

# Romania's Danube Delta & Carpathian Mountains

Naturetrek Tour Report

15 - 24 September 2018



Great Grey Shrike by Paul Collis



European Brown Bears by Ed Drewitt



Juvenile Black-crowned Night Heron by Ed Drewitt



Chamois by Paul Collis

Report compiled by Ed Drewitt  
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## Summary

During our ten days in the Carpathians and Danube Delta, our group of 14 enjoyed seeing the country's vast range of wildlife in mostly glorious sunshine and hot temperatures. In the mountains Brown Bears exceeded our expectations with 14 different individuals seen one evening, including three seven-month old cubs. Marsh Tits and Willow Tits were common in the forest here and we had lovely views of seven Chamois up on the limestone slopes. Back down in the Danube Delta herons, egrets, pelicans, Wood Sandpipers and Kingfishers were seen in high numbers as we explored the channels and creeks over three days. Even a few Cuckoos remained, while Red-footed Falcons passed overhead and Hobbys were still feeding well grown young. Lesser Spotted woodpeckers and Grass and Dice snakes were also common. The final few days down towards the Black Sea coast revealed large numbers of Hawfinches and woodpeckers taking advantage of the Walnut crop. Grey-headed, Syrian and Great Spotted were all seen while Green and Middle Spotted called nearby. The pools at Vadu were rich in wading birds and ducks passing through on migration and highlights included Avocet, Little Stints and Spotted Redshank. We finished the day and tour with many having a paddle in the Black Sea.

## Day 1

**Saturday 15th September**

### Travel to Bucharest and Zarnesti

It was a bright sunny day at Heathrow and with prompt boarding we left the UK in good time and headed to Romania. Flying east over Kent and into Europe we flew the 2,000km in two and half hours, arriving in a roasting Bucharest in a summery 28 degrees Celsius.

At Bucharest, we met up with Richard, Irene, Gill and Jack at the airport along with our local guide Laurentiu and driver Florin, before heading to a restaurant on the outskirts of Bucharest for dinner. After a delicious soup, main and rich cherry pie, with stomachs full we continued our journey to Zarnesti, our base for three nights. By now it was dark and as we drove into Transylvania it became quite wet with some lightning. Numerous frogs and toads were on the road and at least two Foxes crossed in front of us. We arrived at Pension Elena at just after 11.15pm and once the bus was unloaded we headed for bed.

## Day 2

**Sunday 16th September**

### Piatra Craiului and Bran

We awoke to a cool, damp morning and low cloud shrouding the Kingstone Mountains (Piatra Craiului) directly behind our pension. After a wholesome breakfast of bread, fruit, cheeses, meats and cereal at 8am we met together at 9am. Just outside our pension a juvenile male Black Redstart was singing on a nearby terracotta roof alongside a few Collared Doves and a Great Tit.

We drove through Alpine meadows and up into a gorge in the mountains, keeping an eye out for Dippers along the stream. Some saw one very briefly and we had much better views of another further upstream as we drove back down mid-morning.

Florin dropped us off and we slowly walked up the gorge and along the stream which was fed by an underwater spring. Upstream of where the spring rose, the stream was dry, although evidence of the heavy rainfall back in the summer was obvious. Grey Wagtails were common along our walk. For most of our slow stroll we were entertained by foraging Marsh and Willow Tits, together as a mixed flock in the Beech trees and on the low, open vegetation. Coal Tits and the odd Great Tit were also heard and occasionally seen. A Treecreeper was calling and showed for some, while a Nuthatch called nearby. The odd Wren, much darker than in the UK, was occasionally spotted feeding like a mouse on the ground. In the fir trees Goldcrests could be heard calling and the odd Raven circled overhead. At ground level we spotted a few Carpathian Bellflowers, delicate plants with open purple-mauve flowers. Ed also spotted a couple of Earthstar fungi that had opened up their outer layers into a star shape, each revealing a puffball of spores which puffed out like powder when touched.

While the cloud base had risen, it hadn't stopped dark rain clouds moving in and the rain began to come down heavily. We headed for the bus for shelter and decided to visit Bran and come back later when it was dry.

We drove 20 minutes to the town of Bran passing traditional unimproved fields and meadows full of knapweeds, Chicory, trefoils and many other wildflower plants that insects just love. Some were full of fresh mauve Autumn Crocuses. We paused along the road at one point to see a juvenile Red-backed Shrike perched on top of a bush.

In Bran, we stopped just out of the town where we took photos of the 650-year old Bran Castle, originally built as a fortress and later converted to a castle to be used by the royal family in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The castle itself is known as Dracula's Castle, the Irish writer Bram Stoker having used a description of such a building in his fictional story of Dracula in 1897. We had a few hours here with some deciding to visit inside the castle while others explored the adjacent park, or explored the town for one of its many cafes. During that time some of the group spotted Chaffinches, House Sparrows, two Great Spotted Woodpeckers, a few Mistle Thrushes and Ravens.

Now with a brighter afternoon ahead we drove back to Piatra Craiului. We stopped a few times along the road looking down on the rolling hills and fields down the valley to see a circling Goshawk, Hobby and a few Common Buzzards.

Back in the gorge, we were dropped off where we had stopped in the rain and headed up the spectacular narrow gorge, gouged out with gushing heavy rain and meltwater over millions of years. The stream was dry, but the forest floor was damp and full of shade-loving plants such as Woodruff, woundwort and Wood Spurge. A few Ravens 'cronked' overhead and the odd Jay screeched. While it was quiet for birds we did have excellent scope views of Chamois, wild goats that live and feed on the most precarious of mountain ledges. Laurentiu spotted four and everyone was able to see their slightly hooked horns and dark bands leading down from their long ears towards their noses. A little further up the gorge two more were sat chewing the cud at the top of a cliff; with the naked eye they looked just like small bushes. However, the scopes revealed them looking down and moving their jaws left and right as they chewed!

After slowly walking back down the gorge to the bus we arrived back at the pension at just after 5.30pm, just as some young men passed by in their horse (well, two horses!) and cart, carrying a cupboard!

We had time for a rest and a tea or coffee before dinner at 7pm. Gigi and Elena, and their cook, provided a delicious dinner of homemade tomato soup, salad, chicken escalope and a very tasty whipped cream pastry dessert.

## Day 3

Monday 17th September

Piatra Craiului: Coltul Chiliilor. Warm, sunny, up to 25°C+

With a bright morning ahead, we drove just a little way out of Zarnesti to walk along the pasture meadows heading up towards a monastery. We walked through open meadows, deciduous scrub and forest edge. The meadows were a mosaic of limestone grassland species dotted with smaller trees and bushes. As we gained some height to 900 metres we encountered lots of Hazel. On our way we stopped to see a sleeping Little Owl perched on the beam of an unfinished house. Rooks, Hooded Crows and Magpies were in nearby fields.

