

ORNITHOLIDAYS TOUR TO HUNGARY
Natural History Tour

07 – 14 July 2017



Leaders: David Walsh and Gabor Orban

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A Personal Diary

Despite some exceptionally hot weather, Ornitholidays' natural history tour to the Kiskunság National Park was as enjoyable and successful as those in the last two years. We had amazing views of Red-footed Falcons at a breeding colony, leading to this species being voted *Bird of the Trip*, and awe-inspiring sightings each day of European Bee-eaters, European Rollers and Lesser Grey Shrikes. We were pleased to find a Saker Falcon, perched typically on a pylon, and saw good numbers of Pygmy Cormorants at several locations. On our last full day we were thrilled when, having just seen a Short-toed Eagle carrying a large snake, two Great Bustards flew in and landed right in front of us on the puszta! Eastern Imperial Eagle and Syrian Woodpecker were merely glimpsed by most of us; in contrast, roosting Long-eared and Eurasian Scops Owls gave frame-filling views. Eurasian Golden Oriole, Hawfinch and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker were amongst our impressive list of garden birds!

We saw 33 species of butterfly including Weaver's Fritillary, Cardinal, Lesser Purple Emperor, Common Glider and Lesser Fiery Copper. Our tally of 26 different dragonflies was a record, with Dark Spreadwing and Winter Damselfly trip firsts; Large White-faced Darter, Yellow-spotted Emerald and Southern Migrant Hawker were also noted.

Once again, Kondor Eco-Lodge proved to be an ideal base from which to explore, with early morning strolls into the woods, across the fields and within the grounds highly productive; we also made good use of the photographic hide at the garden pond. We were served a range of traditional Hungarian dishes, and Gabor and Andrea did everything possible to make us feel at home. As I wrote last year, Gabor is not simply a 'local bird guide'; he is passionate about Hungarian culture, history and politics! There was high quality birding on this holiday as well as a wide variety of general natural history; I am already looking forward to returning with Ornitholidays in July 2018.

Friday 7th July

Our British Airways flight from Heathrow to Budapest took under two hours, so we arrived earlier than the scheduled time of 4.25pm. We were greeted by Gabor and Andrea in arrivals and, a few minutes later, we boarded our 19 seater minibus, driven by Robbie. We set off on the journey to Kondor Eco-Lodge, our base for the whole week, situated in the heart of Kiskunság National Park; we spotted Brown Hare and Fallow Deer en route. At 7.30pm we were enjoying our first draught lagers and large glasses of red wine; the wine was called Egri Bikavér (the Bull's blood of Eger). Dinner tonight was vegetable soup followed by pork then a splendid cake to celebrate Lin's birthday. This set the tone for the week: tasty, home-cooked food, beautifully prepared for us by Andrea and her team. Around 9pm we retired to our rooms.

Saturday 8th July

Breakfast was at the leisurely hour of 8am, so some took the opportunity to relax and get sorted. Having woken early, I walked along the track into the forest and was joined by Chris; we were rewarded with a number of goodies including a European Honey Buzzard which flew in and landed on top of a tree! Southern and Small Emerald Damselflies sat side-by-side for comparison; there would be further opportunities to show these two species to the rest of the group later. In the garden the source of an unpleasant odour sadly proved to be a dead juvenile Northern Goshawk; this species had clearly bred locally, and we would hear others from our grounds throughout the week.

The well-stocked breakfast table included cereals, yoghurts, salad, a variety of cold meats and cheeses, fresh jam, bananas and apples; we were left to create our own picnic lunches to suit our individual needs.

At 9am we set off in the bus, making a number of stops all of which were within a few kilometres of our lodge. Across the road we watched Tree Sparrows on the wire and noted our first Silver-studded Blue and Brown Argus. In a nearby field we used the shade of a hut to scan for European Sousek and, by persevering, had good views. Pale Clouded Yellows were numerous here, whilst we were struck by the number of Common

House Martins feeding above the pond. At our third spot we scoped a number of birds and saw our first Eurasian Golden Oriole, a female. The rugby fans in the group were kept up to speed with the scores from the Lions/All Blacks decider! A Eurasian Hoopoe was spotted on the road as we headed towards a church in an isolated copse; we strolled from here, seeing a Hummingbird Hawkmoth on Viper's Bugloss and a superb male Eurasian Golden Oriole perched up for ages. Gabor told us that European Rollers had occupied over 400 nestboxes in the Kiskunság this year; we had super views of adults and also saw one of the young birds from the local pair. A walk across the fields produced Hooded Crow and Idas Blue but, with the temperature rising, we prudently returned to the bus and headed for the town of Kerekegyháza where we had our picnic and enjoyed cold drinks at a café. Afterwards we wandered to the courtyard around the back where two Long-eared Owls were roosting in their traditional tree; the views were breathtaking!

