

SAKER eNEWS

2nd edition, 2013

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Carpathian Brown Bear (Photo: Gábor Simay)

Dear Birders and Photographers!

The year of 2013 passed with a blink of an eye and here we are again at the beginning of the eagle-photography season!

Please take a look at our latest newsletter which has various birding and photography information for the future as well as some retrospection of the action-packed 2013!

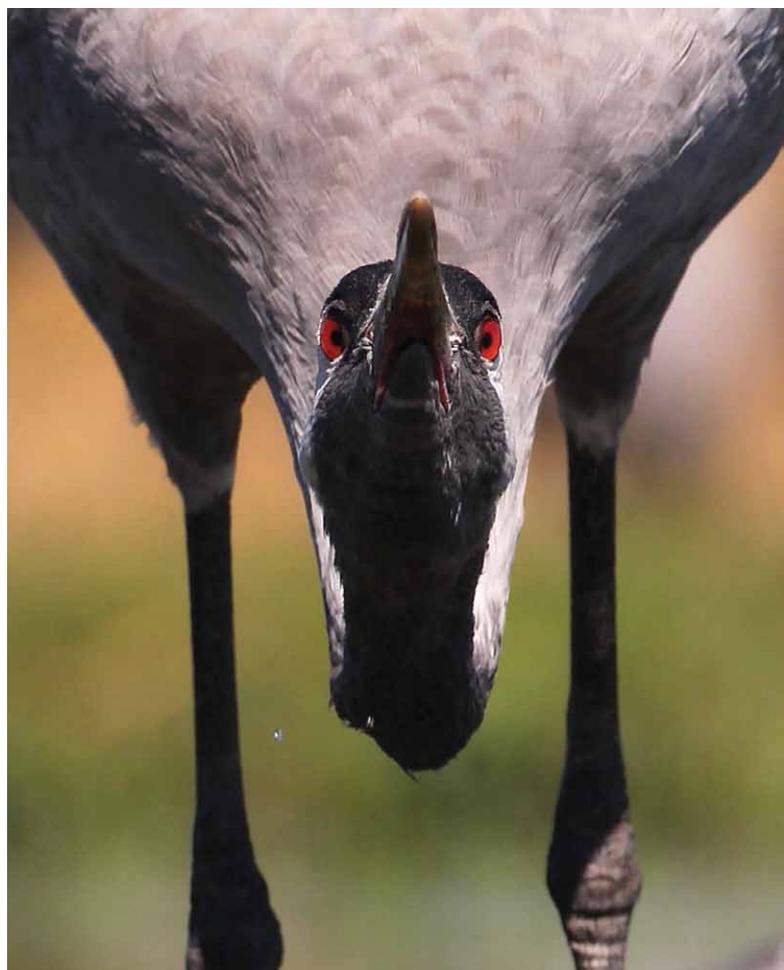
Beside the busy fieldworks we had time to work on several tour improvements and even to construct some new hides as it was foreseen in our last newsletter a year ago! Hopefully every single honored guest will find something interesting in our plans and we very much hope to see you again!

Follow us on [Facebook](#) or check out the [News](#) section on our website to get even more up-to-date information!

Yours sincerely,

János OLÁH

managing director



Drinking Common Crane (Photo: János Oláh)

LATEST NEWS

↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY NEWS

- We are pleased to announce our **Brown Bear Hide Photo Tour in Transylvania!**

Carefully designed photo hides were built and successfully tested in the Hargita Mountains which has a healthy population of these fascinating carnivores. This tour is 5 days long and combined with optional bird photography. The hides were designed by photographers for photographers and we must say having spent a whole year to study the best bear activity we feel comfortable to offer the first tours now! The hides have lens holes with a viewing window above and the photography is without glass. You can find more information on our [website](#).



The `Bear` Photo Hide (Photo: János Oláh)



Carpathian Brown Bear (Photo: János Oláh)

- Pioneering tour in March 2014: **Brown Bear and Golden Jackal Hide Photography Tour in Romania.** This tour was designed in cooperation with our friends at **SKUA Nature**. This is a double based tour which starts in Transylvania and ends in the northern Danube Delta and definitely a great photo adventure if you like mammals. You can find more information on our [website](#).
- **NEW photo hide** was built in the Hortobágy photo network! This is a '**canopy drinking hide**' which is probably the first of its kind in the World! This was designed by János and hopefully will offer the chance to capture images of such shy bird likes Golden Oriole. This hide will be operational from Spring 2014 in a woodland area, close to our [EcoLodge](#) (which is still being built).



