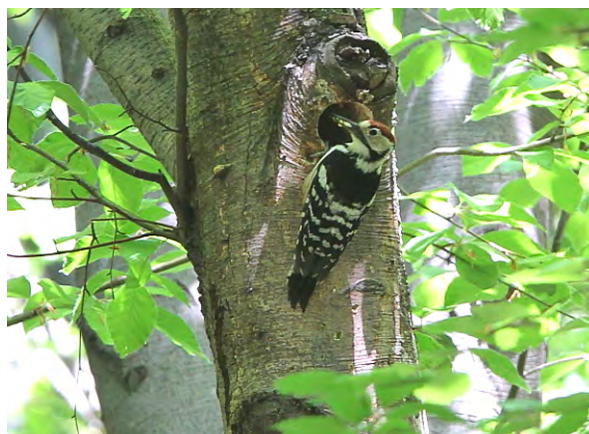


# Hungary & Romania: Birds & Brown Bears

Sat 28<sup>th</sup> Apr – Sun 6<sup>th</sup> May 2012



Photos (clockwise, from top left): Voted bird of the trip, a fine female **Dotterel**, one of a trip of 14 birds seen • Another of the many highlights, a male **Collared Flycatcher** • Seen on our last day, a **White-backed Woodpecker** • Having just arrived, a male **Red-breasted Flycatcher** proclaims its territory • **Nutcrackers** are always good to see • One of six **Wallcreepers** was very much admired! © all photos János Oláh / Limosa

report compiled by tour leader:  
**János Oláh**

## Trip Diary

### **Tour Leaders: János Oláh and Zoltán Baczó (Transylvania)**

**with Nicola Duckworth, Brian Field, Tim Jenkins, (Sally Leach), Nick Picozzi, Bernard Reading, Jim Smith, and Liz Talmadge**

Hungary and Romania in spring is a fantastic birdwatching tour, which offers excellent opportunities to see many of the special birds of Central and Eastern Europe! In fact, there is perhaps no other European tour where it is possible to see over 200 bird species of birds within such a compact itinerary! In 2012, we enjoyed an action-packed tour, visiting all of the important birding habitats from the steppes of the Hortobágy to the snow-covered high elevations of the Carpathians. In stark contrast with our 2010 tour when Hungary experienced its wettest spring for 50 years, in 2012 we had extreme dry conditions and the weather was unusually hot and sunny for this time of the year! Daily maximum temperatures were as high as 32°C, even in the cooler Transylvania region. Also, the dry Spring meant the temporary water bodies and marshes were limited in the Hortobágy National Park but sometimes this helps to find the target birds more easily.

After a late arrival to Budapest, we headed east to the World Heritage Hortobágy National Park for a two night stay. Our first day of birdwatching was spent in the Hortobágy area and was a great start to the tour. We recorded 96 species in a single day, but most importantly had wonderful experiences such as seeing the displaying Great Bustards, visiting a Red-footed Falcon colony with well over 50 birds around and watching a pair of the majestic Saker Falcon! The supporting cast in the form of a Long-eared Owl family, two different White-tailed Eagles, a fine Long-legged Buzzard and all three marsh terns in full breeding plumage was also excellent.

Next day we entered Transylvania (Romania) where most of the tour was spent. A fantastic area of varied habitats where one can still see old land-use such as manual ploughing with oxen or cutting food for poultry with a sickle. These 'ancient' agriculture methods do help to maintain a traditional landscape-friendly environment which is better for the birdlife, unlike the modern farming which affects all of Europe now – and our birds! The weather was hot but still we encountered patches of snow on the higher passes. We managed to see a good list of the specialities of the region such as Hazel Grouse, Lesser Spotted and Golden Eagles, Alpine Swift, Little, Scops and Tawny Owls, Syrian, Black and Three-toed Woodpeckers, Ring Ouzel, Rock Thrush, Thrush Nightingale, Collared and Red-breasted Flycatchers, Nutcracker, Crested Tit, Wallcreeper, Great Grey Shrike, Dipper, Rock Bunting and Ortolan Bunting. The summery weather was not helping much with our Brown Bear watching however. The bears were not in the mood for moving before dusk and it took us two attempts to see a Brown Bear. We will surely never forget the sight though as it walked out from the dark Transylvanian pine forest to the clearing. The improvement of minor roads even in the remote regions of Romania is continuing, which also contributed to an even more convenient and enjoyable tour.

