

## Romania: Danube Delta & Black Sea Coast

Sat 8<sup>th</sup> – Sun 16<sup>th</sup> September 2012

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Photos (clockwise, from top left): This **Black Woodpecker** performed superbly, right next to the ponton! • As it picked green caterpillars off the reeds, we had good views of **Penduline Tit** • A juvenile **Little Bittern** in the open • Again in the open, this **Spotted Crake** fed alongside the ponton • A **European Sousek** tries to break the Sousek record for how much food it can get in its mouth at one go • We had fine views of this juvenile **White-tailed Eagle** © All photos by tour participant Gordon Small

report compiled by tour leader:  
**Peter Kennerley**

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## **Trip Diary**

### **Tour Leaders: Peter Kennerley and Zoltan Baczó**

**with Gerry & Ruth Cooper, Ray & Pam Gooding, Pauline Kell, Alice Lester, Penny Moon, Pam Phillipson, Malcolm & Frances Sainsbury and Gordon Small**

Limosa's autumn tour to Romania focuses on the magical migration that this region of the Black Sea experiences, regardless of the prevailing weather. Here we combine a wonderful selection of eastern European birds with migrants from the north whilst enjoying a relaxing week-long break along the Black Sea coast and Danube Delta. Here it is possible to watch roadside birds included such delights as Roller and Bee-eater, together with common migrant species such as Red-backed Shrike and Red-breasted Flycatcher, which are so hard to see at home. Add to these some of the scarcer and highly sought after European breeders including Levant Sparrowhawk, Great Black-headed Gull and Lesser Spotted Eagle. By the coast, wetlands and shallow lagoons offer resting spots for many migrant shorebirds, including Dunlin, Curlew Sandpipers and Little Stints, while small groups of Broad-billed and Marsh Sandpipers, and flocks of migrating terns just add icing to the cake.

By contrast, the second part of our tour includes a four-night stay on a floating Ponton in the Danube Delta, which provides a wonderfully sublime experience as we cruise slowly along the backwaters of this unique region. The Ponton is actually a luxury floating barge which is slowly towed by a tug-boat. Birding is done from both the Ponton and also from the two smaller craft, which can get along the narrower waterways and into some remote corners of the delta. Here we visit lakes that we can only dream about in Britain, where Whiskered and Black Terns, Pygmy Cormorants, Great White and Dalmatian Pelicans, Squacco, Purple and Night Herons and Great White Egrets dominate the scene. Woodlands of poplar and willow harbour Rollers, and Lesser Spotted, Black and Grey-headed Woodpeckers.

This proved to be a most relaxing and bird-filled week and, with 170+ species recorded, the range and variety of birds is excellent. This tour is ideal for those who really do not like the idea of walking too far during their holiday, and who want good food and plenty of relaxation. Most excursions made during the four-day stay on the Ponton are done by boat and require very little walking. Elsewhere, excursions made on foot are mostly on flat ground and taken at a leisurely pace. This really is birding as easy as it comes.

### **Sat 8<sup>th</sup> September**

After meeting our guide, Zoltan (Zoli), and driver, Miki, at Bucharest airport we sped off towards the town of Calarasi on the north side of the Danube, which we reached just before sunset. Along the way it was apparent that most of the harvest had been gathered and vast prairie-like fields were largely devoid of birds. At Calarasi there followed a short wait while we boarded the ferry to cross the river, but we were able to enjoy the large numbers of Jackdaws, Rooks and Hooded Crows gathering to roost in the trees by the ferry. After the 20 minute crossing, there followed a short pause for border formalities as we entered Bulgaria, and we finally reached our hotel at 21.00.

### **Sun 9<sup>th</sup> September**

We began the day with a pre-breakfast amble in the park by the hotel at Silistra, where a Red-backed Shrike was followed by a Spotted Flycatcher and couple of Willow Warblers. Over the river thousands upon thousands of Sand Martins were steadily moving east – where had they roosted? Overhead, Tree Pipits were calling almost constantly and although very few were seen, we estimated that at least 40 went over in the hour before breakfast. Eventually a couple of woodpeckers were tracked down, both Syrian and gave the most obliging of views.

Following breakfast we re-entered Romania and spent much of the remainder of the day travelling to the east towards the Black Sea coast at Mamaia, just north of Constanta. Along the way we made several stops to admire our first Bee-eaters, Pygmy Cormorants, many more Red-backed Shrikes and a Red-rumped Swallow. A prolonged stop by some roadside fishponds produced a good range of birds, mostly typical of wetlands which we would see many times over the coming week. Overhead, Tree Pipits were still going over in good numbers and with them a single Red-throated was heard. A movement on a small patch of floating vegetation revealed a juvenile Little Crake, shortly followed by a second bird, and both gave prolonged 'scope views – a new bird for everyone.

Lunch was taken near a derelict cement factory at Canaraua Fetei where House Martins and a handful of Red-rumped Swallows were still attending nests, this being one of only a handful of breeding sites for Red-rumped Swallows in the country. Butterflies flew in great abundance here, with the spectacular Cardinal and several Large Coppers being particularly interesting. Once we had reached Mamaia and dropped off the baggage we headed for the refinery pools at Navodari, just 15 minutes up the coast. Although not the most salubrious of sites, it was packed with migrating waders and terns. The highlights were three juvenile Broad-billed Sandpipers, always a joy to watch, and several delicate Marsh Sandpipers. Wood and Curlew Sandpipers, several Black-tailed Godwits, Little Stints, Spotted Redshanks, Greenshanks and Ringed Plovers fed on the open mud, while hundreds of Common, Little and Sandwich Terns roosted here. With them were single juvenile Black and White-winged Black Terns. Most surprising here was a rather sickly Black-throated Diver which appeared to have been oiled. It slowly swam away from us but soon beached itself a little further up the beach. Sadly, when we returned two days later it had died.

### **Mon 10<sup>th</sup> September**

The pre-breakfast stroll around the hotel surroundings began with a lake watch, where Little Gulls and Common Terns flew back and forth. Nearby bushes and trees held several Red-breasted Flycatchers and Red-backed Shrikes, plus numerous Willow Warblers, while the local pack of hounds did its best to make us unwelcome. A good start, one certainly worth getting out of bed for.

We began the morning by heading inland through a vast rolling but rather desolate agricultural landscape punctuated by roadside trees and an abundance of wind turbines – which are reaching plague proportions in several parts of this region. As we neared the village of Targusor we watched Long-legged Buzzards perched on roadside pylons and a couple of Lesser Kestrels interacting over a field, the male showing particularly well in the morning light. The main event of the morning was the visit to the gorge at Cheia – although this is really stretching the definition of a gorge. However, it is an important breeding site for Pied Wheatear and they are quite easy to see here in spring. But this late in the season is another matter and after an hour or so of searching we had drawn a blank. In their place, however, we did find several Black Redstarts and numerous Souseliks which are a feature of this region, often to be seen sitting bolt upright on the lookout for predators. Overhead we watched four Levant Sparrowhawks drift past followed by a pale morph Booted Eagle, three Long-legged Buzzards and several Common Buzzards.