The new canopy drinking hide (Photo: János Oláh)



...the main target is: Golden Oriole (Photo: Derek Lynch)

• **NEW Crane Photo Tour** for 2014

This is a special subject at the very beginning of the Crane migration when the numbers are still low but the weather is excellent. This time of the year due to the heat Cranes regularly come to drink and bath where

water is available in the steppe. 2013 was the real test how much this tour can be sustainable on a yearly basis and we must say the test was successful! If you would like to try, the **2014 tour dates now online!**



Drinking Common Crane (Photo: János Oláh)



Bathing Common Crane (Photo: János Oláh)

• A **new drinking hide** is being built in the **Macin Mountain area** for the next seasons. This will be the 2nd hide in this area and will allow more hide-based photography for our clients. We have also been working to get close to the colorful **Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush** and most hopefully there will be chance to photograph this beauty in 2014.

• **Autumn Photo Tour in the Danube Delta to photograph migrants** with optional pre tour to Transylvania for Brown Bears. In this setup you have a possibility to capture Brown Bears in the Carpathian forests and than many migrants in the Danube Delta. Tour date and information will be soon available on our **website.**



Sombre Tit (Photo: János Oláh)



Juvenile Broad-billed Sandpiper (Photo: Zoltán Nagy)

THE FOLLOWING PHOTO TOURS HAVE AVAILABILITIES IN 2014:

Crane Photography Tour in September (4 places left)

White-tailed Eagle Photography Tour in January and December (2 places and 4 places left)

Brown Bear Hide-Photography Tour in March and April (4 places and 6 places left)

Bear and Jackal Tour in March (1 place left)

Transylvania Landscape Photography Tour in October (6 places left)

↓ BIRDWATCHING NEWS

- **Hortobágy NP** is one of the most important staging site for the **Fennoscandinavian Lesser White-fronted Geese** population during they migration.

This tiny population due to a long-term declining since the early 90`s now is one of the most endangered in Europe. However their numbers showed a slightly increase since 2009 it still remained under 100 individuals!

Our team members following the movements of these birds and ensuring they are in safe here.

We really hope this enigmatic species will be able to survive!

If you haven`t seen this species yet it is time to participate in our **Hortobágy - Zemplén Autumn Tour!**



Geese arriving to roosting area (Photo: Zoltán Baczó)



Red-breasted Goose (Photo: Gábor Simay)

- **Redesigned Autumn Danube Delta Birding Tour** with several new destinations included, such as Baragan Steppe Plain where superb saline lakes and grasslands hide many more migrants.

During our last visit, in August/September produced such goodies like Pallas`s Gull, Broad-billed Sandpiper, 430 Spoonbills, Collared Pratincoles and over 100 Dotterels!

For more tour details please visit our website!

- **Red-breasted Goose numbers**

In the last 4-5 years Red-breasted Goose become a regular migrant in Hungary and the best time to see it here is in November and March. In the other hand the traditional wintering places along the Black Sea coast and Danube Delta are still popular but to these places Red-breasts congregate a bit later when the real cold weather arrives. In January 2013, during the Midwinter Count a record number of 54 000 individual were registered here, which is almost the entire world population! Our partner company **Limosa Holidays** updated it`s **Red-breasted Goose Chase Tour** to Romania, which is going to run in the end of November 2014.



Dotterel (Photo: Zoltán Nagy)

- **Nestboxing 2013**

This is a long-term protection project of Sakertours. Every year we build nest boxes for owls and now has started to target other birds as well.

In 2013 we made 20 boxes for Ural Owls, 15 boxes for Tengmalm's Owls, 5 boxes for Scops Owls, 20 boxes for Red-footed Falcon, 20 boxes for Sombre Tit and several boxes for Rollers.

All these artificial nesting places will be placed during winter and spring and hopefully many will be occupied.



