

Bulgaria: The Secret Flyway

Tue 14th-Tue 21st September 2010



Photos (clockwise from top): **Lesser Spotted Eagle** was recorded on five dates, peaking at 297 birds moving south on 20th September • Pelican passage peaked on 19th September, when several thousand **White Pelicans** passed south over the coastal town of Bourgas • One of the Black Sea coast's star breeding birds, an autumn male **Pied Wheatear** poses for our group at Cape Kaliakra • This year's tour was an excellent trip for butterflies too, including this cryptically camouflaged **Great Banded Grayling** • The large **Cardinal Fritillary** was also among a total of 36 species of butterfly noted during the week... not a bad for Europe in September! • Passerine migrants included remarkable numbers of **Red-backed Shrikes**, many of them juveniles (as here), with perhaps 300 individuals noted on the 16th alone © Brian Small/Limosa Holidays

report compiled by tour leader:
Brian Small

Trip Diary

Tour Leaders: Brian Small & Tihomir Stefanov

with Ed Coleman, Simon Linington, Tony Jones and Jenni Tubbs. (Unfortunately, fellow tour participants Richard & Margaret Bentley were prevented from joining the tour when their connecting flight from Newcastle was cancelled due to technical problems.)

Watching bird migration is always a very special event, and doing so in a 'new' country with exciting species even more so. We were privileged to witness several days of incredibly strong movements of birds, even though the weather was by-and-large simply 'too good' – sunny weather means that many birds move through at height or on a broad front. The first few days saw fantastic movements of hirundines - Swallows, House and Sand Martins poured through in spectacular numbers; meanwhile flock upon flock of Bee-eaters "*chrupp*"ing overhead (flocks low enough to count were in the region of 50-150 birds). Initially raptors were quiet, but a couple of special movements included male Pallid Harrier at Goritza and nearly 300 Lesser Spotted Eagles, plus supporting cast, in four hours of watching at Atanaskovsko. These are just single moments in a week packed with great birds - waders, ducks, raptors, pelicans, storks and passerines. You can see why many come to the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria! Add in the great fun and laughter, with Tisho being such a great co-leader, and hopefully a memorable trip was had by all...

Day 1. Tuesday 14th September

Thanks to airline schedule changes, our autumn tours to Bulgaria switched days of operation from Monday-Monday to Tuesday-Tuesday. But the new timings had the benefit of an earlier arrival time on day one, and also allowed more time in the field on the final day. In the event, our outbound flight left Gatwick a little late, but arrived at Varna more-or-less on time, though (typically) the luggage was delayed. Having met Tisho, we were soon on our way. Driving in the dark is always a touch disorientating, so we had no real feel for where we were or what to expect. The hotel greeted us with a late meal, but we were all a bit tired so soon made our way to our rooms, with expectations for the next day high.

Day 2. Wednesday 15th September.

Our pre-breakfast gathering did not move for an hour, as wave after wave of hirundines and passerines passed by, all moving north up the valley. The scrubby bushes below the hotel produced numerous Red-breasted and Spotted Flycatchers, with Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers and the odd Wood Warbler thrown in; Hawfinches (local birds or migrants?), Tree Pipits, Yellow Wagtails and many others all added to a great first hour! Following breakfast we headed north to Durankulak, with odd stops at various places: Red-breasted Flycatchers continued in great numbers, with several fine adult males chasing each other; Red-backed Shrikes also seemed to fill every bush; an Osprey and Peregrine perched in the same bare trees, a Lesser Grey Shrike, Squacco Herons, terns, etc... It was a busy morning's birding (and butterflies), which ended with a fine picnic near the beach. The afternoon was taken up with trying to get views of the wetlands at Durankulak and Shabla Tuzla, but the highlight was actually a juvenile Hen Harrier which we saw, initially distantly but later right next to the vehicle. At Shabla Tuzla we found a fine assemblage of ducks (including many Ferruginous Duck), gulls, terns and herons, with Little Crane, Red-necked Phalaropes, many Mediterranean and Little Gulls, and Little Bitterns. It was a great end to the day, watching in perfect late afternoon sunlight. On our return to the hotel we were hungry and Costa treated us to a fine meal, washed down with Kamenitza.

