

Bulgaria: The Secret Flyway

Sat 19th - Sat 26th September 2015



Sometimes juvenile red-backed Sghrikes seem to be perched on every available bush or plant on the headlands along the coast of Bulgaria – despite being common, each one is admired © Robin Chittenden, robinchittenden.co.uk

**report compiled by tour leader:
Richard Thaxton**

Bulgaria | The Secret Flyway

Tour Leaders: Richard Thaxton & local guide Lyubo Profirov
with David & Roey Barr, Jim Hickling, Doug & Anne MacKay, Michael Moss and Ursula Wells

Our autumn tour to Bulgaria and the Black Sea coast is timed to coincide with the annual movement of birds of prey, pelicans and storks as they pass east of the Balkan Mountains and stream south towards the Bosphorus. It's one of Europe's busiest yet least known migration corridors - at its best in late September when the variety of species to be seen heading south along this 'secret flyway' is exceptional. With six nights on the coast and one along the Danube valley, our classic migration tour was excellent for raptors, waders, plus Red-breasted Flycatcher, Red-backed Shrike and countless other passerines that sheltered on the various coastal headlands.

Day 1. Saturday 19th September

On arrival at Sofia we were met by our driver Miro and guide Svetlyo – the guide just for the drive to Burgas, where we met Lyubo, who was to be with us for the rest of the week. Along the way, drive-by birds were seen in passing - egrets, herons and corvids plus the odd Common Buzzard. Sadly, major road re-surfacing works made an already long drive time longer, so precluding any stops for birds, if we wanted to reach our hotel at Pomorie in time for dinner, which we did - phew!

Day 2. Sunday 20th September

We began the day with a pre-breakfast visit to the Pomorie Lake and salt pans - an area positively heaving with birds. The total bird-biomass here must be enormous, and, conveniently right outside our hotel. We would start each morning of our stay at Pomorie at this amazing place and it would always be different, always with something new to sift out of this melee of birds.

To begin with, the staples were a veritable gull-fest including the ubiquitous Yellow-legged Gull, but amongst them were Black-headed Gulls, Mediterranean Gulls, a flock of 50+ dainty Little Gulls and we sifted out a lone Slender-billed Gull. There were terns too in abundance, predominantly Sandwich but also Common and the odd Little Tern. There were also lots of waterfowl - Mute Swans and assorted ducks to work through, likewise waders, plus Great Crested Grebes and what seemed like the entire world population of Coots - masses of them! Added to which were Grey Herons, both Great and Little Egrets, White Pelicans and an absolute shed-load of Cormorants and Pygmy Cormorants. It was an altogether astonishing spectacle and what a great start to the trip. There was so much to look at, but breakfast beckoned. We'd be back.

After breakfast we headed to Atanasovsko Lake. Just as we got out of the minibus, our first Lesser Spotted Eagle passed low overhead. We spent time on an earth bank in the reedbed sorting through the multifarious gathering of assorted waders and wildfowl. In the mix were Spotted Redshanks, Redshanks, Marsh, Wood, Green and Curlew Sandpipers, Ruff, Snipe, Dunlin, Little Stint and Lapwing. Duck-sifting gave us Shoveler, Pochard, Pintail, Mallard and Teal plus a lot of Little Grebes. Meanwhile Water Rails called in the reeds behind us and a Kingfisher was heard flying by too. Further scanning of other open areas of water, we picked out both Great and Little Egrets, Spoonbills and pelicans while several Marsh Harriers quartered the reedtops.

We moved on to the Raptor Watch Point and joined a multi-national gathering of sky-scanning raptor enthusiasts, to witness the passage of assorted soaring birds, not just raptors but both Black and White Storks, Spoonbills plus both White and Dalmatian Pelicans. The raptors seen included Lesser Spotted Eagles, Short-toed Eagles, Marsh, Pallid and Montagu's Harriers, sparrowhawks, Hobbies, Red-footed Falcons and Osprey.

After lunch we went along a reedbed-edged track down to the salt pans and here we saw over a hundred Avocets, a few Black-necked Grebes, some distant Greater Flamingos and yet more Marsh Harriers. A late afternoon visit to another area of the lake and saltings gave us yet more gulls, terns, waders and ducks, plus the surrounding bushes and trees held Spotted Flycatchers and more Red-backed Shrikes.

Day 3. Monday 21st September.

