &amp; reptiles

H=heard, D=dead		September 2025									
Common name	Scientific name	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Fire Salamander	<i>Salamandra salamandra</i>			✓							
Yellow-bellied Toad	<i>Bombina variegata</i>		✓								
Eastern Tree Frog	<i>Hyla orientalis</i>					H			✓	H	
Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>			✓							
marsh frogs	<i>Pelophylax</i> sp.					✓	✓	✓			
Sand Lizard	<i>Lacerta agilis</i>		✓								
Balkan Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis tauricus</i>								✓		
Caspian Whip Snake	<i>Dolichophis caspius</i>								✓		
Eastern Grass Snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>							✓			
Dice Snake	<i>Natrix tessellata</i>									D	

## Butterflies

		September 2025									
Common name	Scientific name	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Common Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>		✓								
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias croceus</i>		✓	✓					✓	✓	
Eastern Bath White	<i>Pontia edusa</i>				✓				✓	✓	
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>		✓		✓				✓	✓	
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>		✓								
Silver-studded Blue	<i>Plebejus argus</i>								✓		
Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>								✓	✓	
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>		✓						✓	✓	
Queen of Spain Fritillary	<i>Issoria lathonia</i>		✓						✓		
Cardinal	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>								✓	✓	
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>		✓								
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>		✓								
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>								✓		
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>		✓								
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>								✓		
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>		✓								
Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>								✓		
Common Grayling	<i>Hipparchia semele</i>								✓		
Great Banded Grayling	<i>Brintesia circe</i>								✓		
Common Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>									✓	
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>								✓	✓	

## Moths

		September 2025									
Common name	Scientific name	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Bordered Straw	<i>Heliothis peltigera</i>								✓		
Hummingbird Hawk-moth	<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>		✓						✓		
Spurge Hawk-moth (larvae)	<i>Hyles euphorbiae</i>									✓	

## Dragonflies

		September 2025									
Common name	Scientific name	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Southern Hawker	<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>									✓	
Blue Emperor	<i>Anax imperator</i>									✓	
Moustached Darter	<i>Sympetrum vulgatum</i>									✓	

## Grasshoppers and allies

		September 2025									
Common name	Scientific name	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
European Mantis	<i>Mantis religiosa</i>								✓		
Cone-headed Grasshopper	<i>Acrida ungarica</i>								✓		
Red-winged Grasshopper	<i>Oedipoda germanica</i>								✓		
Blue-winged Grasshopper	<i>Oedipoda caerulea</i>								✓		
Dark Bush-cricket	<i>Pholidoptera littoralis</i>		✓								

## Other insects

		September 2025									
Common name	Scientific name	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
European Hornet	<i>Vespa crabro</i>							✓			
Violet Carpenter Bee	<i>Xylocopa violacea</i>								✓	✓	
Fire Bug	<i>Pyrrhocoris apterus</i>								✓	✓	
Brown Marmorated Shield Bug	<i>Halyomorpha halys</i>					✓					
Devil's Coach Horse	<i>Ocypus olens</i>									✓	
7-spotted Ladybird	<i>Coccinella septempunctata</i>									✓	

## Spiders

		September 2025									
Common name	Scientific name	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Wasp Spider	<i>Argiope bruennichi</i>		✓						✓		
Tarantula Wolf Spider	<i>Lycosa singoriensis</i>								✓		
Garden Cross Spider	<i>Araneus diadematus</i>		✓						✓		
Long-jawed Orb Weaver	<i>Tetragnatha</i> sp.					✓					
Jumping Spider	<i>Marpissa muscosa</i>					✓					
Flower Crab Spider	<i>Misumena vatia</i>								✓		

## Other arthropods

		September 2025									
Common name	Scientific name	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
European Banded Centipede	<i>Scolopendra cingulata</i>								✓		

## Molluscs

I=Introduced		September 2025									
Common name	Scientific name	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Roman Snail	<i>Helix pomatia</i>									✓	
Asian Veined Whelk - I	<i>Rapana venosa</i>									✓	

## Fungi

		September 2025									
Common name	Scientific name	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Parasol	<i>Macrolepiota procera</i>		✓								
Coral Tooth	<i>Hericium coralloides</i>		✓								
Yellow Stagshorn	<i>Calocera viscosa</i>		✓								

## Plants

E=Endemic	
Scientific name	Common name
<b>Equisetaceae</b>	<b>Horsetails</b>
<i>Equisetum arvense</i>	Field Horsetail
<b>Salviniaceae</b>	<b>Water-ferns</b>
<i>Salvinia natans</i>	Floating Fern
<b>Pinaceae</b>	<b>Pine Family</b>
<i>Larix decidua</i>	European Larch
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Scots Pine
<b>Nymphaeaceae</b>	<b>Water-lilies</b>
<i>Nymphaea alba</i>	European White Water-lily
<i>Nuphar lutea</i>	European Yellow Water-lily
<b>Alismataceae</b>	<b>Water-plantain Family</b>
<i>Sagittaria sagittifolia</i>	Common Arrowhead
<b>Butomaceae</b>	<b>Flowering-rushes</b>
<i>Butomus umbellatus</i>	Flowering-rush
<b>Hydrocharitaceae</b>	<b>Frog-bit Family</b>
<i>Stratiotes aloides</i>	Water-soldier
<b>Typhaceae</b>	<b>Bulrush Family</b>
<i>Typha latifolia</i>	Common Bulrush
<b>Poaceae</b>	<b>Grasses</b>
<i>Phragmites australis</i>	Common Reed
<b>Ranunculaceae</b>	<b>Buttercup Family</b>
<i>Delphinium consolida</i>	Forking Larkspur
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow Buttercup
<b>Zygophyllaceae</b>	<b>Caltrops Family</b>
<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>	Small Caltrops
<b>Fabaceae</b>	<b>Pea Family</b>
<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>	Honey Locust
<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	Black Locust
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red Clover
<b>Rosaceae</b>	<b>Rose Family</b>
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn
<i>Cydonia oblonga</i>	Common Quince