For the final leg of the tour we were back to the Hortobágy, where we spent the last full day of the tour on the Great Hungarian Plain again! We had a different selection of migrating birds than one week ago. We also spent some time trying to locate those resident birds we had missed before (I should say having had no time previously). Our day was yet again a memorable one just like our first full day of the tour. Just to name but a few of the special birds we had: a vagrant White Pelican: breeding plumaged Black-necked and Red-necked Grebes: several Ferruginous Ducks: Little Bittern, Black Kite, Montagu's Harrier, a male Little Crane; a flock of breeding-plumaged Dotterel, Roller, Bluethroat, Moustached Warbler and Lesser Grey Shrike. On our final day back to Budapest we were still adding some birds to the ever-growing list. We opted to make a short detour to the southern Zemplén Hills and were rewarded with superb looks of White-backed Woodpecker and a fantastic Ural Owl to round off this memorable tour. Our final tally of 195 bird species recorded in just eight days of birding was a good result.

### **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April**

After a late afternoon arrival to Budapest Liszt Ferenc airport we drove to the Hortobágy National Park in the eastern parts of Hungary. This was a two hour and uneventful drive to our nicely located accommodation. The Hortobágy National Park is a variety of grasslands and wetlands and is the most western fringe of the Asian steppes and the biggest intact grassland in Europe. The micro formations of the natron soil plain and the continental climate results in a unique habitat. In early Spring, not only the 1000s of hectares of permanent fishponds and marshes are the habitat for waterbirds, but in fact the entire 100,000 ha becomes a huge wetland when all the formations are filled with the winter precipitation. Most of these are temporary water bodies, but in a normal year they last until late April and early May. In summer these formations are dry and the habitat is more like a semi desert. This park is a vital stop-over and refuelling site for a wide range of migrating waterbirds (White-fronted Geese, Crane, Ruff, Wood Sandpiper etc.).

### **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> April**

It was a hot and sunny day! After breakfast we had two Sakers while we were heading to the northern part of the park where we have visited a small soda lake which is managed by the woolly Hungarian 'mangalica' pigs, which create open wetland habitat for shorebirds while foraging. We had a fine selection of birds here like Ferruginous Ducks, Spoonbills, Avocets, Black-winged Stilts and all three species of marsh terns in full breeding plumage. We also had many breeding-plumaged Ruffs in a great variety of breeding finery, ranging in colour from snow white to ginger and black. After this wetland we visited a large Red-footed Falcon colony. We enjoyed superb flight and perched views of up to 50 of these special colonial breeding raptors. This is the time when they are establishing territories, so aerial combats between rival males are common and the shrill call of the falcons makes the whole woodland alive. Before lunch we had a lovely Long-legged Buzzard and singing male Grasshopper Warbler. After this great morning we had a delicious lunch at an inn near the Tisza River. The afternoon was exciting and started well with two White-tailed Eagles. The best performance however was produced by several male Great Bustards and we even had some displaying. This is a fantastic sight when they turn their wings and tail inside out and forming a huge white ball. This is also called the 'foam bath' display, which a perfect example of visual attraction even from great distances in an open landscape. Such a Great Bustard 'ball' is visible from up to 4 kilometres! Other goodies we saw around this grassland included Cranes, Little Owl and Hoopoe. We managed to see 96 species of birds on this action-packed first day!

