

DANUBE DELTA - DOBRUDJA SPRING TOUR

with **SAKERTOUR**

17-24 May 2014



Dalmatian and White Pelican (Gábor Simay)

Leader: Gábor Simay

Arguably the Danube Delta, the surrounding hills and the Dobrudjean plains are one of the prime bird watching areas in Europe, and May is one of the best periods to visit. A remarkable range of specialty birds can be found here; some of them are resident, while some others spend only a short period here and late May can be the very best time to find some of these sought after species in good numbers: like Broad-billed Sandpipers and Rose-colored Starlings.

Our 2014 trip was full with action and produced a long list of goodies. It was a really enjoyable trip with a lot of quality birding and just lots of birds everywhere – due to a very wet Spring in the Delta. We recorded 173 species during this 8 days trip (with 6 and a half day birding) and only three of them were heard only. What is even more important, basically all the specialties and target species were seen very well! The weather was also on our side with very little rain and most of the days were sunny and warm but not hot, so even in the middle of the day bird watching was pleasant. Only one day was too warm around noon when we stayed for an extra two hours for a little rest in our hotel after lunch.

This trip was followed by a Transylvanian four days (three birding days) extension which provided 32 additional species (in total, with the extension we recorded 205 species), different habitats, beautiful landscape and breathtaking, multiple views of Carpathian Brown Bears – for more details see our Transylvania Extension report!

Saturday, 17th of May

Just after noon the group members were picked up at the Bucharest International Airport and at various locations in the city. We had a rather calm and uneventful drive along the fast motorway to Constanta (the biggest city along the Romanian Black-sea coast). Beside the road we had our first Red-footed Falcons and Rollers, while soon after we left the main road we found a Little Owl sitting on the wall of a half build building. Though it was quite late in the afternoon, we still had a short birding stop by a quarry, where some of the specialties were found. We had great views of a pair of Pied Wheatear on the rocks and a pair of Isabelline Wheatear on the short grasslands nearby. Lesser Grey Shrike and Tawny Pipit were also seen well this evening, as well as a nice Long-legged Buzzard. It was already dark when we arrived to our nearby hotel in the village of Sinoe.



Tawny Pipit is a common species in dry open habitats (Gábor Simay)

Sunday, 18th of May

Early in the morning we took a short walk within Sinoe village. Our main target here would have been the Syrian Woodpecker which is usually found in villages where old orchards or walnut trees are around. We had no success but we had good views of some of the species which later turned out to be among the most common species in the region, like Hoopoe, Cuckoo and Red-backed Shrike. We walked backed to the hotel and had breakfast at 7:00 what became our regular breakfast time during the trip.

From the village a very bad road leads to a shallow lagoon, with plenty of mudflats, surrounded by deep water ponds and reed beds. Usually these kinds of lagoons host the most diverse wetland species gatherings. Along the road we passed different kind of farmlands – mainly arable fields – where a short stop produced our first Black-headed Bunting, and many Calandra Larks, which were display flaying above us. As we drove down along a sandy bank, we had Bee-eaters by a big breeding colony. Here we saw our first Great White Pelicans flying overhead.



Great-white Pelicans Flying overhead (Gábor Simay)

The nearby reed beds turned out to be excellent habitats for Paddyfield Warblers which were rather common around. We had very close views of this species and also of an Icterine Warbler which appearance in the reed bed was rather surprising. A flying Great Bittern was seen also here, while Wood Sandpipers were the first waders to appear, but soon after Black-winged Stilts and Pied Avocets were seen in the first small lagoons. On the nearby grassland three Eurasian Stone Curlews were seen very well, and when we arrived to the best part of this habitat we started to add the new-to-the list species rather quickly.

We had several Caspian and one Gull-billed Tern here but our attention soon turned to the sandpiper flocks which contained mainly Curlew Sandpipers, Dunlins and Little Stints, but more than 30 Broad-billed Sandpipers were also seen here which is an outstanding number even at this eastern location. The dryer parts of the lagoon held a few Kentish Plovers and also a few Collared Pratincoles. As the road was really bad and slow back to the hotel, it was already time to head back to have our lunch and right after go out to check another wetland site a bit further away.