We made a sensible decision to return to the lodge for a siesta before heading out again at 3.30pm. European Turtle Doves were admired on the wires, then we drove to a place where European Bee-eaters were breeding in numbers, many using holes in the ground right next to the track! We added Red-backed Shrike, White Wagtail, Northern Wheatear, Black Redstart and a fly-over Whimbrel to our ever-growing list. We had intended to spend a while here, but it was clear that the weather was changing rapidly. Robbie brought the bus to us in the nick of time, and we returned to the lodge. Rain stopped play, but only briefly; once it had dried up, some of the group made their first visit to the hide by the pond, seeing Grass Snake and Edible Frog. I wandered up the track with Peter and Janet and we heard a whistling Common Nightingale, photographed a Reverdin's Blue and were buzzed by several Southern Migrant Hawks!

We met to do our bird list in the garden at 7pm, with both Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Short-toed Treecreeper calling as we did so. Dinner at 7.30pm was a traditional Hungarian goulash followed by pasta and then sweet cherry tart. It had been a super first full day and we reflected on the abundance of wildlife within a stone's throw of our base.

Sunday 9th July

A European Roe Deer along the track, and a Short-toed Treecreeper seen well in the garden, were the highlights of various pre-breakfast forays this morning.

At 9am we set off for the hour-long journey to the north of the Kiskunság National Park. A real surprise en route was seeing a Beech Marten crossing the road in front of us, a lifer for most! A little later, we stopped to scan and Gabor was delighted when two Stone Curlews were spotted; these were his first of the year, so the species was deservedly a write-in. Soon afterwards we arrived at a small man-made hill overlooking an expanse of puszta. Several tractors were working in the area so our chances of finding Great Bustards were small. Instead we concentrated on raptors; Common Buzzards were numerous, and we were pleased to see two different Montagu's Harriers, a male in front of us and a ringtail behind. An Eastern Imperial Eagle was found circling, but it was far too far away to impress us. Distant birds of prey aren't to everyone's taste, so a number of the group looked for insects in the grass around us, and this proved highly productive. We found a number of Eastern Baton Blue butterflies, as well as something resembling an antlion and a beetle which only appears every few years.

By 11am it was really hotting up, so we returned to the bus and drove on to another European Bee-eater colony, this one in a cliff. We stood in some shady trees and marvelled at their comings and goings, with the magical fluty calls a delight. There was time to try to identify the large dragonflies in the beaks of the birds, and we certainly noted Norfolk Hawks whose population in the vicinity was taking a hammering! A Wood White butterfly was noted just before we left. We tried again for bustards, but to no avail, soon declaring and heading to the nearby town of Bugyi. Here we relaxed outside a wonderful cake shop; the owners kindly allowed us to eat our picnic there, and we supplemented it with various provisions from their establishment including some super ice creams! A European Serin was glimpsed by a couple of us daring to leave the shade!

Gabor decided that we would spend part of the afternoon at a tower hide overlooking a vast area of fishponds; the tower had a roof, so there would be shade as well, hopefully, as a breeze. On the way we diverted briefly to a spot where we saw our first Great Egret as well as a family of Lesser Grey Shrikes. The track to the fishponds was very birdy, and we had a close view of an immature male Montagu's Harrier on the right and several juvenile Yellow Wagtails to our left. Initially birding from the tower seemed rather fraught. We were looking near, and far, and in four different directions, so people were bound to miss things. With time, however,

things became easier, and calmer. The highlights included superb flight views of both adult and juvenile Eurasian Spoonbills, and point blank looks at a group of gullible Bearded Reedlings. We also found a female Ferruginous Duck, Purple Herons, Western Marsh Harriers, Yellow-legged Gulls and Eurasian Pendulines Tits as well as a moulting adult Black Tern dipping over the water.

Continuing our anti-clockwise loop, we drove on, arriving at a copse in the puszta where a number of tourist parties stop. That is significant, because it means that the Red-footed Falcons which use the Rooks' nests to form a colony each year are used to people and allow close approach. We were privileged to watch a male perched up eating a rodent, a female devouring a European Goldfinch and two very small chicks in a nest, not to mention numerous others in flight. It was a truly unforgettable experience, one which will live long in the memory. The White Storks on a nest were a fine supporting cast too.