Day 3. Thursday 16th September

Another morning's 'vis. mig.' (visible migration), with fewer birds but still plenty to watch, the local Syrian Woodpeckers being joined by Golden Orioles and the odd Red-backed Shrike. This morning we paid a visit to the steppe areas north of Cape Kaliakra, in the Yaylata area. It was a hot and sunny day, so heat haze was great - but so was the passage of hirundines and Bee-eaters, with a constant flow of the former and steady flocks of the latter. The landscape is punctuated with many wind-turbines, but birds seem to live happily beneath them, including Hoopoes and Stone-curlews. Cape Kaliakra was a little touristy but, as a south facing headland, it funnels birds and we had great views of a Lesser Spotted Eagle. Just as nice were the Pied Wheatears that adorned the ruins, and with Red-breasted Flycatchers flitting around, we enjoyed a fine lunch. With plenty of heat and haze, we dropped down into the Bolata valley - but not before a Montagu's Harrier passed in front of the bus. The birds were feeling the heat too, so we went up onto the area of scrub above, which proved eventful with Simon finding a Corncrake, which promptly disappeared. But our search for it produced a small group of Wood Larks. As the day was pushing on, we finally stopped at the Bolgarevo steppe, where hirundines were

still flooding past. Crested, Short-toed and c.800 Calandra Larks were found; a few wheatears, Pallid Swift, Whinchats and wagtails all added to the experience and concluded another great day in the field.

Day 4. Friday 17th September

Very much quieter today, and even warmer, with temperatures pushing up to 32C. Our short drive to the port at Kavarna was interesting, with close views of the bay and the cliffs, plus a few new birds: Alpine Swift, Black-throated Diver and a distant Arctic Skua; also, a couple of lovely Kingfishers. Most of the day was spent exploring the steppe for good views of new species, but it too was relatively quiet with Pied Wheatears, nice Tawny, Tree and fly-off Red-throated Pipits, and good looks at an Osprey perched on a post. At Cape Shabla, a Red-necked Grebe joined the numerous Black-necked, another fly-past Black-throated Diver was seen and butterflies included a few Lesser Fiery Coppers and Knapweed Fritillaries. At Shabla and Tuzla lakes there was a sudden but impressive push of hirundines, plus a few Hobbies, a couple of Goshawks, a large flock of Yellow Wagtails around the cattle, a Glossy Ibis and a small flock of Squacco Herons. Whiskered Terns caught insects over the reeds and meadows, an Osprey came to fish over the lake, a juvenile Purple Heron showed well – and still the swallows and martins swarmed past, as a dark phase Booted Eagle soared overhead. Our final scheduled stop of the day was a return to Shabla Tuzla. The four Red-necked Phalaropes were still present, along with over 100 Little Gulls, four Slender-billed Gulls, Garganey, and excellent and educative views of juvenile Whiskered, Black and White-winged Black Terns. A last visit to the beach here found a few terns and waders, and for a small part of the group a young man doing his impression of a ‘curlew sandpiper’ (!?). Two ‘unofficial’ roadside stops were very welcome: the first to view a nice turquoise Roller on wires; then a juvenile Goshawk sat on a pole for us all to enjoy through the ‘scope.