On the way down to Vadu we managed to get better views of some of the more common roadside birds, like Roller and we also spend some time in a bushy area where Red-footed Falcons were flying around us and they landed on the top of the small trees where they spend enough time to let us fantastic scope views. It was here where we had our first lone Rose-colored Starling – a real stunner which usually arrives only late in May and in most of the years they spend only a few weeks around.



Paddyfield Warbler (Gábor Simay)

In Vadu we had our first flock of Spanish Sparrows, which were coming down to a small pool to have a bath and they were drying themselves on the nearby bushes. On the small ponds around we had extremely good views of the breeding plumaged Curlew Sandpipers and the many Little Gulls which were around. A small flock of Broad-billed Sandpipers proved to be very friendly, so we were watching them from only about 30 meters. The surrounding flooded area had a couple of Garganeys, Glossy Ibises and some breeding Collared Pratincoles. Two Red-rumped Swallows turned up in a Barn Swallow flock. The scattered bushes along the road provided some late migrants, like Spotted Flycatcher or Willow Warbler, while from the nearby reed beds we heard a Savi's Warbler singing, which was found quite easily singing from a perch. Here we had two Great Bitterns flying together above the extensive reed beds. We drove from here to the sandy beach where a few immature Mediterranean Gulls and a nice breeding plumaged Ruddy Turnstone were added to our list. On the way back we tried to find Syrian Woodpecker once more in another village, but the locality was simply too noisy as there were some construction works nearby, so we decided to drive back to our hotel, back to Sinoe.



Gull-billed Terns (left) and Pallas's Gull (right) (Gábor Siamy)

Monday, 19th of May

Instead of going again to the lagoons we planned to visit Cheia gorge and farmlands around in the morning to do some dry country bird watching. Along the road hundreds of wind turbines spoil the landscape, but – at least for smaller birds – the surrounding extensive farmlands still provide some divers habitat. Our first stop here provided Short-toed Lark and great views of singing Black-headed Bunting males as well as a female, which was busy to carry nest material to a nearby weedy area. Spanish Sparrows, Rollers, Isabelline Wheatears, Common Whitethroats and Calandra Larks were also observed before we reached the beautiful gorge of Cheia. The temperature was already fairly high - above 25 Celsius degree – when we arrived here, so passerine activity was a bit low. Nevertheless Pied Wheatears were active and at least 5 birds were seen here readily and Ortolan Buntings were also singing from the slopes. In the grassy valley Susliks - the typical steppe rodent of Dobrudja – were everywhere. We had to cross a small stream – which was not easy at all; we even had to carry some rocks into the water to use them like stepping stones – to find a nice male Barred Warbler. While we were getting closer to this bird, the alarm calls of the hirundines around drew our attention to a small raptor flying overhead, what turned out to be a female Levant Sparrowhawk. Though we had nice views, one part of the group, who stayed behind did not see the bird.



Female Black-headed Bunting (Gábor Simay)

We walked back to the bus and a few kilometers away we stopped to have a look at a soaring Long-legged Buzzard, when first a male, then a female Levant Sparrowhawk turned up above our heads. This time all of us had great views of these localized raptors. We took some small roads to get back to the main Constanca-Tulcea road, which was rather calm bird wise, except of the numerous Bee-eaters and another pair of Levant Sparrowhawk which were calling and displaying by our van. It was rather a great surprise to see 4 or 5 birds (well, the first and the second females could be the same individual) in one morning and all views were really great.



Male Levant Sparrowhawk (Gábor Simay)

We went back to our hotel to have lunch and we decided to head back to the lagoons which we visited the previous morning. Except of some remote areas of the Delta, this is probably the best place to find Pallas's Gull. However we did not find any on the previous day so we hoped to find more seagulls towards the evening here and hopefully one or two Pallas's among them. As we were winding on the dirt road already from a great distance, it was obvious that the lagoons held much more gulls this afternoon compared to yesterday. However our target species was not present, so we had time to check the other birds around. We had great views of the many resting (about 30) Dalmatian Pelicans and Little, Caspian, Gull-billed and Common Terns. Sandpipers were numerous and we had time to do a count and to our surprise we had no less then 187 Broad-billed Sandpipers here! It was an amazing count, and probably the highest record regarding the last couple of years (or decades?).