### **Monday 30<sup>th</sup> April**

The pre-breakfast birding in the hotel garden produced several singing Nightingales and a Golden Oriole. After a hearty breakfast we left the Hortobágy and began our journey into Transylvania. Our first brief stop was at the Hungarian/Romanian border and then at the Élesd Reservoir. Here, among the hundreds of Great Crested Grebes we found about ten Black-necked Grebes and up to five Red-necked Grebes, while a late female Goldeneye was a surprise. There were lots of migrant marsh terns which included all three species; mixed in amongst the lovely White-winged Terns there were up to 15 Little Gulls as well. We also had excellent looks at several singing male Ortolan Buntings. Later we had a picnic stop near Körösfő at an oak forest edge then continued on the newly built highway to Torda, and then a few hours later arrived to the Kükölli Valley near our final destination. Here we took a pleasant walk in the hope of finding some early arrival Thrush Nightingale but there were no sign of any. We were just 2-3 days early and were very hopeful they will arrive still before we leave Transylvania behind! We had a Great Grey Shrike and two fantastic Black-headed (Yellow) Wagtails! Just around dusk we arrived to our final destination at the base of the Hargita Mountain for a nice dinner and our first taste of the region's famous Blueberry brandy!

### **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> & Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May**

The weather was hot and summery still and we enjoyed two great days birding around eastern Transylvania. The garden around our accommodation was excellent for common birds and we also counted up to six Redstarts. Our first day was spent in a nearby pass where we managed to locate most of the special birds of the pine forest: a lovely pair of Three-toed Woodpeckers, certainly the stars of the morning! The male was feeding on the ground and on the lower parts of the pine trees just a few

metres away from us! We were still looking at the male bird when the familiar call of a Black Woodpecker was heard and soon we were watching this largest woodpecker of Europe. Excellent! Other higher elevation birds here included a tame Nutcracker, lovely Firecrests, Crested Tit and lots of Crossbills. Late morning after this fruitful walk we positioned ourselves in an open area to look for raptors. Amongst the many Buzzards two Lesser Spotted Eagles were spotted and then finally two Goshawks joined in as well. By the time we got back and had lunch we were ready to go to Brown Bear hides. We go to the hides early as in normal years the bears usually come out still in daylight; we were all positioned, but no bears were seen on the first evening. It was disappointing but the foresters suggested it might be the hot weather and bears do not move until late dusk. Next morning we were off early morning and started well with a male Grey-headed Woodpecker and fantastic singing Collared Flycatchers! This was followed a lovely male Red-breasted Flycatcher, which had just returned from the wintering grounds and was eager to advertise its territory with continuous singing! On the way to Békás Gorge we stopped in the Görgény Mountains, but activity was rather poor and only some of us managed to see Ring Ouzel. Moving on to Békás Gorge we were lucky to see at least six different Wallcreepers! It was not as easy as to write it down as it took a long time to get the first decent views but finally we were all satisfied. This enigmatic species was a strong favourite for everybody and for some the winner of the 'Bird of the trip' competition. Additional goodies at Békás included four Alpine Swifts and several Grey Wagtails. Late afternoon we were back to bear hides and this time we got lucky and one Brown Bear came out at dusk. What a magnificent creature!

#### **Thursday 3rd May**

After a nice leisurely breakfast we have visited a riverine forest again where we enjoyed stunning views of Thrush Nightingales this time. They were back from Africa just as punctual as ever! A few Garden Warblers were also singing in the same habitat. A short visit to a nearby fishpond system produced Ferruginous Ducks, several marsh terns of all three species, Wood Sandpipers, Savi's Warblers and three summer-plumaged Red-throated Pipits and a fantastic selection of different forms of Yellow Wagtails. Later we broke our journey at Segesvár (Sigishora) where we visited the Citadel, infamous as Vlad the Impaler's (alias Dracula) palace. We spent an exciting hour in the town seeing the sights as well as watching several Redstarts. Our next port of call was the picturesque World Heritage village of Torockó (Rimetea), situated at the foot of the Székelykő Mountain. As we entered the limestone valley our first stop was at Kőköz where we watched a Lesser Spotted Eagle and a Peregrine. There followed a short drive to our accommodation, situated in a very special, old style World Heritage House with a truly memorable and gripping atmosphere. Syrian Woodpecker greeted us while offloading the bags. After a delicious dinner here we went owling, and had a great views of a Scops Owl just looking out from our nest box while calling continuously. Another excellent day again!

