

Romania's Danube Delta & Carpathian Mountains

Naturetrek Tour Report

24 May – 2 June 2014



European Brown Bear



European Roller



Sombre Tit



The Danube upper basin

Report and images compiled by Byron Palacios



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Day 1

Saturday 24th May

London Heathrow – Bucharest – Zarnesti

Our mid-morning flight departed from Heathrow, arriving at Bucharest on time, after a very smooth flight. After collecting our luggage, we met up with our driver and transfer guide at the exit, who guided us to our minibus through a very busy airport. We started our journey by leaving the area of the Romanian capital and heading north into the mountains, making a coffee-break stop right at the foothills of the Carpathians, before the town of Brasov, in order to break the three-and-a-half hour journey to Zarnesti. The beautiful afternoon featured ever-green woods and dramatic crags and mountains, surrounded by rivers, on the way to the heart of the Carpathians. The beautiful weather accompanied us the whole journey, till our arrival to the charming Pension Elena, where its wonderful hosts Gigi and Elena greeted us with the warmest welcome! In despite of the late arrival, a delicious supper was served, followed by a very local – but rather strong! – plum brandy to tune everybody up!

We enjoyed this first taste of the wonderful Romania, and retired to bed in order to rest and get ready for our first excursion the following day!

Day 2

Sunday 25th May

Piatra Craiului National Park (Zarnesti Gorges) and Coltul Chililor Monastery track.

Fantastic blue skies and a warming sun took the full frame of our windows this morning. After a delicious breakfast, we made our sandwiches of our choice in order to pack them in our rucksacks for lunch and, as soon as we were ready, we drove a short distance into the Zarnesti Gorges, right in the Piatra Craiului National Park. We were rapidly engaged with lovely views of Grey and White Wagtails on the way up, also spotting a beautiful

White-throated Dipper feeding its juvenile, very obligingly on a rock in the roadside stream. We parked our minibus and started our walk uphill towards the gorges, leaving the wide part of the track for a minor uphill detour, which we did in order to have a good view of the valley we were about to explore. Many interesting birds such as Red-backed Shrike, Common Redstart, European Nuthatch and a co-operative Wood Warbler were seen in this first part of our walk.

Back on the main track, plenty of butterflies and wild flowers kept us amused, as did the very intrepid rock climbers who were trying to climb the various rock faces. Eurasian Kestrels, Alpine Swifts, Black Redstart, Crag Martin, Grey Wagtails and a European Chiffchaff were spotted, alongside an array of Tits, including Coal, Marsh, European Blue and Great. We found a comfortable patch of green lush meadow very suitable to have our picnic lunch, and also a few interesting species of butterflies such as Duke of Burgundy Fritillary, Painted Lady, Swallowtail, and Black-veined White, amongst others. Once lunch was finished, we returned to the minibus in order to drive through Zarnesti, heading to a different spot where a nice valley track took us to an isolated modern monastery at Coltul Chiliilor. The walk is a bit steep and hard at the beginning, but we all made a great effort to at least climb to the top of the hill, and were rewarded with fantastic views of Red-backed Shrikes, the unique European Nutcracker, Garden Warbler and glimpses of a displaying Lesser Spotted Eagle. A Cirl Bunting was calling, but did not come closer; instead, we had a Lesser Whitethroat plus other birds such as European Jays, Tree Pipits, Song Thrush and Coal Tits.

The majority of us managed to get to the end of the track, where this small, modern monastery lies on top of the main gully, surrounded by pristine conifers and beech forest. A male Collared Flycatcher was spotted here with a few Nuthatch and Black Redstart; a pair of Red Crossbills flew over the area, with three Northern Ravens and a few European Buzzards calling while in flight. We then started the descending walk back to the minibus, spotting the Lesser Spotted Eagle flying in front of us, obliging Red-backed Shrikes, and interesting Balkan Green Lizards. Once in the minibus, we took some time to overlook the valley, with its contrasting landscape of the snowy-topped mountains and the little town of Zarnesti. We headed back to the hotel, in order to get ready for another delicious dinner and drinks.