Pre-breakfast, from the hotel, we walked along the spit between the Black Sea and Pomorie Lake and the saltings. On the seaward side we picked up a Black-throated Diver and two Red-necked Grebes. On the lake-ward side there was the myriad of coots, cormorants, ducks, swans and pelicans, and four Caspian Terns flew over our heads. Amongst the scrubby bushes along the road we found our first Red-breasted Flycatcher and two Tree Sparrows.

After breakfast we headed to Vaya Lake. We made a brief stop and birded amongst local anglers, scanning the grebes ducks cormorants and pelicans, plus a Hoopoe flew overhead. At another brief roadside stop: that flock of 50+ loafing Pintail was nice. Driving around to Mandra Lake, Marsh Harriers were never out of view, a few Lesser Spotted Eagles drifted over and here we found a White-tailed Eagle, which proceeded to spread panic amongst the herons, ducks and terns at rest at the lake edge. The melee that ensued helped us pick out some marsh terns - both Black and Whiskered, and a couple of Caspian Terns too.

Back at an elevated section of road overlooking Vaya Lake, we looked down on a 1200+ flock of loafing Pochard; Hobbies, Lesser Spotted Eagles, two Booted Eagles, and yet more Marsh Harriers passed over, plus many more Black Storks - 170 in one flock. Around the other side of the lake we were able to get close to the amazing spectacle of a fishing flock of White Pelicans, working co-operatively. That portrait of a Black Tern on a post at the water's edge was nice too. In a nearby hedgerow we found several Willow Warblers, a few Icterine Warblers and Spotted Flycatchers.

On our way home we stopped back at Pomorie Lake for some more scanning and sifting through the throng of birds to see what we could find. New for us this time were Knot, Kentish Plover, three Garganey, oh and those strange people in the distance, wearing orange boilersuits!

Day 4. Tuesday 22nd September

As usual, on the pre-breakfast walk we took a look at Pomorie Lake and saltings. New this time were Turnstone, Ferruginous Ducks and a Gull-billed Tern. But it was a transfer day today, so leaving Pomorie later we headed north and ultimately ended up at Kavarna. En route though we stopped at a few spots at the northwest end of Pomorie Lake and added Turtle Dove, Lesser Whitethroat, and Black-tailed Godwits to our tally.

At Poroy we spend a good while in an oak woodland clearing on an elevated position of an escarpment, giving great views of the spectacle of assorted soaring birds migrating overhead. These included flocks of White Pelicans, both Black and a few White Storks, and a constant trickle of raptors on the move. These included Lesser Spotted Eagles, one Imperial Eagle, a few Honey Buzzards, Common Buzzards (including some *vulpinus* sub-species Steppe Buzzards-types), Short-toed Eagles, Levant Sparrowhawks, Eurasian Sparrowhawks, a Goshawk and an Osprey.

Next we made a brief stop at an overview at Poroy Reservoir from where we could pick out Ruddy Shelducks and Spoonbills. Pressing on, we stopped for lunch in another roadside area of oak woodland at Baltalta and here we encountered Nuthatch, Short-toed Treecreeper, Grey-headed and Middle Spotted Woodpeckers. Moving on we stopped at a transmitter-aerial place (where a lycra-clad brigade of cyclists gathered) and saw Sombre Tit, Blackbirds, Yellowhammer, Northern Wheatear, while above us raptor migration continued with several Honey Buzzards, more Common Buzzards, Marsh Harriers, Lesser Spotted Eagles, plus both Short-toed and Booted Eagles, Red-footed Falcons, yet more sparrowhawks and more Black Storks.

Just prior to arriving at Kosta's Hotel, we stopped at a known Eurasian Eagle Owl spot at Topola. Two birds were heard calling as soon as we arrived, but carefully scan the cliffs as we might, we couldn't locate them. Eventually though our patience paid off, and one of the owls revealed itself, flying to a spot where we could 'scope it, just, in the gloaming.

Day 5. Wednesday 23rd September

Today, pre-breakfast we had a bumble about outside Kosta's guesthouse, managing to find a few juvenile Hawfinches, Black Redstarts on roofs, Jays and a Syrian Woodpecker. Heading out for the day, on roadside wires, we came across a pair of Red-footed Falcons, seven Bee-eaters, two Turtle Doves and a shed-load of Corn Buntings. A stop on the shore (just passed the smelly dead jackal - to

remind you where!), we found Whiskered Terns quartering the reedbed, two Red-breasted Flycatchers in the bushes, three Garganey, Tree Sparrows, yet more Red-backed Shrikes and Marsh Harriers, oh and not to forget that all important Pheasant! An unusual find here was a Death's Head Hawkmoth, an amazing creature, albeit dead.