#### **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> May**

Before breakfast we went for a walk in the terraced fields below the crags. Here we managed to find a brightly coloured male Rock Thrush, a fine Golden Eagle, a flock of Alpine Swifts, Great Grey Shrike and Rock Buntings. The beautiful limestone Székelykő Mountain and the tiny village with only the rooftops visible, created a wonderful atmosphere from the slopes. After a substantial breakfast we embarked on a fairly uneventful drive back into Hungary. In the afternoon we were back to Hungary, and visited the mighty Great Wood of Debrecen. In this lovely oak woodland we found several Wrynecks, Middle Spotted and Green Woodpeckers, Short-toed Treecreeper and Collared Flycatchers.

#### **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May**

On our final full day of birding we had lots to do! The huge Hortobágy National Park needs a minimum of two full days, especially if there is almost a week between these days in the main migration time! We first visited the old ponds of Kaba Sugar Factory where we had a Black Kite, Red-necked Grebes and three Mediterranean Gulls. Our next stop was at the main Hortobágy fishponds complex where we enjoyed a nice walk and managed to see a vagrant White Pelican, several Pygmy Cormorants, a male Little Bittern, two White-tailed Eagles, a fine male Little Crake and at least two Moustached Warblers. The latter is usually a shy bird and not a real reed-top singer but we had extremely good looks as one sat out in full view. After a fine meal in the Hortobágy Csárda a nearby

soda lake gave us a fine selection of waders which included up to ten Black-winged Stilts, 40 Avocets, Little Ringed Plovers, three Temminck's Stints and some breeding-plumaged male Ruff. Late afternoon we tracked down several Rollers and Hoopoes but best of all we found 14 full breeding plumaged Dotterels. These special birds gave us a fantastic show and the experience was so good that it was voted as the bird of the trip! A more than adequate finalé to our birding in the Hortobágy! On this particular day we saw 114 bird species!

### **Sunday 6th May**

The flight back to the United Kingdom was late afternoon so we still had an almost full day for birding. We decided to leave early and drive back to Budapest via the Zemplén Hills. Time was short but our local guide had something special for us and took us to woodland where we managed to locate a lovely pair of White-backed Woodpeckers and a fantastic female Ural Owl within a short period of time. What a finish to this action-packed tour. The Zemplén Hill is a remarkable area and one that we regularly visit on several of our Limosa Hungary tours, but due to time constraints it isn't generally an area we visit on the Hortobágy & Transylvania tour on a regular basis.

Although the weather was unusually hot and though sometimes we had to work hard for some birds, I hope that everyone had a great time with countless memories to take home! As far as European birding goes surely the combination of Hungary and Romania is an interesting one!

*János Oláh*

## **ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED**

*(total of 195 species recorded by the group)*

### **Hazel Grouse *Tetrastes bonasia***

One was seen by Brian in one of the Brown Bear hides. It flew in and walked up the slope allowing brief but good views.

### **Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (H)**

We heard it several times in the Hortobágy area and once at Torockó.

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

Common in Hungary and in Transylvania.

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

Flocks of 50–150 were seen in the Hortobágy area.

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

Up to 53 were counted at Hortobágy fishponds.

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

One was seen at a soda lake near Balmazújváros.

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

Two were seen at Élesd Reservoir and a drake in the Hortobágy area.