Day 5. Saturday 18th September

Essentially a day of travel today, so just a very brief pre-breakfast ‘stand’, with Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers and Hawfinches being the highlights. Making our move south, we first checked the cliffs at Balchick/Topola. Although the cliffs were quiet we still saw a few good birds: Alpine Swift, Lesser Whitethroats and a female/imm. ‘pied’ flycatcher-type “*heep*”ed in nearby trees – the call of a Collared Flycatcher! Our lunch stop at Goritza forest was eventful in several ways. First, the car key nearly broke (causing some concern); then a short walk in wood gave us great views of Short-toed Treecreeper (some calling like Eurasian briefly before reverting back to normal calls), Middle and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, many Red-breasted Flycatchers and a few Wood Warblers were all very nice. However, it wasn’t until we stood or sat waiting for lunch that we realised a passage of raptors and storks was going on over our heads. Hundreds of White Storks in three large flocks, Booted and Short-toed Eagles, Montagu’s Harriers, and good numbers Sparrowhawks joined by two fine Levants. But the best was a spectacular male Pallid Harrier which elicited many ‘oohs’ and ‘aahs’ (and a bit of groaning and moaning from Simon (a ‘When Simon Met Pally’ moment). It had been good, but we wanted to get to Pomorie so that Tisho could sort out the key problem before the garages closed, so we pressed on. Having arrived, Tisho raced off and we checked into our rooms, then walked to the southern edge of Pomorie Lake. Lots of terns here, included our first Little, plus some nice waders featuring many Little Ringed Plovers, Little Stints, Grey Plover and Turnstone. To our surprise, Tisho managed to return promptly and so we drove round to the SW corner of the lake, where a number of waders had been seen distantly. Braving the local dogs we were able to locate a good array of waders. Careful scrutiny sorted out many Marsh Sandpipers amongst the Wood, a couple of Curlew Sands, Red-necked Phalaropes, Bar-tailed Godwits and Ruff. Two Spotted Crakes were found creeping around the edge of the reeds.

Day 6. Sunday 19th September

Our early morning walk to the salt museum found a slightly greater number of waders and it was nice to see five Broad-billed Sandpipers and some close Slender-billed Gulls. Following breakfast, we headed off to the eastern edge of Lake Atanaskovsko, where we found a local group ringing the hirundines. A Red-rumped Swallow perched on the wires, but the reeds and pans were a little quiet, as it was warming up nicely (32C would be the max. for the day), with only distant Wood and Marsh Sandpipers, plus a few Common Snipe. Raptor passage was very slight, so rather than stand and wait in the sun we left for another part of the lake, pulling off the main road to watch both Dalmatian and White Pelicans. Eagle-eyed Simon found a Night Heron over the lake, and more Whiskered Terns quartered the water. On to Poda for lunch, but not before a quick walk produced many Pygmy Cormorants, a pair of distant White-tailed Eagles (one perched in a tree) and a faintly calling Penduline Tit, which never did show. During lunch two Caspian Terns flew over, but we left for Burgas Lake and ended the day back at the wader pool at Pomorie Lake.

Day 7. Monday 20th September

Our usual pre-breakfast walk to the salt museum and the same variety of waders. But a big difference was the weather, with a cool northerly wind and cloud cover. So, it was with a certain amount of expectation that we arrived at Lake Atanaskovsko raptor watchpoint. We were not to be disappointed: Lesser Spotted Eagles were immediately evident as were Honey Buzzards and sparrowhawks, plus many hundreds of White Pelicans. Also on the pans were a distant flock of feeding Spoonbills and some 3000 Avocet. However, the raptors stole the show and after four hours, during which time we also had lunch, we had recorded 297 Lesser Spotted, seven Short-toed, and three Booted Eagles, 25 Honey Buzzards, seven Black Kites, 15 Marsh and three Montagu's Harriers, ten Levant and 25 Eurasian Sparrowhawks, and a juvenile Red-footed Falcon. We should not forget the Black Storks and many hirundines. Eventually, as the passage seemed to ease, we made a circuit of Mandra Lake and encountered a small flock of nine Red-footed Falcons, and two White-tailed Eagles (much closer this time); Tufted Duck was new, but the real highlight were two Short-toed Eagles that hanged about just overhead. Our final check was at the south bank of Atana Lake, where rain began to settle in, but there were good numbers of waterfowl and a few waders.

Day 8. Tuesday 21st September

Our last day, so we changed pre-breakfast plans and walked north from the hotel to check for migrants. Though things were quiet, a Little Owl was new for the trip and a fine Red-necked Grebe showed well. But passage was quiet and did not pick up until we returned to the hotel. Red-breasted Flycatchers began to show, as did Red-backed Shrikes... then a call alerted us to a late Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, that eventually showed to all. Leaving the hotel and making our way north, we stopped briefly at the northern end of Pomorie salt pans where an array of waders included a good number of Little Stints. Two Rollers on roadside wires were passed. A diversion into the hills near Gjuljovtsa for Isabelline Wheatear did not produce the target, but did give us views of more raptors passing, including at least 60 Lesser Spotted Eagles and about 100 Black Storks. In the woods near Panitsovo, on the road to Goritza, we spent an eventful hour or so looking for Sombre Tit (which we eventually saw), and also found Cirl Bunting and Wryneck, both of which were new for the trip. At Goritza we had a quick walk whilst lunch was prepared - more woodpeckers and Short-toed Treecreepers - then drove on, making a circuit of Varna lake before a quick snack at a garage and onto the airport and home.

It had been an eventful week and we had been made most welcome, especially by our host Costa at Kavarna. But it would not have been half as good without Tisho, who did all the driving and made a great local guide. I'd like to thank you all for your company, for putting up with my jokes and for enjoying the birds and butterflies as much as I did.

Brian Small

ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED

(Total 185 species recorded by the group)

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Seen almost daily apart from our day in the steppe on 16th. Good numbers on Atanaskovsko

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Noted only in the Burgas/Pomorie salt pans areas

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Two seen a little distantly flying at Durankulak, 15th; another at Pomorie on 18th

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Four dates. Widely recorded near Burgas

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Noted on three dates. Up to four at Shabla Tuzla; eight on 20th

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Five dates, and in varying numbers – most frequent near Burgas

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Seen at Shabla Tuzla on two dates and Atanaskovsko on two. Many nice eclipse drakes with bright orange feet.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

Again, four dates at the same sites as the above: four at Shabla Tuzla being our first

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

It is nice to see Garganey in the autumn, they are subtle but distinct once you get your eye in.

Recorded on five dates the first 20 at Shabla Tuzla on 15th, but perhaps the best views at Pomorie

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

Large numbers at most wetland areas, including Shabla Tuzla, Atan., and Mandra and Burgas lakes.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Good numbers at Shabla Tuzla on 15th/17th, but large numbers on Atan. and Mandra lakes

Red-crested Pochard *Aythya rufinus*

An eclipse drake at Shabla Tuzla on 1th

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

Very good numbers this year, with at least 30 at Shabla Tuzla and others at Atan. and Mandra

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

34 on Mandra lake on 20th

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

Three on 17th, included our first past Kavarna port and the best past Cape Shabla

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Noted daily often in small numbers, but very good numbers at Shabla Tuzla on 15th and 17th

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Two seen: the first off Cape Shabla on 18th; the best at Pomorie on 21st

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Noted daily, with fair numbers in the north, but very good numbers seen in the Burgas region

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Many fine birds seen on a variety of lakes and on the sea

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

Seen on 19th-21st in increasing numbers: just three on 19th, 12 on 20th, but the best were c.100 as we travelled north on 21st

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Three flocks totalled c.280 over Goritza on 18th, but just two over Atanaskovskovo on 20th

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

One at Shabla lake on 17th

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

20+ from the Atan. raptor watchpoint on 20th

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

Always nice to see but we saw just five on only one date, 15th at Durankulak

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

An adult and an imm. At Atan and Poda respectively on 19th

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

Four dates, the first two at Durankulak on 15th, but never more than ten

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Note on six dates, the first at Duran on 15th, but the highest no.s on Pomorie, with 106 being the max.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Three dates and a total of nine birds. The first three on 15th, five on 17th at the same northern reedbeds, one at Poda on 19th

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Small numbers on four dates, with a max of five at Durankulak; up to three seen on the southern lakes

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Seen at widespread wetland sites

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

Observed on two dates but several thousand on 19th and many the next day

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*

One over Goritza on 18th was followed by more at Atanaskovsko, but no more than 50

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*

Seen at four sites: four at Durankulak on 15th, but as expected we saw more near Pomorie/Burgas on 18th-20th

(Great) Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*

Seen all dates

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii*

Seen around the northern coast, with the highest numbers at Cape Kaliakra on 16th

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Noted on all dates in small scattered numbers

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

A total of 13 included a flock of nine at Mandra lake on 20th, three juveniles at various places and a fine adult male at Shabla on 17th

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Noted daily, with up to ten seen on 17th (mainly around Shabla during a big hirundine passage); five passed the raptor watchpoint on 20th

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

A young bird, perhaps of the *callidus* race, was at Durankulak on 15th

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Surprisingly good numbers on our first four days, with at least four on 15th; one perched on a low fence near Cape Shabla on 17th (perhaps our best view)

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Recorded on six dates, but passing in small numbers until 25 on 20th

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Two on 16th at Kaliakra, then seven on 20th at Atanaskovsko and one the next day in the hills

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

A pair near Poda on 19th; a pair at Mandra lake on 20th and three (a pr and imm.) over Goritza on 21st

Short-toed Eagle *Circus gallicus*

Noted on three dates: four on 19th over Goritza; three the next day, but seven were seen on 20th, which included one with a snake, but also two excellent birds over our heads at Mandra

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Recorded daily in sound numbers; 15 at the raptor watch on 20th was the highest at one site

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

A juvenile male on the south side of Durankulak was wonderful, and may have been the same as the bird seen near Bolata valley the next day

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

The adult male that Simon found over Goritza on 18th was (very) much appreciated

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Our total of nine birds included two juveniles near Olata valley on 16th, four over Goritza on 18th and three at the raptor watch on 20th

Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes*

We waited patiently for these to finally show and we were rewarded with two over Goritza on 18th, four the next day, but the best were ten at the raptor watch on 20th

(Eurasian) Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Recorded daily in surprising numbers, as birds passed south; 24 at the raptor watch on 20th our daily max.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Seen on three dates, with the best being the juvenile on a telegraph pole on 17th and another along the southern edge of Varna lake on 21st

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Oddly enough, common but in small numbers, and seen almost daily throughout the tour

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

Two dates and just two birds; the first at our first stop near Durankulak on 15th

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*

Noted on five dates, initially singletons on 15th, 16th and 18th (the bird at Cape Kaliakra was a superb view); these were eclipsed by the numbers at the raptor watch on 20th when 297 were recorded in four hours, and 70+ the next day over the hills near Gjuljovtsa

Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata*

The first (and best?) was a dark phase at Shabla on 17th; three noted over Goritza on 18th and three at the raptor watch on 20th

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Heard on four dates, but seen on one, at Pomorie on 19th

Corncrake *Crex crex*

Seen in flight on the scrubby steppe above Bolata on 16th

Little Crane *Porzana parva*

A first-winter below the viewing platform at Shabla Tuzla on 15th

Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana*

Two at Pomorie on 18th were difficult to see as they skulked in the reeds

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Noted only at wetlands near Burgas

Coot *Fulica atra*

Six dates and widespread by Black Sea

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus*

A single found by Simon on the steppe near Yaylata on 16th

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Just one distant bird at Pomorie on 18th

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Only seen at the wader pools at Pomorie on 18th and 19th, a maximum of 20 on the first day

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Three dates and common on pools and salt pans in the Pomorie-Burgas area with over 3000 at Atanaskovosko on 20th

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Noted on three dates: two flew over on 15th; four on 18th, but several migrants on 19th

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Only noted at Pomorie near the salt museum, with three on 18th and a fine juvenile on 20th

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Seen on six dates. Small numbers in the north, more in the south, with c.10 Pomorie on 20th and 21st

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Heard twice at Cape Kaliakra, but then seen in good numbers at Pomorie, with at least 30 noted on 18th

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Noted on four dates at Pomorie, with a max of 20 on 21st

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Four dates, but in low numbers apart from over 20 at Pomorie wader pools on 19th

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Seen on three days in decreasing numbers, six on 18th at Pomorie

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Just two birds, but seen on three dates at Pomorie

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

Very good numbers at Pomorie on 18th-20th, including 100+ on the first date

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Only recorded in the south, around Pomorie, Burgas and Atanaskovosko

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

Really good numbers in the south (seen on three dates), with at least 30 being seen on 19th

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Noted on four dates, often in flight; 20 on 18th being the max

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Low numbers in the south, at least five on 18th and 19th on the wader pools at Pomorie

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

All four days in the south produced some good day totals: c.100 recorded for 19th

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Small numbers on three dates at Pomorie; three on 18th being the highest

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Seen on four dates at the Salt museum at Pomorie, with six being the best on 20th

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Just 15 on the beach at Durankulak on 15th

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Good daily totals in the Pomorie/Burgas area, with up to 30 on all four dates

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Just noted on two dates; three on 18th were beaten the next day with 13 (10 at Atanaskovsko)

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Recorded on six dates, generally in fairly low numbers, but 30 on 20th then 50 on 21st

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*

Always one to please, so it was nice to see five on 19th and two on 20th – all juveniles and all at the salt museum

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

The first were 30 in the northern section of Pomorie lake on 18th, but in much lower numbers over the next three days

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Two groups were seen on two dates each: four at Shabla Tuzla on 15th and 17th; three at Pomorie on 18th and 19th

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Noted on all dates

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

Ditto

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*

We worked hard for these, as to pick them out from flocks of Black-headed is tough: a 1st-winter at Durankulak on 15th, with four ads on 17th; up to four (two ads and two 1st-win) at Pomorie on 18th-20th

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

One of the surprises of the trip were the huge flocks of these on the coast or in coastal fields. Recorded daily, with many 100s on several dates

Little Gull *Larus minutus*

Nice to see these. Noted on six dates with better numbers in the north where 149 at Shabla Tuzla was the maximum

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Only small numbers at Pomorie, where six was the highest no.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

Two ads at Pomorie on 18th; two others, an adult and 1-w, at Poda on 19th

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*

Quite a few were seen over wetlands and nearby reedbeds/fields on six dates. We had good opportunities to learn the various plumages as we had ads in summer and non-breeding plumage, but juveniles predominated. 30 was the highest total

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

Five dates and in fair numbers, from Durankulak to Burgas; highest total was a flock of 25+ near Burgas on 20th

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

The least common marsh tern, with only up to 20 in total. The first were 10+ at Shabla Tuzla on 15th then three there on 17th, four at Pomorie on 20th

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Seen daily, with lots seen offshore and at the salt museum at Pomorie

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Common, with 100s perched around the nets off Cape Kaliakra

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

A total of four at various places on 17th, the first off the port at Kavarna

Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Widespread, but not really abundant as a feral bird. Are any on the capes actually wild?

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Noted on five dates to the north, in ever decreasing numbers

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Noted daily in villages and towns

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Just two seen; one on the first and last day of the trip

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

One near the hotel on 21st

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*

A total of six was made up of four at Kavarna on 17th and two near Balchik on 18th

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Small numbers in the north, with day totals reaching 20 on two dates – a lot of birds in wing moult, indicating adults

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

We had a great deal of debate about this species, but we saw at least one near Bolgarevo on 16th that seemed to tick the boxes, plus one the previous day

Roller *Coracias garrulous*

One was found on wires north of Bolagarevo at the end of the day on 17th; two more were seen, again on roadside wires, on 21st – always a good bird to see

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Seen on five days, most commonly in the north, including one bird that hovered right in front of us at Shabla Tuzla for so long we all ‘scoped it up

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Always as splendid bird, with its happy call, but we saw so many in the north we became almost blasé about them! 100s or more like 1000s passed through on the first three days (from dawn ‘til dusk on 15th and 16th)

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Only seen on the first three days, with a total of c.12 birds

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* (H)

Just one on the woods near Panitsovo on 21st

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*

From a UK point of view, to see five and with such good views was a real treat. One below the hotel on 15th and 18th; one in Goritza on 18th also and two there on 21st

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius*

Only seen at Goritza on 18th and 21st, with perhaps five birds seen

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus*

Quite frequent in built up areas, their distinct ‘took’ is subtly different to the call of GSW; ultimately we saw quite a few and great views at the hotel at Kavarna; noted on six dates

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Usually found in dense woodland or highland areas and so it proved with our only birds seen at Goritza on 18th and 21st

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Noted on five dates, but usually heard rather than seen; seen at Kavarna on 15th, and Goritza 18th and 21st

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Remarkable numbers seen over the whole week, but those on 15th-17th astonishing, with perhaps 300 on 16th

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*

Two adults seen on 15th at Durankulak were the only ones

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Seen on the first four dates always from the pre-breakfast hotel ‘walks’, 3 on 15th being the highest number

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Noted daily, with perhaps evidence of passage in the first two days

Magpie *Pica pica*

Noted daily

Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

Noted daily in small numbers

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

Five dates, with the odd small roadside party; max. 15 on 21st

Raven *Corvus corax*

One on 19th was the only bird seen as it flew over the salt museum on 19th; heard on 21st

Sombre Tit *Poecile lugubris*

Two or three near Panitsovo on 21st were very welcome, especially as we worked so hard to see them

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*

One heard at Goritza on 21st

Great Tit *Parus major*

Seen daily in small numbers

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Seen on all but one date, again in small numbers

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*

First heard at Poda on 19th, but not seen in windy conditions, but then seen really well in reeds on the western edge of Pomorie lake the same day; heard at Pomorie on 20th

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Seen daily, but this does not do justice to the 1000s we saw moving through the northern coastal area on the first three dates

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Fantastic numbers were recorded passing through in massive waves, especially at Cape Kaliakra on 16th and 17th when many 1000s of birds were moving at all heights all day

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Recorded daily in large numbers, often passing in waves

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

Noted on four dates: three on 16th near Bolgarevo; two or three on 18th near Balchik; one on 19th at Atanaskovsko; heard the next day

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Seen only at Mandra lake on 20th, when up to 10 were in lakeside bushes

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*

Noted on four dates, but the 800-1000 in one flock at Bolgarevo on 16th was easily the highest total

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Two near Kaliakra on 16th

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Seen on six dates, with both juveniles and adults seen; the best views were at the salt museum on 19th and 20th

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Small numbers on three dates in fields on the coastal steppe

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

Four above Bolata valley on 17th, flushed during our search for the Corn Crake; six in the woods at Panitsovo on 21st

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Up to five in reeds round Shabla Tuzla on 15th

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Seen on five dates in scattered locations from Durankulak to Pomorie, with minimal evidence of passage

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida*

Just one heard and eventually seen at Pomorie during our early morning walk on 21st

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Two on 15th, the first moving up the valley in scrubby bushes below the hotel; three at Goritza on 18th; one on 20th

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Noted daily in fair numbers, with the max being ten on 15th

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Five dates, but apart from the first date (with c.40) only in small numbers

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Noted on four dates in low numbers; one found dead at Pomorie on 19th

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Two dates, but a total of just six birds: five on 16th and one on 19th

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

Five dates in low numbers

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Ditto!

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Only seen and heard at Durankulak on 15th

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

One was found near the restaurant at Cape Kaliakra on 16th

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Common at Goritza on 18th and 21st, with good numbers feeding on crushed seeds on the road on the latter date

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

Good views at Goritza on 18th and 21st; interestingly, a small number called very much like Eurasian before reverting back to 'typical' Short-toed calls.....

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common and widespread and seen daily; some enormous swirling flocks were noted

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Seen on six dates, but in generally low numbers

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Fair numbers were seen in the north on the first four dates and one on 21st

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

One heard at Goritza on 18th, but several seen on the road from Panitsovo to Goritza on 21st

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

One at the hotel on 16th; seen or heard at Goritza on 18th and 21st

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Noted on four dates, most in the north on the first three dates, with perhaps six on 16th

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

Seen daily, with highest daily max being c.10 on 16th

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Strangely scarce; just seven seen – two on 16th and five on 17th

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

One standing typically pale and upright on 15th near Durankulak lake

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Only seen near Kaliakra on 16th

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*

Seen on two dates (16th and 17th), with both adults and first-winters at Cape Kaliakra (c.10) and five the next day

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Seen on six dates with good numbers on the first two dates

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*

A calling bird near Balchik ('heep') showed very large white edges to the tertials. This and the date should rule out Semi-collared completely

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

One of the highlights of the trip, with so many seen and heard on the first two dates that we soon got our eye and ear in; perhaps over 250 seen on the 15th

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Seen daily

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

Looked and listened for, but only found around Pomorie lake on 18th and 19th

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Seen on six dates in variable numbers. The best views were at the salt museum at Pomorie, where we also found a hybrid female House x Tree Sparrow

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Noted daily, with both *flava*-types and *feldegg*-types seen and heard. Once you got your ear in, the calls were quite distinct

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Four dates and all to the north; daily max five on 15th

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Seen daily and widespread in small numbers

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

Up to 15 were seen from Cape Shabla south to Kaliakra on 15th-17th, with the best views on cliff-top scrub on 17th

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Seen and heard daily, as many birds flew over on passage; most numerous on the first two days

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*

The subtle call was heard on four dates, but just three were seen on 17th as they were flushed and flew off

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Five dates and in small numbers, the first in the valley below the hotel on 15th

Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

Seen on six dates but in low numbers

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Common and widespread

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

20-30 were seen in the valley near the hotel on the first morning, then over ten there on 18th; one on 21st

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

Seen daily with good numbers in the steppe and ploughed coastal field on 15th-17th

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

Just a couple in woods near Panitsovo on 21st

MAMMALS

Harbour Porpoise *Phocaena phocaena*

Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

European Hare *Lepus europaeus*

Coypu *Myocastor coypus*

BUTTERFLIES

36 species seen, which was a very good total for September:

Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*

Black-veined White *Aporia crataegi*

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

Small White *Artogeia rapae*

Eastern Bath White *Pontia edusa*

Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea*

Eastern/Berger's Pale Clouded Yellow *Colias erate/alfacariensis*

Eastern Wood White *Leptidea duponcheli*

Purple Hairstreak *Quercusia quercus*

Small Copper *Lycaena phleas*

Sooty Copper *Lycaena tityrus*

Lesser Fiery Copper *Lycaena thersamon*

Lang's Short-tailed Blue *Leptotes pirithus*

Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*

Chalk-hill Blue *Lysandra coridon*

Adonis Blue *Lysandra bellargus*

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*

Southern White Admiral *Leminitis reducta*

Peacock *Inachis io*

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

Comma *Polygonum c-album*

Cardinal Fritillary *Argynnis pandora*

Queen of Spain Fritillary *Isoria lathonia*

Lesser Spotted Fritillary *Melitaea didyma*
Knapweed Fritillary *Melitaea phoebe*
Heath Fritillary *Mellicta athalia*
Woodland Grayling *Hipparchia fagi*
Balkan [Southern] Grayling *Hipparchia [aristaeus] senthes*
Great Banded Grayling *Brintesia circe*
Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*
Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*
Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*
Large Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus alveus*
Mallow Skipper *Carcharodus alaceae*
Oriental Marbled Skipper *Charcharodus orientalis*

AMPHIBIANS

Fire-bellied Toad *Bombina bombina*
Yellow-bellied Toad *Bombina variegata*
European Green Toad *Pseudepildalea viridis*
European Tree Frog *Hyla arborea*
Common Frog *Rana temporaria*
Common Marsh Frog *Pelophylax ridibundus*

DRAGONFLIES

Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii*
Southern Darter *Sympetrum meridionale*
Lesser Emperor *Anax parthenope*
Blue Emperor *Anax imperator*
Common Bluetail *Ischnura elegans*
Migrant Spreadwing *Lestes viridis*
Western Willow Spreadwing *Lestes barbarus*
Blue-eyed Hawker *Aeshna affinis*
Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*
Broad Scarlet *Crocothemis erythraea*