E=Endemic	
<b>Scientific name</b>	<b>Common name</b>
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Common Hawthorn
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	Common Tormentil
<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	Common Agrimony
<i>Rosa canina</i> agg.	Dog Rose
<b>Urticaceae</b>	<b>Nettle Family</b>
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle
<b>Fagaceae</b>	<b>Beech Family</b>
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	European Beech
<i>Quercus pubescens</i>	Downy Oak
<b>Juglandaceae</b>	<b>Walnut Family</b>
<i>Juglans regia</i>	White Walnut
<b>Betulaceae</b>	<b>Birch Family</b>
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Silver Birch
<i>Carpinus orientalis</i>	Eastern Hornbeam
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	European Hazel
<b>Salicaceae</b>	<b>Willow Family</b>
<i>Salix cinerea</i>	Grey Willow
<b>Euphorbiaceae</b>	<b>Spurge Family</b>
<i>Euphorbia prostrata</i>	Prostrate Sandmat
<b>Linaceae</b>	<b>Flaxes</b>
<i>Linum extraaxillare</i>	Carpathian Flax
<b>Geraniaceae</b>	<b>Crane's-bills</b>
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Common Herb Robert
<b>Lythraceae</b>	<b>Purple Loosestrife Family</b>
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	Purple Loosestrife
<b>Sapindaceae</b>	<b>Soapberry Family</b>
<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field Maple
<b>Cistaceae</b>	<b>Rock-rose Family</b>
<i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>	Common Rock-rose
<b>Brassicaceae</b>	<b>Cabbage Family</b>
<i>Lunaria rediviva</i>	Perennial Honesty
<i>Crambe maritima</i>	Common Sea Kale
<b>Loranthaceae</b>	<b>Showy Mistletoes</b>
<i>Loranthus europaeus</i>	Yellow-berried Mistletoe
<b>Caryophyllaceae</b>	<b>Campion Family</b>
<i>Dianthus nardiformis</i>	Dobrogea Pink - E
<b>Amaranthaceae</b>	<b>Amaranth Family</b>
<i>Salicornia perennis</i>	Perennial Glasswort
<i>Amaranthus retroflexus</i>	Common Amaranth
<b>Cornaceae</b>	<b>Dogwood Family</b>
<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	Common Dogwood
<b>Boraginaceae</b>	<b>Borage Family</b>
<i>Echium vulgare</i>	Common Viper's-bugloss
<i>Heliotropium europaeum</i>	European Heliotrope
<b>Convolvulaceae</b>	<b>Bindweed Family</b>
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field Bindweed
<b>Solanaceae</b>	<b>Nightshade Family</b>
<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Bittersweet

E=Endemic	
<b>Scientific name</b>	<b>Common name</b>
<b>Oleaceae</b>	<b>Olive Family</b>
<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	European Privet
<b>Plantaginaceae</b>	<b>Plantain Family</b>
<i>Linaria genistifolia</i>	Balkan Toadflax
<i>Linaria vulgaris</i>	Common Toadflax
<b>Scrophulariaceae</b>	<b>Figwort Family</b>
<i>Verbascum nigrum</i>	Dark Mullein
<b>Lamiaceae</b>	<b>Dead-nettle Family</b>
<i>Salvia nemorosa</i>	Balkan Clary
<i>Mentha aquatica</i>	Water Mint
<i>Mentha longifolia</i>	Horse Mint
<b>Campanulaceae</b>	<b>Bellflower Family</b>
<i>Campanula carpatica</i>	Carpathian Bellflower
<i>Campanula romanica</i>	Romanian Bellflower - E
<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	Common Harebell
<b>Menyanthaceae</b>	<b>Bogbean Family</b>
<i>Nymphoides peltata</i>	Fringed Water-lily
<b>Asteraceae</b>	<b>Daisy Family</b>
<i>Carlina acaulis</i>	Stemless Carlina Thistle
<i>Centaurea phrygia</i>	Wig Knapweed
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle
<i>Carduus personata</i>	Great Marsh Thistle
<i>Cichorium intybus</i>	Common Chicory
<i>Solidago virgaurea</i>	European Goldenrod
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	European Yarrow
<i>Tanacetum vulgare</i>	Common Tansy
<i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i>	Common Fleabane
<i>Telekia speciosa</i>	Large Yellow Oxeye
<i>Xanthium spinosum</i>	Spiny Cocklebur
<b>Caprifoliaceae</b>	<b>Honeysuckle Family</b>
<i>Scabiosa ochroleuca</i>	Pale Yellow Scabious
<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	Common Teasel
<b>Araliaceae</b>	<b>Aralia Family</b>
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Common Ivy
<b>Apiaceae</b>	<b>Umbellifers</b>
<i>Eryngium maritimum</i>	Sea-holly