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

20a few were seen in the Hortobágy area.

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

Very common in Hungary and Transylvania.

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

Small numbers recorded in Hungary.

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

Small numbers recorded in Hungary and Transylvania.

### **Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina***

A singleton was seen at one of the fishponds of the Hortobágy, a recently colonized bird in the region.

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

Common in the Hortobágy and in Transylvania.

### **Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca***

We had great looks of this declining species in the Hortobágy area and also at Szentpál fishponds in Transylvania. Largest flock we had was 20 birds.

**Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula***

Only recorded at Élesd Reservoir where up to 80 birds were present.

**Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula***

Two female were seen at Élesd Reservoir. This is a very late date for this winter visitor.

**Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis***

A few were seen in the Hortobágy area.

**Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena***

Five breeding plumaged birds were seen at Élesd Reservoir and two in the Hortobágy area.

**Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus***

Common in Transylvania (Élesd, Sinpaul fishponds) and on the Hortobágy. Up to 150 were counted on Élesd Reservoir.

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

About 10 were seen at Élesd and another 20 in the Hortobágy area.

**Black Stork *Ciconia nigra***

Singles of these magnificent birds were seen in Transylvania, in the Hortobágy area and Zemplén Hills.

**White Stork *Ciconia ciconia***

Still a very common breeding bird in villages in Hungary and Transylvania.

**Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus***

A single bird was seen by some of us from the train at Hortobágy Fishponds.

**Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia***

Just small numbers were seen in the Hortobágy area.

**Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* (H)**

We only heard it in Transylvania. None recorded on the extremely dry Hortobágy.

**Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus***

A nice male showed perfectly on our last day at Hortobágy fishpond.

**Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax***

Just a few were seen in the Hortobágy area.

**Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides***

Up to 10 were seen daily in the Hortobágy area.

**Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea***

Common in Transylvania and Hungary.

**Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea***

Noted daily in small numbers in the Hortobágy and a few seen in Transylvania.

**Great White Egret *Ardea alba***

Common near wetlands throughout Hungary, also seen in the dry grasslands. Three were seen in Transylvania.

**Little Egret *Egretta garzetta***

A few were seen in the Hortobágy area.

**Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis***

A single bird was seen in the Hortobágy.

**White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus***

A vagrant individual was seen at the Hortobágy Fishponds.

**Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus***

About 20 were seen on our last day at Hortobágy fishponds.

**Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo***

Common in the Hortobágy area.

**Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus***

Seen every day of the tour, a fairly common bird in Hungary and in Transylvania.

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

About 50 birds in the colony at Magdolna-pusztá in the Hortobágy. One of the special birds of the tour!

**Hobby *Falco subbuteo***

A single individual was seen in Transylvania.

**Saker *Falco cherrug***

A pair was seen in the northern Hortobágy. Hungary is the stronghold in the Western Palearctic!

**Peregrine *Falco peregrinus***

A fine adult was seen in the Kő-köz, near Torockó.

**Black Kite *Mivlus migrans***

A single bird was seen in the Hortobágy area while feeding on a carcass on the road.

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

Two sightings of both adults and juveniles in the Hortobágy area.

**Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus***

Small numbers seen in Transylvania, and very common in Hungary, especially in the Hortobágy.

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

Just two birds were seen in the Hortobágy.

**Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis***

Two were seen in Transylvania.

**Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo***

Very common in Hungary and in Transylvania.

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

A fine individual performed well for us in the Hortobágy near Darassa.

**Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina***

Daily sightings in Transylvania. A lovely *Aquila* eagle and still numerous in the Carpathians.

**Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca***

Two were seen on the last day of the tour. A magnificent creature!

**Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos***

An adult on nest was our only sighting in Transylvania.

**Great Bustard *Otis tarda***

A total of 12 birds were on the Nagyiváni-pusztá in the Hortobágy . We were lucky to see several males in full 'foam-bath' display! A fantastic experience!

**Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* (H)**

Heard in the Hortobágy area.

**Little Crake *Porzana parva***

A fine male was seen well in the Hortobágy area.

**Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus***

Seen in small numbers in Hungary and in Transylvania at the fish ponds.

**Coot *Fulica atra***

Common in Hungary and Transylvania.

**Common Crane *Grus grus***

A flock of 20 birds in the Hortobágy area on our first birding day.

**Stone-curlew *Burhinus oediconemus***

Two were seen on the southern Hortobágy.

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

Up to 10 were seen in the Hortobágy area.

**Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta***

Seven at Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania and about 45 birds on a soda lake in the Hortobágy area.

**Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus***

Fairly common near the wetlands and grasslands in Hungary and Transylvania.

**Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius***

Fairly common at Élesd Reservoir and we also saw six on the Hortobágy.

**Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus***

A flock of 14 in full breeding plumage was a superb final for our stay in the Hortobágy! Voted the best bird of the trip!

**Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago***

Two were seen at Szentpál fishponds in Transylvania.

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

Only five were seen in Hungary.

**Curlew *Numenius arquata***

Five on a drained fishpond in the Hortobágy area.

**Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus***

A single breeding plumaged on our last day.

**Redshank *Tringa totanus***

Seen in small numbers in Hungary and in Transylvania.

**Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* (H)**

Just heard in the Hortobágy area.

**Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola***

Flocks of 10–20 were seen in Hungary and in Transylvania.

**Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos***

About 15 were counted at Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania.

**Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii***

Excellent looks at three birds in the Hortobágy region.

**Dunlin *Calidris alpina***

Up to 10 were seen in the Hortobágy area.

**Ruff *Philomachus pugnax***

Small numbers in Hungary and also in Transylvania. It was great to see the colourful males.

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

We saw two adult birds near Élesd in Transylvania.

**Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans***

Good numbers in the Hortobágy area where they breed now.

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

Common throughout the tour, both in Hungary and in Transylvania.

**Mediterranean Gull *Ichtyaetus melanocephalus***

Three adults were seen at the old Kaba Sugar Factory Ponds.

**Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus***

A flock of 15 were seen at Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania.

**Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus***

Small flocks seen in Transylvania, but common in the Hortobágy area.

**Black Tern *Chlidonias niger***

Small flocks of 5–50 birds in Hungary and in Transylvania.

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

Flocks of 10–30 birds in attractive breeding plumage were seen in the Hortobágy and at Élesd Reservoir. In such a dry year they were not breeding in the Hortobágy area.

**Common Tern *Sterna hirundo***

About 20 birds were seen at Élesd Reservoir.

**Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia***

Common.

**Stock Dove *Columba oenas***

Just one bird, at our picnic stop in Transylvania.

**Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus***

Fairly common in Hungary and in Transylvania.

**Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur***

Fairly common in Hungary, and also a few in Transylvania

**Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto***

Very common in villages throughout.

**Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus***

Common, especially in the wetlands of Hortobágy where up to 5 birds were seen daily.

**Scops Owl *Otus scops***

Several were heard in Torockó and one showed nicely as it was looking out of the nestbox!

**Ural Owl *Strix uralensis***

After searching for one in Transylvania without success we had a superb female in the Zemplén hills on our last day. Voted the third best bird of the trip!

**Little Owl *Athene noctua***

One was seen in the Hortobágy area.



**Long-eared Owl *Asio otus***

A female with chicks showed nicely in the Hortobágy area.

**Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba***

Four at Békás (Bicaz) Gorge and 12 near Torockó in Transylvania.

**Swift *Apus apus***

Up to 60 in a day were seen on the tour.

**Roller *Coracias garrulus***

Three were seen in the northern Hortobágy area.

**Hoopoe *Upupa epops***

Just three were seen in Hungary.

**Wryneck *Jynx torquilla***

Super views of three individuals in the lovely oak woodland of Debrecen.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor* (H)**

It was very elusive this spring and we only heard it in the Zemplén Hills.

