

ORNITHOLIDAYS TOUR TO BELARUS
Europe's Last Great Wilderness

28 April – 6 May 2012



Leaders: Gabor Orban and Simon Boyes

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A Personal Diary

Saturday, 28 April

We meet up in Heathrow's Terminal 1 for the early flight to Vienna, operated by Austrian Airlines. The connection is less than an hour, but in the event we make it easily. The Minsk flight is operated by Tyrolean Airways, a branch of Austrian. Minsk is warm and sunny, and two hours ahead of BST. Immigration and luggage present no problems, and we soon meet Alex, our Belarus guide and interpreter. However, Gabor, our Hungarian naturalist guide, has had immigration problems at the Poland/Belarus border with his driver Tibor. Eventually they are allowed through, but only after they are required to drive back into Poland and straight out again! Meanwhile, we have plenty of time to change money and enjoy a leisurely lunch in the airport restaurant. We don't need to change much, but by changing £77, you can become a millionaire in Belarus roubles. However, pounds are hard to change – euros are much easier.

Once the minibus arrives, we meet Gabor and his partner Andrea, and Tibor. We jump in and head south-west to our first hotel, on the edge of the great forest called Belovezkaja here, and Bialowieja in Poland. The border – marked by a two-metre fence - bisects the forest. Along the way, Western Marsh Harriers are regular, with a single male Hen Harrier shortly after the airport. There also many White Storks, plus a few Lapwings and one drumming Common Snipe. The landscape is flat, a mix of huge co-operatively farmed fields, and extensive forests, apparently unmanaged, mostly of pine and birch. Villages have wooden houses surrounded by cherry trees covered in white blossom. Our long travel day ends in the welcoming dining room of the hotel, where the staff have stayed up late to serve us a tasty dinner. On each table are glasses of the local birch and apple juice, with local beers a welcome extra. Our rooms are comfortable and spacious: much more luxurious than we were expecting.

Sunday, 29 April

Cloudless skies make a great start, with Common Cuckoo, European Serin, Pied Flycatcher and Common Redstart singing around the hotel. A Black Woodpecker flies past us, and several Hawfinches are active in the mixed canopy. After a substantial cooked breakfast, we set off to explore the great forest. It is famous for its herd of European Bison – about 450 on each side of the border fence, which was built in the 1980s. A Hazel Grouse pauses on a verge, a Lesser Spotted Eagle flies over, and another Black Woodpecker appears. A short walk, past a smart Collared Flycatcher by its nest, leads us to a lake that has a pair of Whooper Swans and Goldeneyes: both may stay to nest. The bank has a singing Great Reed Warbler, and a quickly disappearing Icterine Warbler. Another forest walk brings us singing Wood Warbler, Middle Spotted Woodpecker on territory, and brief views of a White-backed Woodpecker. We see two Grass Snakes active during the morning, as well as several squashed on the roads.

After a restoring picnic, we head off into the forest with Anton, a park ranger who has something special to show us. Grateful for our rubber boots in the boggy terrain, we find ourselves looking up at a huge nest with an incubating Great Grey Owl. A small population nests every year in southern Belarus, which is on the same latitude (53°N) as Birmingham. Yellow eyes and huge facial disc are clear in the scopes, and in a few camera memories too. Here they feed on squirrels and birds. It is odd to see this magnificent owl panting with heat (technically 'gular fluttering') when the classic image of the species is in snow in the Canadian or Russian arctic. A final stop is on the edge of the national park, in an area of meadow and marsh. Here Common Snipe drum in high numbers, and Black-tailed Godwits chase off passing Western Marsh Harriers. The real prize is a fine Greater Spotted Eagle, perched close to the road, then flying off with heavy wingbeats to perch again in view. The supporting cast here is Great Grey Shrike, Garganey and four Common Cranes.