After we alighted from the bus, we had only walked 20 to 30 metres in the first half-hour due to enjoying the birds around us. Fourteen Ravens were busy eating the remains of the nearby guard dogs' food, dwarfing Hooded Crows that had joined them. Down by the river the bushes were busy with Chaffinches, White Wagtails and Yellowhammers. Around us the bushes and grassland were full of wagtails, Yellowhammers, Meadow Pipits and a few Tree Pipits. A juvenile Red-backed Shrike was happily perched on the edge of a bush giving excellent views through the scope. A Nutcracker was calling and eluding us. Meanwhile, nearby fir trees were busy with Chaffinches, Coal Tits and a Robin appeared at the top.

The meadows grew an abundance of Flax, knapweeds, Chicory, Sainfoin, Lady's Bedstraw, Wild Carrot and scabious. Jays often flew overhead, and it wasn't long before we had our first two Nutcrackers flying overhead with their crops full of nuts. They flew like a Jay, with slightly faster wing beats and a shorter tail. From a distance they just looked black.

By this point we had reached an orchard fenced with natural coppice. Several Blackcaps, a Willow Warbler, a Chiffchaff or two and a Grey Wagtail were feeding and washing down by the stream that flowed by. Coal Tits, a few Great Tits, Long-tailed Tit and a Marsh Tit were also mixing amongst the trees. A few heard a Fieldfare calling from the apple trees. Chiffchaffs were common and from here upwards many were frequently calling or singing.

As we headed into the treeline some were able to hear Goldcrests. A Small Copper butterfly sat in the sunshine on the stony track. Irene spotted a basking Brown Hairstreak butterfly while Red Admirals often glided overhead. A Migrant Hawker dragonfly hung from a tree branch and a number of small, young Sand Lizards basked on rocks in the sunshine. At least two Red Squirrels were also seen dashing across the path.

More Nutcrackers flew overhead with full crops. One or two would perch briefly at the top of a fir tree, before carrying on their nut-hustling activities. In the now warm sunshine, we had excellent views as they flew overhead or perched and could clearly see the white tipped tail band. Our second raptor of the day was also spotted. A female or juvenile Marsh Harrier was circling and flying southwest towards the mountains.

While some of the group opted to stay lower down on the slopes, many carried on to a point where we looked out across the hills and forest; it was very peaceful here. The only sounds were the grasshoppers that sounded a

little like the song of a Wood Warbler. Our first Woodpigeon flew past, and two or three further Nutcrackers flew past or overhead. A flock of nine Ravens also flew past, their wingbeats easily heard. Vanessa had managed to catch one of the Common Green Grasshoppers for us to see.

Heading back down we caught up with Cheryl who had been watching Nutcrackers overhead and seen a Hummingbird Hawkmoth feeding on an Autumn Crocus. As we went down further a Large White butterfly flew past followed by a Pale Clouded Yellow.

We joined the rest of the group who had been watching a Great Grey Shrike, a wintering bird, catch a cricket and perching at the top of a bush. A Dark Green Fritillary had also been feeding on the grassland flowers.

A shepherd was gathering his sheep and a few goats with the help of his band of sheep-lookalike dogs; a few were barking at us and protecting the sheep. Many of the dogs had bamboo-like wood dangling from their necks to prevent them from running too fast and chasing boars and other animals. Metal spiky collars also protect them from a bear encounter; the neck is the first place a bear might attack.

Back at the bus we gathered together and went back to the pension for a cooked lunch with another delicious soup, salad, chicken and polenta main and chocolate sponge and gooey chocolate and nut topping for dessert.

After a quick checklist we had an hour and a half to relax before meeting again at 3.30pm. We drove to the beautiful Strumbai Valley, a mix of deciduous woodland, pasture and copses. The fields either side of the track were full of wild flowers and were being farmed in a very traditional way. Some strips of the fields had been recently cut while others still remained uncut from the summer growth, providing flowers for the insects and giving the plants the chance to seed. Common Carder Bees were busily feeding on Red Clover. In the hot sunshine butterflies were numerous and included many Common Blues, striking Clouded Yellows, Pale Clouded Yellows, a few Small Heaths, a Speckled Wood and a Dark Green Fritillary.

Up to four Common Buzzards called and chased each other over the nearby woodland edge. A flock of white-headed Long-tailed Tits made their way along the willows and a small group of Yellowhammers were spooked and flew over the track into some dry vegetation and fallen branches. A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was spotted with relative ease in a small dead tree, showing off its striking barred back. It flew up into a large willow before flying overhead.

Bob spotted a bright green Praying Mantis fly in to nearby plants and we all took a good look at it. Marsh Tit and Green Woodpecker could be heard in the back drop. Stopping by a bridge over a stream, the star-shaped footprints of Water Vole were in the exposed mud below. Delightful mayflies with two long and delicate tail streamers were dancing just above the water.

We then came to some recently cut fields full of freshly emerged and flowering Autumn Crocuses. This was quite a sight and beautiful. They seemed to be thriving in the cut areas and less widespread in the fields still full of flowering and seeding herbage.

Florin joined us with our bus and we headed down the road to meet our ranger for bear watching. All set, we drove further down the road before walking the rest of the way along a fast-flowing stream and beneath a cool, damp woodland canopy dominated by Beech and Hornbeam. A Black Woodpecker called overhead.

By 6.20pm we were settled into our hide looking out to an open feeding area where John, the ranger, had hidden food in special logs and spread it in piles on the ground. Just as we had been walking to the hide Laurentiu and Vanessa has spotted a bear in the woods. And it wasn't long before this one was sauntering down to the feeding station to find some snacks at 6.25pm. It was a four-year-old female called Small Baffoon. She was shortly joined by Big Mama, a 20-year-old female. The two comfortably fed in different places before something disturbed them and they suddenly fled to the perimeter of the feeding area. It wasn't long before an 11-year-old male bear arrived, sleek, very slim and longer legged than the two females. He had a distinctive lighter, blonder patch of hair on his shoulders too. After feeding for five minutes he quickly shot off; we soon found out why. A six-year-old mother and her seven-month old cub appeared on the scene and began munching on some food. They moved off, again quite suddenly. By 7.10pm we were watching a very dark haired six-year-old male and two three-and-a-half-year-old females, soon followed by Big Mama again. The male was also seen feeding on some of the vegetation growing in the feeding station area. A fifth bear then visited at 7.15pm. This was a young female, less than 2 years old and recently abandoned by her mother.