**White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos***

Great looks at a pair visiting the breeding hole on our last day of the tour in the Zemplén Hills.

**Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius***

Great views of two in the Debrecen Great Wood.

**Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus***

Two good sightings in Transylvania.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major***

Commonly seen in woodlands in Hungary and Transylvania.

**Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus***

Absolutely fantastic views of a pair. The male was feeding just a few metres away from us!

**Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius***

Two were seen in Transylvania.

**Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis***

Two were seen in the Torockó area in Transylvania.

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

Stunning views of a male in Transylvania. A much wanted bird for Nick.

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

We had several sightings with up to three daily, both in Hungary and in Transylvania.

**Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor***

Four on our last day in the Hortobágy area.

**Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor***

Two sightings in Transylvania.

**Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus***

Fairly common in Transylvania and Hungary, including a singing male at the Trófea Lodge.

**Jay *Garrulus glandarius***

Daily sightings in the Carpathians.

**Magpie *Pica pica***

Common everywhere.

**Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes***

Excellent close up views of a pair in Transylvania.

**Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula***

Very common in Transylvania and the Hortobágy. Transylvania has the white-collared race *sommeringi*.

**Rook *Corvus frugilegus***

Very common in Transylvania and in the Hortobágy.

**Hooded Crow *Corvus corone***

Very common in Transylvania and in the Hortobágy.

**Raven *Corvus corax***

Up to 30 seen daily in the Carpathians.

**Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris***

A few recorded in Transylvania and in the Debrecen Great Wood.

**Willow Tit *Poecile montana***

Two were seen and several heard in the Carpathians this year.

**Coal Tit *Periparus ater***

Fairly common in the Carpathians.

**Crested Tit *Parus cristatus***

Two were seen in Transylvania.

**Great Tit *Parus major***

Common in Hungary and in Transylvania.

**Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus***

Common in the Debrecen Great Wood.

**Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus***

A male seen at very close range at the Hortobágy fishponds.

**Sand Martin *Riparia riparia***

200+ were seen at Hortobágy Fishpond.

**Swallow *Hirundo rustica***

Very common.

**House Martin *Delichon urbica***

Very common.

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

Two were seen by some on our last day in the Zemplén Hills.

**Crested Lark *Galerida cristata***

Common in Hungary and Transylvania.

**Skylark *Alauda arvensis***

Common, especially in the Hortobágy.

**Woodlark *Lullula arborea* (H)**

We only heard it near Torockó in Transylvania.

**Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia***

A singing male showed well in the northern Hortobágy area.

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

Fairly common in the Hortobágy, and three were seen in Transylvania too.

**Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus***

Common in Hungary, plus a few seen in Transylvania.

**Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon***

Brilliant looks of two different birds in the Hortobágy area.

**Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus***

Very common in the Hortobágy and on the Szentpál fishponds.

**Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus***

Common in the Hortobágy area.

**Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina***

We recorded eight migrant birds during our morning walk at Hortobágy fishponds.

**Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* (H)**

Heard a few times in Transylvania but somehow we always had bigger fish to fry!

**Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita***

Commonly seen and heard in Transylvania.

**Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix***

Good looks at this most neat *Phyllosc* in Transylvania.

**Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla***

Fairly common in Hungary and Transylvania.

**Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin***

One was seen on its breeding grounds in Transylvania.

**Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria***

One seen in the Hortobágy area. A great bird!

**Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca***

A few in Hungary and Transylvania.

**Whitethroat *Sylvia communis***

Good numbers were noted everywhere in Hungary and Transylvania.

**Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus***

A few seen in Transylvania, and regularly encountered in the Hortobágy area. What a beautiful bird!

**Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus***

We had prolonged excellent views of a singing male in Transylvania.

**Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* (H)**

Regularly heard in Transylvania but we were always too busy with other things.

**Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* (H)**

Only heard in the Carpathians.