Day 3

Monday 26th May

Valea Latre – Bran – Valea Stramba (Brown Bear hide)

It was another beautiful morning and, after another lovely breakfast taken at the usual time, we embarked in our minibus in order to do a short drive into the valley of Latre, where we aimed for one particular bird species: Wallcreeper. This valley is quite narrow and has access to a very nice set of crags where breeding pairs of Wallcreepers have been spotted over the past years and, having a recent report from our local ground operator, our chances seemed to be promising! A few birds such as Nuthatch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Marsh, Great, Coal and Blue Tits, and Grey Wagtails were spotted on our walk towards the Wallcreeper crags. Once there, our big scanning task started and, after thirty minutes, our efforts were paid off when someone from our party spotted our target bird. There was a pair moving up and down right in the upper part of the big rocky wall; we had good but distant views of them before they disappeared somewhere else. After ten minutes, just one individual turned up again, this time a bit closer and for a longer period, enough time to set our telescope on it and enjoy good views of this little most-wanted bird! Mission accomplished!

After enjoying our first stop of the morning, we headed down to the main road and took the diversion into the mystic and legendary town of Bran, Dracula's legend home place. We made a quick photo stop and we also took a quick stroll into town for some postcards, where we had good views of nesting White Storks, and shared a Hungarian-local, delicious tubular bread with nuts, called 'kurtos kolacs', which we all enjoyed trying! After visiting Bran, we drove back to our guesthouse in Zarnesti to enjoy a delicious lunch and a break, getting ready for our bear adventure in the afternoon and evening.

The rain was very persistent after lunch and still when we set off from Zarnesti, but it faded away as soon as we arrived at the dirt track which leads to the valley of Stramba, and the weather improved dramatically, turning into a beautiful afternoon! It took around forty-five minutes to get there from Zarnesti, followed by a good birding walk we took along the track, which produced great birds such as Woodlark, Red-backed Shrike, Common Cuckoo, Eurasian Hoopoe, Yellowhammer, Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Fieldfare, and amazing views of a White-backed Woodpecker. We then took our minibus again, in order to drive to the forest, making a short stop at the reserve entrance to take a quick walk in order to see a Red-breasted Flycatcher which we had just heard. Other birds seen here were Hawfinch, Goldcrest, and Nuthatch.

Back to the minibus and continuing on the track, the dense and lush forest made obvious the fact that we were already in Brown Bear country. We parked the minibus before the entrance, and walked about one hundred metres on the track, crossing the little bridge over the river which led us straight to the bear hide. We settled in the comfortable hide very quietly around 6.45pm. I was told by the ranger that the bears had been visiting the hide at around 7.03pm during the last three days, particularly because the weather had been good during the previous three afternoons...and he wasn't winding me up! At 7:05pm, a lovely female emerged from the left hand side of the forest, heading straight to the feeding bunks, treating us to wonderful views! But that wasn't going to be the whole show: soon after the female turned up, another female joined her on the feast, for a good quarter of an hour, then they suddenly vanished into the woods. Thinking we had enough, they both came back and so did other four individuals, especially one distinctive pale brown individual. We enjoyed six wonderful Brown Bears performing greatly in great late afternoon light - what a day! Our cameras burst with photos of one of the highlights of our expedition in Romania...bingo!!

We had a fantastic moment watching these amazing Brown Bears (one individual, perhaps a seventh individual, was even spotted in the woods by some of us walking on the track on the way to the minibus!) but it was time to go back to the minibus and to our hotel to Zarnesti for a well deserved restful night after another exciting experience. It was a late arrival for a very satisfied group who all went straight to bed!

Day 4

Tuesday 27th May

Zarnesti to Tulcea

Our very last breakfast in Zarnesti was taken at the usual time at the lovely Casa Elena. It was another beautiful sunny morning and we were all ready to take the long drive down to the Danube Delta leaving the Carpathian Mountains behind. After a grateful farewell to Gigi and Elena at the guesthouse's main entrance, we set off, heading south east. The scenery changed rapidly to the midlands landscapes as we gradually descended from the mountains, and along the main road through Ploiesti and Slobovia.

The long journey was split by making several stops along the way, with both birding and coffee breaks. One of them was made in the area of Ciorani, where an interesting spot of poplars and willow trees, right next to the main road, hosted a noisy rookery. The spot produced new birds such as nesting Common Kestrel, European Bee-eater, Red-footed Falcon and glimpses of a flying male Golden Oriole. A very nice Syrian Woodpecker was spotted on the way back to the minibus, and we had the chance to see well this scarce European member of the Picidae, and it was seen again by the minibus, later on.