They all suddenly moved off – bears can certainly move when they want to. They had made way for a six-year-old female and her two seven-month-old cubs which were small, compact and adorably furry. They were also quick off the mark if other bears appeared; a nine-year-old male appeared and the two quickly fled up the tree a metre or so before realising they were safe. A mother has to be wary as some males will kill cubs in order to bring her into oestrus, so they can sire her next cubs. By this point we had seen 13 bears including the cubs. At 7.40pm we had one more bear, a sixteen-year-old pregnant female and we were watching five or six bears all at once feeding in their own areas of the feeding station.

Before it got any darker the ranger made coughing calls to keep any nearby bears away from the hide. We then made our way as a group back down the path, across the stream bridge and down the track to the bus. We left the site at 8pm and arrived back at our pension at 9.15pm, ready for a celebratory beer or bed.

## Day 4

Tuesday 18th September

Travel to Tulcea. Hot, sunny, up to 28°C

We awoke to a beautiful sunny morning with the mountains of Piatra Craiului looking stunning.

Today we travelled south and east from the stunning Carpathian Mountains to the equally beautiful River Danube and the start of the delta at Tulcea. We passed a few Common Buzzards in roadside fields and also a White Stork. We had beautiful views of the Bucegi Mountains as we headed through Zarnesti and towns such as Busteni. The Beech forest covering most of the mountains were just beginning to change colour for the autumn, while the higher parts of the limestone mountains were unvegetated and white.

At our first stop at a service station after one and a half hours we were in the lowlands surrounded by agriculture and a few nodding donkeys raising oil. A White Wagtail was by the car park and Vanessa photographed a European Swallowtail butterfly. After some coffee and pastries, we carried on for another hour and a half and

stopped at Lake Rodeanu - a large lake with lots of reedbeds surrounded by fields of maize. It was sunny and hot here, and over 100 Eastern Bath White butterflies plus smaller numbers of Small and Large Whites were feeding on flowers such as Chicory and tall hawkbit-type plants. Out on the lake Little Grebes were common amongst Mute Swans and the odd Coot. Flocks of Greylag Geese were resting on the left side of the lake. A flock of 200-300 Starlings rose up out of the central reedbed as a female or juvenile Marsh Harrier quartered nearby. The odd Wigeon, Pintail, Teal and Pochard were also seen amongst the eclipse-plumage Mallards. A few Tree Pipits called overhead on migration too.

Along our journey we also saw further Common Buzzards, a few Kestrels, a Hobby, House Sparrows and Starlings. Other raptors also started to put in more of an appearance including several Marsh Harriers, a White-tailed Eagle, and two Long-legged Buzzards, in addition to three Black Storks. As we neared the River Danube White Stork nests became more evident in the villages, positioned on top of telegraph poles.

We stopped again for ice cream and then again for fuel. Just over an hour later we came to the beautiful Hasarlac Lake. Out on the open water hundreds of Coots were sitting along with the odd Great Crested Grebe. Closer, on the near side of the lake, the water had receded to reveal some mud. In the shallows a dozen Little Egrets were hunting. Mallards and Teal rested up on the edge of the water while others were dabbling with a few Gadwall. In the shallows to the left seven Wood Sandpipers were feeding. Over 500 Starlings were switching between feeding on the mud and murmuring over the *Phragmites* reeds. At least five Common Snipe were feeding in a shallow pool by the water's edge and a small group of Pygmy Cormorants were hauled out on some shallow reeds. Further right dozens of them were slipping under the water before resurfacing, with Black-headed Gulls and Caspian Gulls in tow, waiting for a free meal. Meanwhile Rooks wheeled together over the nearby hills and Yellow Wagtails and a Tree Pipit flew overhead. The wagtails were feeding down by a muddy stream near a herd of cows while a Snipe and a Wood Sandpiper with a limp were also feeding nearby. Other birds included Little Grebes, Jackdaws, Greylag Geese, Mute Swans and we heard faint calls of Bearded Tits. Where we had positioned ourselves on a small hill we were surrounded by flowering thistles and other plants. They were attracting several butterflies including Clouded Yellows, a Cardinal, a Small Heath, a Meadow Brown and a Small Copper. A hawker dragonfly and male and female red darters (not identified) were also flying around.

As we headed onwards we passed through a very open, patchwork landscape with a mix of brown ploughed fields, stubble, brassicas and rough grassland along with wind turbines. We suddenly passed an extensive deciduous forest, running along a north to south ridge. It comprised mainly Silver Lime trees which, as their name suggests, have distinctive silvery leaves compared to the Oak and Beech.

A further half an hour later, at around 5.00pm, we arrived in the town of Tulcea and boarded a floating hotel which would be our home for the next four nights. We were welcomed with a sour cherry vodka and small biscuits. As the sun set we enjoyed a delicious soup, chicken dinner and wine.

## Day 5

Wednesday 19th September

Danube Delta: Lake Cu Cotete and Lake Nebuna. Hot, sunny, up to 28°C

After a night on the floating hotel in Tulcea we took the small boat out onto the Danube and then into Channel 36, one of the many dividing rivers that make up the delta. We passed corridors of White Willow followed by extensive reedbeds and a mix of willow, White Poplar and reeds. We sailed into Lake Cu Cotete and stopped for

a hot drink at Lake Nebuna (meaning Crazy Lake) where only scientists can go – it is a special lake for breeding birds. We came back out into the Sulina Branch of the Danube where, as if by magic, our floating hotel appeared.

We were out for just over six hours after leaving at 8.30am. Throughout the journey our skipper Dan would switch the engine off enabling us to float along listening to birds such as Blue Tits, Long-tailed Tits, Chiffchaffs and Chaffinches, and other wildlife such as European Tree Frogs, with their loud croaks. During our journey we saw up to 10 juvenile Black-crowned Night Herons, 14 Squacco Herons, three juvenile Little Bitterns, over 20 Grey Herons, over a dozen Great Egrets and a similar number of Kingfishers. The larger Great Cormorant and the smaller, longer-looking Pygmy Cormorant were both numerous and were often seen feeding in the rivers or perched in the trees, sometimes in large numbers.

We encountered two Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers calling and seen by some; later we heard a few others and saw two more. Grey-headed Woodpecker was also heard.

Spotted Redshanks were occasionally calling and at Lake Nebuna, where we stopped for coffee, amongst young Mute Swans and two juvenile White Pelicans, we watched a few Common Snipe, two Spotted Redshanks, a Ruff, a Black-tailed Godwit and small numbers of Lapwing. Here there were also four Whiskered Terns.

Tree Sparrows were common throughout the delta, usually flying across the channels or gathering in flocks in the reeds. Overhead we spotted a White Stork, small numbers of Black Storks migrating over, Marsh Harriers, Hobbies, a male Red-footed Falcon and a few White-tailed Eagles. At one location Laurentiu identified a juvenile Lesser Spotted Eagle, stopping off on its migration – they go as far south as Zimbabwe. Nearby an adult White-tailed Eagle took off showing off its white tail and larger size.

