

Bulgaria

The Secret Flyway

Sat 15th – Sat 22nd September 2018



Tour pictures (clockwise from top left): Red-breasted Flycatcher, White-tailed Eagle, Adonis Blue, loafing pelicans and cormorants © Gary Elton/Limosa Holidays

Report compiled by tour leader: Gary Elton

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Tour Leaders: Gary Elton, Lyubo Profirov and Svetoslav Mitkov, driver Mario

Day 1. Saturday 15th September

On arrival at Sofia we were met by our local guides Lyubo, Svetlo and our driver Mario. We took the opportunity to change money, before loading bags on the bus and heading off towards our first destination, Pomorie. As we drove out of Sofia we took a slip road off the main highway where we parked up and took a short walk along a lane bordered by fields and small-scattered trees. It was here that we saw our first Red-backed Shrikes, several Whinchats, Tree Sparrows and a distant Spotted Flycatcher. Re-boarding the bus we made another short drive to a service station for a further leg stretch and important facilities stop. Here we had distant views of our first Short-toed Eagle. The journey to Pomorie involved one more road stop and this coupled with birding as we drove, produced a nice selection of birds, which included Black and White Stork, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Marsh Harrier and Raven. With the bus fitted with a Tachometer, the driver's time limit unfortunately left us just 20 minutes short of our journey to the hotel. This meant an impromptu stop at Atanasovsko Lake, which enabled the driver to rest and for us to gain some extra birding. The large expanse of water revealed our first Dalmatian Pelicans, Pygmy Cormorants, Eurasian Spoonbills, Great Egret, Marsh Sandpiper and Little Gull, though the biggest surprise here was a nightingale species found feeding on the path. An extremely dull brown bird with a greyish chest and just a hint of rufous in the tail made Thrush Nightingale our immediate thought. Lyubo explaining the timing of the migration of the two similar species helping to confirm its identity. We made the final last part of our journey to the hotel, where we deposited our bags in our rooms and went straight in for dinner with even the days log put on hold until the following day.

Day 2. Sunday 16th September

Pre-breakfast this morning saw us taking a short bus ride to Pomorie Lake and saltings, conveniently positioned just around the corner from our hotel. This proved a great starting point for the day, with us immediately enjoying the sight of thousands of birds easily viewable from the lake edge adjacent to the Salt museum building. Birds seen included a selection gulls, including Mediterranean and Little, hundreds of Sandwich and Common Terns plus Little and Whiskered Terns, Pygmy and Great Cormorants making a useful comparison alongside each other and several Black-necked Grebes. Waders featured strongly too with Greenshank, Spotted Redshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Black-winged Stilt and Wood Sandpiper all seen. Passerines seen included a Red-backed Shrike, Red-breasted Flycatcher and Redstart all in the small trees by the salt museum building.

After breakfast we headed first to Vaya Lake. We made a brief stop and birded amongst the local anglers, enjoying views of the 'pink' White Pelicans and picking out the less common Dalmatian Pelicans amongst them, Several Garganey and a Squacco Heron were noted, A Honey Buzzard flew over us and several more distant Lesser Spotted Eagles were also seen. A short drive further along the road gave us views of another section of the lake; here we added a Purple Heron, Marsh Harrier and a brief, distant White-tailed Eagle to our list. Our next scheduled stop was Mandra Lake where made two lakeside stops and also took a short walk to an elevated position to view another section. The two stops produced fantastic views of an adult White-tailed Eagle plus a more distant juvenile bird, several Lesser Spotted and Booted Eagles, an unfortunately high and brief male Pallid Harrier and a Kingfisher. From the elevated viewpoint we had nice views of our first Long-legged Buzzard, two Collared Pratincoles, three Ferruginous Ducks and a Gull-billed Tern. We had our picnic lunch in Dimchevo village, utilising the tables and chairs outside the local town convenience store.