Leaving the gorge we made for the Gura Dibrogei valley and the small woodland, where we found so many migrants last year. This year it was much the same so we settled down to a prolonged picnic lunch and migrant hunt. Red-breasted Flycatchers were, as usual, the most numerous species, but we quickly added to the tally with Lesser Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, several Redstarts, a handful of Spotted Flycatchers and the ubiquitous Red-backed Shrikes. Continuing over the steppe grasslands towards the coast, we paused to watch a couple of lingering Isabelline Wheatears together with four of their Northern relatives. As we had missed Pied Wheatears in the gorge, Zoli suggested that we try the huge Sitorman quarry, another known breeding site, and after a half hour of searching we eventually found a male, who led us to another male and a female. Phew. Great views as well. Thought we had missed this at one of its few accessible European breeding haunts. By the time you read this they'll be sunning themselves in the sub-Saharan tropics.

### **Tue 11<sup>th</sup> September**

Just for a change our pre-breakfast stroll began at a park some 2km from the hotel, after parking the bus in what appeared to be a dry parking lot. Overlooking the lake we encountered several pert Black-necked Grebes, while overhead many Little Gulls were dip-feeding – picking insects off the surface. The adjacent parkland held a Northern Wheatear – perching 15m up a tree, plus the usual array of suspects including Redstart, Spotted and Red-breasted Flycatchers, Willow Warbler, Blackcap, Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat. An hour later, when we reached the bus to return to the hotel it was surrounded by a lake - the drains were overflowing and the road and surroundings were under several inches of water. Miki improvised with two large plastic bottles to keep his feet dry as he crossed the 'lake' and clambered into the driver's seat.

Following breakfast we drove north, initially to a normally full lake near Histria but which this year showed a nice muddy fringe. Avocets were feeding here in great abundance, at least 400 and probably many more, so we wandered down to the water's edge for a closer look. Here we found a handful of Little Ringed Plovers, several Common Snipe, numerous Ruff and the occasional Little Stint and Dunlin. Moving on towards Grindul Lupilor (the Wolf's Head peninsula), Due to the lack of rains, Grindul Lupilor was rather dry and the birds very distant. In the distance we could make out distant White Pelicans floating like Elizabethan galleons across the lake, and later watched sinuous lines of these lumbering birds rising and falling before dropping in to land. Overhead our first White-tailed

Eagle, an adult, floated into view, albeit somewhat distantly. But in reality, to view the birds we were having to look into the light, the haze made viewing poor and the distance made identifying anything other than pelicans little more than guesswork. We drove in search of gull flocks but found none and left disappointed that Great Black-headed may have eluded us. But there was little to be gained by prolonging our stay here so we returned to Histria and took lunch by the small restaurant near the museum, where a Red-breasted Flycatcher insisted on returning to the fence by the nearby tables. Undoubtedly the highlight of the day here was a 'steppe' Polecat that was hunting Souseliks on the steppe.

Moving on from Histria, our next stop was Vadu where a Saker gave us cracking views as made several low passes over a ridge on a number of occasions. From the viewpoint we watched a White-tailed Eagle sitting on the mud, and huge numbers of birds on the lake which we didn't really have time to check through properly but did find three Dalmatian Pelicans. Then Zoli found a Paddyfield Warbler which we all went in search of, and although we glimpsed a small Acro on several occasions it wouldn't remain still for long enough to be identified. Finally we checked the famous phalarope pool. Quite what it is that attracts these birds to this particular pool and not the others is anyone's guess, but today four juveniles were spinning quite happily and everyone had nice scope views of this most delicate of waders.

We finished the day with a return visit to the refinery pools at Navodari where the spread of waders was similar to those we encountered the previous day.

### **Wed 12<sup>th</sup> September**

A rather subdued pre-breakfast walk failed to produce yesterday's Icterine Warblers and Collared Flycatcher, but Red-breasted remained much in evidence, and the local dog pack escorted us off the premises. Following breakfast we bade farewell to the staff at the hotel and departed for the delta. Along the way we found time to call in at Histria in a final attempt to search for a Paddyfield Warbler. Despite checking several of the smaller dry reedbeds we were unlucky not to see this species, which is usually here until mid September. Unexpected bonuses came with the appearance of adult and juvenile Gull-billed Terns hawking insects over the reedbeds and a scattered group of at least 30 juvenile Collared Pratincoles, many allowing a fairly close approach, all the while nervously bobbing their heads up and down. Here we also saw a few Skylarks; the only ones we saw, it seemed strange that larks were so elusive, with no Calandra or Short-toed seen.

From Histria we continued to the hamlet of Murighiol, although we paused en route to watch a couple of roadside Sakers perching on power pylons and giving great looks through the 'scope, and later on we encountered our only Short-toed Eagle of the tour. Eventually the picnic lunch was served at our usual venue, by the superb steppe lake that lies just beyond the village of Saraturik. This protected wetland often hosts a wonderful spread of birds including several Black-necked Grebes and lots of waders. But we were keen to press on and by mid afternoon we joined our Ponton (floating hotel) and began the journey deep into the heart of the delta. By following the southernmost of the three main channels (Stantu Gheorghe or St George's channel) we passed several groups of Whiskered Terns feeding low over the water, and saw large numbers of ducks and waders resting along the shores. By going with the current we made very good progress and moored up close to the hamlet of Stantu Gheorghe (St. George) shortly after dinner, seeing no fewer than six White-tailed Eagles en route.

### **Thu 13<sup>th</sup> September**

Those who rose early were treated to a magnificent sunrise as the mist rose off the river, obscuring all but the tops of the trees on the opposite bank until it burned off - a very 'Out of Africa' moment. We found that we had moored on the opposite bank to the village, and were able to watch a flypast of small numbers of various herons, Caspian Gulls and Whiskered Terns, but the highlight was undoubtedly the woodpeckers. A calling Lesser Spot had Zoli reaching for his speaker, and following a quick blast a male landed on a branch right in front of us - and being on the top deck of the ponton, he was at eye-level. When everyone had soaked up this endearing little bird, Zoli turned his attention to the other end of the woodpecker spectrum and repeated his trick, this time with a magnificent male Black Woodpecker, which even landed on the exact branch which Gordon had asked for to get the best photo effect. He stayed put for what seemed like hours, occasionally dropping then returning, but always giving wonderful views. Add to this a Great Spot and this place is 'pecker paradise'.