We had our lunch back in the minibus, making another birding stop at the Rodeanu Lake, where we saw Caspian Gulls, Great Reed Warbler, Red-backed Shrike, Eurasian Coot, Common Pochard, and a pair of beautiful Black-necked Grebe. Back in the bus, a few European Rollers were spotted along the electric lines, but all went quiet when we hit a very rainy area which looked like a minor transitional storm, but it soon eased off and we could make a final stop around 50km away from Tulcea. Here, we were right on one of the arms of the upper Danube basin; the area had been a bit affected by the early spring flooding. This site produced great birds for our list, such as Pygmy Cormorant, European Roller, Common Cuckoo, Great Reed Warbler, Great-crested Grebe, Red-crested Pochard, Whiskered and Common Terns, Eurasian Hoopoe and a flying Little Bittern, which crossed right in front of us.

We boarded our minibus once again, and drove our final forty minutes of the long day's journey, into the Danube-shore town of Tulcea, where our floating hotel was waiting for us. First, we thanked so much our driver Florin, for driving us everywhere safely, then we jumped on board, where our hosts Liliana and Roxy welcomed us with a local cherry schnapps and biscuits. All the group members were impressed by our boat's high standard of both the accommodation and dining room, and the standard of our meal was not a surprise: it was delicious!

We enjoyed our dinner and, after going through our checklist, we retired to bed for a well deserved rest, looking forward for a fantastic few days down in the Delta.

Day 5

Wednesday 28th May

Danube Delta

We woke early, to the noises from busy Tulcea, in order to enjoy the views of this small but lively town on the river Danube. We had a delicious early breakfast on this beautiful sunny morning, while watching the river, the city and the motorized boats coming up and down from Tulcea's port. Once we were ready to go, we boarded our expedition boat, leaving our floating hotel behind, and started our first day along the Danube from the mile 36. We followed the fast flowing current for a good fifty minutes, before turning into a side channel which led us to different lagoons and riparian areas to explore, taking advantage of the high level of the water which made it much easier to do a good meandering along this marvellous water system. European Kingfishers were flying along the thick willow-lined shores, while Pygmy Cormorants were crossing along the channels, and the colourful European Rollers appeared to shine at all times. Other lovely birds, and new ticks for our list, were Black Woodpecker and Grey-headed Woodpeckers, Red-necked Grebe, and a young individual of White-tailed Eagle still on his nest. We explored the area of Maliuc, where the Danube National Park's headquarters are based, and we focused mostly on the channel banks and willow forests, where we found a great variety of birds such as Common Redstarts, singing Olivaceous Warblers and Thrush Nightingales; these were complemented by striking views of European Rollers, more Pygmy Cormorants, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Little Egret, and various Squacco Herons discretely hidden amongst the water mint. We made a coffee break stop at the entrance

of Lake Nebuno, from where we enjoyed watching a pair of Great White Pelicans, Ferruginous Duck, Hooded Crows, Great Reed Warbler, Tree Sparrow and a few perched Common Cuckoos. Going back to the main channel, a pair of White-tailed Eagles was spotted, and we got great views of at least one of them from our boat.

After drifting down the many channels, we managed to catch up with our floating hotel at the village of Maliuc itself, in order to have lunch while sailing down the river towards the village of Lebada. We took a break after lunch, before jumping on board of our exploration boat again, and heading towards the main forked channel, known as Old Danube. Along the endless row of willow trees, several European Rollers, Pygmy Cormorants, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Squacco Herons and Common Cuckoos were seen, with some Marsh Harriers, Purple and Grey Herons, and Ferruginous Ducks crossing by. More Red-necked Grebes were spotted, and not far from them, a beautiful Dalmatian Pelican flew right next to our boat, allowing us to catch every single pattern detail of this very rare European bird. Other corners of the various lakes offered hundreds of Whiskered Terns, feeding by or simply sitting on the Water Chestnut beds, alongside with a few pairs of Black Terns and Common Terns. A European Penduline Tit was heard nearby, so we stopped to look, getting wonderful views of a male and one of its lovely weaved baggy nests, cleverly concealed amongst the willows and reeds.