Ural Owl chick born in artificial nestbox (Photo: János Oláh)

- **Old and new members / guides in the team**

We are glad to introduce you our newest members / guides joined to the team recently. Their knowledge and experience of our leaders will help to enjoy your birding or photo holiday in Hungary or in Romania. Our tour leaders are the key parts of our tours success therefore we are honored to write some words about them.

- **Tamás Nagy** is a well experienced german-speaking guide who has returned to our team after a few years break.
- **Zoltán Nagy** is a professional nature photographer based in Romania and certainly will improve many of our photography tours with his knowledge!
- **Zsolt Babos** is our 'bear man' who knows everything about bears in the Hargita Mountains. He will take key role in our Bear Photography Tours!

For more details visit our website!

THE FOLLOWING BIRDING TOURS HAVE AVAILABILITIES IN 2014:

Hungary, Slovakia & Transylvania GT in May (2 places left)

Hortobágy - Zemplén Autumn Tour (8 places left)

Danube Delta - Dobrudja Spring Tour (6 places left)

Danube Delta - Dobrudja Autumn Tour (8 places left)

2013 IN REVIEW

↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE HORTOBÁGY NP.

In Hungary the photo season started with **eagle photography** and the past season was really a memorable one, with a record of **74 White-tailed Eagles** at one of our hide in March and with several **Eastern Imperial Eagles** regularly visiting a feeding station in January. Imperial Eagles are irregular at our hides therefore it was a real treat to be able to photograph them regularly!



Eastern Imperial Eagles (Photo: Attila Szilágyi)

The Spring / Summer season was very busy this year with a variety and ever changing subjects on the menu from April to July.

The **Great Bustard photography** was very rewarding in 2013.

At the beginning of May one of the most unique 'event' was in front of the Shorebird hide. Due to the wet spring **White-winged Black Terns** were breeding in the Hortobágy and gave superb photography opportunities.



White-winged Black Terns mating (Photo: Árpád Ecsedi)

The Egret and Stork hide was successfully improved and was one of the favorite hide for many of you.

Lots of **Black Storks, Spoonbills, Herons** and even Marsh Harriers were regular guests.

We had several pairs of **Hoopoes** this year and they offered fantastic opportunities for almost two months continuously. The **Lesser Grey Shrike photography** was in a testing mode in June. Yves Adams of Tierra Photo Tours was a key person to elaborate the strategy – thanks for this Yves!

The rest of our hides produced excellent photo opportunities for **Red-footed Falcon, Pygmy Cormorant, Roller, Bee-eater, Black- and Middle Spotted Woodpecker's, Hawfinches** and **Collared Flycatchers**.



Red-footed Falcon after rain (Photo: Attila Szilágyi)



Common Crane (Photo: János Oláh)

In early Autumn another photo subject was tested successfully; this is about photographing bathing and drinking **Common Cranes**.

In a nutshell these moments were the most characteristic ones of the past season. See you next year!

↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE DANUBE DELTA

The 2nd photo season in the Danube Delta was fantastic again! Using the camouflage 'Borzas' photo-boat was very effective and our small photo team successfully approached many shy birds.

In **May** the water level was higher than normal years therefore we easily got access to many feeding places. Shallow floodings along the Danube were the favorite places for many birds like **Ibises, Herons, Pygmy Cormorants** and **Whiskered Terns**.

In **June** however the water level dropped more than a meter, the lagoons warmed up and many had dense, carpet-like floating vegetation.

This is the place where **Squacco Herons, Night Herons, Little Egrets, Purple Herons, Glossy Ibises** hang out and there were excellent photo opportunities.

One of the main highlight in the Danube Delta was photographing the glowing-eyed **Black-necked** and **Red-necked Grebes!**



Black-necked Grebe (Photo: Joan Roca)



Glossy Ibis (Photo: Marcel Burkhardt)

Another highlight was to see and capture the fishing **Dalmatian** and **White Pelicans** and witness how effectively they fish using different kind of methods.

Inland, the drinking hide of the **Macin National Park** finally proved to be excellent and some lucky tour participants had moments like a beautiful male **Levant Sparrowhawk** eating a male Green Lizard in front of our hide! It was a special moment and those pictures are quite unique! But Macin was also memorable because of photographing Ortolan Buntings, Red- and Lesser Grey Shrikes, Barred Warblers, Golden Orioles, Isabelline Wheatear, Red-rumped Swallows and also 5 species of larks.