Following breakfast we boarded the two smaller boats and slowly made our way along the Turceasca channel to the lagoon behind Sacaline Island. Along the way Squacco Herons showed in abundance and a Spotted Crake performed magnificently along the edge of the reeds, and wave after wave of Cormorants flew overhead, amounting to 3000+

birds. We were delighted when a young Penduline Tit appeared close to the boat and began to extract large green caterpillars from the reeds, allowing an extremely close approach. On reaching the lagoon the Cormorants had joined up with several parties of White Pelicans, which gave a memorable flypast. As expected water levels in the lagoon were low, meaning we would have to wade ashore, which we managed to do without incident.

Soon we were walking amongst a wealth of birds loafing and feeding along the shoreline, skulking in the reeds or flying overhead. There are just too many highlights to mention them all, but they included White Pelicans roosting on a sand spit, While some went for a dip in the Black Sea (which was bath tub warm), the rest walked closer to the main flock, and were rewarded with masses of waders including groups of Ruff and Wood Sandpipers feeding in the wet grasslands, and three Broad-billed Sandpipers running about with Dunlin, between the legs of roosting gulls and terns. A low-flying fly-by Peregrine initially had us confused as it appeared too small but photos established its identity beyond doubt, but there was no doubt about the Arctic Skuas – we must have seen at least ten different birds in the couple of hours we spent here – many were harassing terns offshore but three came close overhead giving great views.

All too soon it was well past lunchtime and time to leave; unlike last year the boat we were using was somewhat underpowered, and the return journey took rather longer than expected. Sorry about that folks! The afternoon was spent near the village and on an adjacent canal. As we reached the cover of the trees and bushes migrants abounded with Red-breasted and Spotted Flycatchers, Willow Warblers and Red-backed Shrikes dominating. But the undoubted highlight of the day was a pair of obliging Grey-headed Woodpeckers which came in to Zoli's recording, with one sat atop a concrete power pole and the other on the nearby wires. After this we returned to the ponton for another filling meal - a great way to finish a great day.

#### **Fri 14<sup>th</sup> September**

Another glorious sunrise, although somewhat less misty than the previous day. Surprisingly, the Lesser Spotted and Black Woodpeckers put in repeat performances, enabling those who had missed them the previous day to enjoy this wonderful experience. Following breakfast, we set out to explore the village and surrounding fields and fishponds. However, as we were disembarking from the boat Zoli spotted a Great Black-headed Gull close inshore - a juvenile moulting to first-winter plumage – together with a group of Caspians. It proved to be an extremely approachable bird, enabling everyone who wanted frame filling photographs to get up and close. Moving on, a small selection of migrants were feeding by the track - the usual flycatchers, warblers, Redstart, Red-backed Shrikes etc. that we'd come to expect, although a briefly seen Icterine was a bonus. Clearly, however, this was not a day for huge numbers of migrants although three lucky folks managed to glimpse an Otter. From here we returned to the ponton, followed by lunch and then a return visit to the Takaru channel which we visited the previous evening. Again migrants were in a minority, with similar numbers and diversity to the morning, although a female Redstart was nice, as was a Golden Oriole that flew overhead, the first we had seen on the tour - contrast this with their relative abundance in 2011. A little later while returning to the ponton another flew over the boat and a Little Bittern burst out from the reeds. In the distance a group of 44 Red-footed Falcons moved south towards the village. By 16.30 our ponton was on the move again, and those on deck enjoyed a wonderfully lazy late summer evening.

#### **Sat 15<sup>th</sup> September**

Our final full day began on the deck of the ponton where we were treated to yet another glorious sunrise, with constantly changing blues and pinks being reflected in the still waters of the river. The first birds were flocks of Bee-eaters emerging from roost in the nearby reedbeds and flying south, continuously calling to each other to remain in contact. Birds abounded in the riverside willows and alders. Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tits (of the white-headed forms) cavorted, a distant Chiffchaff sang and a Treecreeper called but both species remained hidden. Once again Zoli proved to be most attractive to the local woodpecker population, this time starting with a female Great Spot and concluding with a male Grey-headed, both in the bare branches of a riverside tree and giving great views. We took the small boat along a narrow tree-lined channel and were treated to outstanding views of yet more white-headed Long-tailed Tits, a multitude of Red-breasted Flycatchers including two adult males with red throats, and a most obliging juvenile Little Bittern. A party of warblers held Willow, Lesser Whitethroat, Icterine, Reed and Sedge, but only Zoli managed to get onto the only Wood Warbler of our tour.

As we neared Erenciuc Lake we disturbed a roosting Night Heron in the trees above the channel, plus a dozen or more Squaccos. The lake itself was rather quiet, but by diligently scanning the edges we found two juvenile Little Crakes, the first rather distant and into the light but the second gave great views as it walked on a mat of floating vegetation. Six Ferruginous Ducks we found discreetly feeding amongst the water lilies together with Moorhens.



Moving on, we ate lunch on the ponton (during which our first Osprey was spotted) before disembarking to explore a loop in the river at Perivolovka. It is worth mentioning here that channels have been excavated across the bases of many of the sinuous loops in the river to straighten the channel and make journey times shorter. Consequently, many of these loops are quiet and hold good numbers of roosting birds. Initially, most were Mallard but with them were a handful of Gadwall and Teal. A roosting flock of terns held a couple of Caspian plus numerous Whiskered and three Commons including a first-summer bird the only one we saw of this age class. Overhead a couple of juvenile Ospreys sparred, giving great views and a big adult female Peregrine tried to take out a Little Gull and was chased off by a Hobby. After meeting up with the ponton we continued our journey upstream towards Murighiol, and almost immediately found a couple of Green Sandpipers feeding on the muddy shoreline. It is interesting that these were the first we'd encountered on this tour – they were quite common and widespread on last year's tour, including good numbers along the St Gheorghe channel. Along the way a male Red-footed Falcon flew overhead, two more Little Bitterns were seen and numerous Whiskered Terns dipped and twisted alongside the ponton. We finally moored up at Murighiol in the late afternoon, giving just sufficient time to explore the nearby river bank in the smaller craft. Unfortunately the river was too shallow to get the ponton close to the bank making a dry landing impossible (unless you fancied your chances with Canadian style log rolling – which one of our party with pressing needs managed to do with some assistance from Zoli and the boat crew). To finish off another great day, we cruised over to watch an immature White-tailed Eagle sitting in the top of a bare tree. It was soon joined by a second bird, before one, and then the other, dropped below the tree line, presumably to roost. Finally, we rounded off the day the way in which we had started it – watching roosting flocks, at least 200 Pygmy Cormorants flew overhead in small groups heading to roost.