At Durankulak, we saw a fly-by Purple Heron, Red-backed Shrikes on fence lines, a passing flock of Whiskered Terns, three Ferruginous Ducks and a lot of Teal. We then lunched at another beach spot followed by a walk along a hedgerow-lined track alongside Lake Shabla. The bushes held many Red-breasted Flycatchers, including one fine male still sporting his red breast, Spotted Flycatchers, more Tree Sparrows and a Redstart. At the lake we saw Little Gulls, Spoonbills, assorted ducks, including ten Pintail, and we sifted out a few Little Stints with a Temminck's Stint amongst them, and a Water Rail popped out from the reed edge.

We made a brief stop at the lighthouse, for coffee, ice cream, Red-breasted Flycatchers and a few Shags, before then heading back to our hotel via a stop at Bolgarevo, an area of steppe-like habitat. Here we heard Woodlark, singing from high up in the ether somewhere, saw a few Short-toed Larks, Tawny Pipits and a lot of Yellow Wagtails. Towards the cliffs overlooking the Black Sea we picked up a flock of 14 Alpine Swifts.

Day 6. Thursday 24th September

Today we headed out to Cape Kaliakra. En route we checked fields for Calandra Larks to no avail, yet. On roadside wires we saw Corn Buntings, Red-backed Shrikes and at last we found ourselves a Roller - a juvenile watching and waiting for enormous caterpillars to cross the road on which to feed. Out at the point, among the castle ruins, we saw more Red-breasted Flycatchers, Willow Warblers and Northern Wheatears. Then first a Montagu's Harrier drifted by conveniently followed by a Pallid affording comparative views, plus a few Marsh Harriers too.

We took lunch down on the broken harbour breakwater and rocks at Bolata after which we walked about enjoying Hobbies, a Sparrowhawk and a Goshawk together, also affording good comparisons to be drawn, a Syrian Woodpeckers, Redstarts, more Red-backed Shrikes whilst nibbling on scavenged walnuts.

After lunch we checked more fields for Calanadra Larks, but no, so we escaped the heat of the day with a coffee & ice cream stop. On our way back to the hotel we again stopped at Bolgarevo and this time, yay, we found ourselves some Calandras. We heard Stone-curlew here too, more Short-toed Larks and Mike inadvertently flushed us a Quail.

Day 7. Friday 25th September

It was time to move on, a largely driving day, further north via Dobrich, eventually to Pelican Lodge in the Vetren area, on the River Danube. With no pre-breakfast sortie this morning, we nevertheless left promptly to call in at Topola (the Eagle Owl site), but no joy. We pressed on making a few roadside stops for birds along the way and stopping for a restaurant lunch.

On arrival at Srebarna Reserve and the Maluk Preslavetc area we first saw a Goshawk, then found a couple of both Icterine and Willow Warblers, and then down on the banks of the mighty River Danube, we saw Middle Spotted Woodpeckers, a Marsh Tit which was new for us, Spotted Flycatchers and Redstarts. We stopped briefly at on the river at Popina and found two Common Gulls, which were early winter visitors.

Day 8. Saturday 26th September.

Pre-breakfast we had a saunter down the road from Pelican Lodge, through the village and it turned out to be a bit of a 'pecker-fest. In just a short walk we encountered, as many as ten Syrian Woodpeckers, two Green Woodpeckers, and both Grey-headed and Black Woodpeckers were heard, and Song Thrush which was new for us, numbered 30+.

After breakfast we visited Srebarna Lake. Here Marsh Harriers wafted about, three Sparrowhawks and a couple of Hobbies passed us by and 1200+ Pygmy Cormorants left their roost to fish the Danube. As the heat got up, with the associated thermals, raptors began to move and from a vantage

point overlooking the lake we saw more Marsh Harriers, a Short-toed Eagle and a dozen or so Lesser Spotted Eagles. From here too we saw our one and only Greenfinch.

Before long it was time to cross the mighty River Danube into Romania. Before that we stopped for fuel in Silistra town to a loud *caw*-ing chorus of up to 500+ Rooks with some Jackdaws amongst them. The river crossing was swift - Grey Wagtail seen as we did so, and then it was onwards to Bucharest for our flight home to Blighty.