Monday, 30 April

Another cloudless day begins with a forest walk before breakfast. John has started earlier, and finds his own Common Crossbill and Middle Spotted Woodpecker. We are busy enjoying a perched Hawfinch in the

scopes when a female Northern Goshawk comes hurtling over the clearing. Unfortunately, only Gabor and I are looking in its direction, so it remains off the group list. A Grey-headed Woodpecker offers us excellent views and is the pick of our early sightings. During the morning we try another area of the forest, beginning with a clearing that has Woodlarks, Eurasian Hoopoes and many Whinchats, mostly presumably on migration. A male Golden Oriole up in a budding poplar makes a fine picture in the scopes. A Black Stork soars over the forest. The highlight of the forest walk is an obliging Eurasian Pygmy Owl, which perches in a leafless tree for several minutes, mobbed by a pair of Long-tailed Tits. Anton points out a fallen tree believed to be 500 years old. The forest floor is carpeted by sorrel and flowering wood anemones, with a few herb paris, violets, and the shrivelled skin of a young European Bison that has met an untimely end.

All too soon it is time to leave the delights of Belovezkaja, and head east for Sporovo. At the picnic site in mixed pine and birch woods, the shade temperature reaches 30°C. Gabor is amazed at these high-summer conditions in April. Checking in to the Energy Hotel in Beloozersk, we have a short break before setting out for our first exploration of the reserve. Sporovo is mainly renowned for its population of Aquatic Warblers which nest in the damp meadows by the river, but perhaps they are late back from migration this year? A long vigil on the boardwalk fails to turn any up, though we enjoy the drumming Common Snipe, Common Cuckoos, Sedge Warblers, and a Camberwell Beauty. A male Citrine Wagtail pauses on a bush, but annoyingly against the light. We also hear both Savi's Warbler (from a reedbed) and a Grasshopper Warbler (from a drier, bushier habitat). This superb area seems strangely quiet for bird-life, but perhaps the day is just too hot. A Fieldfare on the return walk is a surprise: one we associate with British winters rather than sweltering summer days.

Tuesday, 1 May

Rooks provide our wake-up calls as they nest next to the hotel. After breakfast we drive to the Sporovo nature centre where our local hosts Vladim and Tanya live. Fieldfares are nesting in his garden, and across the road a Wryneck offers the photographers opportunities as it utters its ringing call from the top of a birch. The first Common Swifts are overhead. From a point overlooking the marshes of the Yaselda River, we watch a Red Fox in the meadow, and a distant pair of Montagu's Harriers displaying above. A Golden Oriole passes over, heading north.

We spend most of the morning at the Sielets Fishponds, where a good selection of waders includes Spotted Redshank, Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Common Greenshank and Temminck's Stint. There are Whooper Swans among the Mute Swans, and a few Caspian Gulls: similar to Yellow-legged Gulls but with longer necks and a more sloping forehead (like a Slender-billed Gull). White-tailed Eagles patrol the skies, first three immatures, and later a pair of adults. At one point one of the adults is mobbed by a passing Osprey. Citrine Wagtails give much better views than the one yesterday. Black Storks fly over a few times, including one at close range. Duck feature Gadwall and Garganey, and we enjoy the singing Great Reed Warblers and a superb Penduline Tit close to its exquisite hanging nest. European Turtle Doves and White-winged Terns fly past without stopping.

Our hosts find us a perfect picnic spot on shady tables in a friend's garden. Tanya has made a vat of cold *borsht*, the traditional beetroot soup popular here as in neighbouring Russia. We return to the hotel for a siesta, and set out again as the heat passes. This time we try another Aquatic Warbler site, a wet meadow not far north of the nature centre where we were yesterday evening. Walking over the tussocky grass in wellies isn't easy, and we start back to the bus a little dispirited when all that we flush are Meadow Pipits. However, Gabor and Derek strike aquatic gold and call us over. They hear, then see a likely candidate. We spend several minutes watching a fine singing male, in low willow scrub, centre crown stripe clear in the scopes. It has surely only just arrived, as its song is muted and it frequently disappears to feed. In a week or two there will be many more here. In the pines across the road, Crested Tits work through the canopy and an Eastern Hedgehog snuffles through the undergrowth. Happy with the day's work, we head back to dinner in the hotel.