We drove a bit further and we checked the reed beds where we saw a couple of more Paddyfield and Savi's Warblers and a few Red-crested Pochards, Spoonbills and Black-tailed Godwits. Towards the evening we drove slowly back and from the van we enjoyed views from a few dozen meters of the breeding plumaged sandpipers and stints and the Little Terns, which gave small fish to its mate as a gift. We get closer to the gull flocks again and even with using our bins it was obvious that there were some huge gulls with black head in the flock! We drove closer and we enjoyed superb views of six Pallas's Gulls on the ground and in flight as well. We were lucky enough to find no less then three different plumage types among them (two 2nd summer, one 3rd summer and three adults). After this fine experience and a great day of birding we dove back happily to our hotel and had our last dinner here as the next morning we had to leave this region for the Danube Delta.



Broad-billed Sandpiper (Gábor Simay)

Tuesday, 20th of May

Because we had already tried but we hadn't seen the Syrian Woodpecker, before we left the region we made a short village birding once more. We had a Hobby flying ahead, a fast moving Rose-colored Starling flock and Spanish Sparrows breeding in White Stork's nest before we heard the drumming of a Syrian Woodpecker. We found it quickly and we enjoyed great views of a pair flying around and feeding on the bigger trees. We had one more Rose-colored Starling flock, a Black-headed Bunting and after a sort petrol station break we drove towards the big oak forests of the Babadag-hills. In the forest we quickly add some common woodland species to our list. Best of them a few singing Wood and Icterine Warblers. A few of us had some views of Hawfinches as well and we found an active nest hole of a Great-spotted Woodpecker. We stopped for while to try to get better views of the fast moving Marsh Tits when we heard the song of a Red-breasted Flycatcher. We had some quick view of it but afterwards it started play hide-and-seek with us. However, after a while we managed to find his favorite perches around and eventually all of us had fantastic scope views of this beauty.

We walked back to our van and we drove to a shady but open area where we had a nice picnic lunch. We hoped to find here some soaring raptors but this time – except of a few Common Buzzards – they eluded us. However Ortolan Bunting was common in the nearby vineyards and we had great scope views of them. We planned to arrive to Tulcea to a take a boat to Mila23 – a small village within the Delta – in mid-afternoon, so we still had time to check some of the smaller lagoons along our way. We saw many Whiskered Terns, some Ferruginous Ducks and a Penduline Tit beside many common species.

In Tulcea we picked up our boatman and we drove to the harbor. Here, we left our van for the next three days and changed it for an open, comfortable motor boat. In the Delta one can do bird watching only this way: use a boat and try to stop it wherever some interesting bird turns up. Sometimes it is not easy as in some of the branches of the Danube the water flows quite quickly. There are many small channels smaller and bigger lagoons, some poplar and more

willow forests and really vast reed beds. There are some villages also in the Delta and many – like Mila23, where our hotel was – can be reached only by boat.

The boat was fast but it still took about three hours to get to our hotel, but we had time to do some birding and we saw many interesting species like Pygmy Cormorant, Squacco Heron, four Grey-headed Woodpeckers, one Rose-colored Starling and a Collared Flycatcher. We counted four White-tailed Eagles – an adult was sitting motionless on an overhanging branch, so we had amazing views as we passed it by our boat. The hotel itself was built on a really small island, but the tiny garden still offered some birding opportunity. A pair of Common Redstart bred nearby and we could observe them as they carried food busily to their nestlings. Caspian Gulls were also common around.



Adult White-tailed Eagle (Gábor Simay)

Wednesday, 21st of May

After a nice breakfast we were in our boat again. Today we wanted to discover the small branches of the Danube, the channel system and some of the more interesting small lagoons around. So the plan was to take the boat for the whole day, and return to the hotel only for lunch and for the hottest part of the day as this day proved a bit warmer, and the temperature reached 27 Celsius degree.