**Nuthatch *Sitta europaea***

Several in Transylvania and in the Debrecen Great Wood.

**Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria***

About six different birds were seen in the Békás (Bicaz) Gorge. Another fantastic experience and voted the second best bird of the tour!

**(Eurasian) Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris***

Two were seen in Transylvania.

**Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla***

Good looks at this one in the Debrecen Great Wood.

**Starling *Sturnus vulgaris***

Very common throughout the tour.

**Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus***

A single one was seen by some in Transylvania. This is the well marked, 'frosted' race *alpestris*.

**Blackbird *Turdus merula***

Fairly common in Hungary and Transylvania.

**Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris***

A few breeding pairs were seen in Transylvania.

**Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos***

Fairly common in the Carpathians.

**Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus***

Fairly common in the Carpathians where it was seen daily.

**Robin *Erithacus rubicola***

A few of these secretive forest birds were seen in the Carpathians.

**Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia***

Excellent looks of singing birds near Székelyudvarhely.

**Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos***

Common in Hungary but scarcer in Transylvania. We had good views in the Trófea Lodge garden.

**Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica***

A much wanted bird for everyone, and seen very well in the Hortobágy. It was voted the fourth favourite bird of the tour!

**Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros***

Noted in small numbers in Hungary and Transylvania.

**Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus***

A total of 13 were seen in Transylvania.

**Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra***

Seen in small numbers on passage in Hungary, and breeding birds in Transylvania.

**Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola***

Fairly common in Hungary and Transylvania.

**Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe***

A few in the Hortobágy and Transylvania.

**Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis***

Two superb males seen very well at Torockó. This species is in serious decline in Europe, mainly due to disappearing grazing systems.

**Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata***

Up to four seen daily in Hungary and a few in Transylvania too. A late arrival to the Carpathian Basin.

**Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca***

Singletons were seen in the Hortobágy.

**Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis***

A star bird of which we had several superb views in Transylvania and Hungary.

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

Great views of a stunning male in Transylvania.

**House Sparrow *Passer domesticus***

Common throughout.

**Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus***

Common.

**Dunnock *Prunella modularis***

Heard and seen in the Carpathians.

**Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava***

The nominate race is common in Hungary and in Transylvania.

**Black-headed Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] feldegg***

A total of six were seen in Transylvania. We also recorded the form '*superciliaris*' in Transylvania. The forms '*dombrowskii*' and '*superciliaris*' represent intergrades between *flava* and *feldegg*.

**Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea***

A few seen in Transylvania.

**White Wagtail *Motacilla alba***

Fairly common in Hungary and Transylvania.

**Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis***

Several were seen in Transylvania.

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

About three seen well on the Szentpál fishponds in Transylvania and one in the Hortobágy.

**Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs***

Common throughout.

**Serin *Serinus serinus***

It was seen daily in Transylvania and a few seen in the Hortobágy area.

**Greenfinch *Chloris chloris***

Common throughout.

**Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis***

Common throughout.

**Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra***

A total of seven were seen in the Carpathians.

**Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes***

A few seen in Transylvania and the Debrecen Great Wood.

**Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra***

Fairly common in Hungary and Transylvania.

**Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella***

Common in Transylvania and the Debrecen Great Wood.

**Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia***

Two singing males in the Torockó area.

**Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana***

At least eight were seen at Élesd, in Transylvania.

**Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus***

Fairly common in the Hortobágy, a few also seen in Transylvania on the fish ponds.

**MAMMALS**

**Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus***

Seen almost every day in Hungary and a few in Transylvania too.

**Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris***

Two were seen in Transylvania and two more in Debrecen Great Wood.

**European Sousek *Spermophilus citellus***

Several were seen in the Hortobágy area.

**Brown Bear *Ursus arctos***

One was seen in Transylvania. A superb experience.

**Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes***

One was seen in Transylvania.

**Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus***

Seen almost daily in Hungary and Transylvania.