Andrea showed us a Timberman Beetle when we arrived back at base. Dinner this evening was cauliflower soup, followed by a lovely chicken dish then cake in honour of Jeff's birthday: it's not often that we get to celebrate two birthdays on the same tour! There was a great deal to discuss; we certainly hadn't rushed around, but it felt as if we had had at least two days' birding in one! As a finale, a couple of us were lucky to see an Eastern Hedgehog under the shrubs close to our rooms.

Monday 10th July

A family of Lesser Grey Shrikes entertained those who wandered up the road this morning, whilst in the garden a family of Spotted Flycatcher was well-watched. Scrambled egg was popular at breakfast, and the fresh rolls were duly filled in preparation for lunch.

We returned to the Bee-eater colony where rain had curtailed proceedings on our previous visit; en route a Tawny Pipit was spotted on a post. A short walk in the area produced a fine Black Stork, some feisty hornets and a number of Crested Larks which we were able to watch in the scopes. Robbie was able to manoeuvre the bus along the sandy tracks, occasionally having to speed up through the softer bits. Eventually we arrived at a proper road and made a pit stop at a fine café to which we would return later. Our plan was to walk through the woods on a nature trail, but the recent tornado which had wreaked havoc in this area had brought down large numbers of trees. It was clear that the sign saying 'path closed' was there for a reason. A singing Icterine Warbler was leader-only before we returned to the bus and drove round to the far end of the path. This was also blocked, which was unfortunate for us but more generally a real shame as we wondered if anyone would have the time to try to clear it in the future. We paused for a while in a meadow, seeing our first Ruddy Darters and a Mallow Skipper as well as a Musk Beetle with long horns.

A different track produced a number of European Stonechats before we adjourned for lunch at the café. Having cooled down, we then ventured out into the sun once again around the pond where we found eight species of odonata including White-tailed Skimmer and White-legged Damselfly; Edible Frogs were numerous here. Returning towards the lodge, we stopped at a spot where Gabor explained the significance of a typical 'Transylvania Gate' at the entrance to a house.

From 1.45 to 4pm we had a much needed siesta; it was as hot a day as I could remember on a European tour. Fortunately the gardens were relatively cool and those keeping their eyes open saw the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker at its favoured tree, a Tree Pipit from the hide and a photogenic Short-tailed Blue butterfly by the pond!

Saker Falcon is one of the rarest birds of prey in Europe, but Hungary is a real stronghold, not least due to the efforts of conservationists in putting up nest boxes on pylons. We drove to a known breeding site and it wasn't long before we had respectable views of an adult through our 60x scopes! The pylons headed off at 45 degrees to two tracks. Making use of a well-known mathematical theorem I realised that we could get closer by driving along the road until we were at right angles to the bird and so it proved! Four Wood Sandpipers in a roadside puddle were found on our return journey.

We arrived at the lodge at 6pm, with a single Southern Darter on the fence and a moth called Nine-spotted on the main building. We met an hour later and had a slightly earlier dinner this evening, at 7.15pm, pea soup, spicy sausage casserole and apple pie on the menu tonight. Having donned insect repellent we met up again at 8.40pm and strolled up the track to a clearing. European Nightjars started churring at 9pm and were on top

form 20 minutes later; most of us had super views in flight, and a few were lucky enough to see one perched. Glow-worms brightened our return walk back to base.

Tuesday 11th July

The thunderstorms overnight were spectacular if not particularly helpful in terms of sleep. The early risers saw some fine birds in the garden, with a Hawfinch at the feeder near the pond this morning's highlight. 'Eggy bread' was popular at breakfast!

We left at 9am as usual and headed east for an hour or so before arriving in a clearing adjacent to an area of woodland; Chris immediately spotted a Hawfinch from the bus and we watched it for a while, to the delight of those who had missed it in the garden earlier. We strolled on through some fine trees and had super views of an inquisitive Middle Spotted Woodpecker. Some then chose to remain in the shade of the forest, whilst the rest of us headed across a couple of small meadows to a tower overlooking a lake covered in water lilies; a White-tailed Eagle was seen on the way looking suitably enormous before heading off. From the hide we watched Whiskered Terns, both Great and Pygmy Cormorants and compared Little and Great Egrets. A Garganey was seen in flight and a Savi's Warbler buzzed below us. The flower-rich meadow proved worthy of exploration and we found Weaver's Fritillary, a first for this tour, as well as Grizzled Skipper and the impressive Cardinal. We could have spent longer, but it was hotting up once again so we headed back to the sanctuary of the woods, seeing a number of Common Gliders along the way. A colourless insect was found to be Winter Damselfly, another first; we agreed with the book's assessment that it was 'easily overlooked'. A Black Woodpecker called and gave flight views to most before we used the tap near the bus to freshen up.