Wednesday, 2 May

Today is mostly a travel day, eastwards from Beloozersk to Turov. During the morning we spend time in an area of lake and forest named Viganachevski. We contemplate a boat trip on a lake which is offered to us, but scanning the distant horizons suggests that the wildlife rewards might be few. So instead we take a forest walk, which is pleasant without being spectacular for birds. Lesser Spotted Eagles (a pair thermalling), Little

Ringed Plover display-fighting, our first Northern Wheatears, and a Great Grey Shrike are among our sightings in these habitats. The picnic spot is by a fishpond, where we find plenty to watch. Black Storks pass over regularly, some stopping to rest. An adult White-tailed Eagle soars in the distance, and White-winged Terns head north without stopping to feed. Yellow Wagtails are on territory, and there is a constant Common Skylark chorus. There is limited shade here, which would have mattered in yesterday's heat, but today's sunshine is tempered by a pleasant breeze.

During the afternoon we press on to Turov, stopping at the great bridge over the Pripyat River with its flooded meadows on each side. Here White-winged Terns are joined by many Black Terns. In Turov village we admire the great variety of colours in the Ruff as they feed on the river bank. There are Northern Shoveler and both redshank species here too. Gabor takes us into the ringing station, where head-ringer Pavel shows us some of the redshank, Wood Sandpipers and Northern Lapwing he and his staff have ringed. We are invited to release them. At the other end of town is our hotel, where our rooms overlook the Turov Meadow, part of the Pripyatski National Park. Dinner is served at great speed: four courses in 45 minutes! We head off to rest, happy with the thought of three full days to explore locally.

Thursday, 3 May

Early birds outside the hotel include Garganey and our first Common Ringed Plover and Pied Oystercatcher. Looking out across the first channel of the river, we watch flocks of Reeves and Ruff of various hues flying and feeding, with a few skirmishes developing between males. Northern Lapwing and Common Redshank incubate on neighbouring nests, in full view of passing Hooded Crows. Serins and Black Redstarts are on territory in gardens along the waterfront.

After breakfast, we head west to a riverbank where Azure Tits have been found nesting these last two years. We are not there long before a pair fly over and start feeding in front of us. Here these unusually coloured birds are at the western end of their breeding range, which stretches to eastern Siberia. Also here are Eurasian Hoopoe, Penduline Tit, Golden Oriole, and a chorus of Common Whitethroat and Garden Warbler. On the way back we stop to photograph two of the many horses and carts which are still as common as tractors here. Not far from Turov, we are treated to a magnificent aerobatic courtship display by a male Montagu's Harrier, while a Thrush Nightingale sings its characteristic phrases from deep in cover. We return to base for a short break before lunch, while our faithful team buy our picnic.

The lunch spot is by the river, at a spot where a Terek Sandpiper calls its double piping note at intervals. Much scanning reveals only Ruff and redshank. Next is a visit to the Old Railway Forest, which looks wonderful but in reality is guarded by a battalion of fierce mosquitoes. Too much hot weather has brought them out a few weeks early. Beating a hasty retreat, we watch the skies instead, and find eight raptor species and a few Black Storks, all within half an hour: White-tailed, Lesser Spotted and Short-tailed Eagles, Common Buzzard and European Honey Buzzard, Hen and Montagu's Harriers, and a distant Eurasian Hobby.

Another riverside spot is the meadow which has been a traditional Great Snipe lek for many years. We set off on foot at 5 o'clock, traversing a stream which is almost as deep as our wellies in one spot – indeed a few unlucky ones are inundated. Otherwise it's an easy and beautiful walk, with Black-tailed Godwits, Northern Lapwing, and Common Redshanks and Skylarks in almost constant display above us. Ruff, Wood Sandpipers and White-winged and Black Terns also pass over at regular intervals. Passing harriers are attacked by protective breeding waders, and Yellow Wagtails are abundant too. We are worried by a hide set up by four Dutch photographers, extremely close to the lek. All the same, the Great Snipe start to arrive soon after 1830, with a flurry of new arrivals soon after seven o'clock. They are not especially active or noisy: action will start closer to dusk. But instead we have perched and flight views in full sunlight: in all at least 20 birds fly in. A Corncrake calls nearby but can't be enticed into the open. As we leave, we wonder how the Dutch will move from the hide and dismantle it without disturbing the snipe: which are rare and declining. Gabor tells us how the Polish leks have become harder to observe satisfactorily as more and more birders visit. One of the Dutchmen comments that this is best place in Europe for Great Snipe, and that more birders should visit: not helpful to the breeding success of their target species. We have reported the selfishness of the photographers to Birdlife Belarus, so that they may at least become aware of the problem at this sensitive stage of the breeding season. Our sombre thoughts are happily interrupted by a Terek Sandpiper, feeding

with Ruff in a shallow pool of floodwater. Belarus beer and dinner taste especially good after a great day in the field.

