

**HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA & TRANSYLVANIA GT 2015**  
**with SAKERTOURS**  
6-17 May 2017



Collared Flycatcher in the Zemplén Hills (Simay Gábor)

**Leader: Simay Gábor**

This was the sixth Sakertour GT tour in a row. This tour covers three Central European countries and most of their bird habitats from the Hungarian grasslands to the Slovakian and Romanian spruce forests. This is an extremely productive tour in Europe and can be easily combined with the Romanian Danube Delta Tour for overseas travellers. The biggest value of this trip is the wide range of habitats we visit during twelve days. The consequence of this variety is the high number of species we regularly encounter on these trips. This year we recorded 223 species, despite the very cold spring which resulted late arrival of many breeding birds.

The weather on the tour was generally good, typically variable May weather. We had some rain but it was usually sunny and warm with temperature between 15°C and 24°C. There was only one exceptionally cold morning with even a tiny bit of snowing in Slovakia.

This year's highlights were the ten species of woodpeckers (all were seen well) including White-backed and Three-toed Woodpeckers; seventeen species of raptors, including Short-toed, Eastern Imperial and Lesser Spotted Eagles, Long-legged Buzzard, Red-footed and Saker Falcon; good views of Great Bustard, Little Crake, Corncrake, Collared Pratincole, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Great Snipe, Wallcreeper, Thrush Nightingale, Moustached and River Warblers; we also saw some of the more difficult inhabitants of the woods, like Eurasian Capercaillie and Hazel Grouse. This time we saw seven species of owls, as this year

was a particularly poor one for some species. Still, we had amazing views of Ural Owl; Eagle Owl and Eurasian Scops Owl as well as Tawny, Little, Long-eared and Barn Owls.

### **Saturday, 6th of May**

The group members arrived from different locations and the meeting point was the Liszt Ferenc Airport in Budapest. From here, we took the M3 motorway till Miskolc and from there to the Zemplén Hills. These gentle hills are found in north-eastern Hungary with beech and oak forests, wide valleys and foothills with grasslands, vineyards and orchards. On the way we had one short stop, where we had our sandwiches and saw our first species to mention: a few Crested Larks – typical species of the parking areas or garages – and a somewhat distant adult Eastern Imperial Eagle in the scope. Our first proper birding stop was in a quarry where we were looking for Eagle Owl. The female was quickly found, but unfortunately it moved too behind a bush. Despite we waited there for a while it didn't appear again. European Turtle Doves, Red-backed Shrike and Hawfinches were also seen here. On a nearby area later on, we found another adult Eastern Imperial Eagle much closer than the first one, and also a perched Saker Falcon. The nearby marshy habitat produced Savi's, Grasshopper and Great Reed list. Warblers. A pretty amazing first afternoon! As we did the birding till dusk, it was already dark when we arrived to our hotel deep in the Zemplén Hills.



Singing Savi's Warbler (tour participant Björn Johansson)

### **Sunday, 7th of May**

Before breakfast we took a short walk around the hotel. To our surprise one of the first bird we found was a superb male Collared Flycatcher. They are not uncommon at the suitable habitat, but we didn't expect it to find it in the village. There was also a Hoopoe nearby and a bit further away we had good views of a male Grey-headed Woodpecker and a nice female Northern Goshawk. Excellent pre-breakfast walk which was followed by a hearty breakfast and we were soon off for a full day birding in the superb area! The beech and oak forests of

the surrounding hills hosts some of the most sought-after species on this trip so it kept us busy for the day.

Following a short ride by bus we walked a few hundred meters through dense forest to reach a more open woodland. Here we had two nice Middle-spotted Woodpeckers carrying food for their chicks as well as many Great-spotted Woodpeckers. We didn't have to wait too much until we spotted our main target here, a fantastic Ural Owl, of which we had extremely good and prolonged views! For sure, this species was on the wish list of many of the tour participants. After we left the area we drove up on a dirt road to walk into a similar beech forest. First we had a pair of Lesser-spotted Woodpeckers on a dead tree, a few singing Wood Warblers, a Black Woodpecker calling and flying overhead and more Collared Flycatchers were seen too. We spent some time in the territory of the scarce White-backed Woodpecker because for unknown reason they abandoned their nest hole we found a few days ago at this location. If the exact breeding hole is not known they can be really difficult to find in the canopy as they are really shy and wary this time of the year. The weather turned against us as and it started to rain. However, after a while we heard the picking of a woodpecker, which turned out to be a White-backed, but unfortunately it disappeared before most people could have a glimpse of it. We kept trying which was rewarded by short flight views for some of us, but that was all. Not very satisfying after much effort.



The impressive female Ural Owl (tour participant Björn Johansson)

Before lunch we stopped at a few sites for raptors and we saw three White-tailed Eagles, a few Black Storks and we had rather short views of a Short-toed Eagle. We had lunch in a nearby restaurant by the river Bodrog and after lunch we gave another chance for the Eagle Owl, as many of us missed it the day before. This time we were lucky, and we had good looks at a female sitting on a cliff, not far from an active Black Stork nest. A very nice combo indeed!



In the afternoon we saw another Saker and also a fine Eastern Imperial Eagle, this time in flight. A few Black Terns were flying around and also Garganeys and a superb male Little Bittern were seen too. We spent a lot of time trying to find a Little Crake, but despite we heard a few we had only glimpses of them. Late afternoon however they became more active and eventually we had fantastic and close views of three different birds! This is a real Central European specialty! This great day was finished in a wine cellar where we tasted plenty of different kind of local (Tokaj) wines and had a fantastic dinner too. From the vineyard we drove back to the hotel, where we decided to skip the bird list in such a late hour and leave it for tomorrow morning.



Female Little Crake (János Oláh)

### **Monday, 8th of May**

It was our travel to Slovakia though we spent a good part of the morning still in the Zemplén Hills. Driving on a small road, a nice adult male Montagu's Harrier turned up and not much later we had good views of a pair of Barred Warblers and also of a very cooperative Wryneck. The same place held an Icterine Warbler also, which was singing from a tree top allowing unusually excellent looks! Along the way we spotted a couple of Black Storks, and a distant Black Kite. Still in the forests of the Zemplén, we found a perched Tawny Owl and lovely pair of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker.