The middle part of the day was spent in and around the picturesque town of Tiszaalpár; we made a comfort stop before Gabor gave us a thought-provoking history lesson next to a monument illustrating the break-up of Hungary in times past. We picnicked on benches in the churchyard, Gabor providing coffee and tea which was most welcome! Most of us walked to a viewpoint on an adjacent hill-top from where we had a superb view of the impressive wetland. Here we saw a Syrian Woodpecker in flight, surprisingly our only one of the week, and another Black Stork.

We walked down between two hills and headed beyond a barrier along a track to the edge of the wetland. Common Kingfisher and Black-crowned Night Heron were seen as expected on the ponds to our left before we continued to a point where we could scan a vast expanse of water. There were hundreds of Pygmy Cormorants perched up, and a number of Squacco Herons were seen in flight. Black-necked Grebes in a variety of plumages were scoped, as was a distant male Ferruginous Duck; a group of Black-winged Stilts was much closer. Had it been cooler we could have lingered, but it wasn't! So we made haste for the bus. We made one more birding stop, a stake out for Eastern Imperial Eagle. It duly appeared, but if anything was even further away than the one from earlier in the week!

Keckemét is a large city with some very fine architecture; it was on our way home, so whilst Gabor took the opportunity to do some serious shopping, Robbie gave us a brief guided tour, rounded off of course by ice-creams! We arrived back at base at more or less the usual time, enjoying cool beers before a splendid meal of green bean soup followed by pork and macaroni with cottage cheese pastries for dessert.

Wednesday 12th July

Once again there was rain overnight, and it was still cloudy as Ann and Tony joined me at 6.30am for a stroll into the forest along the track a little to the east of the lodge. We saw a group of Long-tailed Tits, heard Common Nightingales croaking and whistling, and saw both European Roe and Fallow Deer. Paté was added to the breakfast menu this morning.

At 9am we drove west then south and explored a reed-fringed lake by a minor road, doing our best to use trees for shade. Whilst we were watching two juvenile Eurasian Penduline Tits at close range, a Little Gull flew in and landed on the water, the first here for couple of months so it was a proper 'write-in' for us! The count of 70 Black-winged Stilts was noteworthy, but most of the other waders were rather distant and into the light. Ruff, Spotted Redshank and Wood Sandpiper predominated and we were pleased to see a Marsh Sandpiper amongst them, albeit briefly. White Storks soaring overhead were a splendid sight. The adjoining copse is another site for Red-footed Falcons and we admired them once again.

We had been tipped off about a Eurasian Scops Owl just down the road and everyone managed to see it, although some had rather better views than others. We then drove past an area which Gabor said had an interesting history before arriving at a tower hide with views over an enormous area of alkaline lakes. In marked contrast to last year, there were very few waders on show although we did manage to find our first Common Sandpiper. We lunched at some picnic tables in the shade and Jeff showed me a photo of a Knapweed Fritillary he had found nearby. I failed to locate it, but whilst looking I found a damselfly which I knew was different from anything I had ever seen before. It was a female Dark Spreadwing, and Betty found a couple of others. Reading up later, we discovered that the Hungarian salt lakes provide ideal habitat for this very localised species which was a lifer for Gabor!

We tried again for the owl on our return journey, with mixed success once again; as a bonus, a female Southern Migrant Hawker was scoped in one of the tall trees across the track. It was getting hot, so we were pleased to take time out at a well-known café with informative boards about the wildlife of the area. The number of blue butterflies in the adjoining meadow was staggering! Suitably refreshed, we explored an oxbow fishing lake and a channel with tall trees on either side. Surprisingly, birds were in short supply but we had wonderful views of a Common Nightingale perched out in the open. European Pond Terrapin and Scarlet Darter dragonflies provided the supporting cast.

We arrived back at 5.30pm with plenty of time to unwind before dinner; we were pleased the weather forecast hinted at lower temperatures tomorrow!

Thursday 13th July

A Common Kingfisher delighted the photographers at the pond this morning; we were told it was only the second record for the garden!