White Pelicans, already beginning their migration south, were seen in flocks overhead, one of 20 and another of 34, plus twos and threes.

Other birds during our trip included over 100 flocking Coots, Mallards, Teal, a few Garganey, a Caspian Tern, Moorhens, a male Pochard and Hooded Crows. Black-headed Gulls and Caspian Gulls were seen in small groups at many points, particularly close to the main fishing areas. Towards the end of our sailing we also saw two Grass Snakes swimming in the channel.

During this period many fishermen visit the delta and we saw many along the banks, both those with modern rods and boats, and a few using traditional canoe-like boats and nets.

Once on the floating hotel we continued along the Sulina Branch and went straight for lunch (soup, pork with a delicious cabbage, onion and herb compliment).

The hour and a half journey was fascinating as we passed traditional thatched houses, riverside hotels and extensive reedbeds. We stopped at Crisana and turned south into the Crison Channel. We met again at 4.30pm and waited for our floating hotel to be positioned and rested in the reeds for the night. We then boarded our small boat and headed out back along the channel and then into the Ceamura (Mud) Channel. Along the Crison Channel we saw four separate Squacco Herons looking really creamy in the sunshine. A few hundred Mallards

were resting in small groups of 50 along the bank, with Lapwings mingled amongst them. Grey Herons and Great Egrets were frequently encountered, and sometimes the odd Common Snipe was also spotted, usually flying away. We also saw three Black-tailed Godwits. A Peregrine flew onto a pylon and began preening after washing in the channel. Other highlights along this area included two separate Hoopoes and a Reed Bunting.

Turning off into the Ceamura Channel the group spotted a number of Kingfishers although they remained elusive in the lower branches of the willow trees. A few juvenile night herons took flight. A juvenile Hobby was perched in a tree ahead; it took flight and joined another, both calling together while a Marsh Harrier passed by.

Joining the Litcov Channel we headed back towards the Crison Channel, spotting a few more Squacco Herons, Little Egrets and Grey Herons. We then visited the other side of the Crison Channel leading to Lake Iacob. Along the way we stopped to see our only adult Black-crowned Night Heron so far, admiring its cream-coloured breast, yellow legs and white head streamers. As a Sparrowhawk flew past we reached the weed-filled lake full of Coots, Greylag Geese, Mute Swans, Mallards alongside some Teal, Squacco Herons, juvenile Night Herons and both cormorants. A closer scan revealed two Dalmatian Pelicans. These were greyer than the whites we had seen earlier, swimming along with their beaks low to the water ready to catch a fish or two. Seven or eight Wood Sandpipers were wading over the weeds alongside a Ruff too. Plumes of mosquitoes began to rise above the reeds and some came to bother us too, so we beat a retreat and headed back to the floating hotel for 6.30pm, with some downtime before dinner at 7.30pm.

## Day 6

Thursday 20th September

Danube Delta: Caraorman and Lake Treiezer. Hot, sunny, up to 28°C

After a beautiful sunset last night and a warm, calm night the air cooled first thing leaving a morning mist which began to burn off by breakfast time. A fisherman in a traditional wooden boat was checking his fish traps along the channel, becoming hidden in the mist at times. Overnight those on the reedbed side of the channel heard splashes and croaks of *Pelophylax* frogs.

We met for breakfast at 7.30am and headed out in our smaller boat at 8.30am along the channel to the village of Caraorman (the Black Forest). Along the channel there was a rich assemblage of Yellow Water-fringe Lilies, Water Soldiers and Floating Fern (*Salvinia natans*). Amongst the plants we heard and then spotted hundreds of *Pelophylax* frogs (Marsh, Pool and Edible) ranging from bright green-yellow to brown and mottled and we also saw many browner and well-marked Agile Frogs. Walking across the platform of weeds were Common Snipe, Wood Sandpipers, Greenshanks, Little Egrets and Squacco Herons. Mallards and Lapwings lined the banks alongside a few Teal; a pair of Garganey and a pair of Ferruginous Ducks took flight. We stopped to spot a few juvenile Bearded Tits feeding on the surface of the weeds close to the reedbed, while surrounded by lots of frogs! A Grey-headed Woodpecker flew over and with a little playback flew back over before disappearing into the willows. An almost white Ruff, probably a leucistic individual, was feeding along the bank – a Redshank-like Ruff was nearby allowing for immediate comparison. Caspian Terns and Swallows flew overhead in small numbers while a few Red-backed Shrikes perched on top of Sea Buckthorn bushes.

We arrived at Caraorman, a village with lots of dilapidated buildings that were built quickly and then demolished during the communist era. There was going to be a factory to process the sand on which the village is built and today the wetter land and lagoons provide an ideal place for birdlife such as Lapwings, Yellow Wagtails and

Rollers. With a treefrog calling in the background we were soon spotting a Kestrel, Starlings, a flyby Spoonbill and Steppe Buzzard, and a Roller sat on the wires. We were lucky to see this bird before it migrated south. Caspian Terns flew around calling like cackling witches. Down on the muddy lagoons we saw Wood Sandpipers, a juvenile Black-winged Stilt, two Temminck's Stints and a few Yellow Wagtails. Two Pygmy Cormorants and two Great Cormorants rested side by side on the bank offering excellent views and allowing us to see the differences between the two species.

We headed over to the derelict buildings and onto the sand dunes where a large lagoon was home to hundreds of Caspian Gulls, Black-headed Gulls and tens of Caspian Terns, pausing on their migration south from Scandinavia. Two Rollers could now be seen on the wires and a Red-backed Shrike was in a nearby bush. Two Spotted Redshanks flew in and fed down on the lagoon. Irene and Alison had spotted the footprints of an Eastern Hedgehog along a sandy path. Butterflies included Large White, Common Blue, Clouded Yellow, Small Heath and Eastern Bath White. Amongst the buildings the introduced Pricklyburr was abundant with its white trumpet-like flowers and prickly fruits.

We re-joined the small boat for coffee and tea, before spotting a small Dice Snake swimming through the water. We headed back and turned off down a narrow channel where Laurentiu spotted a juvenile Cuckoo flying away from us. We saw it several times as it flew from tree to tree. The channel was abounding with fish of many different species and sizes swimming beneath us amongst the weeds and lilies. Here we saw Yellow Water-fringed Lilies, Yellow Lilies and White Lilies, many with frogs sat on top. Snakes were occasional too with a Grass Snake and another Dice Snake. We disturbed a Little Bittern which flew up into some taller reeds. We travelled round in a loop, following the perimeter of an old fish farm, spotting a few more Red-backed Shrikes on bushes. Once back on the main channel we passed many of the great weedy and lily areas where we had seen birds this morning. More Greenshanks were feeding along the bank and several pairs of Ferruginous Ducks were showing well in the sunshine; their chocolate brown plumage and white bottom very distinctive. A moulting Whiskered Tern still with its darker belly perched on a post was also a highlight. White Wagtails were in abundance along the weedy edges. As we disembarked the boat at 12.30pm Ed heard a Water Rail and one was seen running along the edge of the reeds and into the open before disappearing into the next reedbed.