After lunch our first roadside stop proved quiet but several active Red-backed Shrikes ensured nice scope views for the group. Our next stop was to view a small fish farm on the edge of the lake. The viewing conditions were good and the birds reasonably close, with a particularly impressive group of White Pelicans crammed onto a small, vegetated island. A Purple Heron was seen in flight and a Common Sandpiper was found picking its way in typical manner along the lake edge. Our next stop was a short walk along the edge of the lake again, though largely concentrating on passerines. Several Spotted Flycatchers greeted us on wires as we arrived with a Hoopoe showing briefly before disappearing from view. Garden, Sedge and Willow Warbler, Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat were all seen well over the next 45 minutes at the site, though for Nick especially, a pair of Syrian Woodpeckers stole the show. A brief look at the lake itself revealed Black and Whiskered Terns, though the heavily vegetated edge meant viewing was limited. Our last stop of the day at Atanasovsko Lake revealed a similar spread of species as the day before. A group of distant Curlews and two Whimbrel were the only real additions and passerines in the nearby trees included at least two Redstarts and a Spotted Flycatcher.

Day 3. Monday 17th September

Before breakfast we took a short drive and walked out along the dyke between the Black Sea and Pomorie Lake. On the seaward side we picked up several Red-necked Grebes, which offered a nice comparison in plumages, with both an adult and juveniles present. A pale morph Arctic Skua was picked up as it harassed terns over the lake, eventually flying literally right over us as it headed back out to sea. On the lake-ward side there was a myriad of coots, cormorants, pelicans, swans, assorted ducks and waders. A flock of marsh terns sallied back and forth along the central bund of the lake with closer inspection revealing a combination of Black and White-winged Terns present.

After breakfast we headed off again to Atanasovsko Lake, this time the northern part, with our first stop *en route* to view an area of farmland. Several Turtle Doves, Corn Buntings and a covey of Grey Partridges greeted us and made us feel we had taken a trip back in time back to the way the UK countryside once was, though a noisy flock of several hundred Spanish Sparrows brought us back to earth! Arriving at the lake, we immediately noted Redstart, Tree Pipit and Syrian Woodpecker plus several Lesser Spotted Eagles high up above us. At the lake edge, bird ringers were operating. A tape was playing to attract hirundines and searching through perched birds we found all four species, including several Red-rumped Swallows. A Little Bittern flew over us and an immature Night Heron was found huddled deep in lakeside vegetation. Several Kingfishers were seen, with the more obliging returning to perches and allowing some nice views. Whilst this was all happening the ringers had been busy and every so often one would appear and hand Gary a bag with a bird in it. In hand views followed of Swallow, Sand Martin, Spanish Sparrow, Willow Warbler and Lesser Whitethroat, though pride of place went to a subtly smart and much appreciated Savi's Warbler. Our next stop was an elevated viewpoint on the edge of the lake where raptors were our hoped-for target. Unfortunately the rising temperature and clear skies meant what we did see was very high. A flock of around 20 Honey Buzzards, several Lesser Spotted Eagles, Common and Long-legged Buzzard, an Osprey and Alpine and Common Swifts were all seen.

Lunch was now beckoning so this was taken in the meadow below the viewpoint before we walked out onto the nearby saltpans. This proved a good move as waders that were just dots from the viewpoint were now clearly visible. Large numbers of Avocets, at least a thousand, stretched out ahead of us and other species found on the pans included Ruff, Spotted Redshank, Marsh and Wood Sandpiper and Little Stint. Gulls also featured strongly with around 100 Little and 40 Slender-billed Gulls seen, though a low, flyover Short-toed Eagle eclipsed these to a degree! Returning to the bus we drove a short distance to view another section of the lake, adding more views of several of the above including Spotted Redshank, Little and Slender-billed Gulls plus Black-winged Stilt. With the day now drawing to a close we made one more stop at Pomorie Lake. A conveniently positioned supermarket complete with car park was just what we needed and ice creams seemed the only route to take before walking out to view the lake. The Black and White-winged Terns were still present, now much closer from our new viewing spot, with another Kingfisher, several Black-necked Grebes and two Bar-tailed Godwits amongst the selection of birds seen.

Day 4. Tuesday 18th September

A change of hotels and location today, so we opted not to go out pre-breakfast, ensuring bags packed and ready to leave for Kavarna as soon as we had had breakfast. Our first destination was the saltpans west of Pomorie and a short walk soon had us searching through the large numbers of waders to be found there. Best of the bunch were an impressive flock of Marsh Sandpipers, 72 birds in total (as per James!), a Temminck's Stint which was a good find by Nick, a Little Ringed Plover and two Curlew Sandpipers. A family party of Penduline Tits were a welcome bonus, moving noisily along the reeds in front of us and an adult Caspian Gull was also seen on one of the bunds extending out into the water on the main lake. Large numbers of Starlings also appeared, making quite a sight as they noisily flew around in front of us.