We brought forward the time of breakfast to 7.15am which allowed us to leave at 8am. The plan was to enjoy a boat trip on Lake Kolon, in the south-west part of the Kiskunság and a 40 minute drive from the lodge. Unfortunately it was clear that, whilst the fresher conditions this morning were very welcome, the accompanying gusty winds would be problematic, and so it proved. Gabor received a call from the boatman saying that we wouldn't be able to go out on the lake, but that we could postpone until the following day rather than cancel. Gabor and I quickly revised our plan for today, and we drove to a large area of puszta. Having parked by a channel, we enjoyed close views of Pygmy Cormorants before strolling onto the grassland. We hadn't gone far when a raptor appeared overhead: it was a Short-toed Eagle, complete with large snake! The magnificent bird drifted slowly away, but was in view for ages. Continuing to a tower hide, we located a photogenic Dingy Skipper before beginning our search for bustards. It was very windy; at least there was virtually no heat haze. We enjoyed the panoramic views but birds were few and far between, so after an hour or so we declared and decided to drift back towards the bus. Determined to make the most of every minute in this habitat, I continued to scan periodically, and could hardly believe it when two Great Bustards hove into view from the right! They flew in and landed in front of the tower, so I whizzed up and put them in the scope, allowing us to obtain distant but atmospheric views. It was brilliant to locate this species, one of the 'must-see' birds of a visit to Hungary, and we were even more thrilled when Gabor told us they hadn't been seen at this site for the best part of two years.

We adjourned to a local café for a pit stop before heading out of town and down some sandy tracks through dry pine forest to a parking area close to the lake. Another tower hide, and a screen, provided a vista across the reeds and an area of open water; we spotted our first Eurasian Hobby from the former and a fine Ferruginous Duck from the latter. Dragonflies took centre stage here, with Four-spotted Chasers and Dainty Damselflies seen in a clearing and Scarlet Darters from the screen. Lake Kolon is an internationally important site for Large White-faced Darter; thousands are present in June but, with the species coming towards the end of its flight period, we were pleased to find two, one of which landed on Jeff's thumb! Around 1pm we headed off to enjoy our picnic at a place where we could also buy drinks and ice-creams. Scarce Swallowtails and Queen of Spain Fritillaries were seen at close range as they searched for salts on the road, and we found our first Common Redstart of the week perched on a roadside wire.

Having driven for around 45 minutes, we noted a number of apricot orchards, and paused briefly at some roadside pits where we scrutinised the Yellow-legged Gulls, before spending a while along a road by the Danube which formerly led to a ferry crossing. It was relatively sheltered here, and we found a Eurasian

Treecreeper then admired the river itself. We had a specific butterfly target, and scored just before we returned to the bus, a couple of male Lesser Purple Emperors landing in the treetops for several minutes, allowing us to obtain good scope views and discuss the diagnostic features at some length. A female Banded Demoiselle was an addition to our dragonfly list.

The day might not have been quite as planned, but we reflected on some excellent sightings as we sat down for our final dinner together, the pork accompanied by red wine courtesy of Ornitholidays; a little later it was really good to have time to say a proper thank you to Gabor and Andrea.

Friday 14th July

Having woken early, I walked into the forest and saw two of the juvenile Goshawks which had been calling incessantly each morning; unfortunately I was alone so the sighting was 'leader-only'. A female Common Redstart along the entrance lane was of note, as was a Coal Tit which sang and showed in the pines, whilst a Black Woodpecker called distantly and a Short-toed Treecreeper finally gave itself up to me by the pond.

We repeated our timings from the previous day and arrived at Lake Kolon at 9am. There was a light breeze, but this didn't cause any issues for our boat trips. We split into two groups, and my half spent an hour strolling through a meadow and around a short nature trail. It was relatively quiet, but we were pleased to find a roosting Black-crowned Night Heron and watch a Yellow-spotted Emerald patrolling close to the path. A Large White-faced Darter sat on Judith's hat! Unexpectedly, the local ringers were in action and we were able to compare Savi's and European Reed Warblers in the hand. Later in the morning Gabor's group were even more fortunate, seeing both Great Reed Warbler and Common Kingfisher being ringed. The open water at Lake Kolon has been recreated in recent years and both groups had a relaxing and productive time on an electric boat. The avian highlights were the close views of Squacco Herons feeding in the open, watching Eurasian Hobbies hunting over the reeds and seeing more juvenile Eurasian Penduline Tits in the bushes. 'Heard-only' Water Rail and Little Crake were of interest to some, whilst the variety and number of dragonflies was impressive; Small Red-eyed Damselflies were abundant, but there were also small numbers of Red-eyed Damselflies.

Having returned to the lodge at 12.45pm, there was plenty of time to picnic, pack and do our final bird list before saying goodbye to Gabor and Andrea and departing a little after 3pm. I was able to show the group Lesser Spotted Fritillary and Lesser Fiery Copper, two fine butterflies which I had located a short distance from the lodge, the weather perfect not just for the insects but for being out in the open looking for them! A Red-veined Darter was the reward for Jeff's final check near the pond. The journey to the airport took 75 minutes, those still looking for birds noting our first Corn Bunting on a wire and a Black Woodpecker flying across the road! We bade farewell to Robbie as we unloaded the bus in record time before checking in for our evening flight to London. We were in the air for two hours 15 minutes and, although there was a tedious wait for our gate to be freed up at Heathrow, we were out of the airport around 10pm and going our separate ways.