We met again for lunch at 1pm, enjoying meatball soup before a delicious vegetable stew for main and ice cream for dessert. Our tug then roped up and took us on a three-hour journey into a different part of the delta. Not long after we left a small section of the group saw a Golden Jackal standing on a bare patch of bank. Up to six White-tailed Eagles and two Hobbies were also seen all together in flight, and later a White Stork and a pair of pelicans, one a White and the other Dalmatian.

We arrived at our location on an area of open water looking out across extensive reedbeds at around 4.30pm. Once everyone was gathered we hopped onto the smaller boat and headed off at 5pm for another trip amongst the channels and lakes. During the hour and a half, we visited Lake Treiezer.

It was a beautiful evening, very warm and sunny. As we travelled down towards the lake we stopped to see a Hobby sat in a tree in the sunshine. On the opposite site Laurentiu had heard Bearded Tits; we headed over and four were feeding on the seed heads of the *Phragmites* reeds. Everyone had beautiful views of these stunning birds. Two males and two females or juveniles were happily feeding. With the sun silhouetting the birds we managed to reposition and watched in better light as all four clung onto the same stem feeding. At one point a

warbler, probably a Sedge Warbler, came to see what all the fuss was about. They suddenly moved along the reeds out of view – our cue to continue on.

Down a narrow creek we spotted a few juvenile Night Herons and a few Squacco Herons. Hooded Crows were ever present in nearby trees and on the weedy islands, looking for an easy meal. Reaching Lake Treiezer we looked out across this extensive yet shallow lake – only a metre deep. A huge island of Floating Fern and Water Soldiers was adjacent to us. A few Pygmy Cormorants stood on nearby fishing stakes. A small group of Little Grebes gathered on the island's far side while Black-headed Gulls and Caspian Gulls flew around and three Whiskered Terns sat on the weedy island. Heading across the lake over 50 Great Cormorants were perched on several large willow trees; their guano was clearly killing their lake-side branches which were naked and leafless.

We sailed down a short channel into an adjacent smaller lake where there were suddenly birds everywhere – Coots, Teal, several Garganey, Pochards, Ferruginous Ducks, half a dozen Shovelers, Mute Swans, Great Egrets (20) and to our delight up to eight relatively close White Pelicans. We slowly edged closer, watching seven in particular which were preening. Their faces and upper bills were really pink in the sunshine while their gular pouches, which expand like a fishing net when they catch a fish, were bright yellow. Caspian Terns were flying around, juveniles 'squeaking' away and begging to nearby adults. Black-headed Gulls were laughing and maintaining their reputation and Romanian name of 'Laughing Gull'.

As we turned back we had the most beautiful sunset cruise. We headed back across the two lakes in warm, golden sunshine with gulls circling round and small flocks of Ferruginous Ducks flying past in the distance, flickering like wading birds as their white wing bars caught the light. Some flew past the large rising moon against the evening sky. Back in the main channel the Hobby had been joined by another.

We arrived back at 6.30pm with an hour to relax in the calm, warm evening as the sun went down. We met again at 7.30pm for dinner – a vegetable cocktail followed by succulent pork and mash, and chocolate cake for dessert.

## Day 7

Friday 21st September

Danube Delta: Lake cu Ciulini and Lake Ligheanco. Hot, sunny, up to 28°C

After a hot day yesterday and a cool night, a thick fog hung in the air. Breakfast was at 8am; Vanessa and Howard, who had been out earlier were rewarded with over 100 pelicans flying just above the fog, presumably coming out of their roost.

After breakfast we again set out on the little boat, exploring more of the channels, bays and lakes of this delightful delta. We had the most wonderful trip in glorious sunshine, passing acres and acres of reedbed alongside bulrushes, Hornwort, Frogbit and Water Soldiers (sometimes known as Water Pineapple). The water was so clear beneath us that in many places we could see fish swimming around amongst the aquatic vegetation. The reeds help trap sediments and keep the water clean.

Wildlife-wise, we saw a whole suite of birds including many Squacco Herons, Grey Herons, several Kingfishers, and a few Night Herons and Great Egrets. We finally caught up with a Purple Heron, a juvenile poised amongst the Water Mint close to a fishing trap. Bearded Tits called at various places across the reedbeds and at one location we stopped for a juvenile Penduline Tit which appeared in a willow. Today a few more Reed Warblers

were spotted along with a Reed Bunting. At the first lake (Lake cu Ciulini) we visited there were many Mute Swans, three Whiskered Terns, Gadwall, Mallards, Coots and a few Garganey and Teal. In the reeds nearby a small group of six Bearded Tits appeared and fed on the seeds of the *Phragmites* close by.

The air smelled of the 'aquaticness' of the environment we were in; a lovely reminder of the special place the Danube Delta is. A few Robins and the odd Lesser Spotted Woodpecker were heard calling. We finally caught up with Great Spotted Woodpeckers, with two in different locations feeding in dead willow trees.

At our second lake (Lake Ligheanco) a few White Pelicans were mingling with the swans. Juvenile Moorhens were common over the Floating Ferns and Hornwort. Ferruginous Ducks were mixing with hundreds of Coots and several Little Grebes towards the back of the lake. Our skipper Dan thought he saw an Otter. While something did surface several times like an Otter, we didn't get any confirmed sightings.

Heading on back to the Old Danube channel a Sparrowhawk flew overhead with 30 Swallows swarming around it. By a house at Mile 23, a Cuckoo perched on nearby wires. This village, Mile 23 on the Danube, is home to Russians who came here 200 years ago. Many of the buildings are now guest houses, some with reed-thatched roofs. Further along a gathering of Caspian Gulls and Black-headed Gulls also included over a dozen Caspian Terns. The terns took off after one which had a fish dangling from its beak, and a young bird was begging.

It soon became clear there was a passage of Red-footed Falcons in progress and throughout the rest of the journey we regularly saw pairs drifting overhead and at one point half a dozen together. We saw over 14 in total. The males were dark with orange vents and deep orange-red legs, while the larger females were very pale. Hobbys were also in attendance and at one point we watch an adult and juvenile come together and exchange food. The morsel, a dragonfly, fell and was quickly grasped by the young bird which ate it in flight.