Glossy Ibises were feeding beside the hotel and, from a close by little channel we heard a Thrush Nightingale singing. They are common in the Delta, but late May only a few of them sing, so we had to grab the opportunity and tried to have a view of this skulking specialty. We were lucky, cause after a few minutes of searching it perched up for us on a dead branch so the whole group had a clear view of the bird.

Our next destination was an old poplar forest where a drumming advertised the presence of a Black Woodpecker. We managed to park our boat to a tiny bay among the trees. From this point we had extremely good and long views of the male on a dead tree.



Black Woodpecker (Gábor Simay)

The rest of the morning provided many Rollers, some elusive Penduline Tits (they are common here, but while breeding they are rather shy), singing Lesser White-throats and a cooperative Olivaceous Warbler beside the common heron species, Ferruginous Ducks and big (sometimes hundreds) flocks of Great White Pelicans.

After lunch and a little rest we went to the opposite direction to discover some small lagoons. We had great views of both Black-necked and Red-necked Grebes and we also enjoyed a breeding colony of Whiskered Terns. There were plenty of Squacco and Black-crowned Nightheron, so the photographers had an opportunity to get closer to them. We had fabulous views of two Little Bitterns. We heard first their booming but with a little patient we had clear and very close views of them. A nice flock of Rose-colored Starling was seen on a dead willow tree, a few Red-footed Falcons were also around and eventually we found a Grey-headed Woodpecker (after many much shorter sightings) which was friendly enough to preen in front us for about five minutes.



Little Bittern (Gábor Simay)

Thursday, 22nd of May

This morning we headed toward a very interesting area. A huge sandbank with dunes is located in the heart of the delta. This area is big enough to host three villages where fishermen live, a big alkaline pond and a huge, dry oak forest. The boat trip to get there was long, but we had great views of some of the already well known birds, like Dalmatian and Great-white Pelicans.



White Pelicans (Gábor Simay)

Close to the banks we had Black Stork, Common Ravens and Sedge Warbler as additions to our bird list. At the little harbor a car was waiting for us and we drove directly to the alkaline pond. A big breeding colony of Collared Pratincole, together with many Avocets and Kentish Plovers with chicks were found here. Also Ruffs, Curlew Sandpipers and Little Stints fed on the shallow water. Bee-eaters were very common around.

We were invited by our driver to have a meal in their house. It was a real experience and the two courses traditional fish meal was really tasty, it was made of at least 5 or 6 different local fish species.

In the afternoon we visited the woods which was a bit slow, but we had great views of Icterine Warbler, Common Redstart and Common Treecreeper here.

The boat trip back started with a nice find: a Penduline Tit's nest was spotted overhanging from a willow tree. In a few minutes the male arrived and spent about five minutes repairing his half-ready but already very nice looking nest. Another good find was a second summer 'Baltic' Lesser Black-backed Gull which is rather scarce around this time of the year. The lights were great in the evening so we gave again some chances for the photographers to try to get some good pics around our hotel.



Dalmatian Pelican close to our hotel in Mila23 (Gábor Simay)

Friday, 23rd of May

Our last birding day started with a breakfast in our hotel and then a fast boat picked us up which could take us to Tulcea in one hour. We had to be quick as we had a lot to do in our last birding day. Even from this fast boat we recorded some good species like White-tailed Eagle. In Tulcea we changed our boat to our van again and we drove to our hotel where we quickly checked in and left our baggages in our rooms. We had about an hour long drive ahead from Tulcea to the Macin-hills; however roadside birding is sometimes also productive along this road.

We counted five flocks of Rose-colored Starlings (about 120 birds altogether) flying close by to our van. This species appears literally every year in this region but usually only in the last third of May and they stay for only a few weeks unless they stay here to breed. However breeding is far from regular.

We stopped the van whenever we spotted an interesting looking raptor in the sky, and this way, beside some Long-legged Buzzard we saw two dark morph Booted Eagles and two extremely close Lesser-spotted Eagles.