Birds of the Trip (voted by the group)

- 1st Red-footed Falcon
- 2nd European Bee-eater
- 3rd European Roller
- 4th Short-toed Eagle
- 5th Eurasian Golden Oriole
- 6th Eurasian Scops Owl
- 7th Great Bustard
- 8th Hawfinch
- 9th European Nightjar
- 10th Long-eared Owl

Acknowledgements

Many thanks for being such a super group! You were great company, enjoyed looking at the variety of wildlife on offer, not just the birds, and coped admirably with the hot weather. I am so pleased that you were able to make the most of Gabor's expertise with regard to Hungarian history and culture. Thanks as always to Ed Keeble for his assistance in preparing the photographs and to Jeff Fisher and Peter Monahan for allowing us to use some of your images. Thank you also to Tony Boniface for his poem. Last but not least, thanks to Robbie for his excellent driving and to Gabor and Andrea for making us feel so welcome, providing lovely food and as always paying attention to the little details which once again made this such a successful tour.

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August 2017



Boat trip on Lake Kolon

Itinerary and Weather

- 7th July Early afternoon flight from Heathrow to Budapest, then transfer to Kondor Eco-Lodge in the Kiskunság National Park, arriving early evening.
- 8th July Kunpuszta (just north of the lodge), then Kerekegyháza (Long-eared Owls + picnic). Short siesta, then return to Kunpuszta.
Mostly sunny, humid; a heavy shower late afternoon, then clearing. 15-30°C.
- 9th July North Kiskunság including Hosszúhát (raptor viewpoint), Bee-eater colony nearby, Bugyi (picnic), Apaj fishponds and Apajpuszta (Red-footed Falcon colony).
Mostly sunny, humid. 16-31°C.
- 10th July Kunpuszta, then attempt at walking Peszéradacs nature trail (picnic). Siesta, then fields north of Szabadszállás (Saker Falcon). Late evening walk from lodge for Nightjars.
Mostly sunny, humid. 19-35°C.
- 11th July East Kiskunság including Töserdő (forest, oxbow lake) and Tiszaalpár (picnic in churchyard, wetlands). Return via Kecskemét (city tour).
Thunderstorms overnight, cloudy at first, then mostly sunny, fresher. 18-30°C.
- 12th July West Kiskunság near Járápuszta including Böddi-szék alkaline lakes (picnic), fishing lake and channel.
Rain overnight, cloudy at first, then mostly sunny. 18-29°C.
- 13th July South Kiskunság including Soltzentimre (puszta) and Lake Kolon (tower/blind then picnic). Afternoon to the north-west at Dunaújváros (riverine forest alongside the Danube).
Sunny, windy. 18-25°C.
- 14th July Boat trip, walk along nature trail and brief ringing demonstration at Lake Kolon. Picnic at the lodge, then afternoon transfer to Budapest for evening flight to Heathrow.
Sunny am, cloudy pm, lighter winds. 12-24°C.

Poem by Tony Boniface

Once in a lifetime

Red-footed Falcon
Dismembering a goldfinch-
Look! The feathers fall.

On a branch nearby
Her mate sat eating a rat-
Yellow-ringed eyes shine!

Two chicks wait for food
In a deserted rook's nest-
Birding at its best!

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING THE TOUR

No of days recorded

1 2h means seen on 1 day
and heard on 2 other days

Abundance scale

Maximum seen (on one day)

1 = 1-4
2 = 5-9
3 = 10-99
4 = 100-999
5 = 1,000+

Species	No of days recorded	Abundance scale	Scientific name
Mute Swan	3	3	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Greylag Goose	5	4	<i>Anser anser</i>
Mallard	5	3	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Garganey	1	1	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
Common Pochard	2	1	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Ferruginous Duck	3	2	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
Grey Partridge	1	2	<i>Perdix perdix</i>
Common Pheasant	7	2	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
Black-necked Grebe	1	2	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
Little Grebe	3	1	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Great Crested Grebe	4	3	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Great Cormorant	2	4	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Pygmy Cormorant	2	4	<i>Phalacrocorax pygmeus</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron	2	1	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Squacco Heron	2	2	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
Little Egret	1	2	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Great Egret	4	3	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>
Grey Heron	5	3	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple Heron	4	2	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
White Stork	8	3	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
Black Stork	2	1	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	2	1	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
White-tailed Eagle	1	1	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
Eastern Imperial Eagle	2	1	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>
Short-toed Eagle	1	1	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
Western Marsh Harrier	7	3	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Montagu's Harrier	1	1	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
Common Buzzard	8	3	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
European Honey Buzzard	1	1	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	2	1	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Northern Goshawk	- 6h	1	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
Common Kestrel	8	3	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Red-footed Falcon	4	3	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>
Eurasian Hobby	2	1	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
Saker Falcon	1	1	<i>Falco cherrug</i>
Water Rail	- 1h	1	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>
Little Crake	- 1h	1	<i>Porzana parva</i>
Common Moorhen	2	1	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Eurasian Coot	4	3	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Great Bustard	1	1	<i>Otis tarda</i>
Black-winged Stilt	2	3	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Stone Curlew	1	1	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>
Northern Lapwing	3	3	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Common Sandpiper	3	1	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Wood Sandpiper	4 1h	3	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Common Redshank	2 1h	1	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Spotted Redshank	1	3	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
Common Greenshank	1	1	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Marsh Sandpiper	1	1	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
Eurasian Curlew	1	3	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Whimbrel	1	1	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>

Ruff	1	3	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	
Black-headed Gull	4	4	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	
Yellow-legged Gull	4	3	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	
Little Gull	1	1	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>	
Common Tern	3	3	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	
Black Tern	2	2	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	
Whiskered Tern	2	4	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	
Feral Pigeon	8	4	<i>Columba livia</i>	
Common Wood Pigeon	8	3	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	
Eurasian Collared Dove	8	3	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	
European Turtle Dove	6	2	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	
Common Cuckoo	5	1h	1	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
Long-eared Owl	1	1	<i>Asio otus</i>	
Eurasian Scops Owl	1	1	<i>Otus scops</i>	
European Nightjar	1	1	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	
Common Swift	3	2	<i>Apus apus</i>	
Eurasian Hoopoe	3	1	<i>Upupa epops</i>	
Common Kingfisher	4	1	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	
European Bee-eater	7	4	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	
European Roller	8	3	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	
Black Woodpecker	2	1	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	
European Green Woodpecker	1	5h	1	<i>Picus viridis</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	7	1h	1	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
Syrian Woodpecker	1	1	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>	
Middle Spotted Woodpecker	1	1	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>	
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	3	3h	1	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>
Common Skylark	4	1	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	
Crested Lark	4	2	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	
Common Sand Martin	2	3	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	
Barn Swallow	7	4	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	
Common House Martin	6	4	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	
Tawny Pipit	1	1	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	
Tree Pipit	4	1	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	
White Wagtail	7	2	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	
Yellow Wagtail	1	2	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	
European Robin	4	1h	1	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Common Nightingale	3	1	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	
Common Redstart	2	1	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	
Black Redstart	7	1	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	
Northern Wheatear	2	1	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	
European Stonechat	4	1	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	
Song Thrush	2	1h	1	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Common Blackbird	7	1	<i>Turdus merula</i>	
Blackcap	3	4h	1	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Savi's Warbler	1	2h	2	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>
Sedge Warbler	1	1	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	
European Reed Warbler	3	3	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	
Great Reed Warbler	1	1	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	
Common Chiffchaff	3	4h	2	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Eurasian Wren	-	1h	1	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Spotted Flycatcher	4	1	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	
Great Tit	7	2	<i>Parus major</i>	
Coal Tit	1	2h	1	<i>Pariparus ater</i>
European Blue Tit	6	1	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	
Long-tailed Tit	1	2	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	
Bearded Reedling	1	2	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	
Eurasian Penduline Tit	3	2	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	
Eurasian Nuthatch	6	1h	2	<i>Sitta europaea</i>
Eurasian Treecreeper	1	1	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	
Short-toed Treecreeper	4	2h	1	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
Lesser Grey Shrike	6	2	<i>Lanius minor</i>	
Red-backed Shrike	7	3	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	
Common Magpie	8	2	<i>Pica pica</i>	

Eurasian Jay	5	1	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Western Jackdaw	2	2	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Rook	2	4	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
Hooded Crow	8	3	<i>Corvus cornix</i>
Common Starling	8	5	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Eurasian Golden Oriole	7	2	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
House Sparrow	8	3	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	7	3	<i>Passer montanus</i>
Common Chaffinch	5	1h	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Common Linnet	1	1	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
European Goldfinch	7	3	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
European Greenfinch	7	1	<i>Chloris chloris</i>
European Serin	1	1	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
Hawfinch	5	1	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>
Common Reed Bunting	1	1	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>
Corn Bunting	1	1	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>

MAMMALS

Eastern Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus roumanicus</i>
Stone Marten (Beech Marten)	<i>Martes foina</i>
Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>
European Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>
European Hare (Brown Hare)	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>
European Souslik	<i>Spermophilus citellus</i>

BUTTERFLIES

Scarce Swallowtail	<i>Iphiclides podalirius</i>
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>
Small White	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>
Green-veined White	<i>Artogeia napi</i>
Eastern Bath White	<i>Pontia edusa</i>
Pale Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias hyale</i>
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>
Wood White	<i>Leptidea sinapis</i>
Lesser Fiery Copper	<i>Lycaena thersamon</i>
Short-tailed Blue	<i>Everes argiades</i>
Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>
Eastern Baton Blue	<i>Pseudophilotes vicrama</i>
Silver-studded Blue	<i>Plebejus argus</i>
Idas Blue	<i>Plebejus idas</i>
Reverdin's Blue	<i>Plebejus argyrognomon</i>
Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>
Lesser Purple Emperor	<i>Apatura ilia</i>
Common Glider	<i>Neptis sappho</i>
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>
Comma Butterfly	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>
Cardinal	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>
Queen of Spain Fritillary	<i>Issoria lathonia</i>
Weaver's Fritillary	<i>Clossiana dia</i>
Knapweed Fritillary	<i>Melitaea phoebe</i>
Lesser Spotted Fritillary	<i>Melitaea trivia</i>
Marbled White	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>
Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>
Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus malvae</i>
Mallow Skipper	<i>Carcharodus alceae</i>
Dingy Skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>

DRAGONFLIES

Banded Demoiselle
Southern Emerald Damselfly
Small Emerald Damselfly
Dark Spreadwing
Winter Damselfly
Blue-tailed Damselfly
Common Blue Damselfly
Azure Damselfly
Dainty Damselfly
Red-eyed Damselfly
Small Red-eyed Damselfly
White-legged Damselfly
Southern Migrant Hawker
Norfolk Hawker
Emperor
Lesser Emperor
Yellow-spotted Emerald
Four-spotted Chaser
Black-tailed Skimmer
White-tailed Skimmer
Large White-faced Darter
Ruddy Darter
Red-veined Darter
Common Darter
Southern Darter
Scarlet Darter

Calopteryx splendens
Lestes barbarus
Lestes virens
Lestes macrostigma
Sympetma fusca
Ischnura elegans
Enallagma cyathigerum
Coenagrion puella
Coenagrion scitulum
Erythromma najas
Erythromma viridulum
Platycnemis pennipes
Aeshna affinis
Aeshna isocetes
Anax imperator
Anax parthenope
Somatochlora flavomaculata
Libellula quadrimaculata
Orthetrum cancellatum
Orthetrum albistylum
Leucorrhinia pectoralis
Sympetrum sanguineum
Sympetrum fonscolombii
Sympetrum striolatum
Sympetrum meridionale
Crocothemis erythraea

AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

Common Tree Frog
Edible Frog
European Pond Terrapin
Common Wall Lizard
Grass Snake

Hyla arborea
Pelophylax esculentus
Emys orbicularis
Podarcis muralis
Natrix natrix

OTHER SPECIES

Hummingbird Hawkmoth
Nine-spotted (Moth)
Glow-worm
Musk Beetle
Timberman Beetle
(Scarab Beetle)

Macroglossum stellatarum
Amata phegea
-
Aromia moschata
Acanthocinus aedilis
Polyphylla fullo

Notes on the checklists

The nomenclature and taxonomy largely follows:

Collins Bird Guide by Lars Svensson et al (revised 2nd edition, 2015)

Collins Butterfly Guide by Tom Tolman and Richard Lewington (2nd edition, 2008)

Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Europe by Klaas-Douwe B Dijkstra and Richard Lewington (British Wildlife Publishing, 2006)

Mammals of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East by S Aulagnier et al (A and C Black)

Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Britain and Europe by Jeroen Speybroeck et al (British Wildlife Guides)

These lists represent the birds, butterflies, dragonflies, amphibians, reptiles and selected other species recorded by the group members on this tour.



Short-toed Eagle



Squacco Heron



Common Kingfisher



Eurasian Scops owl



European Roller



Black-winged Stilt



Great Bustards



Hawfinch



Lesser Grey Shrike



Long-eared Owl



Pygmy Cormorant



Red-backed Shrike



Red-footed Falcon



Scarlet Darter



Knapweed Fritillary



Queen of Spain Fritillary

Front cover: European Bee-eaters

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