Not long after we had crossed the border, we stopped by a small lake to have our picnic lunch. The lake itself held only a few common species, so we quickly continued our drive to the Slovakian Ore Mountains. By the road we had good views of our first Lesser-spotted Eagle.



Lesser Spotted Eagle (Simay Gábor)

After we took a small forest road, we left our van behind and walked up on a forestry road into a nice old spruce-beech forest. The evergreen trees held plenty of Crested Tits and a few Bullfinches. After we heard a distant White-backed Woodpecker calling, we managed to find the female on a tree top and we had good scope views of it. No much later the male bird was also seen by some of us. After the struggle yesterday it was amazing to get such a good look of this rare woodpecker! Right after this a calling Hazel Grouse drew our attention. After some effort it was found and seen a couple of times, sometimes really well. It was a very good bird to get on our list! Again by early May they usually not calling much but the cold spring and the cold weather was helping with this bird. After this we tried hard to find Tengmalm's Owl, but we had no luck with this species. This year was - sadly - a particularly bad year for the small owls anywhere in the Carpathians. While searching for the owl, we found the nest hole of Black Woodpeckers and had great views of the pair. While a Nutcracker also turned up on a tree top. The lights had started to fade and it was time to walk down the road and drive to our hotel near Dobsina.

### **Tuesday, 9th of May**

Early in the morning we were perfectly aware, that it is not going to be an easy day as we got out of the hotel for a pre-breakfast birding: it was cold, windy and, though only slightly, but it was snowing! We tried hard to find Pygmy Owl at two different sites, but we had now luck. It was probably because of the weather as we had two active territorial males a few days before the tour. We found many of the commoner species of the pine forest, but it was rather silent this morning and none of the other goodies showed up. The appearance of a Northern Goshawk was a nice experience though! At breakfast time we had an extremely friendly Willow Warbler while we were packing our luggage into our vehicle. It was time to return to Hungary, but before that, we took a walk into another spruce forest, this time in much better weather conditions. The sun came out and it was also much warmer. However, to our surprise

there was some forestry work exactly beside the place where Three-toed Woodpeckers were mating and busily drumming last week. Of course the noise and the activity didn't help, and we were not successful in finding the woodpecker. Two Nutcrackers were a bit of a compensation. So we started our drive towards Hungary and the famous Hortobágy National Park.

We had a Black Kite on the drive and in the afternoon we stopped for an Isabelline Wheatear – a rarity in Hungary, and a somewhat unexpected addition to our bird list. Though it was getting late and we still had some distance to cover to the hotel, we couldn't resist the temptation and stopped for birding by a fishpond system. We had very good views of a pair of Penduline Tits, plenty of Spoonbills were feeding in the shallow water and Pygmy Cormorants and Black-crowned Night-herons were flying around. Whiskered Terns were hunting for insects, while from the bushes Common Nightingales were singing away. It was a nice evening for sure. We drove to our hotel near Nádudvar and arrived in the dark.



Male Hazel Grouse (János Oláh)

### **Wednesday, 10th of May**

Early in the morning a Little Bittern was seen by some on the garden lake though most of us only heard its characteristic call. This was our first full day in the Hortobágy National Park, which is famous for its grasslands and wet habitats with a good range of special bird species. So we were looking forward to see new habitats and also many new species for the trip. From the hotel we drove to the Hortobágy Fishponds, which is the biggest wetland in the area and it is found in the central area of the park. On the way a quick stop provided about 150 Common Cranes and a nice Mediterranean Gull. By the fishponds, we visited a shallow wetland grazed by Buffalos, managed for the breeding and migratory bird species. There were plenty of duck species around with a few Northern Pintails and more Garganeys. To our surprise a Greater White-fronted Goose (should have been in Siberia by this time) was among the Greylags. Among the waders, there were plenty of Ruffs, Black-tailed Godwits and one Spotted



Redshank in full breeding plumage. Among the Dunlins, a breeding plumaged Curlew Sandpiper was seen, and three Temminck's Stint were feeding quite close on a mudflat. Squacco Herons and a few Glossy Ibises were also around, while, on a muddy area a somewhat distant Bluethroat was seen alongside with Yellow Wagtails. In a breeding box a Long-eared Owl was sitting with its chick and a European Bee-eater – obviously still on migration – flew above us. Not a bad tally for a short birding!

From this bird reach area we drove to the BÍbic nature Lodge in Balmazújváros, to have lunch. The lodge itself is very well located and from its terrace we had an overview of an alkaline pond with grassland around and local breeds of different grazing livestock (we stay here on our autumn tours but in spring it is full with our photography tours). On the pond, among others a few Black-necked Grebes and Ferruginous Ducks were nice to see. On the islands Pied Avocets, Black-winged Stilts and Little-ringed Plovers were sitting on their nests. A small street nearby gave us two long and close views of Syrian Woodpeckers – a typical village bird, always found away from real forests. After a fine meal, we visited a grassland area where Red-footed Falcons were hunting around and nice breeding plumage Ruffs were feeding in the shallow water. We thoroughly checked the wet parts of the area, and we managed to flush one Great Snipe which made a big round around us while we could have a really good view of this scarce species. While we were driving on a rough little road, we stopped by a similar habitat, where we managed to find another Great Snipe, along with plenty of Red-throated Pipits. On a bush, a nice Long-eared Owl was found right in the open, and a male Montague's Harrier also turned up. By a ruined farm building we saw two Barn Owls of the race *guttata*.



Syrian Woodpecker is a village bird in Hungary (tour participant Björn Johansson)

The afternoon we planned to spend our time to look for Great Bustards. It is one of the most characteristic and sought-after birds of the Hungarian grasslands. A long drive on a dirt road – which was luckily dry enough to drive on it – took us close enough to their display area. As it

was late spring, the display time was coming to its end, but males are usually still hanging around these places. After a very short walk we spotted seven males of these magnificent birds. They are very shy, but as we had some reed cover we could have good views of them as they were walking around. It is indeed a fantastic bird and the heaviest flying bird on earth! As we still had some time to visit another buffalo grazed wetland where new birds included a nice perched Hobby and a Whinchat on a wire: the last birds of the day. It was a full-action-packed day with great birds!