The **Black Sea coastal** wetlands and steppes were a perfect ends of every tour. In this place **Collared Pratincoles** and **Bee-eaters** were voted to be the best photo subjects.

You can read more about the Danube Delta Photo Season in our [Blog](#).



Levant Sparrowhawk (Photo: Derek Lynch)

↓ BROWN BEAR PHOTOGRAPHY IN TRANSYLVANIA

Brown Bear photography is the **latest photo tour we have** elaborated for the next season in Romania but before it was put online this tour were tested throughout the year between March and November 2013.

The results were very good and certainly promising for the future! We had very high success rate in several periods though from late August there was a wide range of available food (fruits and beechmast) in the forests and bears got more irregular at our hides.

In the middle of **March** we took the first pictures of bears still in winter conditions.

In April the `test photography tour` was organized with great success. We had Bears in front of the hide almost in every session and only 1 afternoon we failed. This tour was combined with bird and landscape photography and everybody enjoyed it! Beside Bears we photographed Collared Flycatcher, Firecrest, Willow Tit, Three-toed and White-backed Woodpeckers, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Bluethroat, Yellow Wagtail and others.

You can read the photographers report [HERE](#).



Carpathian Brown Bear (Photo: Lennart Hessel)

Later in May and June at least 8 Bears regularly were present around the hides. Mainly younger individuals but few times a huge male has also been seen.

During the **Summer** a mother Bear with 3 cubs was a regular visitor but also other independent youngsters were seen regularly! The different photographs revealed that around 15-17 different individuals have been visiting our hides and learned the places. This is certainly a promising number for the next tours to come!

We are looking forward for an exciting new season in Transylvania too.



Carpathian Brown Bear in a snow (Photo: Attila Szilágyi)

↓ BIRDING TOURS IN 2013

We run several tours for our **partner companies** regularly but also offer a **few fixed date tours**.

We are also able to cater for customized birding tours adapting to certain targets and wishes. All the birdwatching tours were run smoothly and had a great success.

In our main **Carpathian transect tour** (Hungary, Slovakia & Transylvania GT) in Spring over **200 species** have been seen and included lots of goodies like **Saker Falcon, Great Bustard, Capercaillie, Little Crake, Corncrake, Ural Owl, Eagle Owl, Tengmalm's Owl, Pymy Owl, White-backed** and **Three-toed Woodpeckers, Wallcreeper, River Warbler, Thrush Nightingale** just to name but a few.

All the **Danube Delta Birding Tours** were very enjoyable and over **170 bird species** were seen in Spring and Autumn as well. Both period is excellent to experience the migration of the Black Sea coast with such a great birds like **Dalmatian Pelican, Glossy Ibis, Pallas's Gull, Levant Sparrowhawk, Saker, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Paddyfield Warbler, Pied Wheatear, Sombre Tit** and others.

Danube Delta detailed **trip reports** are available in our **website** or **Blog**.

The **Hortobágy - Zemplén Autumn tours** in Hungary were excellent in 2013 with such highlights as **45.000 roosting Cranes, Lesser White-fronted and Red-breasted Goose, Great Bustard, Sociable Plover, Dotterel, Ural and Eagle Owls, Long-eared Owl roost, White-backed Woodpecker**.

The **Red-breasted Goose winter tour** to Romania were a superb short break trip with such species seen this year like **350 Red-breasts, 20 000 White-fronted Goose, 96 Dalmatian Pelican, 560 Whooper Swan, Bewick's Swan, Pygmy Cormorant, Long-legged and Rough-legged Buzzard, Hen Harrier, Goshawk and Long-eared Owls** in a roost site.

Great birds, great food, great company...this is how we would characterize our birding tours and don't hesitate to try if you haven't been to this fascinating part of Europe yet!

Sakertour team



Saker Falcon (Photo: Gábor Simay)



Paddyfield Warbler (Photo: Zoltán Baczó)



White-backed Woodpecker (Photo: Zoltán Baczó)



Waxwing - Lost in winter (Photo: Zoltán Nagy)

**With best wishes for Christmas and the
New Year from everyone at [SAKERTOUR](#)**