We also found groups of Great White Pelicans congregated amongst Great and Little Egrets, Great and Pygmy Cormorants, Glossy Ibis and Black-crowned Night Herons, waiting for a good chance to catch some fish. Other Great White Pelicans were spotted catching some fish from the surface of the waters, by putting their baggy beaks and heads in the water and continuously stirring it. We continued on the main Danube channels back towards the boat in Lebada, spotting dozens of marsh birds such as Marsh Harriers, Red-footed Falcon, Hobby, Ferruginous Ducks, Squacco Herons, Black-crowned Night Herons, and a single Northern Wheatear alongside a lovely Lesser Grey Shrike.

We then arrived at Lebada, where our 'mother ship' was waiting for us, ready to sail down to 8th mile, diverting onto the Magearu channel, where we spent the night. We had a beautiful sunset whilst enjoying another scrumptious dinner, washed down by local wines and beers we all enjoyed!

Day 6

Thursday 29th May

Magearu Channel

We had another lovely day and, although it was a bit cloudy and breezy at breakfast time, the sun came up as soon as we boarded our expedition boat, right after our usual delicious breakfast. The endless reedbeds and massive old willow trees covered the surroundings of the northern channels of the delta, as we entered into the stretches of Magearu Channel. The numbers of Squacco Herons, Hooded Crows, Northern Starlings and many other common birds were the perfect complement to the colourful European Rollers and Great White Pelicans. A heavy buzzy call diverted our attention to tall single rushes, where a Savi's Warbler was sitting on top, singing away non-stop. Then, the familiar tone of Bearded Reedling put us on to two beautiful male and female individuals: beautiful birds! Not far from this point, a Little Crake was spotted amongst some vegetation, right on the shore of the floating reed islands, and it was eventually seen really well!

As we were reaching the main area of floating reedbed islands, the stirring of our boat's engine brought up a strong smell of methane gas, product of the ancient accumulation of decayed material and vegetation kept beneath the islands. This was well explained by our local guide Florin, with a very clear demonstration out of the

boat. This is an ideal place for pelicans to lay their eggs, after flattening with their feet their desired area to 'nest'. After this, we drifted back along the channel into the village of Letea, where we took a nice walk around this very traditional border village (Romania – Ukraine). We saw a few interesting birds at our arrival to the village, such as Common Cuckoo, Black Redstart, White Stork, European Bee-eaters, Eurasian Hoopoe, Tree Sparrow and Lesser Whitethroat. Whilst walking through the village, Florin gave us a comprehensive explanation about this site, its people and their everyday living, which is still similar to the ancient ways, as the village and its 200 inhabitants are quite isolated in the north-eastern corner of the Delta. Their proximity to Ukraine results in the complexity of the Letean people's language, a mixed dialect of Romanian and Ukrainian. We walked along the sandy 'streets' of Letea, watching interesting birds such as Tree Sparrows, Black Redstart and Eurasian Hoopoes, amongst others. After a good stroll around the village, we went back to the river and our excursion boat, heading back to our floating hotel slowly, while listening to Savi's Warblers, Penduline Tits and Bearded Reedlings all the way down the canal. Alongside them, dozens of Squacco Herons, European Rollers, Common Cuckoos, Black-crowned Night Herons, and plenty more were seen. We arrived at our 'flotel' to enjoy our lunch and a short break.

After lunch, the afternoon excursion started with great views of a gorgeous male Golden Oriole, which made the day for many of us! Moving slowly up the Bogdaproste Channel and lake, watching singing Common Redstarts, colourful European Rollers and standing Squacco Herons, we arrived in a beautiful channel full of Great-crested Grebes, Whiskered Terns, a few Dalmatian Pelican and a few pairs of Black Terns, finding also a beautiful male of White-winged Tern amongst them! We also heard lots of Eurasian Bittern calling actively, and a few Little Bitterns crossing by, the latter constantly seen crossing the reedbeds side to side, and trying to catch some dinner: the number of frogs living in this unique Water Chestnut habitat is enormous, especially Edible Frogs. We kept going into Lake Trei Lezere, another beautiful but much smaller lake, where we spotted a few pairs of Black Tern amongst plentiful Whiskered Terns, Great White Pelicans and a few individuals of Dalmatian Pelicans. We were surrounded by Caspian Gulls, Pygmy and Great Cormorants and Common Pochards, amongst others. We spared some time to give a breeding Tawny Owl a go, getting fantastic views of a beautiful male which cooperated brilliantly by perching on the closest willow branch, right in front of us!