### **Sun 16<sup>th</sup> September**

All day yesterday the pressure had been dropping so we anticipated a change in the weather. And we were not to be disappointed as a cool breeze blowing in through the cabin window giving a foretaste of the change in weather. By 06.30 we began to assemble on the upper deck replete with double fleeces and cups of coffee to fight off the chilly conditions. For the first time on this tour the sky was largely overcast but we did still manage a sunrise of sorts, a rather dappled affair as wispy streaks of cloud partially obscured great golden orb. Birds were less conspicuous than on previous mornings, doubtless the wind was keeping them down, although Red-breasted Flycatchers were heard, Whiskered Terns continued to dip-feed over the channel and juvenile Hobbies frolicked overhead.

After saying our farewells to the ponton crew we departed at 08.30 and by 09.00 we had boarded our bus for the 5+ hour drive to Bucharest. We spent much our last day in Romania travelling, although we paused for 30 minutes birding by some roadside fishponds close to the Danube bridge near Braila, which held the expected Snipe, Wood Sandpipers and masses of duck, mostly Mallard but with a scattering of Gadwall, Teal, Shoveler, Wigeon, Pintail, Garganey and Pochard. Overhead Yellow Wagtail and Red-throated Pipit were heard. Shortly afterwards we passed through a heavy rainstorm, the most rain this region had seen since June, but once we cleared this the weather improved. We paused for a distant White Stork and here Zoli found a couple of distant Lesser Spotted Eagles, migrants making the most of the northerly breeze. We were lucky that our picnic lunch stop on the expressway just beyond Slobozia was on the flight path for yet more Lesser Spotted Eagles, and in the 30 minutes that we were here no fewer than 17 more passed overhead. After this, we drove non-stop to the airport and arrived at 15.00, two hours before departure, with more than ample time to spare, and we sailed through the formalities without incident or delay.

We all enjoyed a fantastic tour and between us we had seen or heard 176 bird species, some of which are extremely rare in Europe including Saker Falcon, Pied Wheatear and Great Black-headed Gull. We also encountered a wealth of migrating birds that featured high on everyone's most-wanted, including masses of shorebirds and terns which added variety, quality and quantity to our experience. No two years are ever the same, and the birds and our experiences with them change from year to year. We stayed at some great hotels, with welcoming and friendly people, and enjoy superb food. I look forward to returning again.

My thanks go to our local agents for making such smooth arrangements, and to Zoltan (Zoli) our leader for finding so many birds, without his expertise our bird list and experiences would be only a fraction of what they were. Our driver, Miki, also looked after us extremely well and drove us with care and consideration throughout. And a big thank you to everyone who made it such a pleasure and privilege to lead this tour.

## Summary Itinerary

- 8/9.** Arrived Bucharest, crossed Danube at Calarasi and entered Bulgaria at Silistra. Overnight Silistra.
- 9/9.** Pre-breakfast walk in park by hotel. Return to Romania, day spent birding en route to Constanta and north to Mamaia. Late PM visit to refinery pools at Navodari.
- 10/9.** Pre-breakfast walk by hotel at Mamaia Morning driving towards fields and grasslands near village of Targusor, then onto gorge at Cheia Dobrogei. Lunch in small woodland at Gura Dobrogei, followed by birding on steppe and finally at quarry near Sitorman.
- 11/9.** Pre-breakfast walk in parkland near the hotel in Mamaia, then north to Histria and the coast at Grinbul Lubilor (Wolf peninsula). PM Histria, Vadu and finishing at the refinery pools at Navodari.
- 12/9.** Pre-breakfast walk by hotel at Mamaia. North to Histria, then to lake near Murighiol for lunch. PM joined ponton and sailed along S. Gheorghe Channel. Eventually moored near village of Stantu Gheorghe.
- 13/9.** Morning to Sacaline Island. Lunch on boat. PM exploring channel and bushes near village until dusk.
- 14/9.** Morning around village looking for migrants followed by small boat ride along narrower waterways. Late afternoon return along S. Gheorghe Channel and moored up at Erenciuc just before dusk.
- 15/9.** Morning exploring channel to Erenciuc lake. Afternoon exploring river at Perivolovka, then return to Murighiol and overnight there on ponton.
- 16/9.** Depart the ponton and drive to Bucharest with occasional roadside stops.

## ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED

(A total of 176 species was recorded by the group)

### **Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus***

Noted on five dates with maximum of three at Histria on 12/9. As elsewhere in Europe, this species is introduced.

### **Greylag Goose *Anser anser***

60+ in the delta on 12/9 followed by a similar number in the lagoon at Sacaline Island on 13/9, while a similar number flew past the ponton at St. Gheorghe early morning on 14/9.

### **Mute Swan *Cygnus olor***

Noted daily except on 10/9. Most numerous at Grinbul Lubilor on 11/9 and in the lagoon at Sacaline Island with 50+ at both locations.

### **Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna***

Two en route to Mamaia on 9/9, followed by 300+ spread over various sites at Grinbul Lubilor, Histria and Vadu on 11/9, and 20+ at the lake near Murighiol on 12/9.

### **Gadwall *Anas strepera***

Regularly encountered with a high of 150+ spread over various sites at Grinbul Lubilor, Histria and Vadu on 11/9. Numbers in the delta rather lower than expected with high of 30+ on 13/9 at Sacaline Island.

### **Wigeon *Anas penelope***

One at Sacaline Island on 13/9 and four on the fishponds near the Danube on 16/9.

### **Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos***

Common throughout the week and recorded daily.

### **Shoveler *Anas clypeata***

Small numbers recorded on five days, with 90+ on 11/9 being the daily high count. The lagoon at Sacaline Island held less than 20 on 13/9, but 30+ were seen on fishponds near the Danube on 16/9.

### **Pintail *Anas acuta***

Noted on five dates, mostly ones and twos in the delta but a high of 10+ at the small lake near Murighiol on 12/9, and also a female at the Navadori refinery pools on 9/9 and 11/9.

### **Garganey *Anas querquedula***

Noted on three dates, with 10+ on 9/9, 15+ on 11/9 and two on 16/9.

### **Teal *Anas crecca***

Common throughout the week and recorded daily except for 10/9. Most numerous on 11/9 with 700+ seen at various sites between Grinbul Lubilor, Histria and Vadu.

### **Pochard *Aythya ferina***

At least 60 on fishponds near Calarasi on 8/9, six on fishponds en route to Mamaia on 9/9, and a further six were seen on fishponds near the Danube on 16/9.

**Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca***

A minimum of 80 on fishponds near Calarasi on 8/9, one on fishponds en route to Mamaia on 9/9, 17 at Sacaline Island on 13/9, eight at Erenciuc Lake on 15/9 and two on fishponds near the Danube on 16/9.

**Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula***

Just one, seen by Pam, on fishponds near the Danube on 16/9.

**Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis***

Up to ten daily, most numerous on fishponds near Calarasi on 8/9, and fishponds en route to Mamaia on 9/9, but scarce in the delta.

**Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus***

Ones and twos noted at several locations on five dates throughout the week but nowhere numerous, with highs of six at Sacaline Island on 13/9 and on fishponds near the Danube on 16/9.

**Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis***

Six on the lake near the hotel pre-breakfast on 11/9 and 10+ at lake near Murighiol on 12/9 as we ate lunch.

**Black Stork *Ciconia nigra***

Noted on five days, with two on 9/9 and 10/9, one on 12/9, at least ten over the delta in the evening of 14/9 and three en route to Bucharest on 16/9. All would have been migrants.

**White Stork *Ciconia ciconia***

Just one seen, in flight near Slobozia, on 16/9. A late date for this early migrant.

**Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus***

Four on fishponds near Calarasi on 8/9 was the only sighting.

**Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia***

One on fishponds near Calarasi on 8/9, seven at Grinbul Lubilor on 11/9 and one on fishponds near the Danube on 16/9.

**Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus***

A total of five juveniles seen in the delta, with singles on 12/9 and 14/9 (in flight), followed by three singles on 15/9 in the S. Gheorghe channel and in the channel leading to Erenciuc Lake on 15/9, the latter bird performed exceedingly well for the group.

**Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax***

At least 20 over fishponds at Calarasi on 8/9. Thereafter only recorded from the delta, with eight on 12/9, 25+ on 13/9, 20+ on 14/9 and four or more on 15/9. Others heard calling after dusk.

**Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides***

At least ten at fishponds en route to Constanta on 9/9. Other than these, all other birds were in the delta where it was common and recorded daily from 12/9 to 15/9, with 100+ at and near Sacaline Island on 13/9 being the daily maximum.

**Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea***

Widespread in small numbers and recorded daily throughout the week, daily maxima being ten at the fishponds at Calarasi on 8/9 and 20+ at and near Sacaline Island on 13/9.

**Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea***

Recorded most days but generally in smaller numbers than Grey Heron. Eight noted at the fishponds at Calarasi on 8/9 and a further six at fishponds en route to Constanta on 9/9. In the delta, one or two seen daily.

**Great White Egret *Casmerodius alba***

At least ten by the fishponds at Calarasi on 8/9 and 60+ at coastal wetlands including Grinbul Lubilor, Histria and Vadu on 11/9. At least 40 at and near Sacaline Island on 13/9, but elsewhere in the delta numbers were in single figures.

**Little Egret *Egretta garzetta***

Common on wetland areas especially so on the Danube Delta.

**White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus***

Our first were very distant lines of pelicans over the coast near Histria on 10/9. Thereafter seen daily until 15/9, with 400+ at Grinbul Lubilor and up to 200 in the delta, typically distant flocks in flight, although good views were had of 50+ at Sacaline Bay on 13/9.

**Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus***

Two juveniles flew into the fishponds at Calarasi on 8/9, three were at Vadu on 11/9, and five at Sacaline Bay on 13/9.

**Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus***

At least 100 on the sandbanks by the Danube near Calarasi on 9/9. Thereafter only seen near Murighiol when 200+ flew overhead to go to roost on 15/9.



**Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo***

Common throughout the tour and seen daily. Huge numbers, probably in excess of 5000 were seen at Sacaline Bay and adjacent beach.

**Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni***

Two males over steppe grassland on 10/9 east of the Gura Dobrogei valley en route to the coast, and a male and female over roadside fields en route to Histria on 11/9.

**Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus***

Up to 15 recorded daily throughout the tour.

**Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus***

A male in flight over the Tataru channel on 13/9, a distant flock of 44 birds there the following day, and a male flew over the ponton on 15/9 near Murighiol.

**Hobby *Falco subbuteo***

Common, widespread and recorded daily from 9/9 to 16/9. These included the four birds playing noisily around the hotel at Mamaia on 10/9. Ones and twos recorded daily until we reached the delta, then they became particularly numerous with up to 50 birds seen daily, many perching in riverside trees, hunting alongside the waterways, and just generally having fun. Wonderful to watch, and their screaming calls became a characteristic sound of the delta dawns.

**Saker *Falco cherrug***

The first was a distant bird in flight over the steppe beyond the Gura Dobrogei valley en route to the coast.

Another gave gripping views as it hunted sousliks at Vadu on 11/9, skimming just above the ridge top time and again. Two juveniles were perched on roadside pylons en route to Histria on 12/9 and treated us to superb views.

**Peregrine *Falco peregrinus***

A juvenile at Sacaline Island on 13/9 and an adult which narrowly missed a Little Gull as it flew along the river loop at Perivolovka on 15/9.

**Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus***

Quite scarce, as most have already moved through. Two birds over on 9/9 en route to Constanta, three on 12/9 and two over the delta on 13/9.

**White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla***

A distant adult over Grinbul Lubilor on 11/9 followed by an immature perched on the mud at Vadu later the same day. During the cruise along the S. Gheorghe channel from Murighiol a total of six were seen up until dusk.

Thereafter 2–3 daily in the delta, the most interesting being two immatures interacting in a dead riverside tree near Murighiol on 15/9.

**Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus***

One over on 12/9 en route to Murighiol.

**Osprey *Pandion haliaetus***

Three in the delta on 15/9 including two interacting juveniles which put on a fine show for us. A distant bird noted at the fishponds near the Danube on 16/9.

**Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus***

Very common, recorded in good numbers everyday of the tour.

**Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus***

A juvenile noted at Vadu on 11/9 and what was presumably an adult female seen briefly over the channel leading to Sacaline Bay on 13/9.

**Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes***

One at Canaraua Fetei on 9/9 and four at Cheia Dobrogea on 10/9 - all juveniles except an adult male on 10/9.

**Northern Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus***

Noted on four dates, including one at Cheia Dobrogea on 10/9 and two migrating with Lesser Spotted Eagles as we ate a picnic lunch on the expressway east of Calarasi on 16/9.

**Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo***

Recorded on most days of the tour but less common in the delta region.

**Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus***

Noted on four dates, with one en route to Constanta on 9/9, six on grasslands/agricultural regions en route to and near Cheia Dobrogea on 10/9, four from the roadside between Histria and Vadu on 11/9 and six in the same region the following day. We had particularly good views of a perched bird on a roadside pylon on 10/9 and 11/9.

**Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina***

None recorded until the last day, when a total of 20+ birds moved south following a short downpour. Of these, 17 passed over as we ate lunch by the expressway east of Calarasi, so it's likely many others would have moved on this date.

**Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata***

Single pale morph birds noted daily from 9/9 to 12/9.

**Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica***

A slightly oiled and sickly bird at the Navodari refinery pools on 9/9. Sadly this bird had died when we returned on 11/9.

**Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus***

One seen briefly as it fed along the edge of a reedbed at the Navodari refinery pools on 11/9.

**Little Crake *Porzana parva***

A good year for this species, with four birds seen well. Two juveniles on floating vegetation at the fishponds en route to Constanta on 9/9 and two more juveniles at Erenciuc Lake on 15/9.

**Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana***

A juvenile treated us to superb and prolonged views as it fed quietly along the channel leading to Sacaline Island on 13/9.

**Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus***

Widespread in small numbers at most wetland sites and seen daily.

**Coot *Fulica atra***

Generally common at wetland areas. Particularly high numbers noted including flocks of up to 1500 birds seen in the delta on 13/9 and on fishponds near the Danube on 16/9.

**Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus***

Three at Vadu on 11/9.

**Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostraelgus***

Four in the delta at Sacaline Island on 13/9.

**Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus***

A juvenile at the refinery pools at Navodari on 11/9 was the only sighting.

**Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta***

At least 400 on a roadside pool at Histria on 11/9, one at the refinery pools at Navodari later the same day, and two at the small lake near Murighiol on 12/9.

**Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus***

Generally common in agricultural fields and wetland areas, and recorded on six dates.

**Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola***

Two at the Navodari refinery pools on 9/9 and 11/9, singles at Grinbul Lubilor on 11/9 and at the small lake near Murighiol on 12/9, and 12+ at Sacaline Island on 13/9.

**Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula***

At least 30 at the Navodari refinery pools on 9/9 and 12+ there on 11/9.

**Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius***

Noted on three dates, with 20+ on mud fringed lakes near Histria on 11/9 and four on the Danube on 15/9.

**Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago***

Recorded on six dates at various wetland areas throughout, with ones and twos recorded on most days but with maxima of 18+ on 11/9 and 20+ on 16/9.

**Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa***

Small numbers at most wader sites including 10+ at the refinery pools at Navodari on 9/9 and 11/9, 80+ on lakes at Histria and Grinbul Lubilor on 11/9, 40+ at Sacaline Bay on 13/9 and three on the river at St Gheorghe on 14/9. All were of the nominate race and a few young birds still retained juvenile plumage.

**Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica***

Three juveniles at Sacaline Bay on 13/9 were unexpected.

**Curlew *Numenius arquata***

At least 40 at Histria and Grinbul Lubilor on 11/9, and four at Histria on 12/9. The extremely long bills shown by most birds points to them being of the Asian form *orientalis*.

**Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus***

Small numbers on just five dates with maxima of eight at the refinery pools at Navodari on 9/9 and 11/9.

**Redshank *Tringa tetanus***

Contrary to what we encountered in 2011, this year this species was more widespread and numerous than the previous species. Maxima included 15+ at the refinery pools at Navodari on 9/9 and 30+ there on 11/9, followed by 20+ at Sacaline Bay on 13/9.

**Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis***

Eight at the refinery pools at Navodari on 9/9 followed by four there on 11/9 were the only sightings.

**Greenshank *Tringa nebularia***

Surprisingly scarce and noted on just five dates with a high of six on 12/9.

**Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus***

Just three singles along the S. Gheorghe channel on 15/9. Not seen elsewhere.

**Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola***

Widespread and recorded on six dates. Most numerous at Sacaline Bay on 13/9 where 30+ were recorded, but groups of up to 15 noted at Histria on 11/9 and on pools near the Danube on 16/9.

**Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos***

Singles or pairs seen on five dates at many wetland sites throughout.

**Turnstone *Arenaria interpres***

Two at the refinery pools at Navodari on 11/9 was the only sighting.

**Knot *Calidris canutus***

Three juveniles at the refinery pools at Navodari on 9/9, followed by four there on 11/9. Not seen elsewhere.

**Sanderling *Calidris alba***

A juvenile at the refinery pools at Navodari on 11/9, and at least ten juveniles at Sacaline Bay on 13/9.

**Little Stint *Calidris minuta***

Surprisingly scarce, with two at the refinery pools at Navodari on 9/9 and 11/9, two on the mud-fringed lake near Histria on 11/9 and two at Sacaline Bay on 13/9.

**Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea***

Slightly more numerous than the last species, with the refinery pools at Navodari holding four on 9/9 and three on 11/9. Elsewhere, six on the mud-fringed lake near Histria on 11/9, and four at Sacaline Bay on 13/9.

**Dunlin *Calidris alpina***

Again the refinery pools at Navodari were the single best site with 70+ there on 9/9 and 11/9. Smaller numbers seen at near Histria on 11/9 and at Sacaline Bay on 13/9.

**Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus***

Three juveniles at the refinery pools at Navodari on 9/9, followed by one there on 11/9. At Sacaline Bay just three on 13/9.

**Ruff *Philomachus pugnax***

Recorded at wetland sites throughout on six dates, including the Navodari refinery pools and wetlands near Histria, but was most numerous at Sacaline Bay with 20+ there on 13/9.

**Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus***

Four juveniles on the usual pool at Vadu on 11/9 was the only sighting.

**Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola***

At least 30 juveniles in short grassland and saltmarsh on 12/9.

**Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei***

A first-winter bird at Sacaline Bay on 13/9 was the only sighting.

**Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus***

Very common, recorded daily throughout the tour.

**Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyhaetus melanocephalus***

Large flocks of 100+ birds frequently encountered roosting in inland arable fields from 9/9 to 13/9 at many sites.

A group of 60+ at Sacaline Bay on 13/9 was the only sighting from the delta.

**Great Black-headed Gull *Ichthyhaetus ichthyhaetus***

A juvenile moulting to first-winter plumage was on the river at S. Gheorghe with Caspian Gulls on 14/9. It was continually giving a quiet begging call to every gull which approached it, including first-winter Caspians. This species has nested in the Danube Delta since 2009.

**Little Gull *Larus minutus***

Widespread and recorded daily from 9/9 to 15/9. Quite common over the lake by the hotel at Mamaia, with up to 20 present, and 30+ at Sacaline Bay on 13/9. Smaller numbers noted elsewhere.

**Common Gull *Larus canus***

One flew past the ponton along the S. Gheorghe channel on 12/9.

**Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis***

Common and recorded on each day of the tour.

**Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans***

Very common, recorded every day of the tour. Much more numerous than the previous species. Most adults were completing primary moult.

**Little Tern *Sternula albifrons***

At least 80 at the refinery pools at Navodari on 9/9 and 11/9. Four were present at Sacaline Bay on 13/9.

**Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilocta***

An adult and juvenile feeding over the dry fields Histria on 12/9 was the only sighting.

**Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia***

Two at the refinery pools at Navodari on 9/9 and one there on 11/9. All other sightings in or near the delta, with seven at the small lake near Murighiol on 12/9 and 12+ at Sacaline Bay on 13/9. Elsewhere, numbers typically just ones or twos.

**Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida***

Very common and widespread this year and noted on every day. Most numerous in the S. Gheorghe channel, with 1000+ noted on 12/9 and 500+ on 15/9. Other daily totals ranges from 20 to 40.

**Black Tern *Chlidonias niger***

A juvenile at the refinery pools at Navodari on 9/9 and 11/9. Elsewhere, three in the S. Gheorghe channel on 12/9 and also on 15/9, and four at Sacaline Bay on 13/9.