We stopped on the floating hotel for lunch by a vast reedbed, not far from Lake Baclanestii. Just before lunch some of the group had very good views of two White-tailed Eagles overhead. After a delicious lunch, the floating hotel was tugged back to Tulcea at 2pm. Over the next five hours we passed acres of reedbed, lakes, and parades of willow and poplar trees. Along the journey we had many falcons, usually Red-footed and sometimes Hobby (including another food pass to a young bird). Occasional flocks of hirundines, mainly Swallows, passed overhead. White-tailed Eagles, Marsh Harriers, egrets and herons, White Pelicans, cormorants and gulls were seen at various locations along the way, usually flying overhead. One flock of pelicans glided gracefully overhead, and when one flapped the others followed suit. As we headed down the last stretch of willow trees - before we headed out into the main Danube channel - some of the group on top watched a Booted Eagle flying south on its migration. Cheryl caught sight of a Spotted Flycatcher at the top of a White Willow. Blue Tits, Long-tailed Tits, a Grey-headed Woodpecker and tree frogs were also heard.

Before exiting the channel, the tug changed positions and sailed us on the rest of the journey from the side. At 6pm we came out of Channel Mile 36 and headed along the Sulina Branch back to Tulcea, still in glorious early evening sunshine on the day of the Equinox.

We arrived in the town at 6.30pm, the floating hotel carefully manoeuvred into place by the tug. Dinner was at 7pm, with a starter of bolognese followed by a traditional main of pork, polenta with a fried egg on top, and

grated white cheese. Laurentiu briefed us for the following day and after the checklist we all stayed chatting for a while before heading to bed or to pack.

## Day 8

Saturday 22nd September

Very hot, sunny, up to 30°C

After a night on the floating hotel in Tulcea we finished breakfast on the boat and said good-bye the crew. We headed out at 8.30am, passing various Rooks, Jackdaws, Magpies, Starlings and a Roller. As we neared our stop at Celic-Dere monastery community we passed several horses and carts on the road, while farmers in a field were loading hay into a cart by hand.

Arriving in Celic-Dere, we didn't have to walk far – from the car parking area we were watching tens of Hawfinches and Chaffinches flying overhead, Tree and House Sparrows in nearby bushes, a Willow Warbler, many Blue Tits and a singing Black Redstart. A little down the lane we stopped again to watch the finches overhead. Two Hawfinches stopped in a tree long enough for people to see them through the scopes. Woodpeckers were all over the place, although not so easy to see! With some patience and time, we saw several Great Spotted and Syrian Woodpeckers, the latter identified by a paler vent and the absence of a black line towards the back of each cheek compared to the Great Spotted. Gill found a Grey-headed Woodpecker foraging on the side of a barn and a Green Woodpecker called in the background. Middle Spotted Woodpeckers made their presence known by their various calls throughout the morning and remained elusive to see. The woodpeckers were attracted to the walnut trees with plenty of nuts to choose from. They were a tasty choice for some of the group picking them up from the ground too.

Overhead, a migrating dark phase Booted Eagle glided over, followed by a female Goshawk, a Marsh Harrier, a Sparrowhawk and superb views of a hunting female Red-footed Falcon right above our heads. Before we headed into the woodland a Lesser Spotted Eagle circled overhead too. Jays were back and forth across the meadow and trees.

With Hawfinches squeaking and ticking all around us we found at least one juvenile Red-breasted Flycatcher flying down to the ground to pick up insects beneath a bush. Laurentiu has also located a Spotted Flycatcher although it remained difficult for most of us to see. Chaffinches, a few Grey Wagtails and Blue Tits continued to pass overhead into nearby trees.

The meadow was full of thistles and Chicory and amongst them were tens of feeding Cardinal butterflies, many looking very worn. Several slightly smaller, more orange Silver-washed Fritillaries, Clouded Yellows and Small Whites were also feeding.

We walked through the Hornbeam woodland and then headed up to an old disused orchard with sparse trees and grassland. Many more butterflies were feeding on thistles. Laurentiu managed to tempt out two Sombre Tits. Great Tit size and profile, these Marsh/Willow Tit like birds were calling and foraging in the nearby bushes with other tits.

With the sun beating down on us we headed to the monastery for some shade and chance to look inside at the beautiful painted interior. We headed back at midday for tea, coffee and cake.

By 12.15pm we were on our way again, passing oak pasture, vineyards and farmland near the village of Telita where we viewed a distinctively styled Ukrainian church. The trees in the pasture are Balkan Oaks and are part of the Natura 2000 Niculitel reserve which is formed of a special volcanic ridge. Flowering Ash and Wild Pear also grow amongst them. The lower area is grazed while the upper areas are left and contain lots of scrub amongst the trees. Further on we could see Ukraine on the other side of the Danube, and to our right farmland which was once marshland. Since the 1970s it has been drained and is now managed through sequences of dykes.

We headed on towards the Macin Mountains protected area passing flood plains covered in reedbeds and other parts converted to farmland.

We stopped at Pricopan, an area of granite hills and cliffs, some of which are quarried. In the blazing sunshine we sheltered under the trees and had a delicious buffet picnic including sesame-seed coated chicken, salami, cucumber, beef tomatoes and tasty grilled mushrooms filled with cheese. Laurentiu identified the acacia-like trees with dangling seed pods known as Honey Locust *Gleditsia triacanthos*, originally from North America.

A Long-legged Buzzard soared overhead showing off its rich orange underparts and tail. We went for a walk up in some of the oldest mountains in Romania which have been worn down to only 467 metres high. The heavy rains in May and June saw this area turn very green. The grasses grew high and now it looked like a savannah, with parched vegetation and seeded plants such as Viper's Bugloss. Despite this there were plenty of plants in flower when we looked closer including *Salvia*, Chicory, various legumes and Mullein. Vanessa found a Praying Mantis, and we saw several more later, including one which landed on Alison.

The flowers were attracting many different butterflies. We saw Common Blue, Brown Argus, Cardinal, Small Heath, Small Copper, Large Copper and Safflower Skipper butterflies during our walk up the rocky terrain to an amazing view out across the vast, open landscape. Many of us saw a Balkan Wall Lizard, with a hint of green along its back, at the highest point we reached along the Pricopan Trail. There were also paths of flattened vegetation in the dry grassland made by Spur-thighed Tortoises. Laurentiu also pointed out two endemic plant species to this region; the *Dianthus nardiformis*, endemic to Romania and Bulgaria, and *Campanula romanica*, endemic to this range of mountains in Romania. During the walk members of the groups saw or heard the odd Blackbird, Song Thrush and Kestrel.

We continued on to Greci and visited a local bakery that did exceedingly good ice creams and drinks, also selling local jams and cakes. We headed back at 5pm, along a different route taking in the steppe terrain and open farmland landscape.

We arrived at our guesthouse around 6pm, ready to unpack in our new rooms and refresh before dinner.