After a good afternoon excursion, we made our way back to our floating hotel, drifting down the labyrinth of channels till we found it 'parked' by a beautiful enclosure of reeds and willows, in the middle of nowhere, with a stunning wild vista, including pelicans and terns perched on some logs right in front!. It was very wonderful to see this background landscape over our delicious dinner, alongside a marvellous sunset which made us interrupt our meal in order to dash to our rooms and grab our cameras for a posterity shot!

Day 7

Friday 30th June

Loptpatna – Razaboinitia – Lake Baclanesti – Sontea Canal

It was the start of a very overcast and grey day in the delta, surrounded by dark clouds, which predicted heavy rain in the area. After our usual breakfast, we set off again in the little boat, exploring new channels, backwaters and small lakes. The whole gamut of herons appeared almost constantly, with Squacco Heron and Black-crowned Night-Heron the most numerous. Also, European Rollers outnumbered Common Cuckoos, which were abundant all over the area. Not very long after we set off on our small boat, heavy rain finished our morning, and forced us to make our way back to the floating hotel in order to change our wet clothes and do some leisurely birding from there until lunch time. After an early lunch, the weather improved a little so we

decided to go out again in our smaller boat. It was a short but very productive boat-birding ride, which produced fantastic views of Black and Grey-headed Woodpeckers, Ferruginous Duck, a beautiful pair of Little Bittern perched on top of the reeds, and many other birds. We entered Lake Baclanesti where large groups of Mute Swan and Great White Pelicans were gathered, together with Great Cormorants, in order to get fish more easily. A beautiful White-tailed Eagle was spotted on top of a short willow tree, and we all enjoyed watching her through the scopes, alongside Whiskered and Black Terns. Soon after that, a storm reached our area from the east forcing us, once again, to drive back to the 'mother ship', which was already on the way to the Old Danube and then to Tulcea.

We did some birding from the floating hotel while heading to the main River Danube stream into the main port, spotting some interesting wildlife along the journey, while having some scattered showers along the way. Once in Tulcea, another lovely dinner was served overlooking the Danube, with the town in the background. We had some heavy rain during the night, with thunder and lightning, which lit up our cabins in the middle of the night.

Day 8

Saturday 31st May

Somova Old Quarry – Somova Oak forest – Macin National Park

After a very rainy night, we started the day with a usual breakfast, overlooking a grey-skied Tulcea. After our last delicious and last meal on board, we packed our belongings and left behind the wonderful crew of the boat, who had looked after us very well while we were exploring the Danube Delta. After a very warm farewell, we boarded our minibus, driving up out of Tulcea, heading towards the eastern outskirts of the town. We made a stop to explore an abandoned quarry, from where we took a short walk which produced very interesting birds such as Ortolan Bunting, Red-backed Shrike, Northern Wheatear and Barred Warbler. We also saw a nesting Long-legged Buzzard, and we all enjoyed watching the adult and three chicks through the scopes. We also had great, but short, views of a lovely male of Pied Wheatear. We returned to the bus as little shower started to fall in the area: good timing to move on towards our next spot, just thirty minutes away from the quarry.

We arrived to Somova Oak forest, where we had an enjoyable walk through this lovely habitat of meadows and Balkan Oak trees. Here, new target birds for our list were seen very well, such as Middle-spotted Woodpecker, Sombre Tit, Honey and Steppe Buzzards, Hobby, Ortolan Bunting, Sombre Tit, and a very vocal Levant's Sparrowhawk. We completed the whole walk along the crest of the meadow, getting Grey Partridges, Eurasian Hoopoe, Corn Buntings, Red-backed Shrikes, Skylarks, Woodlarks and European Bee-eaters along the way. Down in the foothills of the meadow, our minibus was already waiting for us, with a delicious picnic lunch which we all enjoyed after our great walk! The weather improved a lot over our meal, in good time for us to continue our driving towards our last stop in the Macin Mountains National Park. We took a good walk amongst the green valleys, surrounded by granite boulders, where we managed to see Pied and Northern Wheatears, Long-legged Buzzard, Common Kestrel, a nesting pair of Woodchat Shrikes, and a very distant Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush. On the way down, we scanned a ravine full of bare trees, oaks and ash trees, where we found Turtle Doves, European Bee-eaters, Common Starlings, European Goldfinch, and a beautiful pair of Hawfinches feeding a youngster.

After this visit, we headed back to Tulcea, where our new town hotel was expecting us, with comfortable rooms and a delicious supper!

Day 9

Sunday 1st June

Denistepe – Babadag Forest – Sinoe (Black Sea area)

We had our breakfast at the usual time and then we drove out of Tulcea, heading towards the area of Babadag. Along the road, we made our first stop at the area of Denistepe, following a dirt track along wheat fields and dry rocky hills, where many interesting birds such as Eurasian Hoopoe, Tawny Pipit, Corn Bunting, Spanish Sparrow, Marsh Harriers, and a very handsome Black-headed Bunting were seen beautifully. A pair of European Quail was seen along the track, as we were driving to the foothills of the mountain, where we also spotted several pairs of Isabeline Wheatear, some in-flight Greater Short-toed Larks, Skylarks, Tawny Pipits, Common Kestrels, Short-toed Snake Eagle, Northern Wheatear, and also some Little Souselik. Happy with the wildlife seen here, we continued our journey back to the main road, into the Turkish-descendent village of Babadag. Our next stop was in the Babadag Forest, from where we had a very enjoyable walk which produced very interesting butterflies and some interesting wild flowers, alongside lizards, moths and crickets. A male Levant Sparrowhawk and Ortolan Bunting were also seen here. After the walk, we came back to our minibus in order to drive to our picnic spot.

The marsh of Sinoe, an adjacent wetland area to the Danube Delta National Park and close to the Black Sea shore, was the perfect stop to enjoy our delicious picnic lunch, in the pleasant weather. Marsh Harriers, Eurasian Hoopoe, Dalmatian Pelicans, Yellow Wagtails (race *feldegg* or Black-headed Wagtail), and two flying Eurasian Bitterns were spotted while having lunch. A distant group of Collared Pratincoles made us walk into the tall grass and towards a flooded pond, where we saw interesting birds such as Northern Shoveler, Common Shelduck, Reed Bunting, Great Reed Warbler, Black-winged Stilt, Marsh, Curlew and Wood Sandpipers, Kentish Plovers, Dunlin, and close views of dozens of Collared Pratincoles. It was time to move to a different stop closer to the Black Sea shore, where we made a couple of stops. The first one was right in the marsh, where a considerable nesting colony of Common Terns was surrounded by Pied Avocets, Black-headed Gulls, Black-winged Stilts, mating Collared Pratincoles, and interesting waders such as Black-tailed Godwits, Ruff, Temminck's Stint, Dunlin, Redshank, Curlew Sandpipers and Kentish Plover, amongst others. A single Little Tern was also spotted here. The second stop was not far from here, and a little before the sea front, exclusively to look for the very elusive Paddyfield Warbler. After working a bit hard to get good views of this wanted bird, one came right on top of the reeds, giving us the views we wanted.

The sun was still up and it was perfect weather to walk along the Black Sea shore, overlooking the beautiful landscape on this little corner of this gigantic lake-looking sea. Some of us walked deep in the water, getting wet feet, and we had a compulsory photo session by the abandoned old canoes. A single Little Ringed Plover was spotted here, amongst the many other 'usual' birds such as Great Cormorants, Caspian Gulls, Common Terns, and others. We then returned to the minibus to start our drive back to Tulcea, making a few quick photo stops along the way, in order to catch with our cameras some gorgeous orchids and colourful meadows adorned with beautiful wild flowers, taking advantage of the magnificent natural light!

Once in Tulcea, we had time to get ready for our very last dinner together, enjoying the tasty local wine and beer, accompanied by another – sadly, our last – delicious supper. We all lifted our glasses and made a toast, wishing each other all the best in the future, and bringing up the lovely moments we had enjoyed throughout the entire tour.

Our cook proudly presented us with a special farewell cake, and some champagne glasses came along to reinforce our celebration! We thanked them all hugely for looking after us so well, during all these last nine days while on tour! We also expressed our deep thanks to our local guide Florin, for all his expertise and lovely companionship, and for sharing with us the beautiful scenery and the wildlife of his lovely country!

Day 10

Monday 2nd June

Tulcea – Bucharest airport

Another nice and sunny morning dawned at Tulcea, as a friendly farewell to us. After a delicious breakfast, our local guide Florin turned up to say ‘good view’ to all of us, and we certainly bade a warm farewell to him, with wishing to see him again sometime in the future and wishing him also all the best for him and his family! Then, our bus was ready to go, so we loaded our all belongings into it and set off to Bucharest, making a couple of stops on the way. We arrived in good time at the airport, in order to sort out our luggage and proceed with the checking in. We all went through in time, and boarded our rather smooth and comfortable flight back to Heathrow airport, where we shared our farewells at the luggage carousel.

We all agreed that we had enjoyed a fantastic tour in Romania, we were lucky enough to share wonderful wildlife moments and the right company of people with a huge passion about wildlife and great camaraderie. It was a journey full of highlights of great wildlife, accompanied with a fairly good weather which was good to us at all times. Our hotel hosts, from the mountains, on board and in Tulcea, were fantastic and they couldn't make us feel more than welcomed, looking after us very well with delicious food and kind attention, showing their passion for what they do. We truly had a great time in this wonderful and poorly-known country, a unforgettable trip with a real success which will be, surely, well kept in our memories and hearts..

.....La revedere Rumania...Multumesc!! (.....Good bye Romania...Many thanks!!)

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Species Lists

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

	Common name	Scientific name	May/June										
			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	
1	Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>									✓	✓	
2	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>									h	✓	
3	Ring-necked Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>			✓		h			✓	h		
4	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>			✓		✓			✓		✓	
5	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
6	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>			✓							✓	✓
7	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>			✓								
8	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>					✓	✓	✓			✓	
9	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>										✓	
11	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>					✓	✓	✓			✓	
12	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>										✓	
13	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>				✓	✓					✓	
14	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
15	Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
16	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>					✓						✓
17	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>					✓	✓	✓				
18	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>				✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
19	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>				✓							
20	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
22	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>					✓	✓	✓			✓	
23	Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>						h				✓	
24	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
25	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓				
26	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓				
27	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
28	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓				
29	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
30	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
31	Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
32	Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>					✓	✓				✓	
33	Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo pygmeus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
34	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
35	European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>					✓				✓		
36	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>								✓			
37	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>					✓	✓	✓				
38	Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>				✓					✓	✓	
39	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
40	Levant Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter brevipes</i>									✓	✓	
41	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>		✓									
42	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	
43	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>									✓		
44	Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>		✓									
45	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
46	Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>				✓	✓	✓				✓	
47	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

	Common name	Scientific name	May/June										
			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	
48	Little Crane	<i>Porzana parva</i>						✓					
49	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓				
50	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
51	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>						✓				✓	
52	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>										✓	
53	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
54	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>										✓	
55	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>										✓	
56	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>						✓	✓			✓	
57	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>										✓	
58	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>										✓	
59	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>										✓	
60	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>										✓	
61	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>										✓	
62	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>										✓	
63	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>										✓	
64	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>										✓	
65	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>										✓	
66	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>					✓	✓	✓			✓	
67	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>										✓	
68	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaeus melanocephalus</i>										✓	
69	Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
70	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>										✓	
71	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
72	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
73	White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>						✓				✓	
74	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
75	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
76	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
77	European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>			✓							✓	
78	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
79	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
80	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>						✓	h				
81	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>										✓	
82	Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymartus melba</i>		✓	✓								
83	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		✓								✓	
84	European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
85	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓				
86	European Bee-Eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>				✓		✓			✓	✓	
87	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>			✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
88	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>										✓	
89	White-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>			✓								
90	Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>				✓							
91	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
92	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>					✓		✓				
93	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>			✓								
94	Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>					✓	✓	✓				
95	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
96	Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>					✓				✓	✓	
97	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius</i>									✓		
98	Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>			?		h	✓	✓	✓			

	Common name	Scientific name	May/June										
			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	
99	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓	✓	✓								
100	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
101	Spotted Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>		✓									
102	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
103	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
104	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
105	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓								
106	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>		✓	✓								
107	Sombre Tit	<i>Poecile lugubris</i>									✓		
108	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>		✓	✓								
109	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>		✓	✓								
110	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
111	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
112	Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>				h	✓	✓	✓				
113	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>						✓					
114	Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>										✓	
115	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>										✓	
116	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>				✓							
117	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>			✓						✓		
118	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>				✓					✓	✓	
119	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>				✓						✓	
120	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
121	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>		✓	✓								
122	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
123	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>									✓	✓	
124	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>						h	✓				
125	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓	✓		h	h	h	h			
126	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>		✓									
127	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	h
128	Paddyfield Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>										✓	
129	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>					h	h	h			h	
130	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Iduna pallida</i>					h✓	✓					
131	Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>						h					
132	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>						✓					
133	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		✓	✓		h	h					
134	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>		✓	h								
135	Barred Warbler	<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>									✓		
136	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>		✓			✓	✓	h				
137	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>			✓								
138	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		h	h								
139	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓	✓								
140	Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>			✓								
141	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>		✓									
142	Rosy Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i>								✓			
143	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
144	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
145	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>			✓								
146	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓	✓				✓				
147	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓									
148	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓								
149	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>				h					h	h	

	Common name	Scientific name	May/June											
			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2		
150	Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>						h		h				
151	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓	✓	✓				✓					
152	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>		✓				✓	✓	h				
153	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>			✓							✓	✓	
154	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>						✓				✓	✓	
155	Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>										✓		
156	Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>										✓	✓	
157	Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>										✓		
158	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>						✓	✓					
159	Collared Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>		✓										
160	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>			h									
161	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>		✓	✓									
162	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
163	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>											✓	
164	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>						✓	✓	✓				✓
165	Black-headed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla feldegg</i>											✓	
166	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava superciliaris</i>				✓								
167	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓									
168	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
169	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>										✓	✓	
170	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		✓										
171	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	h	✓	✓				
172	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓	✓	✓		h	h						
173	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓				✓	✓		✓				
174	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>		✓										
175	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>			✓							✓		
176	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>										✓	✓	✓
177	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		h	✓	✓								
178	Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>										✓	✓	
179	Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>		h										
180	Black-headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>											✓	
181	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>						h	✓	✓			✓	

Reptiles & Amphibians

1	Fire Salamander	<i>Salamandra salamandra</i>			✓									
2	Yellow-bellied Toad	<i>Bombina variegata</i>		✓	✓									
3	Common Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>		✓										
4	Grass Snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>						✓					✓	
5	European Pond Terrapin	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>											✓	
6	European Green Toad	<i>Bufo viridis</i>											✓	
7	Balkan Wall Lizard	<i>Podarchis taurica</i>		✓										
8	Balkan Green Lizard	<i>Lacerta trilineata</i>		✓										
9	Dice Snake	<i>Natrix tessellata</i>						✓	✓					

Butterflies

1	Cardinal	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>											✓	
2	Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>			✓				✓					✓
3	Small Cooper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>											✓	
4	Wood White	<i>Leptidae sinapis</i>		✓										
5	Black-veined White	<i>Aporia crataegi</i>		✓										
6	Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>		✓										

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			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	
7	Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>		✓									
8	Piedmont Ringlet (?)	<i>Erebia meolans</i>		✓									
9	Chequered Blue	<i>Scolitantides orion</i>								✓			
10	Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>		✓									
11	Duke of Burgundy Fritillary	<i>Hamearis lucina</i>		✓									
12	Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>		✓									
13	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>		✓									
14	Marbled Fritillary	<i>Brenthis ino</i>										✓	
15	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>										✓	
16	Freyer's Purple Emperor	<i>Apatura metis</i>						✓					
17	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>										✓	
18	Gipsy Moth	<i>Lymantria dispar</i>						✓					✓
19	Cream-spot Tiger Moth	<i>Epicallia villica</i>				✓							

Other Invertebrates

1	Hornet	<i>Vespa</i>											✓
2	Banded Damselfly	<i>Calopteryx splendns</i>			✓	✓	✓						
3	Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>						✓	✓			✓	
4	Lesser Emperor	<i>Anax perthenope</i>						✓	✓	✓			
5	Southern Hawker	<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>					✓	✓	✓				
6	Emperor Dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓			
7	Brown Hawker	<i>Aeshna grandis</i>										✓	
8	Broad Scarlet	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>						✓	✓				
9	Brown Cricket	<i>Acheta domesticus</i>									✓		
10	Golden-eyed Hawker	<i>Aeshna spp.</i>					✓						
11	<i>Uromenus</i> Cricket	<i>Uromenus rugosicollis</i>			✓								

Mammals

1	Brown Bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>			6								
2	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>		✓									
3	Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>							✓	✓			
4	Dormouse	<i>Gliridae</i>			✓								
5	Little Souslik	<i>Spermophilus pygmaeus</i>									✓	✓	
6	European Hare	<i>Lepus europeaeus</i>										✓	