**White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus***

Single juveniles at the refinery pools at Navodari on 9/9 and 11/9.

**Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis***

At least 70 at the refinery pools at Navodari on 9/9 and 11/9, and 200+ at Sacaline Bay in the delta on 13/9.

**Common Tern *Sterna hirundo***

Very common on wetland areas and along the shores of the Black Sea, for example 120+ at the refinery pools at Navodari on 9/9 and 11/9, and 200+ at Sacaline Bay on 13/9.

**Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus***

At least 12 seen at Sacaline Island on 13/9. Although many were distant as they chased terns over the Black Sea, others came much closer and some were directly over island.

**Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia***

Recorded each day except in the Danube delta.

**Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus***

Noted on five dates but most numerous in the delta with a high of 20+ on 15/9, mostly seen in flight over the river from the ponton.

**Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur***

Just six birds, a single juvenile and a group of five en route to Constanta on 9/9.

**Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto***

Very common throughout the tour except in the Danube delta.

**Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus***

One along the channel leading to Sacaline Bay on 13/9.

**Tawny Owl *Strix aluco***

Single birds heard calling from the ponton on the nights of 13/14 at St Gheorghe, and Erenciuc on 14/15.

**Little Owl *Athene noctua***

One at a regular site in a small cliff en route to Constanta at Canaraua Fetei on 9/9, and one sitting in an opening in a house roof on 11/9 en route to Histria.

**Swift *Apus apus***

Six seen over Silistra after re-entering Romania on 9/9.

**Roller *Coracias garrulous***

Recorded in small numbers on six days with a maximum daily count of 8+ on 16/9 en route to Bucharest. All were young birds.

**Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis***

Widespread and noted on seven dates, including the lake by the hotel in Mamaia. Most numerous in the delta with daily sightings of up to 12 birds.

**Bee-eater *Merops apiaster***

Recorded in good numbers everyday of the tour, the vast majority being juveniles mostly moving south. Numerous throughout, although many were too high to see, but their distinctive calls gave away their presence. Maximum estimate was 600+ en route to Constanta on 9/9.

**Hoopoe *Upupa epops***

Just three birds seen during the week with one on 10/9 and two singles on 11/9.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor***

A male seen well before breakfast from the ponton in riverside trees along the S. Gheorghe channel on 13/9 and 14/9. Also one heard near the channel leading to Erenciuc Lake on 15/9.

**Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus***

A pair showed well in Silistra Park by the hotel on a pre-breakfast walk on 9/9, and another seen en route to Constanta later the same day. Two in trees in the Gura Dobrogei valley where we stopped for lunch on 10/9.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major***

Up to six daily from 13/9 to 15/9 in the delta region.

**Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius***

A male came in to our recording and sat in the upper branches of a bare tree by our ponton on 13/9, then made a repeat performance on 14/9. Elsewhere one in flight along the channel leading to Sacaline Bay on 13/9, and one heard near the channel leading to Erenciuc Lake on 15/9.

**Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis***

A pair at Canarua Fetei on 9/9 was the only sighting.

**Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus***

On the Danube Delta one heard pre-breakfast on 13/9 and pair seen later in the day along the Tataru Channel by a concrete power pole. Eventually the male sat on the top and the female landed on the connecting wire. Also, a male showed superbly pre-breakfast from our ponton in bare branches by the channel at Erenciuc on 15/9.

**Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio***

Common and widespread with up to 25 birds recorded daily. All were young birds apart from one adult male.

**Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus***

Two singles seen in flight along the Tataru Channel on 14/9

**Jay *Garrulus glandarius***

Two in Silistra Park on a pre-breakfast walk on the 9/9 and six en route to Constanta later the same day. One noted on 10/9.

**Magpie *Pica pica***

Very common, recorded daily in good numbers.

**Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula***

Recorded in good numbers each day, although numbers were much reduced in the heart of the southern part of the Danube Delta.

**Rook *Corvus frugilegus***

Very common throughout the week except in the southern part of the delta where it was absent.

**Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix***

Widespread and common, and recorded regularly throughout the week. Most numerous corvid in the delta.

**Raven *Corvus corax***

Two in flight over the channel leading to Sacaline Bay on 12/9, and two distantly from St. Gheorge the next day.

**Great Tit *Parus major***

Recorded in ones and twos most days.

**Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus***

Two in the park by the hotel in Silistra during our pre-breakfast stroll on 9/9. Thereafter, all other sightings came from the delta, with up to eight daily from 13/9 to 15/9.

**Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus***

A young male showed well as it searched for caterpillars along the channel leading to Sacaline Bay on 13/9.

**Sand Martin *Riparia riparia***

Incredibly numerous this year and recorded daily. Thousands were moving east along the Danube at Silistra on 9/9. This passage continued to the east as we drove to Constanta. Similarly, there were many thousands feeds over all wetland sites on the coast on 11/9. Scanning the skies here they resembled swarms of midges.

**Swallow *Hirundo rustica***

Again, recorded daily and many thousands moving, although not as numerous as Sand Martin. Most numerous along the coast and most would have been migrants moving south.

**House Martin *Delichon urbicum***

Common at many sites along the Danube and coast from 9/9 to 12/9, with up to 120 daily. Not recorded from the delta.

**Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica***

One in flight over the road just beyond Silistra after re-entering Romania on 9/9. At lunch later the same day at Canarua Fetei, a minimum of 10 was seen. This is a scarce and localised breeding bird in Romania.

**Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus***

Two parties comprising 6+ and 12+ birds were seen in trees near Erenciuc Lake on 15/9. All birds seen well showed entirely white heads typical of the nominate northern/eastern breeders.

**Crested Lark *Galerida cristata***

Noted on four dates, with three on 10/9, four on 11/9, six on 12/9 and two on 16/9. Many were flushed from the roadside as we drove past them.

**Skylark *Alauda arvensis***

At least four at Histria on 12/9 was the only sighting.

**Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides***

Single birds calling at the Navadori refinery pools on 11/9 and along the St. Gheorge channel on 12/9. Neither bird was seen.

**Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus***

Noted on four dates, with two by the fishponds en route to Constanta on 9/9 and two in the channel near Erenciuc Lake on 15/9. Others sightings were of singles birds. Presumably all were migrants.

**Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus***

At least six by the fishponds en route to Constanta on 9/9 and two in the channel near Erenciuc Lake on 15/9. Others noted occasionally elsewhere.

**Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina***

Five in trees by the hotel in Mamaia on 11/9 by Malcolm and Frances. Another in the channel near Erenciuc Lake on 15/9.

**Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus***

Widespread in small numbers and noted on seven dates with maxima of 25+ on 11/9.

**Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita***

Two singing birds heard at Erenciuc on 15/9, but neither was seen.

**Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla***

Scattered sightings on four dates but numbers quite small, with no more than three/day. The small woodland in the Gura Dobrogei valley where we ate lunch on 10/9 was probably the most productive site.

**Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin***

Just two sightings, singles on 10/9 in the small woodland in the Gura Dobrogei valley where we ate lunch, and one at Erenciuc on 15/9.

**Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca***

Widespread in small numbers, and noted on five dates. Three around the village at S. Gheorghe on 14/9 was probably the best day.

**Whitethroat *Sylvia communis***

Singles noted in the park in Mamaia on 11/9 and on top of the tower by the lake where we ate lunch en route to Murighiol on 12/9. The latter bird remained in the same place, in the open on top of the tower and barely moving, for the entire time we were there.

**Bearded Tit *Parnurus biarmicus***

After hearing birds at the fishponds en route to Constanta on 9/9 and at the Navadori refinery pools on 11/9, we eventually saw a group of 10+ birds very well along the channel leading to Sacaline Bay on 13/9. These birds are much paler, less richly toned than British birds.

**Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes***

One seen briefly along the channel leading to Erenciuc Lake on 15/9.

**Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris***

Three heard at Erenciuc on 15/9.

**Starling *Sturnus vulgaris***

Very common, recorded in good numbers everyday of the tour.

**Blackbird *Turdus merula***

Single birds seen en route to Constanta on 9/9, and in the small woodland in the Gura Dobrogei valley where we ate lunch on 10/9.

**Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos***

One en route to Constanta on 9/9, one in the small woodland in the Gura Dobrogei valley where we ate lunch on 10/9, and one heard at Erenciuc on 15/9.

**Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos***

One calling from scrub en route to Constanta on 10/9.

**Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros***

At least six in the Cheia Dobrogei gorge on 10/9 and one by the hotel at Mamaia on 11/9.



**Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus***

A minimum of four males and a female in the small woodland in the Gura Dobrogei valley where we ate lunch on 10/9, several of which showed very well. Singles also noted in the park in Mamaia 11/9, and along the Tataru channel near S Gheorghe on 14/9.

**Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra***

The best day was 10/9 when a minimum of 30 was noted, some in the steppe en route to the coast and others at the Sitorman quarry later in the day, but generally in small parties. Elsewhere, two on 11/9, one at Histria on 12/9 and one in reeds along the channel leading to Sacaline Bay on 13/9.

**Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina***

Two in steppe grassland en route to the coast on 10/9 gave us the run-around but eventually everyone saw them.

**Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe***

Noted on just three dates from 10/9 to 12/9, with up to 12 daily. Perhaps most unusual was a bird perched in a tree top in the park near Mamaia on 11/9.

**Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka***

Two males and a female eventually showed well at the Sitorman quarry on 10/9. A rare bird in Europe and we were lucky to see these, with those at the Cheia gorge having already departed.

**Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata***

Fairly common and widespread, and recorded daily, with up to 20 noted on 10/9, 14/9 and 15/9.

**Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis***

One in trees by the hotel in Mamaia on 11/9 by Malcolm and Frances.

**Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva***

Much more numerous than Spotted Flycatcher and probably the commonest passerine migrant. Recorded daily, typically starting with two or three by the hotel in Mamaia, and ten or more heard or seen most days (they are much easier to hear than they are to see!). The small woodland in the Gura Dobrogei valley where we ate lunch on 6th held at least 15 birds, probably many more as they seemed to be everywhere. Similarly they abounded in woodlands at Erenciuc Lake on 15/9, where two red-throated males were seen, the only ones we encountered during the week. Great sparring and tail flashing as the fought for control of small puddles for bathing.

**House Sparrow *Passer domesticus***

Common around towns and villages, but largely absent from the delta.

**Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus***

Four in the park by the hotel at Silistra on 9/9 and a further two en route to Constanta later the same day. At least 60 in a roadside flock at Histria on 11/9 and two at St Gheorghe on 14/9.

**Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava***

Recorded in good numbers throughout the week and seen or heard daily although most were in flight, calling as they went. All calls were those which we are familiar with in western Europe (so presumably given by Blue-headed (*flava*) or Grey-headed Wagtails (*thunbergi*). Of birds seen on the ground, the majority were first-winter birds which were difficult to assign specific subspecies, although the greyer birds with a darkish head were presumably *feldegg* or a closely related type. Of the adults we certainly saw was nominate *flava*.

**Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea***

Singles noted on three dates, two fly overs on 10/9 and 11/9, followed by a first-winter in the St Gheorghe channel near Perivolovka on 15/9 which showed well.

**White Wagtail *Motacilla alba***

Quite common and recorded daily throughout the week.

**Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis***

Heard calling in flight on five dates, particularly just before/after dawn near the hotel at Mamaia and in the delta. Numbers on 9/9 were exceptional, with 40+ heard over the park at Silistra before breakfast, then others heard throughout the day whenever we stopped en route to Constanta. In total we recorded well over 100 calling birds (but saw less than 10, all as dots going south), so many thousands must have moved over on this date.

**Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus***

Single birds calling in flight (but not seen) en route to Constanta on 9/9 and by the fishponds near the Danube on 16/9.

**Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs***

At least ten en route to Constanta on 9/9 was the only sighting.

**Greenfinch *Chloris chloris***

Two in Silistra Park during our pre-breakfast walk on 9/9 followed by a further two en route to Constanta later the same day. One heard at St. Gheorghe on 14/9.

**Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis***

Ten or more en route to Constanta on 9/9 was the only sighting.

**Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes***

At least seven at Canaraua Fetei where we ate lunch on 9/9.

**Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus***

Four at Histria on 11/9 and one in the delta on 13/9.

**MAMMALS**

**Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*** One black individual at Siriska on 9/9.

**European Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*** Occasional dead individuals seen in the road.

**Polecat *Putorius putorius*** One hunting Souseliks at Histria on 11/9.

**Eurasian Otter *Lutra lutra*** One at S. Gheorghe on 14/9.

**European Souselik *Spermophilus citellus*** Common in steppe grassland regions.

**Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*** Singles on 10/9 and 13/9.

**Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*** At least eight in fields by the expressway east of Bucharest on 8/9.

**REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS**

**Spur-thighed Tortoise *Testudo graeca***

**Dice Snake *Natrix tessellata*** One swimming in the Danube on 15/9.

**Common Wall Lizard *Podarcis muralis***

**Marsh Frog *Rana ridibunda***

**Edible Frog *Rana esculenta***

**DRAGONFLIES & DAMSELFLIES**

**Small Bluetail *Ischnura pumilio***

**Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii***

**Southern Darter *Sympetrum meridionale***

**BUTTERFLIES**

**Eastern Dappled White *Euchloe ausonia***

**Lesser Clouded Yellow *Colias chrysotheme***

**Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus***

**Large Copper *Lycaena dispar***

**Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta***

**Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui***

**Cardinal *Argynnis pandora***

**Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina***