

**HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA & TRANSYLVANIA GT 2012**  
**with SAKERTOUR**  
1-12 May 2012



Tengmalm's Owl in Slovakia (Gábor Simay)

**Leader: Sándor Borza**

This was the first time our GT tour was running with this itinerary and this very comprehensive birdwatching tour certainly was a great success! The weather was generally dry and hot, in fact it was unusually warm. We recorded a total of 205 species in 10 days of birding while covering almost all major bird habitats of the Carpathian Basin. This tour also gives a superb insight of the fantastic sceneries in the countries visited: Hungary, Slovakia and Romania. May is certainly a magical month to birdwatch in Eastern Europe and one of the most productive periods of the year when breeding and migrating birds are both present. This year's highlights were ten species of woodpeckers including superb views of the rare and declining White-backed Woodpecker; nine species of owls including Ural, Eagle, Tengmalm's and Eurasian Pygmy Owl; Capercaillie, Great Bustard, Saker, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Little Crake, Corncrake, Collared Pratincole, Wallcreeper, Red-breasted and Collared Flycatchers, Thrush Nightingale and a wide range of warblers including River Warbler and Moustached Warbler. Sadly there were no breeding Aquatic Warblers in the Hortobágy – we will see what will happen in the future with this most sought-after bird. We do hope it is not lost yet!!

### **Tuesday, 1st of May**

The tour started from Budapest with a two hours drive to the east. The first destination was the Zemplén Hill in the northeastern part of Hungary a magical area of the Carpathian foothills. Our local guide here the well-known birder Zoltán Petrovics knows every corner of this fantastic area as he has been birdwatching here for 30 years. His nickname is 'woodpeckerman' and without a doubt he deserves this name as he is simply outstanding in finding them! After we met with Zoltán we visited at a nearby quarry, where we saw a female Eurasian Eagle Owl – a great start of the tour. We did not know that another eight species is to come! On the way back to the car, we had a nice Lesser Spotted Eagle circling above us. We drove to a nearby place, where we got lucky and saw three eagle species at same place: an adult White-tailed Eagle, a gorgeous Short-toed Eagle and another Lesser Spotted Eagle. We saw Woodlark and Hawfinch en route to our accommodation in the tiny village of Komlóska - a final village on a dead end road deep in the Zemplén Hills. We had a remarkable afternoon with many spectacular birds.

### **Wednesday, 2nd of May**

The pre-breakfast birding around our hotel produced Black Woodpecker, Wood Warbler, Golden Oriole and lot of songbirds. After breakfast we met again with Zoltan and we started the all-day-long tour in the various corners of the Zemplén foothills. First we looked for Eastern Imperial Eagle near the Bodrog River where supporting cast included Little Crake, Eurasian Hobby, Moustached Warbler, White-tailed Eagle, Spoonbill and Lesser Grey Shrike. More open country birding nearby Bodrogkeresztúr yielded singing Barred Warblers, Red-backed Shrikes, a Wryneck, Syrian Woodpecker and a fine Black Stork. Just to avoid the heat of the day we spent most of the afternoon deep in the forest, where we tracked down the specialties of Zemplén such as Ural Owl and White-backed Woodpecker We had fantastic views of both plus Tawny Owl and Grey-headed Woodpecker as well. At the end of the day we saw the secretive Corncrake which was followed by a wine tasting dinner in the World Heritage Tokaj region. The 'Sun King' of France (Louis XIVth) said the famous words (which became a motto) when he first tasted the wine from Tokaj: 'vinum regum rex vinorum' (the wine of kings and the king of wines).

### **Thursday, 3rd of May**

After an early breakfast we left for the Érc Mountains in Slovakia. We had a few stops en route to look for various birds though. The first port of call was still in the Zemplén where we added a fine 'Black-bellied' Dipper to our list. Later while we were driving to the border we saw a pair of Grey Partridge to cross the road. We got brilliant views of this rather scarce bird – used to be common but change of agriculture crashed its European populations. We stopped again beside a drained fishpond en route as well where we had several waterfowl bird such as Ferruginous Duck, Common Pochard, Little Grebe, Great-crested Grebe, Lapwing, Little Ringed Plover, Common Sandpiper and Wood Sandpiper. By lunch time we arrived to the base of the Stolica Mountain near Rejdova. We had our packed lunch while Willow Warbler and Goldcrest were singing constantly around of us. The afternoon was spent in search of the key target birds. First of all we visited an active nest hole of Eurasian Pygmy Owl which gave superb views and then tracked down a spectacular Three-toed Woodpecker plus several Crested Tits and Common Crossbills. It was time to drive to our accommodation but we still picked up a pair of Lesser Spotted Eagles, a pair of European Honey Buzzards and Mistle Thrush. Unfortunately two singing male Hazel Grouse was heard but they proved to be elusive.

### **Friday, 4th of May**

Prebreakfast birding around our hotel gave us a pair of Bullfinch, Black Woodpecker and we heard Grey-headed Woodpecker. We heard Hazel Grouse again, but again we had no luck. After the breakfast we drove to a nearby pine forest where after some work we managed to see a male Tengmalm's Owl. It was an unforgettable event to see this 'stunning owl in daytime. Sadly after lunch we had to leave for the Hortobágy National Park. Just before we arrived to our final destination we visited the Debrecen Great Wood where we saw Short-toed Treecreeper, Collared Flycatcher, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker and Marsh Tit. Exhausted we settled into our lovely Trófea Hotel near Nádudvar.

### **Saturday, 5th of May**

The World Heritage Hortobágy National Park! This was our first full day at this premier birdwatching site. There were so many things to do but we had to take our time and do it one by one. Our first port of call was a soda pan near Balmazújváros where we observed many wader species such as Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Black-tailed Godwit, Dunlin, Temminck's Stint, Common Redshank, Little Ringed Plover as well as several Spoonbills, Little Gull, three species of marsh terns, Northern Shoveler and Garganey. After the wetland we have visited a Red-footed Falcon colony which was magnificent. The birds were in the peak of mating so the little forest patch was alive with calling and fighting birds. What a superb raptor this colonial breeder with a strikingly different plumage of the sexes. A Hoopoe was a bonus here for us. Still before lunch we checked a family party of Long-eared Owls. The chick was big enough but we managed to find the adult bird nearby so we got view of it. This species was the number one target for Sylvia and Paul. After the tasty lunch at Tiszacsege Fish Csárda we drove to another 'puszta' where we saw Long-legged Buzzard, Montagu's Harrier, Saker Falcon, European Bee-eater and fantastic Great Bustards! We could study eight different male birds and we even had two displaying for a long time. This was a fantastic experience!

### **Sunday, 6th of May**

After breakfast we left for Transylvania. Not much later when we crossed the border to Romania we stopped at the Élesd's reservoirs where we saw several new birds for our list. There were plenty of Great Crested Grebes, a few Red-necked and Black-necked Grebes and Little Grebe too. The water level was low so the highest parts of the lake had several small muddy 'islands' which was good for waders. Carefully looking through the shorebirds we spotted Little Stint, Dunlin, Wood Sandpiper and a rather scarce Red Knot. The reservoir was also good for terns, marsh terns (Whiskered, Black, White-winged and Common) and gulls (Black-headed, Common, Caspian and Lesser Black-backed). We also had several singing Common Whitethroats and Ortolan Buntings. After this stop we continued towards Torockó and only arrived in the late afternoon. After a traditional dinner we saw a singing Scops Owl at center of the village.

### **Monday, 7th of May**

We were up early and birded the limestone outcrops of the Székelykő Mountain. Highlights included Golden Eagles, Alpine Swifts, a fine male Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Northern Wheatear and Rock Bunting. Later we continued our drive towards the Hargita Mountain and arrived to our rural accommodation in Déság by mid afternoon. We had a quick stop en route at the Dracula's Castle of Segesvár and along a riverine habitat where we located Thrush Nightingale, Garden Warbler and Golden Oriole. Kingfisher was heard only. Upon arrival to our hotel a male Common Redstart greeted us by its lovely song. In the late afternoon we tried

the one of the Brown Bear hides but it was unsuccessful. On the way back we saw Eurasian Nightjar.

### **Tuesday, 8th of May**

After a substantial breakfast we drove to the Békás Gorge. This is a fantastic location – apparently the most scenic of all Carpathian Gorges – to see the sought-after Wallcreeper. It is not only easy to get to (by car) but holds several pairs of these unique birds. We were not disappointed and were granted with amazing views of Wallcreepers. First we had two 'butterfly-flying' birds above us and then a male bird flew down to the streambed for drinking! It was a truly unforgettable experience to see it as close as 10 meters. This bird was the main target of Paul and Sylvia. Horray! We also had White-throated Dipper again and lots of Grey Wagtails. On our way back we have visited a higher pass where we had Firecrest, Goldcrest and Common Redstart.

### **Wednesday, 9th of May**

It was the day to visit some higher altitude coniferous forests of the mighty Hargita Mountain. We slowly worked our way up towards the high elevation areas where we could find a male Ring Ouzel of the heavily scalloped *alpestris* race, a few Water Pipits and Eurasian Nutcracker. When we were walking back to the car, we flushed two female Eurasian Capercaillies. In the afternoon we drove to the Szentpál-fishpond where we had Curlew Sandpiper in a mixed flock of Wood Sandpiper and Ruff. On the ponds we saw Red-necked Grebe, Ferruginous Duck and Mute Swan. In the evening we tried a different Brown Bear hide, but unfortunately we were unlucky again. Most probably the very high temperature (32C) – unusual for this time of the year – was the main factor why the bears were highly inactive.

### **Thursday, 10th of May**

It was time to leave Transylvania behind and after breakfast we started our long return journey to Hungary. At the beginning of the travel we had a Lesser Spotted Eagle, which gave excellent looks. Later we had a quick stop at one of our stake-outs and we soon located a singing male Red-breasted Flycatcher. We had two singing birds on the meeting point of their territories. We also had several singing male Collared Flycatcher, Middle Spotted Woodpecker and Wren at the same location. Later we stopped again at Élesd's reservoir adding Tawny Pipit and Marsh Warbler to our growing list. Our last birding stop was at Andaháza wetland in Bihar, where we spotted an Eurasian Teal and an Eurasian Wigeon. It was late afternoon when we arrived to the familiar Trófea Hotel near Nádudvar

### **Friday, 11th of May**

We were back to the Hortobágy this most amazingly birdy place! Even in such an extremely dry Spring there are plenty to see. This was also the last all-day-long birding of the tour and we were mainly looking for birds we have not seen previously. First we visited the Hortobágy Fishpond complex where we have several Squacco Herons, Purple Herons, Black-crowned Night Herons, Little Bittern, Common Shelduck, several singing Bluethroats and Bearded Tits. After a nice and productive walk we had a lunch at the Hortobágy Csárda, where we also had a European Honey Buzzard while sitting at our lunch table! In the afternoon we checked the surroundings of Balmazújváros where we had excellent views of European Roller and Whinchat. On the way back to the hotel we had Little Owl by an abandoned farm.

## Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> of May

After breakfast we took a short birding on the puszta of the southern section of Hortobágy National Park. Firstly we visited an abandoned farmhouse, where we could see a pair of Barn Owl. This was amazingly the 9th species of owl on this tour! Later we went to the Angel House Puszta (Angyalháza) where we saw a pair of Eurasian Stone-curlew. Sadly we had to say goodbye to the Hortobágy and started our drive towards the Liszt Ferenc Airport of Budapest. We made one more brief stop at the abandoned Kaba sugar factory ponds where we saw Mediterranean Gulls and Gadwall. Our final stop en route was on the paddyfields of Kisújszállás where we had a good look of Collared Pratincoles. Finally we got Budapest airport in time for their flight. This was a truly memorable tour through the transect of the Carpathian range from the high mountains to the steppes of Hortobágy with an amazing selection of birds! We also had an insight into three Central-Eastern European countries with great natural heritage.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

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

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Western Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*: We observed two female birds on the road to Hargita Mountain in Transylvania.

Hazel Grouse *Bonasa bonasia* (H): We heard three birds in Slovakia, but unfortunately we couldn't see them.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*: We saw one pair in the Zemplén area, when we were driving to the Rejdova. This pair ran across the road and then stopped by the road where we could study them very well.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (H): We heard this vocal bird on several occasions in the Zemplén area and also in the Hortobágy but it did not show.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*: Common throughout the tour.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*: It was numerous in the Hortobágy area with up to 500 daily. This is the eastern *rubrirostris* race in eastern Hungary.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*: The first one was seen on the Szentpál-fihpond in Transylvania. In the Hortobágy area we observed several individuals.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*: Five birds were seen at Hortobágy Fishpond. It is a rather scarce migrant and a rare breeding bird in some parts of Hungary.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*: We had one pair of it at Andaháza wetland.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*: We saw three birds at Kaba sugar factory pond.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*: Two males were seen at Andaháza wetland in Bihar.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*: It was very common throughout the tour in Hungary, Slovakia and Transylvania.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*: We had several individuals at Hortobágy area and Transylvania.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*: Small numbers recorded in Transylvania and in Hungary too.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*: We saw a few birds in Transylvania, Hungary and Slovakia.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*: Regular encounters with this globally threatened species on the tour with most sightings in the Hortobágy area.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*: About 40 were seen at Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania and one pair at Kaba sugar factory pond.

Smew *Mergus albellus*: Surprising observation of an adult male at Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: We had several individuals every bigger lake during the trip.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*: It was common on the fish ponds in Transylvania and in the Hortobágy. Up to 350 individuals were counted on Élesd reservoir.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*: Two sightings on the tour, on Élesd reservoir and the other one was at Szentpál-fishpond in Transylvania.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*: About ten birds were present at Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania and later saw more at Hortobágy-fishpond and Kaba sugar factory ponds.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*: Just one sighting near Tokaj in the Zemplén Hills.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*: Still a very common breeder in villages in Transylvania and Hungary.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*: One was seen at Andaháza wetland in Bihar and then up to 30 in the Hortobágy area.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*: A pair was seen at the Hortobágy-fishpond.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*: Small flocks were recorded in the Hortobágy area.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*: Regularly seen in the Hortobágy area with a maximum five birds.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: Small numbers were recorded nearly at all the visited wetlands both in Hungary and in Transylvania. Particularly common in some parts of the Hortobágy.

Great Egret *Egretta alba*: It was very common everywhere during the tour near the wetlands.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: Small numbers were recorded nearly at all the visited wetlands both in Hungary and in Transylvania.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*: Up to 5 birds were seen daily on the Hortobágy.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: Small numbers were regularly seen on the tour.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*: About 20 birds were seen near the breeding colony on the Hortobágy. Later we observed one bird on Kaba sugar factory pond.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*: Fairly common throughout the tour.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*: Daily sightings of these very special colonial breeders on the Hortobágy. Sometime we had up to 20 circling together or occupying their abandoned rook nest or an artificial nest box for breeding.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*: Only a single bird was seen in the Zemplén area.

Saker *Falco cherrug*: We had one bird at southern section of Hortobágy area.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*: Great views of an adult bird on our first afternoon in the Zemplén area. Later two were seen in the Hortobágy area too.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*: We had an amazing view of one bird in the Zemplén Hills.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*: Small numbers were seen in Transylvania, and it was very common in Hungary, especially on the Hortobágy, where the daily maximum number were up to 15 individuals.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*: We had a fine male and two females on the Hortobágy.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*: It was very common throughout the tour in all three countries.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*: We had a distant view of one on the Hortobágy Plain.

European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*: We saw two birds in Slovakia, and later we had great views of another in Hortobágy village.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*: We saw up to four birds in each country, but the best view were obtained in Transylvania.

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*: We had excellent looks of one bird in the Zemplén area.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*: Two birds were seen near Torockó in Transylvania. One was sitting on its nest cliff but later gave good flight views too.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* (H): We heard it once in the Zemplén and two times on the Hortobágy but did not show.

Little Crake *Porzana parva*: One bird was seen briefly in the Zemplén area.

Corncrake *Crex crex*: We had good views of this shy bird in the Zemplén area and heard other birds as well.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*: A leader only sighting in the Hortobágy area.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*: Commonly seen in most wetlands we have visited throughout the tour.

Common Crane *Grus grus*: We only saw two flocks on the Hortobágy.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*: A great tour for this species as not only we saw 10 birds on the Hortobágy but we had two males in display.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*: Up to 15 were seen on the soda lake near Balmazújváros in the Hortobágy area.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*: We counted about 50 on the soda lake near Balmazújváros in the Hortobágy area and several birds at Andaháza wetland.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemus*: Great views of a pair in the Hortobágy area.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*: We stopped on the way back to airport at the paddy fields near Kisújszállás to see this now much localised bird. We managed to see three birds and it was a great ending of the tour!

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*: Several were seen on the various wetlands, reservoirs and fishponds both in Transylvania and on the Hortobágy.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*: Fairly common near the wetlands and grasslands in Hungary and Transylvania too.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus*: A moulting plumaged bird on the mudflats of Élesd Reservoir.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*: Two individuals were seen on one of the shingle islands of Élesd Reservoir.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*: One was seen on the soda lake near Balmazújváros in the Hortobágy area.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*: A single bird was seen between a flock of Ruff at Szentpál fishpond in Transylvania.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*: We saw two in Transylvania and up to 130 on the Hortobágy.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*: Up to 150 were seen daily on the Hortobágy. Some different breeding plumaged males with great ruffs were also observed.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*: Up to 20 were seen on the Hortobágy.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*: We saw about 50 birds on the Hortobágy.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*: Up to ten summer-plumaged birds were seen on the Hortobágy.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*: We saw 5 birds on the Élesd Reservoir and up to 12 on the Hortobágy.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: Singles were seen on the soda lake of Balmazújváros, Hortobágy.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: We regularly had flocks of 5-10 birds on most visited wetlands in the Hortobágy area.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: We observed this species on the shingle islands of Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania and two birds were also seen on the Hortobágy.

Common Gull *Larus canus*: One bird was seen at Élesd Reservoir.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*: Eight birds were seen on the old sugar factory ponds of Kaba.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*: We have seen this species in Transylvania and in Hungary too. The biggest flock of five was at Élesd Reservoir and three more birds were seen on the Hortobágy.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*: Common, mainly in the Hortobágy.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*: We saw one adult bird at Élesd Reservoir.

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*: We saw several individual at the various wetlands we have visited on the tour.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: Up to 10 were counted at Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania and we also had a few birds at the Hortobágy Fishpond and Kaba sugar factory ponds.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*: It was very common on the Hortobágy with up to 120 seen daily.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*: Small number of migrants were seen throughout the tour. The biggest count of 100 birds was at Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*: We saw the first 30 on the Hortobágy and later a few more in Transylvania.

Rock Dove *Columba livia*: A very common resident throughout the tour.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*: A few were seen in the Zemplén Hills.

Common Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*: Fairly common in Transylvania and in Hungary too.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*: Very common in the villages.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*: Still a fairly common sight in most parts of Hungary and Transylvania. We had most of our sightings in the Zemplén Hills.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*: A very common bird throughout the tour from the flat Hortobágy to the top of the Carpathian Mountains.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*: A fairly common but secretive species in Hungary. We saw a two adults at an abandoned house in the Hortobágy area

European Scops Owl *Otus scops*: We had several bird calling in the village of Torockó in Transylvania and we could see one of them.

Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*: A very fine female was seen in the Zemplén Hills.

Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus*: We were very lucky to see one in the daytime in Slovakia. It was a great experience!

Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum*: A female was seen in Slovakia near its breeding territory. Another brilliant experience!

Little Owl *Athene noctua*: We had a single sighting of one pair on the Hortobágy.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*: The first one was heard from our accommodation in the Zemplén Hills where one was also seen later.

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis*: We saw three birds in the Zemplén Hills. 2012 was a very good breeding year for this species with many of our nest boxes were occupied!

Long-eared Owl *Asia otus*: In the Hortobágy area we saw several individuals at different breeding locations.

Eurasian Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*: We heard three birds in Transylvania and then we flushed one from the roadside.

Common Swift *Apus apus*: Up to 15 were seen near Torockó and several bird above debrecen Great Wood in Hungary.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*: We saw several birds in the Bihar Mountains of Transylvania.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (H): Unfortunately we only heard one bird close to Székelyudvarhely in Transylvania.



European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*: At the beginning of the tour we only heard two birds very high in the Zemplén Hills as they were just moving in from the wintering grounds but later on the tour at least 12 were studied well on the Hortobágy.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus*: One lovely pair was seen very well on the Hortobágy.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*: We have only recorded this lovely bird on the Hortobágy where up to 2 were seen daily.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*: Great look of one bird in the Zemplén Hills and later it was heard in Debrecen too.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*: First we saw one bird in the Zemplén Hills and later we heard another bird in Slovakia.

European Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*: A fine male was seen well near Debrecen in Hungary.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*: We had two sightings of this species in the Zemplén Hills.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*: Regularly seen in Hungary, Slovakia and Transylvania throughout the tour.

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus*: A female on a roadside tree was seen in the Zemplén Hills and other one was observed on the Hortobágy.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius*: Two sightings of singletons in Transylvania and on Hortobágy.

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*: Excellent views of this rare and declining species in the Zemplén Hills. A pair was feeding chicks.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor* (H): Unfortunately, we only heard it drumming in the Zemplén area.

Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus*: We had a brilliant prolonged look of this higher altitude species in Slovakia.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*: Small numbers were seen in Hungary and in Transylvania too. Mainly near to the roadside or around farm areas.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*: We had good views of one in the Zemplén Hills.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*: A very common bird, especially numerous on the Hortobágy.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*: Small numbers at various locations but the biggest concentration was seen at Élesd Reservoir where up to 50 were counted.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: Very common throughout Hungary, Slovakia and Transylvania.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbica*: Very common throughout the tour, huge flocks in Hungary.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*: We saw the first one at the dam of Élesd Reservoir and later we could see another bird on the Hortobágy.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*: Two were seen on the top of Hargita Mountain in Transylvania.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*: The nominate race was common in Hungary and in Transylvania.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*: It was common in the Zemplén Hills and in Transylvania.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*: It was fairly common throughout the tour.

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*: We had a single bird in the Zemplén Hills. Later we saw another bird at Békás Gorge in Transylvania.

Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*: Several heard in Slovakia, and we saw one bird in Transylvania.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*: Several were seen in Slovakia.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*: Several sightings of this shy forest bird in the Zemplén Hills and in the Carpathians.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*: We observed one bird in Transylvania.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*: It was very common in Hungary. We heard it daily and seen a few at various places.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*: Most of them were busily feeding young but finally managed to see one at Hortobágy Fishponds.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*: A very common birds of the villages al along the tour. We saw several at various places but usually in small numbers.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*: The first male was seen at our accomodation in Transylvania. Later another male bird was seen in the Bucsin Pass in Transylvania.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*: It was seen in small numbers in Hungary and in Slovakia too.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*: A fairly common bird in Hungary and in Transylvania too especially numerous on some parts of the Hortobágy.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*: A few were seen in Transylvania and on the Hortobágy.

Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*: We managed to see a fine male at Torockó in Transylvania.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*: We saw one male bird on the top of Hargita Mountin.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*: Fairly common in Hungary and in Transylvania, rare on the Hortobágy.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*: The first one was seen in Slovakia, later we had more in Tranylvania.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*: A common bird in the Zemplén Hills and in the Carpathians.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*: We saw a few in Slovakia and in Transylvania.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (H): Unfortunately, we only heard few individual on the Hortobágy as it was very windy.

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*: We had at least three different singing male near the Zemplén Hills.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*: We saw it in wet places throughout the tour but it was particularly very common on the Hortobágy.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* (H): We only heard one bird at Élesd Reservoir, but we couldn't find it.

European Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*: A fairly common bird of the extensive reed beds of the Hortobágy with daily sightings there.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*: It was a fairly common bird on the Hortobágy.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*: Excellent views of this striking warbler in the Zemplén Hills..

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*: It was commonly heard throughout the tour and several were seen as well.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*: We saw this species regularly in Transylvania.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*: It was commonly heard throughout the tour and several were seen as well.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*: We saw one bird near Székelyudvarhely in Transylvania.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*: Fairly common in the beech woods of the Zemplén Hills and later we heard in Slovakia and Transylvania too.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*: It was commonly encountered throughout the tour.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*: We saw three birds in Slovakia and later we heard it in Transylvania as well.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*: It was seen in the Carpathian Mountains both in Slovakia and in Transylvania.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*: Like the previous species, it was seen a few times in the coniferous forests of the Carpathian Mountains in Transylvania.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*: Several were seen on the Hortobágy and in the Zemplén Hills.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*: A gorgeous male was seen in Transylvania.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*: We recorded several males of this very handsome species throughout the tour.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*: One female bird was seen around the accommodation on the Hortobágy and later one migrant bird was seen in Transylvania too.

Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus*: It was common on the Hortobágy where we had several excellent views.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*: It was first seen in the Zemplén Hills and then two were seen in Transylvania. This is the lovely white-headed race here in the Carpathian Basin though there are some intermediate birds too.

Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*: A few were seen in Debrecen Great Wood.

Willow Tit *Parus montanus*: A two birds were seen in the Carpathian Mountains in Slovakia.

Crested Tit *Parus cristatus*: We had good views of this magnificent little bird at higher elevations in Slovakia.

Coal Tit *Parus ater*: Fairly common in the Carpathian Mountains.

Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*: It was common throughout the tour.

Great Tit *Parus major*: It was common throughout the tour.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*: It was common in the Zemplén Hills, in Transylvania and in Debrecen Great Wood.

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*: Minimum three of these stunning birds were seen at Békás Gorge in Transylvania. We could first study the remarkable 'butterfly like' flight action of two birds (probably one pair) and then we had a very close and amazing view of one as it flew down to the streambed for bathing. It was a mere ten meters away!

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*: It was seen in the Slovakia.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*: A single bird was seen in Debrecen Great Wood.

Eurasian Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*: A fairly common bird in the reedbeds of the Hortobágy.

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*: Fairly commonly seen throughout the tour.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*: We had some in Transylvania though it was more common in the Zemplén Hills and on the Hortobágy.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*: The first pair was seen in the Zemplén area but later others were seen on the Hortobágy.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*: Unfortunately, just one bird was seen on the motorway near Kolozsvár from the car.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*: It was commonly seen in the Zemplén Hills and in the Carpathian Mountains.

Common Magpie *Pica pica*: A very commonly encountered bird throughout the tour.

Spotted Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*: We had two birds in Transylvania. The first one was seen from the car, but we managed to get good views of the second bird near the top of Hargita Mountain.

Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*: Very common in Transylvania and on the Hortobágy.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*: A very commonly encountered bird throughout the tour.

Hooded Crow *Corvus corone*: A very commonly encountered bird throughout the tour.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*: A several individuals were seen in the Zemplén Hills, and small numbers were common in Transylvania too.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*: One of the most common species and was seen all along the tour virtually in every habitat.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: It was common in or around human settlements.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*: It was common in the Zemplén Hills and on the Hortobágy but distinctly less so in Transylvania.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*: A very common bird in most wooded habitat.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*: Fairly common in the Zemplén Hills and a few were observed in Transylvania and on the Hortobágy too.

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*: It was seen frequently in human settlements.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*: It was seen frequently in human settlements.

Common Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*: It was fairly common in Transylvania and in the Zemplén Hills. Two birds were also seen on the Hortobágy.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*: It was surprising to see a lot in Slovakia in the middle elevation of the Carpathians and not to see any in the higher parts in Transylvania at all. Flocks of up to 25 were seen.

Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*: One pair was seen in Slovakia very well.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*: A few were seen in the Zemplén Hills and Debrecen Great Wood.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*: It was fairly common in the Zemplén Hills, in Transylvania and in Debrecen Great Wood.

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*: We managed to get absolutely great looks of a singing male near Torockó in Transylvania.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*: Three males and a female was seen at Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*: It was fairly common in suitable habitat on the Hortobágy and a few were seen near the Zemplén Hills.

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*: Fairly common in the Zemplén Hills and on the Hortobágy.

## MAMMALS

Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*: It was regularly seen throughout the tour but it was especially common on the Hortobágy.

European Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*: We had one sightings in the Zemplén area.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*: Several were seen all along the tour from the Zemplén Hills to the Hortobágy.

Stoat *Mustela erminea*: One was seen in Slovakia.

Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*: Three individuals were seen in Transylvania.

Western Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*: It was regularly seen throughout the tour but it was especially common on the Hortobágy.