In all, we recorded 163 species of birds and in particular witnessed and shared the spectacle that is the migration Secret Flyway in Bulgaria. I trust you enjoyed it and thank you for your company and for coming along and sharing it all. Thanks too to our encyclopaedically knowledgeable guide Lyubo and to Miro for driving.

Richard Thaxton
October 2015

Systematic List of Bird Species

(Total 163 species recorded by the group)

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Mike inadvertently flushed one as we crossed the steppe area, near Bolgarevo, Kavarna, 24th.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

One, seen Durankulak area, 25th and one on the drive from Danube crossing to Bucharest on 26th.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Common on freshwater lakes recorded almost daily.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

675 seen in total during the week, with of 650+ on Pomorie salt pans on 20th. Others at Mandra and Vaya lakes.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Nine, seen from the viewpoint overlooking Poroy reservoir on 22nd.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Total for the week -14. Seen in low numbers on five dates, various locations.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

50+ in total on 21st at Pomorie, Mandra and Vaya Lakes, and five Durankulak on 23rd.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Common. Total for the week - 3,810, with 800+ on Pomorie Lake, 20th.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

75+ for the week; various sites, with 40+ on 20th at Pomorie Lake area and 30+ at Atanasovsko Lake.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

74+ in total for the week; 12 on Atanasovsko Lake on 20th, 50 seen from the roadside on Vaya Lake on 21st and 10 on 23rd at Lakes Shabla & Tuzlata, plus an odd one here and there too.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

17 seen in total for the week, at various lakes – Pomorie, Atanasovsko, Mandra, Vaya and Shabla.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

1420 in total for the week; 300+ on Pomorie/Atanasovsko Lakes on 20th, 400+ on Mandra & Vaya Lakes on 21st, 120 on Poroy reservoir on 22nd, 400+ on Lake Durankulak on 23rd, and then 200+ on the River Danube on 26th.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

3,200+ in total for the week on 21st, at Vaya/Mandra Lakes, including a single flock of 1200.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

Seen on four dates; three on Atanasovsko Lake on 21st, 11 on Pomorie Lake on 22nd, three on Lake Durankulak on 23rd and three on River Danube on 26th.

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

One, offshore, seen from the spit, pre-breakfast from our hotel at Pomorie on 21st.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

52+ in total for the week at various locations, with max. of 25 on Pomorie Lake on 20th.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Two, offshore, from the spit on pre-breakfast walk from our hotel at Pomorie on 21st.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

70+ in total for the week, on Pomorie, Mandra and Vaya Lakes.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricolis*

25+ on Pomorie Lake and saltings on 20th.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*

Five Pomorie Lake & saltings on 20th.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

Noted on four dates with a total of 439 for the week, with a max. of 286 seen in the Pomorie area on 21st and 110 on 20th.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Just 22 for the week seen on three dates, in low numbers, often 1-3 in amongst Black Storks flocks with max of 11 on 21st.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

21+ for the week, with max of nine in the Pomorie area on 20th and a further nine at Poroy reservoir on 22nd.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Seven in total on 21st at Vaya and Mandra Lakes.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

Four, in river / drain at Vaya Lake on 21st.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Common, recorded daily, 103 total with max of 60+ seen on 21st at Pomorie /Vaya / Mandra lakes.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Two on 23rd, the first at Lake Shabla and the other at Durankulak Lake.

Great Egret *Ardea albus*

A total of 66 for the week, recorded daily in low numbers, as a drive-by bird in fields as well at the various lakes visited.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

A total of 92 for the week, as above for Great Egret.

Great White Pelican *Pelicanus onocrotalus*

3647 recorded for the week; 340 on 20th, 3000 on 21st and 307 on 22nd, Pomorie, Mandra and Vaya Lakes area, including that amazing spectacle of that large flock of co-operatively-fishing birds at Vaya.

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelicanus crispus*

160 for the week; 139 on 20th at Pomorie and Atanasovsko lakes area, 20 on 21st at lakes Vaya and Mandra area and one on the River Danube on 25th.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*

Noted on four dates in the Pomorie area, max of 200 on 20th, then 1200+ at Srebarna Lake on 26th.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

2307 for the week. Very common and easily seen.