## Day 9

Sunday 23rd September

Cooler morning with light rain; sunny later, 25°C

After yesterday's scorcher, today was very much cooler and overcast. After breakfast at 7.30am we headed south in the bus at 8.30am to the southern edge of the Danube Delta and to the Black Sea coast. We called first at the Deniz steppe where it was cool and the insects were 'chilling'. This made it easy to catch various grasshoppers including Common Cone-headed Grasshoppers – a bright green one was brought over by Laurentiu, followed by

a smaller green one. The rear ends resembled the worn/torn tip of a grass stem. We started to find several more including those that mimicked the brown vegetation. Various other smaller brown grasshoppers were also caught by Rob. Aside from a resting Common Red Darter it was quiet for wildlife, and as it had begun to rain we headed on further south.

We passed through Babadag (hill of the father) where gypsy-turks live in big, colourful houses. We saw some fast racing horse-and-carts as well as slow donkey carts along the road. We passed by Babadag Forest due to the rain.

We headed on to Vadu, another area of wetlands bordered by a former factory extracting rare chemicals from sand, and closed down as a result of the site becoming a special site for nature. Along the roads we saw a small flock of Ruddy Shelducks, Kestrels and Marsh Harriers. Four Common or Steppe Buzzards were circling together heading south. Rooks and Jackdaws were very common. About 100 Mediterranean Gulls fed in the distance on a recently ploughed field.

Back at Vadu we looked down onto open lagoons where Avocets, Dunlin, Ruff and juvenile Little Ringed and Ringed Plovers fed. Irene found a Little Stint and further scanning revealed a few more in amongst the Dunlin and Common Snipe. Several juvenile Whiskered Terns rested on small islands and were accompanied by an adult White-winged Tern still in summer plumage. A small flock of Common Shelducks flew overhead. In the larger lake behind a few Mute Swans were swimming with over 50 Gadwall, half a dozen Shovelers and a few Little and Great Crested Grebes. A juvenile Purple Heron flew past and another poked its head above the reeds. A Roller was perched on nearby wires and a Little Owl called for a short while.

We drove round and down near the old factory, popular with Starlings and Collared Doves, and walked slowly along the track for an hour to take in all the birdlife. Crested Larks sang around us and one finally showed through its flight display above. Common Snipe, Mallards and Teal were common by the small pools. Tree Pipits and Corn Buntings regularly flew overhead, the latter identified by their 'popping' calls. Up to four Wood Sandpipers fed amongst the pools and a Spotted Redshank gave excellent views as it flew round calling and occasionally stopping on the ground. Three Greenshanks also flew overhead calling. Marsh Harriers were common here and more Purple Herons rose out of the reeds from time to time.

The sun began to come out and it warmed up very quickly. Dragonflies and butterflies became active again and appeared out of nowhere. As we headed on to one more large lagoon Spoonbills flew overhead in several groups. Stopping for a juvenile Red-backed Shrike in a Hawthorn bush by the bridge, two young Water Rails called to each other in the reeds behind us. Laurentiu picked up the call of a Savi's Warbler too alongside Bearded Tit and Penduline Tit. At the lagoon four Caspian Terns, a Caspian Gull, two juvenile Little Gulls and a juvenile Little Ringed Plover were resting on the shingle island. On the far water a Black-necked Grebe was diving.

We stopped for lunch with some convenient concrete blocks nearby to sit on. Small Whites, the odd Eastern Bath White, Clouded Yellows and blue butterflies fed and flew around close by where knapweeds and other flowers were still in bloom. Cheryl found a freshly dead Dice Snake with an unusually plain khaki green skin. A White-tailed Eagle was seen in the far distance and a pelican flew past. A Crested Lark fed near the bus where a herdsman was watching his cows and the local farm dogs had come to join us for lunch. Before we finished lunch a dashing male Red-footed Falcon flew low over the wetlands.

After lunch we drove down to the beach adjacent to the Black Sea. Here some of the group went for a paddle while others walked along the beach. It was quite breezy in places, although very warm in the sunshine. Several Barrel Jellyfish floated by the tideline. A Ruddy Turnstone fed on some rocks and juvenile Dunlins foraged on the beach. Further down the coastline over 100 Mediterranean Gulls were resting up while 30 Cormorants sat on a structure protruding out of the sea further out. In a nearby pool Little Grebes were diving and Pygmy Cormorants sat out on a tree.

We met again at 3.15pm where a flock of House Sparrows were dustbathing and then perching in a bush. Earlier, Florin, our driver, had found a Reed Bunting amongst them. Driving back along the track half a dozen juvenile Red-backed Shrikes popped out of the Tamarisk trees.

As we left the area we stopped at a nearby café for ice creams and beers before heading back to Tulcea and our last dinner together. A Caspian Gull was feeding on a dead European Eastern Hedgehog in a ploughed field close to the road. Several Kestrels, a few more Marsh Harriers, Swallows and corvids were seen along the way back.

We met together for dinner at 7pm enjoying our final soup and chicken escalope; towards the end we celebrated our holiday with some sparkling wine and cake.

## Day 10

## Monday 24th September

After a slightly later start and breakfast we left Tulcea at 9.00am and headed for the airport at Bucharest and our journey home. It was a bright, sunny, breezy day, enabling us to enjoy and take in the different landscapes and habitats along the way, and return past some of the sites we had stopped at on our way here from the Carpathians. Birdlife included Rooks, Jackdaws, Collared Doves, migrating Swallows and the odd Common Buzzard.

We arrived at the airport in very good time and headed back to the UK over Hungary, the Czech Republic, Germany and Belgium with some strong headwinds, arriving a little behind schedule at 7.50pm. It wasn't long before we gathered our luggage and bid our farewells.

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## Species Lists

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

	Common name	Scientific name	September									
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
1	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓			6	
2	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓			2	✓
3	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>									6	
4	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>									8	
5	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>			2			6+			6+	
6	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>			1	3	2	✓				
7	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>			✓			✓			30+	
8	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓			20+	
9	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓			8+	
10	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>			✓	1	✓					
11	Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>				✓	✓	✓				
12	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>				1	2	1				
13	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
14	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			1+			4+	✓			
15	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>									1	
16	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>			1	1	1				1	
17	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>			3	10						✓
18	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>					1				12	
19	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>					3	1				
20	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>					12+	4	2			
21	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>					20+	12+	✓			
22	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		1	1		20+	12+	✓		1	✓
23	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>							1		5+	
24	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>			1	12+	25+	✓			3+	✓
25	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>			✓	✓	8+				2+	✓
26	Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>					55+	9	100+		1	
27	Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>					2	1	✓			
28	Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo pygmeus</i>			✓	30+	12+	✓			6+	
29	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			✓	30+	50+	✓			30+	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	September								
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
30	Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>				1			1		
31	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>						1	1		
32	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>				1	1	1	1		
33	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	1						1		
34	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	1		
35	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>			1	5+	7	6+		1	
36	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>			2				1		
37	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	3	4		1			2	6+	✓
38	Steppe Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i>					1				
39	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>				✓	✓	✓		1	
40	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
41	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>					1				
42	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>								5+	
43	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>				25+	8	1			
44	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>								4	
45	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>								2	
46	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>				2	2	1		1	
47	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>					6+			3	
48	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>					1				
49	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>			8	6+	12+			4+	
50	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>								1	
51	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>								1	
52	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>								4	
53	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>					2				
54	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>				2	2			12+	
55	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>				5					
56	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>			6	6+	15+	1		8+	
57	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
58	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>								200+	
59	Pallas's Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus</i>				1					
60	Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cacchianans</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
61	White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>								1	