Magnificent Great Bustard in the Hortobágy National Park (János Oláh)

#### **Thursday, 11th of May**

We were packed in the morning and ready to start our drive to Transylvania which is a rising tourist destination in Europe and a fantastic area. We said goodbye to the Hortobágy for a few days but we still visited some wetlands on the Hungarian side side of the border. Our first stop was dedicated to the skulking Moustached Warbler, which usually becomes increasingly difficult to see once they finish singing. Though they were not singing, but busily carrying food to their chicks, they gave us very good views every time they were flying with an insect in their beak, and land on a bulrush. A few Bearded Tits were also hanging around together with other reedbed birds, like Savi's Warbler. We had a brief visit to another nearby wetland in search of White-winged Black Tern but we only found large number of Spoonbills and other different heronss. The White-winged Black Terns usually quite common on migration, but this year they were rather thin on the ground. A small flock of Little Gulls were nice nonetheless, just like the many Red-footed Falcons which were flying around their colony!





Always great to see a Moustached Warbler in the open (tour participant Björn Johansson)

A grassland area gave us a soaring Long-legged Buzzard (a rare breeder of the Hungarian grasslands) and also a Hobby and a Hoopoe. Our next stop was by some reservoirs where we had our picnic lunch. We had no time for checking the huge lakes thoroughly, but five Red-necked Grebes were spotted among the many Greater-crested Grebes. We also saw singing Ortolan Buntings and a Tawny Pipit made a short appearance too. A soaring Short-toad Eagle gave better views than the one in the Zemplén Hills and was a very welcome addition!



Ortolan Bunting (Simay Gábor)

From here we still had a considerable distance ahead, so we didn't had any more stops for birding. We had our first Lesser Grey Shrike en route – this year they arrived very late, just like many other long distant migrant – and close to our destination a few low flying Alpine Swifts. After arriving to the Torockó Valley we still had some time for birding. The place itself is a beautiful with a lot of limestone cliffs, barren hillsides and grassy pastures. At the bottom of the valley there are wet meadows and orchards. We had Green Woodpeckers and a Greater Grey Shrike by the road, and a nice singing male Rock Bunting at a gorge, where European Crag Martins were flying above. Two Golden Eagles were spotted near the high cliffs as they were soaring above a beautiful landscape. Towards the evening we managed to see two Corncrackes as well, which also had just arrived from their wintering ground. We checked into our very well located hotel for the night. After dinner, we quite easily tracked down a Eurasian Scops Owl in the hotel garden, while another one was calling nearby. It is allways great to finish a day with a superb owl!

### **Friday, 12th of May**

Before breakfast we took a short walk by a nearby stream. The weather was far from optimal as it was cloudy, quite cold and very windy. However it started really well as a Steppe Polecat was seen though it quickly disappeared behind the bank of the stream. Bird activity was low and a Marsh Warbler was the best find of the morning. We tried some of the good habitats for River Warbler, but they were silent so we had no chance to see one. We returned to our hotel for a great and very welcome breakfast and right after we climbed up on a steep hillside toward some cliffs which are the home of the Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush. This species proved to be very difficult this year and they were found only around the highest parts of the cliffs. Weather it is only because this is a bed year for them or it is a sign of a general decline we still don't know. It was still windy, so we had to spend a lot of time with the scanning of the rocks. Still we only found this beauty when the weather improved! As the sun came out and the wind stopped we found a pair of Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrushes, though they were quite high on the cliff. A Golden Eagle passed close by and Woodlarks and Ortolan Buntings were singing. The good weather delivered us good birds continuously: Rock Buntings were seen and a singing Sombre Tit also turned up around a bushy area. Another much localised bird here on its most northerly breeding site in Europe! We also had great looks of Green and a Grey-headed Woodpecker. As we were walking down from the hillsdie Grey Partridges were seen and by a wet area we heard the characteristic song of a River Warbler. Yes, this was one we were hoping for and has eluded us in the previous days. Access was not easy to the area but with a little bit of strategy game, everyone managed to see the bird. A real highlight of Central Europe!

We left behind this wonderful area in the afternoon and started our drive towards the Hargita Mountains of the Carpathians. Not far along the way we stopped for Red-rumped Swallows and two of them were seen in the air, together with other hirundines. Yet again this is probably one of the most northerly breeding area for this species too. After a few hours of driving, our next stop provided us fantastic scope views of a Thrush Nightingale as it was singing from the bush. Also here a Red-breasted Flycatcher turned up, obviously an individual still on migration. Finally we rolled into our hotel which was located in a nice little valley where we were due to spend our next three nights.



Singing Sombre Tit (top) and Thrush Nightingale (Simay Gábor)



### **Saturday, 13th of May**

We had an early start today, because we wanted to increase our chance to see Eurasian Capercaillie in the spruce forests of the Hargita Mountains. It gets increasingly difficult to locate these chickens - or Wild Turkey of the Carpathians as the locals call it - after the lekking season. So mid-May is usually not the best time but we cannot be everywhere in the best time so we had to try! Especially as it was really cold here in April, we expected some snow on the trails. Fortunately we didn't have to wait so long, as (thanks to our bus driver!) a female Capercaillie was spotted already along the road. It was just beside the tarmac road and as we stopped it walked without any hurry into the forest, where it stopped for about half-a-minute to give us a really good chance to have a good view of it. Not far from this location we started to walk on a trail. The weather turned bad as dark clouds were gathering above us making the forest dark and silent. A few Firecrests were nice to see just before it started to rain. The snow on the trail also appeared on the northern slope of the mountain so it was good that everybody had some waterproof gear. In these conditions it was not easy to reach a shelter (in the form of a small wooden house). We had luck as the rain didn't last long, and after about 15 minutes it stopped and the sun slowly came out too. We found ourselves on a big clearing where we put some effort to find another Capercaillie but this time we could only hear the wing beats of a flushed bird. The forests were full of activity following the rain storm. 'Alpine' Willow Tits were new for the trip, and the sightings of Whinchats were a little bit out of place - obviously birds on migration. We had nice scope views of a Nutcracker, but best of all we found three different Three-toed Woodpeckers here, and had good views on all of them! We got the other difficult European woodpecker in the bag too!



Female Three-toed Woodpecker (tour participant Björn Johansson)

The walk back was easier in the good weather with more Firecrests and other common birds along the trail. We drove close to the peak and had a nice coffee and the nearby grassy area had a few displaying Water Pipits. We had lunch in a restaurant down in the valley and after that

we returned to our hotel as it started to rain again and we decided to have a little rest instead of going out in the heavy rain. Later on we took a short walk around though it was still raining. A few White-throated Dippers – one adult, but more freshly fledged juvenile – were seen along the nearby streams. However an exciting activity was still coming up for the evening: Carpathian Brown Bear watching! Sakertours now operates several bear hides in the region and we picked one which had good activity recently. It was still raining but after a short drive and a little walk we got to the hide. The Brown Bear population is strong and stable in the surrounding mountains, but one has a small chance to meet a bear without a good hide. Though we had to wait about an hour without any bears, eventually they arrived and during the evening we saw no less than seven different bears: small young females, older females and also two huge males. Five bears were the maximum in front of us at one time. It was an amazing evening a fine ending to our somewhat rainy day.



One of the Brown Bears in the rain (tour participant Björn Johansson)

### **Sunday, 14th of May**

We had a hearty breakfast before we started our travel toward the gorgeous and really spectacular Békás Gorge. It is one-and-a-half hour drive from our hotel, so we were not in a rush and we had some birding stops along the way. Unfortunately the weather did not change much and it was still rainy and we were driving in the clouds among the mountains. However by the time we arrived to the Görgényi Basin the weather improved and raptors appeared in the sky. We had several great views of Lesser Spotted Eagles and a distant Honey Buzzard as well. We had great scope views of a few Woodlarks and a Great Grey Shrike also put up an appearance. It was a bit early in the season for Common Rosefinch but we did try a few location with no luck. Later on as we were driving slowly out of the area we recognised the typical song of the Rosefinch and we readily found a nice male on the top of a willow bush. It came closer and we got excellent looks of it! Our next stop was by the scenic gorge where

were looking for the special Wallcreeper. You can walk along the cliff face or sit around (the latter is better considering the traffic) both strategy can be good. We opted for the sitting around and after about 10 minutes the first bird appeared quite high, flying from one rock face to the other. Later on no less than three birds were flying around often chasing each other along the cliffs. From time to time, they landed on the cliffs, and we had time to set our scopes on them. So eventually everyone had great look of these special birds not only in flight but on the rocks as well. At the background a White-throated Dipper family entertained us as the adult were hunting and swimming in the water, while the juveniles were waiting for them on the nearby rocks.



Wallcreeper flying above our head (tour participant Björn Johansson)

After a great success and a nice lunch we chose a different route to return to our base. On the way back we stopped at a mountain pass to look for Ring Ouzel (the beautifully patterned race *alpestris*). We were lucky as literally the first bird we found was a fine male, which was perched for at least five minutes on a small spruce tree. Excellent! In the late afternoon we visited a small fishpond system, which usually provide some interesting species as this is the only wetland around. We did not found any freshly drained ponds so there were not many waders. A few Pied Avocets and Ferruginous ducks were around and also Black-headed 'feldegg' and 'dombrowsky' Yellow Wagtails were interesting to see. All Red-backed, Great and Lesser Grey Shrikes were sitting along the electric wires. Above a bigger pond we saw several Little Gulls, Black and Whiskered Terns, among them three White-winged Black Terns (eventually!).

### **Monday, 15th of May**

This was our long travel day back to Hungary. We had some birding stops in mind to break up the journey and our first target was the Red-breasted Flycatcher as the previous one by the Thrush Nightingale area was only seen by some of us. We had great views of a Middle-



spotted Woodpecker, and a Common Redstart here, and also Collared Flycatchers were around. Finally we located two immature male Red-breasted Flycatchers as they were singing and both of them were close enough to provide great views. We also had a Black Woodpecker flying parallel to the road.



Immature male Red-breasted Flycatcher (tour participant Björn Johansson)

After a few hours drive we stopped again by the big reservoirs. This time we checked the other side of these waterbodies but the only new bird for the trip was Tufted Duck. There were many birds around but mostly the common species we have already encountered. Here we had good chance to have a closer view on the Yellow-legged Gulls in different plumages. Among the ducks there were a few nice breeding plumage Black-necked Grebes as well. Back in Hungary a nice small forest patch we saw a few recently arrived European Rollers (they were also very late this year) and plenty of Red-footed Falcons. By the nearby wetland Eurasian Curlews were new to our list, but other waders were also seen: such as many Dunlins and a few breeding plumage Spotted Redshanks. We also had great looks of a Saker again as it was hunting waders in the air. There were plenty of gulls as well, and among them we counted eight Mediterranean Gulls. It was getting dark quickly, but we still had time to find two Little Owls on a farm building before we arrived to our familiar base in the Hortobágy.

### **Tuesday, 16th of May**

Our last full day of the trip was nice and sunny however we had already found most of our target species already. It was pure liberated birding and looking for additional migrants! Our strategy was to visit all the good wetlands and hope to find some interesting or new for the trip list. A nearby fishpond in the morning provided beautiful lights and we had six Black Storks, a few Greeshanks, Little Stints and Common Ringed Plovers (many more were seen during the day) among other waders. We returned to the Hortobágy Fishponds, where we saw

a few more Icterine Warblers, Glossy Ibises and a few thousand Dunlins. Among the Dunlins we found a few Curlew Sandpipers as well. A beautiful singing male Bluethroat was probably the best moment of our stay here. We have visited a few more places where we found a good variety of waders and other wetland birds. We added Grey Plover and Eurasian Oystercatcher to our list, but we also found Temminck's Stints and White-winged Black Terns among others. Our lunch at a fish restaurant was nice by the Tisza River and later we continued our wetland birding by a restored nice alkaline pond, where we found plenty of waders. In amongst few hundred Dunlins we managed to see a Broad-billed Sandpiper. We had good looks as it was quite close in good lights, but it was in sleeping mode first. We had to wait about half-an-hour to have good looks of its characteristic bill and head pattern. Later we drove to the old oak forest near Debrecen where we saw a nice Middle-spotted Woodpecker and a Short-toed Treecreeper albeit the latter only gave glimpses and many of us missed it. We had had several quick or distant flight views of European Bee-eaters on the tour so far, but none of them was really satisfying. Therefor we took a little walk around a nearby sand wall, where we had eventually luck and had good look at the first arriving pair of these colourful birds. A Little Owl was a bonus here. We finished the day by a small alkaline pond, where a breeding plumaged Ruddy Turnstone was the only new-for-the-trip species.



Little Owl (tour participant Björn Johansson)

### **Wednesday, 17th of May**

It was our last day of the trip and we only had very limited time for bird watching before we had to be in Budapest airport. First we had a short stop to secure our last good look of Saker Falcon and we had to w birds nicely in the scope. Our next and last stop was by a farmland beside a paddy field, where we saw a few Collared Pratincoles flying and sitting on the

ground. These amazing waders are in sharp decline all over their European breeding grounds and it is a very prized bird to see nowadays. In Hungary we only have 60-80 pairs breeding. This was the last new bird for our bird-filled Hungary, Slovakia & Transylvania GT in 2017, and species number 223. We arrived in time to the airport where we said goodbye to each other after a productive 12 days, during which we had many good species, many good views. In general we spent some really good time in the three countries and visited an amazing selection of habitats.



Collared Pratincole was the last bird on our trip list (János Oláh)





Roadside Western Capercaillie in the Hargita Mountains (János Oláh)

### SYSTEMATIC BIRD 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).

**Eurasian Capercaillie** *Tetrao urogallus*: One female was seen well in Transylvania, and another one was recorded (heard) on the same day.

**Hazel Grouse** *Bonasa bonasia*: One male was seen in Slovakia. This bird is a difficult one to see in May.

**Grey Partridge** *Perdix perdix* (NL): Two birds were seen in Transylvania; a seldom seen and declining species.

**Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* (H): It was only heard on two days.

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

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*: It was very common in the Hortobágy area with flocks of several hundreds around certain wetlands. This is the eastern *rubrirostris* race.

**Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons*: We had a second year bird at the Hortobágy Fishponds among Greylag Geese.

**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor*: This rapidly increasing species was seen at most of the wetland sites.

**Common Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*: Once a rare bird in the region, but now one can find it readily around suitable habitats. We recorded it on four days.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera*: Regularly seen in the Hortobágy region. We recorded it on four days.

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope*: Though a common migrant, this time of the year it is rather scarce. We recorded it on three days in small numbers.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*: It was common throughout the tour. We met this species on 11 days.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*: It was recorded on four days, especially in the Hortobágy area.

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*: We recorded a few drakes on three different days.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula*: We had several individuals on four days at various wetland sites.

**Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca*: We recorded them on three days in small numbers around the Hortobágy area.

**Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina*: It was quite common around various wetlands.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*: Four birds were seen at the Élesd Reservoir in Romania.

**Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*: We recorded this species on three different days, both in Hungary and Romania.

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: Interestingly, this otherwise common bird was recorded on only two days.

**Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegena*: Five birds were seen at Élesd Reservoir in Romania.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*: It was common at many of the visited wetlands.

**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*: We had great views of small flocks at two locations.

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra*: We saw several individuals around the Zemplén, but the best views were by a drained fishpond in the Hortobágy.

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*: Recorded every day; a common breeder in villages in Transylvania and Hungary.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus*: We saw a few birds twice in the Hortobágy. We had good views on the second occasion.

**Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*: We saw them regularly in the Hortobágy area. The biggest flocks were 50+ individuals.

**Eurasian Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* (H): We had no luck this time with them, despite we heard them regularly, no one was seen.

**Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus*: One was seen in flight and later on another one by some of us near our hotel in the Hortobágy, where it was regularly heard calling.

**Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*: Recorded on seven days around wetlands.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides*: We saw them on three days in the Hortobágy area.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*: Recorded every day during the trip.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*: Quite common around reedbeds; recorded on six days.

**Great Egret** *Egretta alba*: It was really common, not only around wetlands but at various types of habitats.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*: It was present around wetlands in small numbers on five days.

**Pygmy Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*: It was not rare around suitable habitats in the Hortobágy; we saw them on three days.

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*: We saw them only around the Hortobágy, but at certain locations it was numerous.

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*: One of the commonest raptor, which was recorded on 11 days.

**Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus*: One of the most characteristic raptor in Hungary, where they are usually found in colonies. We saw them on four days, and sometimes several dozens were recorded at one site.

**Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*: Two birds were seen. One was seen hunting birds over a wetland.

**Saker** *Falco cherrug*: We saw one or two birds on four different days; mostly perched, but also one hunting bird.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*: Only one bird was seen in the Hortobágy as it was chasing waders and Starlings over a grassland.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans*: One was seen distantly in the Zemplén Hills, and another one in the Hortobágy.

**White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla*: Recorded on six days with a maximum of 11 bird/day in the Hortobágy.

**Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*: It was very common in Hungary, especially in the Hortobágy; recorded on 10 days.

**Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus*: It was recorded on three dates. Only adult males were seen.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*: We saw three birds on the tour.

**Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*: One female was seen in the Zemplén, and another one in Slovakia.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*: It was common and recorded every day.

**Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus*: We saw one soaring bird close to the Romanian border.

**European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*: This year - as many other late arriving migrants - they arrived very late; therefore we saw only one bird in Transylvania.

**Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina*: We had a very good view in Slovakia, but we had many more in Transylvania, where we had fantastic views of several individuals.

**Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca*: Three adult birds were seen, all on the first two days of the trip. We saw them perched and in flight as well.

**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*: Three birds were seen in Transylvania.



Golden Eagle near Torockó (tour participant Björn Johansson)



**Short-toed Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus*: We had a distant and short view in the Zemplén Hills and later on a much better view in Romania.