Dark morph Booted Eagle (Gábor Simay)

Near Macin town we took a small dirt road and we drove along as far as we could to save us some time (and energy). From this point we started our walk and on the road we saw a huge Spur-thighed Tortoise as it was walking across. Here the hills are rocky and mostly barren and higher up Rufous-tailed Rock Thrushes – our main target here - breed. Plenty of Honey Buzzards were in the air, and they were displaying spectacularly above us. Further up Ortolan Buntings, then Woodlarks were seen, and on the top of the rocks two male Rufous-tailed Rock Thrushes were singing. As we were walking down a female Levant Sparrowhawk circled above our head and on a side valley we found a local scarcity: a nice male Woodchat Shrike.

We had (a bit latish) lunch in a nearby restaurant. Not far from here we found a Long-legged Buzzard nest on a cliff with three quite big nestlings and an adult which was bringing food for them. The weather seemed to get worse with some heavy rains nearby. Despite this weather we tried a good raptor watch site along the road, but - no surprise in this weather – except some Hobbies and Kestrels, we found no raptors but had some real good views of Cuckoos chasing each other, and eventually we managed to find – after many-many flight views – one Golden Oriole perched in the open for our scopes.

Our last birding spot for the day and for the whole trip was an open oak forest. We had some very good views of Hawfinches here, good but short views of three Sombre Tits and we heard at least three Wrynecks but they all remained in the dense cover, unfortunately. A Green Woodpecker was seen briefly, while first a Middle Spotted and later a Lesser Spotted

Woodpecker made a real show for us in the beautiful evening lights. A breeding pair of Red-rumped Swallows was also seen very well just like the several Turtle Doves along the road on the wires.

We arrived back quite late to Tulcea and after a nice meal everyone retreated to the rooms as we were expected to wake up quite early next morning to reach the flights in Bucharest.



Red-rumped Swallow near Tulcea (Gábor Simay)

Saturday, 24th of May

We had to wake up very early and we had to start quickly from Tulcea to Bucharest (a four and a half hours drive) because of some unluckily early departure time. It was a little sad that we had no time to stop by some good birding sites along the road but more importantly we managed to take everyone back to Bucharest in time to reach their flights. The only notable sighting was a flock of Rose-colored Starling and some common farmland birds and a few Red-footed Falcons.

We said goodbye for those who finished the trip at this point and we kept driving with the rest of the group towards Transylvania to start our extension tour in a much different habitat, in the land of the Brown Bears...

SYSTEMATIC LIST

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*: Seen on most of the days but usually only a few individuals.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (H): Heard only once from a wheat field

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*: Not really common, but around wetlands, small flocks or family groups were regular..

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*: Very common in Dobrudja but it was seen elsewhere too. A family with few days old chicks was also seen.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*: Common, sometimes numerous at all wetland sites.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*: A few were seen in Dobrudja and it was common in the Danube Delta

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*: Common around most of the wetland sites.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*: Only a few were seen in the lagoons of Dobrudja.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*: Mostly in the lagoons of Dobrudja. Some nice males ween very well.

Common Pochard *Aythya farina*: Common but not numerous around all wetland sites.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*: A few were seen around most os the wetland sites, but it was evidently more common in the Delta.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*: They were seen on two days in Dobrudja in small number. We had some good views of the beautiful males as well.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*: Common, especially in the Delta.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*: Only seen in the Delta where it was not uncommon.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*: Only seen in the Delta on one day, but we had really close views.

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*: It was recorded in five consecutive days. Usually not in big numbers, single birds or pairs together, but the biggest flocks contained more then 20 birds. Some views were extremely close and good.



White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*: Common in Dobrudja and in the Delta as well. Usually many big flocks were seen each days. The biggest flocks were above 200 birds. Some soaring birds even above the Macin-hills.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*: Only seen in the Delta, though there it was very common.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: Common throughout the trip.

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*: Heard in most of the days, but it was seen only in Dobrudja. The most memorable sighting was two birds flying together in the nice evening lights.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*: One seen in flight very briefly on the first evening in the Delta. On the next day two different calling males were seen exceptionally well.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*: It was fairly common in Dobrudja and very common in the Delta.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*: A few were seen in Dobrudja but very common in the Delta.



Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: Quite common and it was seen on most of the days.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*: Fairly common, though not numerous in reed beds both in Dobrudja and in the Delta.



Great White Egret *Egretta alba*: Quite common during the whole trip.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: They were recorded on seven days. More in the Delta.

European White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*: Common. Almost all the nests are in villages but we found a beautifully located nest among the lagoons of Dobrudja as well.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*: Only one bird was seen near Letea in the Delta

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*: This year it was surprisingly scarce, recorded only on two dates, but the views were good.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*: A few flocks were seen in Dobrudja also, but in the Delta it was rather common. Close to our hotel on a shallow weedy wetland they were feeding all mornings and evenings, providing us very good views.



White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*: Recorded in two days and five individuals were recorded all together. One adult was especially seen well as we could approach it by our boat without disturbing it.

Leeser-spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*: Two birds were seen along the road to the Macin-hills on the 23rd. Both were good views but the first bird landed just 10 meters from the road!

Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata*: Two dark morph birds were seen very well on the 23rd, while driving to the Macin-hills.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*: The most frequently seen birds of prey during the trip.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*: They were seen both in Dobrudja and in the Macin-hills. One nest was found with three big chicks as well.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*: A few were seen for example around the Babadag-forest and the Macin-hills.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*: Only seen on our last full day, when at least five birds were seen displaying above the Macin-hills.

Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes*: We had no less than 5 or 6 birds on the trip: two pairs and a female (which could be identical with one of the previous birds) in Dobrudja, and one female in the Macin-hills. All were exceptionally good views.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*: A widespread and common raptor. More were seen outside the Delta.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*: Some breeding pairs and very close views in Dobrudja, but several were seen elsewhere and some in the Delta as well.



Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*: Only one was seen in Sinoe in our last day in Dobrudja but several were recorded in the Delta.

European Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* (H): Only one was heard near Sinoe. We tried to get some views but it stayed in the dense reed.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*: A few in the deeper lagoons in Dobrudja and many in the Delta.

Common Coot *Fulica atra*: Quite common, especially in the Delta.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*: Many breeding pairs were seen around the lagoons and also a big breeding colony around Letea.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*: A few were seen around shallow wetlands.

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*: Three birds were seen together not far from our Hotel in Sinoe.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*: A few were seen around most of the suitable wetland sites, but big breeding colonies were also present at two locations. They were already sitting on their nests.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*: Some good views in Dobrudja and Letea as well, but only a handful of birds were seen all together.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*: Some bigger migrating flocks were recorded near Sinoe and a few elsewhere.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*: Breeding pairs were recorded at least three different locations. Also quite small chicks were seen by a bigger pond near Letea.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*: Only one bird was recorded near Sinoe, in nice breeding plumage.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*: Fairly common around suitable wetland habitats.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*: The biggest flock (about 100 birds) was seen near Sinoe. Elsewhere only single numbers were recorded.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*: Most of them were in stunning breeding plumage. Common around most of the lagoons.



Little Stint *Calidris minuta*: Hundreds at Sinoe and common at other lagoon sites as well.

The most common *Calidris* species during the tour.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*: One of the star species of the trip. The timing of the trip was excellent to find this odd wader but the 187 birds together on the 19th of May was a real surprise. We don't know about similar sized flocks from recent years from this region. A few dozen were recorded on the previous day as well.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*: One breeding plumaged bird was seen by the sandy coast on the 18th of May.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: Not numerous but a few birds were present around all suitable wetland sites.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*: Only a few birds were seen around the lagoons in Dobrudja.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: Three birds were seen on the 19th near Sinoe.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*: Three birds near Sinoe and another one at Letea.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*: A few birds were seen on the 19th near Sinoe.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*: Quite common, though not really numerous around the lagoons.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*: Only recorded around the Constanca region.

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*: Very common during the whole trip.



Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*: A scarce migrant. Only one immature *ssp. fuscus* was seen in the Delta.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*: Common bird around wetlands.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*: Only three immature birds were seen by the coast near Vadu in the evening of the 18th of May.

Pallas's Gull *Larus ichthyæetus*: One of the main target species of the trip. Six birds of three different age classes (with three adults) were seen exceptionally well in the afternoon of 19th of May.



Little Gull *Larus minutus*: The biggest flocks were 20 plus birds, mostly immatures, but a few nice adults as well. Only seen in Dobrudja.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*: Many of them and also breeding pairs were around the bigger lagoons in Dobrudja.

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica*: On our first day in Dobrudja we had one bird, and three at the same location on the next day.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: Very common both in the Delta and in Dobrudja as well.



Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*: Small flocks, maximum nine birds together were seen on two days in Dobrudja.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*: A few were seen around the Dobrudja lagoons and many more in the Delta with some breeding colonies there as well.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*: Only a few birds seen on three different dates. Obviously marsh tern migration was over.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*: Common and recorded almost every day.

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*: Common in the Delta but scarce elsewhere.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*: Only a few individuals were recorded in the Delta.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*: Very common.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*: Commonly seen in the countryside.



Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*: Very common, especially in the Delta.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*: One bird was seen very well on a wall in our first evening and another bird in our last full day which was sitting in the window of a ruined building.

Common Swift *Apus apus*: We recorded them a couple of times during the trip.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*: Common, especially in Dobrudja in villages and short grassed pastures and along dirt roads.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*: Many were seen breeding in holes of the banks of the Danube channels.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*: Very common in Dobrudja and Macin-hills, basically anywhere where breeding habitat (sandbank) is available.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus*: Quite commonly seen in Dobrudja but many more were seen in the willow forests in the Delta.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*: An exceptionally great view in our last evening of a male feeding low down on an oak tree just in front of us.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius*: One bird was seen well in our last evening in an oak forest.

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus*: On the 20th of May we had a pair in a village. The male was drumming and showing very nicely.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*: Common in the Delta. We also found a nesthole with big chicks in the Babadag forest.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*: We had a great view of a male drumming in the poplar forest in the Delta on the 21st of May.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*: One was heard near Macin and one was briefly seen in our last evening.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*: Commonly seen in the Delta, but we had only a handful of really good views as most of the birds were rather shy.



Wryneck *Jynx toquilla* (H): Three birds were heard on our last evening. All of them were called only once and they were too elusive to find them.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*: Very common in agricultural areas.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*: Common in Dobrudja, especially by smaller roads.

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*: We saw a few on the rocky slopes of the Macin-hills.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*: We recorded a few displaying birds only ones in agriculture land on our third day.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*: A common bird of the Dobrudjean farmlands.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: Common.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cercropis daurica*: Two pairs were seen. Both around bridges where on the second occasion we also found their nest.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*: Very common especially in villages.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*: They were seen a couple times mainly around wetlands.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*: Quite common around all kind of wetlands.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*: A common bird around farmlands and wetlands as well. Most commonly Black-headed Wagtails (*feldeggii*) were seen but the hybrid *superciliaris* form was recorded regularly as well. Blue-headed (n nominate) Wagtails were also regularly seen just like the also hybrid *dombrowski* types.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*: A common, though not numerous species of short grassed pastures and farmlands.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*: Only one bird was seen singing in the Babadag-forest.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*: A few were heard in bushy areas. Only one tour member managed to see and photograph it.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*: A few were heard in the Delta and one was seen also there.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*: A pair was seen in the Cheia-gorge and one was heard singing in Tulcea.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*: A common breeding bird in the Delta. A pair was nesting just next door to our hotel there.



Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*: A very common bird around suitable habitats.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*: First a pair was seen in our very first evening. Later a few more were seen around the very short grassed pastures. On our last day even a family was seen with freshly fledged juveniles.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*: A pair was seen well in our very first evening and another six birds on the 19th in rocky areas in Dobrudja.

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*: A surprisingly scarce bird in this region so we were still happy to find a male in the Macin-hills.

Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula*: A few birds were seen in the Delta and a few heard singing elsewhere in forested areas.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*: A few were heard in Babadag and a few were seen on our last evening in an open oak wood.

Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*: Two nice males were seen singing on the rocks in the Macin-hills.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*: One nice male was seen in the bushes of the Cheia-gorge, on the 19th of May.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*: In the delta it is a fairly common breeding bird and many of them were heard. A few were also seen well.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*: In bushy and forested areas it was a quite common species. A few migrating also in the bushes by the coast.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*: Only a few were seen singing along ditches or bushes in Dobrudja.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*: One migrating bird by the coast and a few breeding also in the Delta which were seen well.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*: Only a few birds were seen in Dobrudja and a few more heard in the Delta.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobenus*: Only two singing birds in the Delta near Letea.

Common Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*: Common in the reeds.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*: Surprisingly common in Dobrudja this year. Many of them were seen exceptionally well.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*: Very common in all types of reeds.

Icterine Warbler *Hyppolais icterina*: The first bird was seen in the reed in Dobrudja side by side of a Paddyfield Warbler. Many breeding one were seen in the forests.

Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida*: One bird was first heard then also seen in the Delta.

Common

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*: A common bird in the more forested areas and in the Delta.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*: Only one migrating bird was seen near Vadu on 18th of May.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*: A few singing birds were very nicely seen in the Babadag-forest.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*: Many migrating birds were seen in the bushes in Dobrudja near the coast. A few were seen elsewhere during the trip.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*: A singing male was seen very well in the forest of Babadag.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula collaris*: Only one bird was seen briefly by some of us on the 20th in the Delta.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*: Two birds were seen in the Babadag-forest.

Great Tit *Parus major*: Very common in the Delta, a few were seen elsewhere.

Sombre Tit *Parus lugubris*: Three birds were seen briefly but well on the 23rd of May in an open oak forest.

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*: Very common in the Delta.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*: We saw the nominate race twice in the Delta.

Eurasian Penduline-tit *Remiz pendulinus*: One was seen near Einsala in Dobrudja and quite commonly heard and also seen a couple of times in the Delta. Best views were of a male breeding its nest beside our boat.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europea*: It was seen only in the Babadag-forest.

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*: A pair was seen well in the sandy forest near Letea.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*: A very common bird outside the Delta.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*: A rare bird in Romania, so it was nice to find a fine male in the Macin-hills.



Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*: Not rare in Dobrudja. We had some very nice views.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*: Only seen on our last day in a pine-oak mixed forest.

Common Magpie *Pica pica*: Very common throughout.

Eurasian Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*: Common, especially in Dobrudja.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*: Common, especially in Dobrudja.

Hooded Crow *Corvus corone cornix*: Common, especially in the Delta.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*: Two birds were seen near Letea and a few more at the Macin-hills.

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*: Very-very common in the whole area.

Rose-colored Starling *Sturnus roseus*: We recorded this enigmatic nomad no less than 15 times during our trip. Though, they were seen landed on trees only three times. On our best day we recorded about 120 birds in five different flocks.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*: Many birds were seen briefly or in flight and many more were heard singing but we saw one sitting in the open for a long period.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Very common.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*: Many of them were seen in Dobrudja around farmlands and also at White Strok nests as they often nest underneath these huge constructions (alongside with House Sparrows).

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*: Generally common, especially in the Delta.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*: Common in forested areas.

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*: Recorded a couple of times around very different type of habitats.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*: Recorded only a few times during the trip.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*: First one or two birds were seen very briefly in the Babadag-forest. Then in our last evening a small flock was seen very well in an oak forest.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*: In our last evening we saw a few birds singing.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*: Recorded on three days. A few good scope views and also some distant birds. They were quite actively singing.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*: On the 18th we saw two males briefly, but on the 19th we had about five singing males and a female which was busy in building their nest in a weedy ditch side. Another male on the 20th.



Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*: More were seen in the reed beds of Dobrudja, but a few were seen daily in the Delta as well.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*: Very common in Dobrudja.

MAMMAL LIST:

Steppe Polcat *Mustella eversmanni*: One of this secretive eastern species was seen in Dobrudja near Sinoe.

Suslik *Spermophilus citellus*: Common ground living mammal in grassy areas.

Musk Rat: One was seen in the Delta.

Brown Hare: A few were seen in Dobrudja.