European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotellus*

35 on 23rd at Lake Shabla/Tuzlata and 25 on 24th at Cape Kaliakra.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

21 for the week, 2-3 recorded daily.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

A total of 10 for the week; two at the Raptor Watch Point (RWP) at Pomorie on 20th, five in the Pomorie Lake area generally, on 22nd, two at Lake Shabla on 23rd and one Srebarna Reserve on 25th.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Recorded on four dates; 13 for the week. Four at RWP on 20th, two on 21st at Vaya Lake, two at Poroy on 22nd, two on 24th at Bolata Valley and three on 26th at Srebarna Lake area.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Six in total for the week; four in the Pomorie/Vaya/Mandra lakes area, and two there on 22nd, then one at Cape Kaliakra on 24th.

Eurasian Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

A dozen or so seen during the week, 6+ at RWP on 20th, 3-4 at Poroy on 22nd.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaetus albicilla*

One, three-year old bird, at Mandra Lake on 21st.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

10+ for the week. A max of eight at the RWP on 20th.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Common, with 118 recorded for the week, max of 30+ birds each day of 20th-22nd in the Pomorie area.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

Just two, one at the RWP on 20th and the other near Kavarna on 24th.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Three for the week; a juvenile at the RWP on 20th and two juveniles at Cape Kaliakra on 24th.

Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes*

14+ for the week, 7-8 at the RWP on 20th and then 6+ in total on 22nd at Poroy.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Common with birds seen daily and a total of 45 for the week. Max of 10 on 22nd at Poroy.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

One, Mandra Lake and another Vaya Lake on 21st, two seen at Poroy on 22nd and then one with a Sparrowhawk at Bolata, 24th, and one seen at Srebarna Reserve on 25th.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Common, recorded daily, all localities, a total of 88 for the week. Max on 10 at Poroy on 22nd. **Steppe**

Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus*

Amongst those Common Buzzards some were the subspecies *vulpinus*.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

Just three for the week; one, Vaya Lake area on 21st, one Bolata Valley on 24th and one near Maluk Preslavets Marsh near Silistra on 25th

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Clanga pomarina*

260+ for the week, noted on four dates; first that one (of seven this day) quite low over the minibus on 20th, 50+ seen on 21st at RWP and Pomorie area generally, 194 seen in total on 22nd with 50+ of these at Poroy, then 11 on 25th at Srebarna Reserve/Maluk Preslavets Marsh.

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

One, Poroy on 22nd.

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus*

Seven for the week. Three at RWP on 20th, two Mandra Lake area on 21st and two at Poroy on 22nd

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Four for the week, three of them heard-only, but one poked its head out of the reeds for us at Lake Shabla on 23rd.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Total for the week was 24, low numbers in various wetland locations visited.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

11150+ for the week. Pomorie Lake in particular was *hoaching* with 'em.

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

One heard, on that roadside area of steppe, at Bolgarevo, on 24th.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

150 for the week, Pomorie Lake & salt pans on 20th.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus, vanellus*

90+ in total at Pomorie Lake & surrounds on 20th, four in the Vaya Lake area and on 21st and eight on 22nd at the NW end of Pomorie lake.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Two, Pomorie Lake on 21st.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus*

Six, Pomorie Lake on 22nd.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Six, Pomorie Lake on 20th.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

34 in total for the week, all in the Pomorie Lake area.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Four, Pomorie Lake on 21st.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

10+ on 20th, at Atanasovsko Lake then eight on 23rd at Durankulak Lake.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Seven on 22nd at NW end of Pomorie Lake and then two on 23rd at Lake Shabla & Tuzlata.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Three seen at Atanasovsko Lake on 20th and then one, Pomorie saltings on 21st.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

164 recorded for the week, with 160 on 20th at Atanasovsko & Pomorie Lakes, then just ones & twos on other days.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

50+ in total for the week with 30+ of these at Atanasovsko Lake area on 20th, with 20+ or so at the NW end of Pomorie Lake on 22nd.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

On 20th, 12 at Atanasovsko Lake and then two on 22nd at Poroy reservoir.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Just 1-2 seen at Pomorie salt pans on each of 20th to 22nd.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Two, Pomorie Lake on 20th and two, at NW end of Pomorie Lake on 22nd.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Ten, at Pomorie Lake / salt pans on 20th and eight there on 22nd.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Four, Pomorie Lake / salt pans on 22nd.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

10+ for the week, just ones & twos at Pomorie Lake/salt pans and the 8+ Lake Shabla on 23rd.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

One, Lake Shabla on 23rd.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Just four in total all week, Pomorie salt pans on 21st.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Ten seen on both 20th & 21st at Pomorie salt pans, and then five at Lake Shabla on 23rd.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Low numbers, 3-5, seen on each of our visits to Pomorie Lake 20th to 22nd.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Two, on River Danube on 25th.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Very common, everywhere throughout the week.