**Great Bustard** *Otis tarda*: We had good views of 7 males in one flock in the Hortobágy.

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus* (H): A few were heard.

**Little Crane** *Porzana parva*: We tried hard and eventually everyone had very good views of these skulkers.

**Corncrake** *Crex crex*: They arrived very late this year, but just in time: we saw two birds in one evening in Transylvania.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*: It was recorded on seven dates in small numbers.

**Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra*: Fairly common around wetlands.

**Common Crane** *Grus grus*: We saw them on two dates. One flock contained more than 150 birds.

**Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*: One was seen on a drained fishpond in the Hortobágy.

**Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*: It was not rare around wetlands and some breeding colonies were seen as well.

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*: One of the commonest wader, especially around suitable breeding sites.

**Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola*: It is a declining breeding species, so it is always nice to see. We saw a few on our very last day.

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*: Quite common in the lowlands, where we recorded them in smaller or bigger numbers regularly.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*: We recorded this species on five days; usually a few individual per day.

**Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*: We saw them only on one day, but obviously it was a good migration day, with more than 50 birds at several locations.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*: Only one breeding plumage bird was seen in the Hortobágy.

**Greta Snipe** *Gallinago media*: We had luck with this scarce species as we saw two birds in one day at two locations in the Hortobágy. We had really good views on both occasions.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*: We recorded it on four days at various locations around the Hortobágy.

**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata*: Only a few birds were seen on two days in the Hortobágy.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*: A few nice breeding plumage birds seen around the wetlands of the Hortobágy, on three different dates.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus*: Quite common at the breeding sites in the Hortobágy area.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*: Three birds were seen at two wetlands on two dates.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*: The bulk of the migration was over for this species, so we saw them in rather small numbers around the wetlands on four days.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*: We recorded it in small numbers on three different dates.

**Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*: One summer plumaged bird was seen on our last full day with Dunlins on an alkaline pond.

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*: We had good views at different locations, but only on our last full day; about 15 birds in total.

**Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii*: Good views of three birds on a wetland; later three more on a drained fishpond.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*: Many were seen in the Hortobágy. The biggest flock was probably over 2000 birds.

**Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*: Only a few were seen with Dunlins, but in their pretty breeding plumage.

**Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus*: We had good views of one bird with Dunlins on our last full day.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*: It was fairly common in the Hortobágy. Many nice, variously colored males were seen.

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*: Common around wetlands.

**Common Gull** *Larus canus*: One immature bird was seen on a fishpond in the Hortobágy. It is quite rare by this time.

**Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus*: We saw nine birds all together on two different dates, all in the Hortobágy area.

**Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus*: Surprisingly common around many wetlands in Hungary and Romania as well. The biggest flock (50+) was at the Élesd Reservoir.

**Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michaellis*: We recorded them on three days. Best views and biggest numbers were at the Élesd Reservoir.

**Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans*: Common in the Hortobágy area.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*: We saw quite commonly around suitable wetlands on five days.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus*: We saw them on six days during the tour, mostly in the Hortobágy area; the commonest of the three marsh terns.

**Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger*: Small flocks were recorded around various types of wetlands. Probably the biggest flocks were seen in Transylvania.

**White-winged Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus*: Their migration was over very quickly, and there was no breeding because of the dry weather. So we struggled to come across this species, but eventually, we found them twice on two days (three-three birds).

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

**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas*: Recorded on five days.

**Common Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*: Common and recorded every day.

**European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*: We recorded them on nine days in small numbers.

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

**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*: Still a common sight around almost all type of habitat; recorded on every day.

**Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*: Two birds were seen well in the Hortobágy; race *guttata*.

**Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco*: One bird was found on its dayroost in the Zemplén Hills.

**Ural Owl** *Strix uralensis*: We had a very memorable and long lasting encounter of one bird in the Zemplén Hills.

**Eurasian Eagle Owl** *Bubo bubo*: on our first day we saw shortly an adult and its chicks. The next day we had good scope views of a family (female with chicks).

**Long-eared Owl** *Asia otus*: One was seen in the dark from the van, then a family in a nestbox (which was seen on two days), but we had our best view of a bird which was found on its dayroost.

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua*: Three birds were seen on two days in the Hortobágy.

**European Scops Owl** *Otus scops*: One was seen well by our hotel in Transylvania, where we heard another one too.

**Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba*: Four birds were seen with hirundines en route to Torckó, then another four next day in Torockó.



Barn Owl *guttata* race (top) and Alpine Swit (Simay Gábor)

**Common Swift** *Apus apus*: Recorded on four days.

**European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster*: They arrived very late this year, so despite we saw them regularly, only migrating birds too high or too quick in the air. Eventually on our last full day we had good views of a pair by their breeding site.



**European Roller** *Coracias garrulus*: Just like the previous species, they arrived late; towards the end of the trip we saw six birds in the Hortobágy area.

**Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*: We recorded them on six days in the Zemplén, Hortobágy and Transylvania as well.

**Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla*: Fantastic views of an obliging bird in the Zemplén, later on, another one was heard in Romania.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos minor*: All together we saw four birds in the Zemplén.

**White-backed Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos leucotos*: Very quick and poor views in the Zemplén, but later in Slovakia we had good scope views of a dunning bird, and another one was seen there by some of us.

**Middle Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos medius*: Very good views of a pair in the Zemplén, then one in Transylvania and another one on our last full day near Debrecen.

**Syrian Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos syriacus*: Three birds were seen in one day in the Hortobágy.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*: The commonest of the woodpeckers in any type of forest.

**Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker** *Picoides tridactylus*: We saw four birds in Transylvania in one morning; all of them were seen very well, though the first two (a pair) was in misty weather, the next birds were in brilliant lights.

**Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius*: We recorded it on five days. The best views were gained of a pair in Slovakia.

**European Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis*: Recorded on five days; best views in Torockó.

**Grey-headed Woodpecker** *Picus canus*: Two birds were seen: one very well in the Zemplén, and another one in Transylvania.

**Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio*: As most of the late migrants, they arrived late, therefore we saw less than expected. Still, we met them on eight days.

**Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor*: Just like the previous species; recorded on four days, best views in Romania.

**Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor*: Two birds were seen well on two days in Transylvania.

**Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus*: Very common by song, but seen less often than heard. We saw them on most of the days (8).

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*: Common in wooded habitats, recorded on 10 days.

**Common Magpie** *Pica pica*: We saw them every day throughout the tour; common.

**Spotted Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes*: One on our first day in Slovakia, then (for some of us) another two on the next day. Best views in Transylvania, where we scoped one in good lights on a treetop.

**Western Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula*: Very common in Transylvania, also plenty in the Hortobágy.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*: Recorded on eight days, most common in the Hortobágy and in Transylvania.

**Hooded Crow** *Corvus corone*: Common basically everywhere.

**Common Raven** *Corvus corax*: Getting more and more common. We recorded it on 10 days and in the Zemplén we saw a flock well over a hundred birds.

**Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris*: We saw them on six days at various locations and various habitats.

**Willow Tit** *Poecile montana*: We saw them only on one day in Transylvania, but in that forest they were rather common.

**Sombre Tit** *Poecile lugubris*: One bird was seen very well in Transylvania.

**Coal Tit** *Parus ater*: The commonest bird in the spruce forests in Slovakia or Transylvania.

**Crested Tit** *Lophophanes cristatus*: We had very good views of these cool birds in Slovakia; we heard them in Transylvania.

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

**Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus*: Fairly common at lower elevation, but not in the mountains.

**Eurasian Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus*: We recorded it on five days, mainly around the Hortobágy, where we had really great views more than one time. We also found its so special nest.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*: We saw them on five days, usually in big flocks over water.

**Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*: In the Torockó area we recorded them in small numbers around cliffs on two days.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*: Very common throughout the tour.

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica*: We saw two birds in Transylvania. This is a rare but spreading breeder in the Carpathian Basin.

**Northern House Martin** *Delichon urbica*: Very common throughout the tour.

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus*: We recorded them on three days. We saw both the white-headed (*caudatus*) and the black-browed (*europaeus*) subspecies.

**Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata*: We saw them on seven days, mostly on the lowland of Hungary.

**Eurasian Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*: Quite common; mainly singing birds over grasslands.

**Wood Lark** *Lullula arborea*: We recorded them on three days. We had good views in Transylvania.

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia*: One was seen on our first day. Later another one was heard.

**River Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides*: Like some of the other long distant migrants, they arrived later than usual. We eventually found one singing in Transylvania, which was seen – though not easily – by all of us.

**Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides*: Quite common in reedy habitats, also along channels. We had plenty of good views on them.

**Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*: Common in reedbeds, like beside our hotel in the Hortobágy and also along channels. We recorded it on nine days.

**Moustached Warbler** *Acrocephalus melanopogon*: It is usually quite difficult to get good views once they stop singing. Therefore it was a nice surprise to have several good looks at a pair which was busily feeding its chicks.

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*: A really common species around wetlands, and also wet ditches.

**European Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*: A fairly common bird in the reeds. We recorded it on six days.

**Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris*: Surprisingly only one singing bird was seen in Transylvania; another long distant migrant, which arrived back late this year.

**Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina*: We had very good views of a singing bird in the Zemplén. Later we saw and heard more in the Hortobágy.

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*: We saw one in Slovakia and later a few migrating birds in the Hortobágy.

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*: A common species in wooded habitats, both in the higher and also in the lower altitude forests.

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*: We recorded it on four days. The best view we had, was in the Zemplén.



Wood Warbler in the Zemplén-hill (tour participant Björn Johansson)

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*: We heard them singing on seven days, but we saw them only on a few occasions.

**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*: We recorded them on three days, but only in Transylvania.

**Barred Warbler** *Sylvia nisoria*: We had good views of a pair in the Zemplén.

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*: Fairly common at some places. We recorded on five days.

**Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis*: We recorded them only on three days, but at some places in Romania it was numerous.

**Bearded Reedling** *Panurus biarmicus*: We saw them twice, and on the second time we had really good views.

**Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapillus*: A few individuals were seen in Transylvania.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*: One of the commonest birds in the spruce forests, both in Slovakia and Transylvania.

**Winter Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*: A few birds were seen in the Zemplén and in Slovakia.

**Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*: It was fairly common in the Zemplén Hills, but we also recorded it in Transylvania and near Debrecen.

**Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria*: We saw three birds in Transylvania. They were flying a lot, but they landed often and at these occasions we had good scope views.

**Eurasian Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris*: We saw one in Slovakia.

**Short-toed Treecreeper** *Certhia brachydactyla*: Only one bird was briefly seen in Hungary, near Debrecen.

**Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*: One of the most common species along the tour.

**Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus*: Two males were seen in Transylvania. This is the more scaly *alpestris* race here.





Ring Ouzel (Simay Gábor)

**Eurasian Blackbird** *Turdus merula*: A common species, recorded on 12 days.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*: A few were seen in Slovakia but it was really common in Transylvania.

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*: Common in wooded areas. We recorded it on eight days.

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*: We saw them in Slovakia and Transylvania as well on three days.

**European Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*: Several were heard and a few were seen, especially in Transylvania.

**Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia*: We had very good views of one bird singing in a dense bush in Transylvania.

**Common Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos*: It was heard much more often than seen, though we had good views, even of a bird singing from a wire.

**Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica*: We saw one distantly feeding on a mudflat in the Hortobágy. Later on, also a beautiful singing male was seen from a close range. This is the white spotted *cyanicula* race.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*: We recorded on 12 days. A very common bird.

**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*: We had good views twice in Transylvania.

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*: We saw a few in Hungary and in Transylvania as well.

**Common Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata*: We recorded it on 11 days; common, especially on the lowlands.

**Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*: We recorded in small numbers on six days.

**Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina*: A rarity in Hungary. We saw one bird in the Hortobágy.

**Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis*: This year there were territories only on the higher parts of the cliffs in the Torockó area, so the views of a pair were rather distant. We could not get closer to them.

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*: We recorded it on three days, mainly in the Hortobágy.

**Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*: We saw them on two days in Transylvania. All together three second year males were seen.

**Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca* (NL): Only one migrating bird was seen at the Hortobágy Fishponds.

**Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis*: Several very good views, mainly in the Zemplén Hills, but we also had great views in Transylvania.

**White-throated Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus*: We saw two families with freshly fledged juveniles in Transylvania.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*: It was common and we recorded it every day.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*: It was common and we recorded it every day.

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*: One was seen in Slovakia and a few more in the forests of Transylvania.

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*: It was fairly common in Hungary and also in the lower parts of Romania, where we also had a black-headed *feldegg* and also 'dombrowsky'.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*: It was common along the streams in Transylvania.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*: It was fairly common in a wide variety of habitats.

**Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris*: We didn't have luck with this species. Only the leader saw one in Transylvania, where another one was seen by some of us, but only briefly.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*: It was common, but only in Transylvania.

**Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*: About ten were seen at a wetland site in the Hortobágy.

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

**Common Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*: A very common bird in the forests and other wooded habitats.

**European Serin** *Serinus serinus*: It was recorded on six days. It is mostly a village bird.

**European Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris*: It was a common bird throughout the tour.

**European Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*: Common in a wide variety of habitats.

**Eurasian Siskin** *Carduelis spinus*: Only three birds were recorded on three different days.

**Common Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina*: We recorded on eight days and it was common at certain type of habitats.

**Eurasian Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*: Only a few nice males were seen in Slovakia and Transylvania.

**Common Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra* (H): It was heard in Slovakia and Transylvania as well.

**Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*: We recorded it on seven days in all three countries.

**Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus*: We had one nice singing male in Transylvania.

**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella*: We recorded it on seven days. It was the most common in the Zemplén Hills.

**Rock Bunting** *Emberiza cia*: We had very good views of 3-4 birds in Transylvania on two days.

**Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana*: In Romania we had very good views around the Élesd Reservoirs and later around Torockó.

**Common Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*: It was fairly common around wetlands.

**Corn Bunting** *Miliaria calandra*: A common bird, especially in Hungary.



Water pipits were displaying in the Hargita Mountains (tour participant Björn Johansson)

### MAMMALS

**Brown Hare** *Lepus europaeus*: It was regularly seen throughout the tour.

**Red Fox** *Vulpes vulpes*: Only few were seen in Hungary.

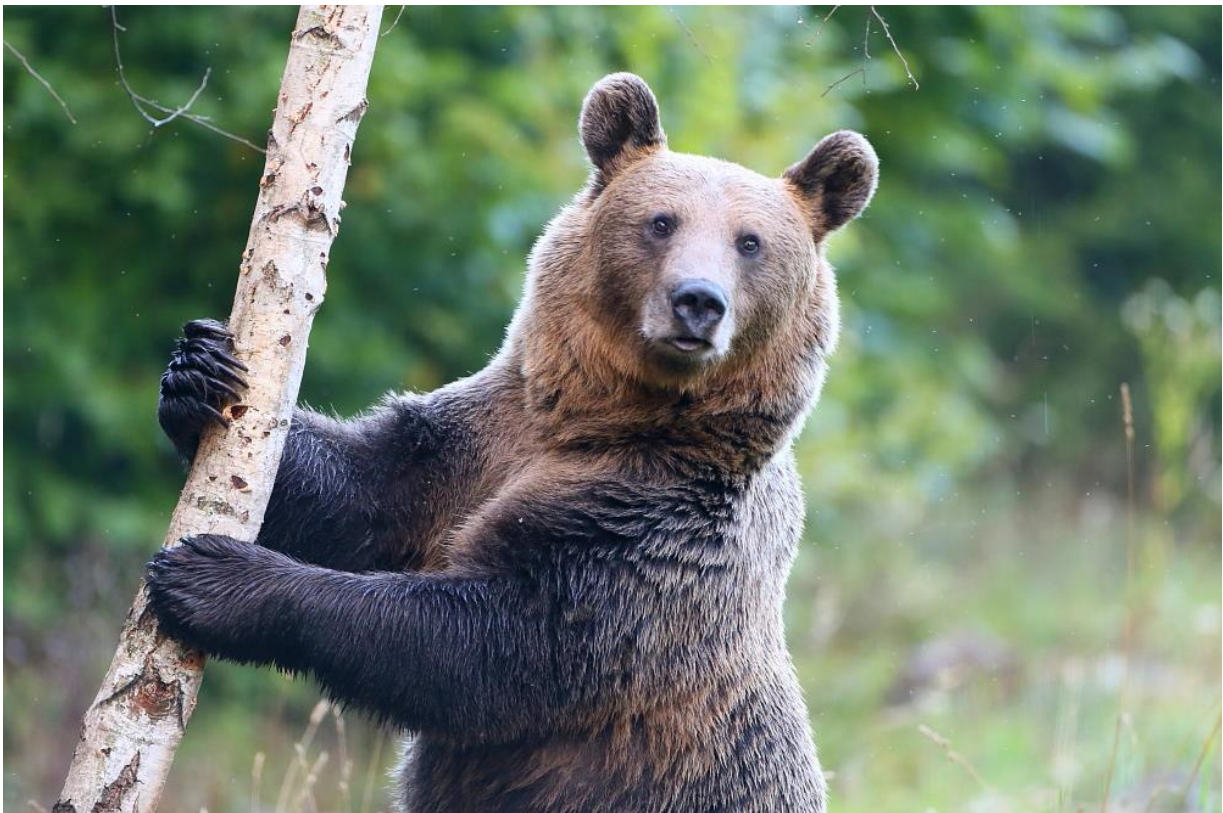
**Brown Bear** *Ursus arctos*: Seven of them were seen from a hide in Transylvania.

**Red Deer** *Cervus elaphus*: One was seen in the Zemplén.

**Western Roe Deer** *Capreolus capreolus*: It was commonly seen in Hungary.

**Red Squirrel** *Sciurus vulgaris*: A few sightings in the mountains.

**Steppe Polecat** *Mustella eversmanni*: One was seen near Torockó, in Transylvania.



Carpathian Brown Bear in the Hargita Mountains (János Oláh)