Friday, 4 May

In addition to the usual wetland species, Thrush Nightingale and Middle Spotted Woodpecker are our pre-breakfast birds. The rest of the morning is at the forest edge near Azerani, where Black Storks and raptors are the main interest. We can compare the more massive Greater Spotted with Lesser Spotted Eagle in flight: in the same spot a White-tailed Eagle is mobbed persistently by a Common Buzzard. There is a Red Squirrel and a brief view of a Black Woodpecker, but the insects deter us from walks in the forest interior. The lunch spot by the river has a closer Greater Spotted Eagle, mobbed by a Common Raven as it flies past us. Erica and Ray find a Wryneck. As for the more welcome insects, there are Swallowtails mating, Four-spotted Chaser and Downy Emerald.

After a short break back at base during another hot afternoon, we explore wetlands just west of Turov. We stand at the roadside, gazing over a paradise for breeding and migrant waders and terns. White-winged Terns are in great numbers, most resting but others feeding above us on insects as if they were hirundines. A few Whiskered Terns, also in full breeding plumage, fly past us several times. There are Northern Shoveler, Garganey and Common Pochard, and spectacular numbers of Ruff. A second stop near the ringing station adds Little Terns, more Ruff in full finery starting to pick fights with neighbours, and Common Sand Martins perched on the ground, feeding on sandflies. Best of all is a young Eurasian Beaver, which feeds on water-weed and makes regular voyages across a small pool below us – very photogenic.

We have an early dinner, served with great efficiency as always, and head out again to the edge of Azerani Forest. As we wait for interesting wildlife to appear, we enjoy a passage flock of eight Golden Plovers in breeding plumage, and a solitary Common Crane in flight. A Wild Boar continues today's mammals theme, emerging from the forest to feed in the nearest meadow. But the day's best moment is at 2030, as the light begins to dim. Chris calls 'Bison!' and there facing us is a young bull, perhaps three years old, and already an impressive beast. It too has left the forest to graze. We watch it as it watches us, then runs powerfully at right-angles to us, before striking another pose for the cameras. We head back to base especially happy with what we have found.

Saturday, 5 May

Before breakfast we make a short drive to the bridge over the Pripyat River a few miles east of Turov. Here a flock of Great Egrets, illuminated by sun, fly from their roost with a stormy sky behind. Two Terek Sandpipers are a pleasant discovery where Tibor has parked the minibus. Back near the hotel we find a Glossy Ibis feeding out on the marshes – an over-shooting visitor to Belarus from breeding grounds further south.

On the way to Beloe Fishponds, a Hen Harrier quarters a fallow field. Once at the ponds, Black-necked Grebes appear in spectacular breeding plumage. Plenty of duck include many Gadwall, Common Pochard and Common Goldeneye, with a single pair of Eurasian Wigeon. This is a special spot for Smew: but the only ones we see are a pair that fly past us, with the male's white colours outstanding. The constant chorus of croaking frogs and crooning Fire-bellied Toads is joined at intervals by Eurasian Hoopoe and Common Cuckoo. Occasionally a Great Bittern booms from the depths of a distant reedbed. A White-backed Woodpecker gives great views in a number of trees along the track. Teamwork, especially from Cliff and Derek, locates a superb male Bluethroat singing for all to enjoy in the scopes. The white spot in the centre of the blue breast is puffed out as it faces us. Other ponds have a pair of Whooper Swans and a single Red-necked Grebe.

After another satisfying picnic, we visit other fishponds in the same complex. 20 Black Storks fish together in a shallow pool; waders include two Common Greenshank, a few Spotted Redshank, many Wood Sandpipers, two Temminck's Stints and a single Terek Sandpiper. White-tailed Eagles patrol the skies. A brightly-coloured Map butterfly is a catch-up for some of the group. On the way back, we stop at the ringing station to offload a surplus of Belarus bank notes as a donation: it's hard to spend money here except on a few drinks. Nearby, the young Eurasian Beaver is still busy ferrying water-weed to what may be its first attempt at building a lodge. Ruffs are still strutting and posing, fanning out their brilliant neck plumes. The final meal comes with a celebratory round of drinks from Ornitholidays.

Sunday, 6 May

Breakfast opens at 0800 at this hotel, and often in Belarus we have found that rules are not meant to be broken. However, the staff cook us up a 0630 meal with no problem. As we load up the minibus for the last time, White Storks bill-clatter on their nests and our last few Turov waders fly over. We make great speed to Minsk, with a single comfort stop where we make our end of tour presentations to Gabor, Tibor and Alex. Penny finds a Red-backed Shrike, and all three harrier species appear by the road – including male Hen and male Montagu's very close to the minibus. We reach the airport four hours after leaving Turov, helped by the empty Sunday morning roads. Austrian Airlines look after us well, and after a two-hour wait in Vienna have us back at Heathrow almost on time. The only slight delay is caused by a torrential thunderstorm just as we are ready to leave Vienna. Luggage is quickly delivered, and we say our farewells by the carousels. Most of the group can reach home this evening.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Gabor and Andrea for looking after us in Belarus and finding us many wonderful birds. Thanks are also due to Tibor for safe driving and to Alex for translating and organizing our programme in a land that is only just opening up to foreign travellers. Additional local guiding was available in all three centres – Anton in Belovezkaja deserves special mention. Most of all, thanks to you all in the group for participating in this exploratory tour with enthusiasm, patience and good humour at all times. I hope we may meet up on another Ornitholiday again soon. Thanks also to Derek for the photographs that illustrate this report.

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June 2012

Itinerary and Weather

Our weather was not typical of Belarus in late April: future visitors should expect cooler weather with some rain. Wherever possible, **shade** temperatures at dawn and midday are given.

- 28 April Arrive Minsk 1300. To Belovezkaja Pushcha.
Sunny, 16-24°C (61-75°F)
- 29 April Belovezkaja Pushcha.
Sunny, 13-26°C (55-79°F)
- 30 April Belovezkaja Pushcha to Beloozersk. Sporovo Reserve.
Sunny, 11-30°C (52-86°F)
- 1 May Beloozersk. Sporovo. Selets Fishponds.
Sunny, 15-31°C (59-88°F)
- 2 May Beloozersk to Turov.
Sunny, 11-24°C (52-75°F)
- 3 May Turov and local area.
Sunny, 13-26°C (55-79°F)
- 4 May Turov. Alshany Forests.
Sunny, 15-27°C (59-81°F)
- 5 May Turov. Turov Bridge. Beloe Fishponds.
Overnight rain.
Cloudy a.m, sunny p.m. 15-24°C (59-75°F)
- 6 May Turov to Minsk. Depart 1345.
Dry, some sun. 15-23°C (59-73°F)

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING TOUR

No of days recorded	Location	Abundance Scale (max. seen on 1 day)
1 2h means seen	B = Belovezkaja	1 = 1 – 4 individuals
on 1day and	S = Sporovo	2= 5 - 9
heard on 2 other	T = Turov	3 = 10 - 99
days	> = on journey to....	4 = 100 - 999