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*

20+ Srebarna Reserve, 25th.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

One, Pomorie Lake on 20th.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

2,350 recorded for the week, common and seen daily in 100s.

Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei*

Just one, Pomorie salt pans on 20th.

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

12 in total for the week, all at Pomorie Lake/salt pan area, with max of eight on 20th.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

50+ birds on each of 20th to 22nd, Pomorie Lake, near the Salt Museum.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Two, Pomorie salt pans on 20th.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

One, on 22nd at Pomorie Lake.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

Three seen pre-breakfast on 21st, along the dyke from hotel at Pomorie, then four seen at Mandra Lake later that day.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

100+ in total for the week; 12 on 21st at Vaya Lake, and then 90+ on 23rd at Lake Shabla / Tuzlata.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

Six at Mandra Lake on 21st.

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

330 in total for the week; 20 at Pomorie Lake on 20th, 10+ Vaya Lake on 21st and 300 in total on 22nd mainly at NW end of Pomorie Lake / salt pans.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Low numbers, (2-4 daily) recorded on five dates, various locations.

Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Common.

Wood Pigeon *Colomba palumbus*

Low numbers, less than ten, seen on four dates, various locations/drive-by birds.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Just three on 22nd at NW end of Pomorie Lake/salt pans area and then 15 on 23rd at Lake Durankulak and Lake Shabla.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common, recorded daily, with as many as 300+ seen on 26th, mainly drive-bys.

Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*

One, seen eventually (!), plus another heard, along cliffs near Topola on 22nd.

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

Can't really include it, but for completeness, that dead one at the shops at Kavarna, 23rd an opportunity at least to look closely at the plumage details.

Alpine Swift *Tachymarpis melba*

A dozen or so along sea cliffs, near Bolgarevo on 23rd.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Just six, four Pomorie on 21st and then two Vetren on 25th.

European Roller *Coracias garrulous*

A juvenile on the wires, Cape Kaliakra, 24th.

Eurasian Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Ones & twos, recorded on four dates,

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Recorded on three dates, mainly "heards" passing high overhead, but a few seen on wires on 23rd en route to Durankulak.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

One, Atanasovsko Lake on 20th and then one on 21st at Vaya Lake

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*

One, at Baltalta, near Goritza on 22nd

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos media*

One, also at Baltalta, near Goritza on 22nd and one at Maluk Preslavetc, on the River Danube on 25th.

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus*

One, Goritza on 22nd, one at Lake Durankulak on 23rd, one heard at Bolata Valley on 24th and then several, maybe as many as 10+, on our pre-breakfast walk from Pelican Lodge on 26th.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

In contrast to the above, just the one, Mandra Lake on 21st.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*

One, heard only, on pre-breakfast walk from Pelican Lodge on 26th.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Heard only at first, on three dates, at Mandra Lake on 21st, at Goritza on 22nd and at Lake Shabla on 23rd, but then two seen on our pre-breakfast walk from Pelican Lodge on 26th.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*

One, 22nd at Baltalta, near Goritza and one heard on our pre-breakfast walk at Pelican Lodge on 26th.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Common, recorded daily at all localities visited. A total of 127 for the week.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Quite common, recorded daily, often drive-by birds.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*

Common, recorded daily.

Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Recorded on four dates, in low numbers (5-10), except on 26th where there were 30+ amongst rocks at Silistra.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

50+ on drive from Sofia then a flock of c.500 over Silistra town on 26th.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

Recorded daily.

Northern Raven *Corvus corax*

Several seen as we drove from Sofia to Burgas on 19th and then 6+ at Poroy on 22nd.

Sombre Tit *Poeciles lugubris*

Just the one, on 22nd, at that transmitter aerial site, where all the cyclists were gathered - can't recall the actual name of the place, but en route to Kavarna.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*

One, on banks of River Danube, at Preslavetc, on 25th.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Noted on several days.

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Noted on most days

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*

Heard only, at Atanasovsko Lake on 20th.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

10+ on 21st at Pomorie Lake / saltpans.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Just a few seen on all days, but no great numbers seen.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Very few, just 1-2 seen each day during the week.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*

Five seen on the steppe area at Bulgarevo, near Kavarna on 24th.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Three seen on the steppe area at Bulgarevo, near Kavarna on 23rd then four there on 24th.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Recorded daily.

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

One, heard only on the steppe area at Bulgarevo, near Kavarna on 23rd heard then again on 24th.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Heard only, Bolata Valley on 24th.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

Three, Mandra Lake on 21st.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Two, Bolata Valley on 24th and then four at Maluk Preslavets on 25th.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

One or two heard during the week.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

One, NW end of Pomorie Lake on 22nd, then one Lake Shabla on 23rd and one at Cape Kaliakra on 24th.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

Heard only, Atanasovsko Lake on 20th.

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

One, plus others heard, Baltalta, near Goritza on 22nd.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

One, Baltalta, near Goritza on 22nd.

Eurasian Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common, recorded all days.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Recorded on just two days, four at Goritza on 22nd and three at Silistra on 26th.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

None all week then perhaps as many as 20+ on our pre-breakfast walk from Pelican Lodge on 26th.

Eurasian Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

One, 23rd at Tuzlata *en route* to Kavarna

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*

One, 21st at Mandra Lake.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Five around Hotel Kosta, Kavarna on 23rd and one on our pre-breakfast walk from Pelican Lodge on 26th.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Two at Goritza on 23rd, ten in Bolata Valley on 24th and one at Silistra on 25th.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

Recorded on five dates, with a max on 8+ on 24th at Cape Kaliakra.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

One, at that transmission aerial (gathered cyclist place) *en route* to Kavarna on 22nd, two at Bulgarevo on 23rd and two Cape Kaliakra point and two at Bulgarevo on 24th.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Low numbers (1-5) seen on four dates.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

Our first, on the pre-breakfast walk along the dyke from our hotel at Pomorie, 20th, then 20+ on 23rd at Lake Shabla/Tuzlata.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

At least a couple every day.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

200+ on 20th in the Atanasovsko Lake area, 30+ on 21st at the NW end of Pomorie Lake area and 30+ in the Lake Shabla & Tuzlata area on 23rd.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Two, on our pre-breakfast walk along the dyke from our hotel at Pomorie, 21st, 10 in total on 22nd at Poroy, then a flock of 20 pre-breakfast from Hotel Kosta on 24th and 10+ on 25th in the Vetren area.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Low numbers of Black-headed birds (ssp. *feldegg*), seen on five dates.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

One on 26th on banks of River Danube.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Low numbers (1-5) recorded daily between 20th and 25th then 10+ seen at River Danube on 26th.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

Two, seen on the steppe area at Bulgarevo, near Kavarna on 23rd and two there again on 24th.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*

Just the one, on 23rd near Lake Durankulak.

Eurasian Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Scarce, just one seen on three dates.

Eurasian Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Just one, on our pre-breakfast walk from Pelican Lodge on 26th.

Eurasian Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Five on 20th and three on 23rd, Pomorie Salt Museum area.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Three juveniles below Hotel Kosta on 23rd and then 10 in the same area on 24th.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

Lots of drive-by birds on wires *en route* to Silistra on 25th, many hundreds seen, at least.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

One, at that transmission aerial site, *en route* to Kavarna on 22nd.

Mammals

Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*

Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

Golden Jackal (dead) *Canis aureus*

Pine Marten (dead) *Martes martes*

Reptiles and amphibians

Balkan Marsh Frog *Rana bedriagae*

Edible Frog *Pelophylax esculentus*

European Green Toad *Bufo viridis*

Grass Snake *Natrix natrix*

Butterflies

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 Pale Clouded Yellow *Colias erate*

Purple Hairstreak *Quercusia quercus*

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

Lesser Fiery Copper *Lycaena thersamon*
Lang's Short-tailed Blue *Leptotes pirithous*
Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*
Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*
Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*
Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*
Cardinal *Argynnis pandora*
Queen of Spain Fritillary *Issoria lathonia*
Heath Fritillary *Mellicta athalia*
Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*
Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*
Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*
Mallow Skipper *Carcharodus alaceae*
Oriental Marbled Skipper *Carcharodus orientalis*

Hummingbird Hawkmoth *Macroglossum stellatarum*
Death's Head Hawkmoth *Acherontia atropus*

(I am grateful to tour participant James Hickling for his help with the butterfly identification).