	Common name	Scientific name	September								
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
62	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>				8	✓	✓		6+	
63	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
64	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		1		1	✓	✓			
65	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓		6+	1	✓		
66	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>		1						h	
67	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>				2					
68	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>				15+	2	4			
69	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>		1		4	h	h			
70	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocoptes medius</i>							h		
71	Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>							2+		
72	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	2					3	3+		
73	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>		1							
74	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		h			1		h		
75	Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>				1		h	1		
76	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			✓	1	1		2	6+	
77	Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>				1		25+	1	1	
78	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	1		2	✓	✓	12+			
79	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>				1		1			
80	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	1	1			6	1		6+	
81	Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>		1				1			
82	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	2+	✓						3	✓
83	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	3	✓	✓	1	2+	2+	3+	3+	
84	Spotted Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	h	8+							
85	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
86	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		10	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
87	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
88	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	4+	25	2				4	2	
89	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	✓	h							
90	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>	✓								
91	Sombre Tit	<i>Poecile cinctus</i>							2		
92	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	✓	✓							
93	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	2+	2+		✓	✓	✓	✓		

	Common name	Scientific name	September								
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
94	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		h		h	✓	✓	✓		
95	Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>						3			
96	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>			h		6	6			
97	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>								2+	
98	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓		6	1	10+	50+	✓		✓
99	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓						✓		
100	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓			
101	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		1					1		
102	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓		1	h	h	h	2+	
103	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>					1				
104	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>					1	2		1	
105	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>								h	
106	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		3							
107	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		h							
108	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	2								
109	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	1	h					1+		
110	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	1	1							
111	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>			800+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
112	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>							2+		
113	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>		h							
114	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	h	1					h		
115	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	2								
116	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		4				h			
117	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	1	4					1		
118	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>						1	1		
119	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>							1+		
120	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	2								
121	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
122	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓		
123	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>			✓		✓				
124	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	4+	1					2		
125	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		6+	✓	✓	✓	✓	2	✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	September								
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
126	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		3+	h					✓	
127	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	6+	4+		h			20+	h	
128	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>									
129	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		h					✓		
130	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>								1	
131	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>							2		
132	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>								8+	
133	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		10							
134	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>				1		1		2+	

### Reptiles and Amphibians (S =signs of; D = Dead)

1	Agile Frog	<i>Rana dalmatina</i>					✓	✓			
2	Pool/marsh/edible Frog	<i>Pelophylax sp.</i>					✓	✓	✓		
3	Sand Lizard	<i>Lacerta agilis</i>			3+						
4	Balkon Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis tauricus</i>							1		
5	Grass Snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>				2	1				
6	Dice Snake	<i>Natrix tessellata</i>					2			D	
7	Dice/Grass Snake	<i>Natrix sp.</i>					2	1		1	
8	Spur-thighed Tortoise	<i>Testudo graeca</i>							S		
9	European Tree Frog	<i>Hyla arborea</i>				h	h	h			

### Mammals

1	Chamois	<i>Rupicapra rupicapra</i>	6								
2	Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>						1			
3	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	2	S						S	
4	Brown Bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>		14							
5	Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>									S
6	Eastern European Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus concolor</i>					S				D

### Butterflies and Moths

1	Safflower Skipper	<i>Pyrgus carthami</i>							✓		
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	Common name	Scientific name	September								
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
2	European Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>			1						
3	Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
4	Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>			✓		✓	✓			
5	Eastern Bath White	<i>Pontia edusa</i>			✓	1			1	✓	
6	Pale Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias hyale</i>		3					✓	✓	
7	Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias</i>		6+	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
8	Brown Hairstreak	<i>Thecla betulae</i>		1							
9	Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>		1	2		1		✓		
10	Large Copper	<i>Lycaena dispar</i>							✓		
11	Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>		8+					✓		
12	Brown Argos	<i>Aricia anteros</i>							✓		
13	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>		6+	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
14	Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>		1							
15	Cardinal	<i>Pandoriana pandora</i>			1				✓		
16	Silver-washed Fritillary	<i>Argynnis paphia</i>							✓		
17	Dark Green Fritillary	<i>Argynnis aglaja</i>		2							
18	Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>			1						
19	Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>		2+	1		1				
20	Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>		1							
21	Hummingbird Hawkmoth	<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>		1	1						

### Other Invertebrates

1	Ground Beetle	<i>Carabus coriaceus</i>	1								
2	Emperor Dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>					✓	✓			
3	Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>		1							
4	Common Red Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Banded Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>					✓				
6	Praying Mantis	<i>Mantis religiosa</i>		1						✓	
7	Common Conehead Grasshopper	<i>Acrida ungarica</i>									✓
8	Hornet	<i>Vespa crabro</i>							✓	✓	
9	Violet Carpeneter Bee	<i>Xylocopa violacea</i>								✓	
10	Barrel Jellyfish	<i>Rhizostoma pulma</i>									✓

	Common name	Scientific name	September								
			16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24

Notable plants

1	Carpathian Bellflower	<i>Campanula carpatica</i>										✓	
2	Romanian Bellflower	<i>Campanula romanica</i>										✓	
3	Dianthus	<i>Dianthus nardiformis</i>										✓	
4	Cream Scabious	<i>Scabiosa ochroleuca</i>	✓	✓									
5	Dwarf Elder	<i>Sambucus ebulus</i>	✓	✓									
6	Dusky Cranebill	<i>Geranium phaeum</i>	✓										
7	Honey Locust	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>										✓	
8	Yellow Water Lily	<i>Nuphar pumila</i>						✓	✓	✓			
9	White Water Lily	<i>Nymphaea alba</i>								✓			
10	Frogbit	<i>Hydrachara sp.</i>						✓	✓	✓			
11	Water Soldiers	<i>Statiotetes aloides</i>						✓	✓	✓			
12	Floating Fern	<i>Salvinia natans</i>						✓	✓	✓			
13	Cocklebur	<i>Xanthium strumarium</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Pricklyburr	<i>Datura innoxia</i>						✓					

Fungi

1	Earthstar	<i>Geastrum triplex</i>	✓										
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White Pelicans and Great Cormorant by Ed Drewitt



Group watching Bearded Tits by Ed Drewitt



Silver-washed Fritillary by Ed Drewitt