SPECIES	No of days recorded	Location	Abundance Scale	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Mute Swan	4	B S	>T 3	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Whooper Swan	3	B S	T 2	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
Mallard	9	B S	T 3	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Gadwall	3	S	T 3	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Northern Shoveler	4		T 2	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Eurasian Wigeon	1		T 1	<i>Anas penelope</i>
Garganey	5	B S	T 2	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
Common Pochard	3		T 3	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Tufted Duck	1		T 2	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Common Goldeneye	3	B S	T 3	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
Smew	1		T 1	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>
Hazel Grouse	1	B		<i>Tetrastes bonasia</i>
Corncrake	-	2h	T -	<i>Crex crex</i>
Common Pheasant	1	>B		<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
Black-necked Grebe	1		T 3	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
Great Crested Grebe	2		T 3	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Red-necked Grebe	1		T 1	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>
Great Cormorant	5	B S	T 3	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Great Bittern	-	2h	T -	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>
Great Egret	8	B S	T 3	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>
Grey Heron	7	B S	T 2	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
White Stork	9	B S	T 3	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
Black Stork	7	B S	T 3	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>
Glossy Ibis	1		T 1	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
Osprey	1	S		<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
White-tailed Eagle	5	S	T 2	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
Lesser Spotted Eagle	4	B	T 1	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>
Greater Spotted Eagle	2	B	T 1	<i>Aquila clanga</i>
Short-toed Eagle	1		T 1	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
Western Marsh Harrier	9	B S	T 3	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Hen Harrier	5	>B S	T 1	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
Montagu's Harrier	4	B S	T 2	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
Common Buzzard	8	B S	T 2	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
European Honey Buzzard	1		T 1	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	1	S		<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Common Kestrel	3		T 1	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Eurasian Hobby	1		T 1	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
Common Moorhen	1	1h	T 1	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Eurasian Coot	4	>S	T 2	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Common Crane	2	B	T 1	<i>Grus grus</i>
Eurasian Oystercatcher	3		T 1	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
Little Ringed Plover	3	S	T 1	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Common Ringed Plover	3		T 1	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
European Golden Plover	1		T 2	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>
Northern Lapwing	9	B S	T 3	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Temminck's Stint	2	S	T 1	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>
Common Sandpiper	3	B S	T 2	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Terek Sandpiper	2		T 1	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>
Wood Sandpiper	6	S	T 3	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Green Sandpiper	3	B	T 2	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>

Common Redshank	4	2h		S	T	3	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Spotted Redshank	5			S	T	2	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
Common Greenshank	2	1h		S	T	1	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Black-tailed Godwit	7		B	S	T	3	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
Great Snipe	1				T	3	<i>Gallinago media</i>
Common Snipe	8		B	S	T	3	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Ruff	6			S	T	4	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Black-headed Gull	8		B	S	T	4	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Common Gull	5		B	S	T	1	<i>Larus canus</i>
Caspian Gull	4			S	T	2	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1				T	1	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
Little Tern	4				T	3	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
Common Tern	6			S	T	3	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Black Tern	4				T	3	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
White-winged Tern	6			S	T	4	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
Whiskered Tern	4		B		T	2	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
Rock (Feral) Pigeon	9		B	S	T	3	<i>Columba livia</i>
Stock Dove	1	1h	B			1	<i>Columba oenas</i>
Common Wood Pigeon	9		B	S	T	3	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove	4				T	2	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
European Turtle Dove	2			S	T	1	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
Common Cuckoo	5	2h	B	S	T	1	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
Great Grey Owl	1		B			1	<i>Strix nebulosa</i>
Eurasian Pygmy Owl	1		B			1	<i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>
Common Swift	3			S	T	2	<i>Apus apus</i>
Eurasian Hoopoe	4		B		T	1	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Black Woodpecker	2	1h	B		T	1	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>
Grey-headed Woodpecker	2	1h	B		>T	1	<i>Picus canus</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	2	2h	B	S	T	1	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
Middle Spotted Woodpecker	3		B		T	1	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>
White-backed Woodpecker	2		B		T	1	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>
Wryneck	2	1h		S	T	1	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
Common Skylark	8		B	S	T	1	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Woodlark	1		B			1	<i>Lullula arborea</i>
Common Sand Martin	4				T	3	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
Barn Swallow	8		B	S	T	3	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Common House Martin	9		B	S	T	3	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>
Meadow Pipit	2			S	T	3	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Tree Pipit	3	1h	B		T	1	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
White Wagtail	8		B	S	T	3	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Yellow Wagtail	7		B	S	T	3	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Citrine Wagtail	2			S		1	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>
European Robin	2		B			1	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Thrush Nightingale	1	2h			T	1	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>
Bluethroat	1				T	1	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>
Common Redstart	2	1h	B		>T	1	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Black Redstart	6		B		T	1	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Northern Wheatear	2				T	1	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Whinchat	8		B	S	T	2	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
Song Thrush	3	1h	B		T	2	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Mistle Thrush	1		B			1	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Fieldfare	3			S	T	2	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>
Eurasian Blackbird	7		B	S	T	3	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Garden Warbler	2	1h		S	T	1	<i>Sylvia borin</i>
Blackcap	4	4h	B	S	T	1	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Common Whitethroat	4	1h		S	T	1	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	2	5h	B	S	T	1	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
Common Grasshopper Warbler	-	1h		S		-	<i>Locustella naevia</i>
Savi's Warbler	-	2h		S	T	-	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>
Sedge Warbler	3			S	T	2	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>
Aquatic Warbler	1			S		1	<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>
European Reed Warbler	1			S		1	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Great Reed Warbler	5	2h	B	S	T	1	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>

Icterine Warbler	1		B			1	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>
Willow Warbler	2	5h	B	S	T	1	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Wood Warbler	3	4h	B	S	T	1	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
Common Chiffchaff	3	1h	B	S	>T	1	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Goldcrest	1		B			1	<i>Regulus regulus</i>
Winter Wren	-	3h	B		T	-	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Spotted Flycatcher	3		B		T	1	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Pied Flycatcher	1		B			1	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
Collared Flycatcher	1		B			1	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>
Great Tit	6		B	S	T	2	<i>Parus major</i>
Eurasian Blue Tit	2		B		T	1	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Azure Tit	1				T	1	<i>Cyanistes cyanus</i>
Crested Tit	2		B	S		1	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>
Marsh Tit	2		B		>T	1	<i>Poecile palustris</i>
Willow Tit	1		B			1	<i>Poecile montanus</i>
Long-tailed Tit	1		B			1	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
Bearded Reedling	-	1h		S		-	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>
Eurasian Penduline Tit	2			S	T	1	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>
Eurasian Nuthatch	3		B		>T	1	<i>Sitta europaea</i>
Great Grey Shrike	3		B	>S	>T	1	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>
Red-backed Shrike	1				T	1	<i>Lanius collurio</i>
Common Magpie	7		B	S	T	2	<i>Pica pica</i>
Eurasian Jay	5		B		T	3	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Western Jackdaw	9		B	S	T	3	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Rook	8		B	S	T	3	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
Hooded Crow	6		B		T	2	<i>Corvus cornix</i>
Common Raven	9		B	S	T	3	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Common Starling	9		B	S	T	4	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Golden Oriole	5	2h	B	S	T	1	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
House Sparrow	8		B	S	T	3	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Tree Sparrow	6			S	T	2	<i>Passer montanus</i>
Common Chaffinch	9		B	S	T	3	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Common Linnet	2				T	1	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
European Goldfinch	8		B	S	T	2	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Eurasian Siskin	2		B			1	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>
European Greenfinch	7		B	S	T	2	<i>Chloris chloris</i>
European Serin	6	1h	B		T	1	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
Hawfinch	2		B			2	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>
Common Crossbill	2	1h	B		>T	1	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>
Yellowhammer	7		B		T	2	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>
Reed Bunting	7		B	S	T	2	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>
Corn Bunting	2		B			1	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>

MAMMALS

European Hare	2				T	1	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>
Eurasian Red Squirrel	3		B		T	1	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>
Eurasian Beaver	3		B		T	1	<i>Castor fiber</i>
Red Fox	1			S		1	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>
Eastern Hedgehog	1			S		1	<i>Erinaceus concolor</i>
Eurasian Wild Boar	1				T	1	<i>Sus scrofa</i>
Western Roe Deer	1				>T	1	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>
European Bison	1				T	1	<i>Bison bonasus</i>

OTHER ANIMALS included Grass Snake, Fire-bellied Toad, Marsh Frog and Edible Frog.

BUTTERFLIES included Peacock, Brimstone, Orange-tip, Small Tortoiseshell, Swallowtail, Green-veined White, Wood White, Comma, Camberwell Beauty, Speckled Wood, Painted Lady, Green Hairstreak and Map.

DRAGONFLIES included Four-spotted Chaser, Downy Emerald, and Ruby Whiteface.

This list represents those birds and other animals seen by party members of this tour.

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Eurasian Pygmy Owl



Great Grey Owl



Greater Spotted Eagle



Eurasian Wren



White Stork



Black-tailed Godwit



Bluethroat



Great Reed Warbler



Black Redstart



Ruff



Black-necked Grebes



Black Stork



Eurasian Beaver



European Bison



Wood White



Common Swallowtails

Front cover: Azure Tit

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