Leaving the coast and heading inland we made two stops *en route* to lunch at Goritza. Birds seen included several Tree Pipits and two distant Lesser Spotted Eagles at the first stop, where we also added our first Cardinal butterfly and a praying mantis to the species list. The second stop was very quiet until Svetlo spotted a flock of Bee-eaters sat on some pylon wires in a field as we were leaving. As we watched the birds, a Woodlark could be heard singing and was quickly found perched on an adjacent pylon. We stopped at Goritza for an excellent restaurant lunch before going to an area of oak woodland to look for woodpeckers. Here we saw both Great, Lesser and Middle Spotted Woodpeckers and heard Green, as well as Short-toed Treecreeper and Nuthatch. In the late afternoon we stopped at Topola, a site for Eurasian Eagle Owl. We searched the cliff faces to no avail, having to accept a nearby Red-breasted Flycatcher and two Red-rumped Swallows as consolation; nice, but it wasn't quite the same!

Day 5. Wednesday 19th September

Today for our pre-breakfast birding we simply stood outside our guesthouse looking down over the wooded valley below. From our vantage point we picked out a small flock of about 20 Hawfinches, the majority stopping to perch and giving nice scope views. We had similar scope views of Syrian and Grey-headed Woodpeckers plus a small flock of around 10 Bee-eaters, perched on wires on the other side of the valley. A couple of singing Black Redstarts and a Spotted Flycatcher concluded our hour as we returned to the guesthouse for breakfast. On heading out, we first stopped at Balgarevo, an area of stony steppe where we hoped to see Stone-curlew. Our luck was in and it wasn't long before we were watching our hoped-for target species, though we distinctly got the impression it was watching us as it did all it could to try and melt away into the grassland around it! A small flock of Corn Buntings and several Woodlark, a Long-legged Buzzard and a Levant's Sparrowhawk were other appreciated additions here. Our next stop for the morning was Kamen Byrag, an archaeological site with similarly stony habitat leading up to the sea. Another Hoopoe and Northern Wheatear were seen as we walked to the cliff edge to view the sea below. Several rock outcrops below revealed around twenty Shags sat on them and a flyover Osprey gave us some nice views.

Next stop, Shabla Lake. A short walk from the bus took us to the edge of the largely reed-fringed lake, where we spent a productive hour searching through the birds there. A Red-necked Phalarope started the ball rolling, followed by a Caspian Tern, two Broad-billed Sandpipers, White-winged and Whiskered Tern, Marsh Sandpiper and Spotted Redshank to name a few! Lunch was taken nearby, which offered the opportunity to watch several Red-breasted Flycatchers, one of which was sporting a red breast. After lunch a brief stop at another nearby lake revealed three more Ferruginous Ducks, three Caspian Terns, four Garganey and a Squacco Heron. A roadside stop next as a Purple Heron was spotted in the centre of a ploughed field. Unfortunately it was clearly injured, its wing hanging down, having hit the pylon wires running above it. Whilst watching this, another bird perched on wires the other side of the road was identified as a Great Grey Shrike, a winter visitor so its arrival seemingly a bit premature. Durankulak Lake was the last stop of the day where we walked out along the track separating the lake from the sea. A small flock of 28 Sanderling was watched running up and down the beach, avoiding the tide in their typical manner and three Spoonbill, a Wheatear and a Cuckoo were amongst the other birds seen. Several hundred Mediterranean Gulls were also seen, flying along the shoreline with the majority seemingly first-year birds, hopefully an indication of a good breeding season.

Day 6. Thursday 20th September.

Pre-breakfast was again from our elevated watch-point at the rear of the guesthouse. Hawfinches again entertained us, with around 50 seen in total which included some nice views of perched birds. Best of the rest were several Turtle Doves, Syrian and Green Woodpeckers and a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker heard calling. After breakfast we drove north to our destination for the morning, Cape Kaliakra, arriving early enough to avoid the tourists that flock to the area. A covey of Grey Partridges produced our first notable birds seen, flushed from the road ahead of us as we approached the site. We parked, climbed down from the bus and were immediately greeted by a flock of Alpine Swifts flying around above us. A Quail could be heard calling and the first section of the ruins at the site revealed several Northern Wheatears hopping around amongst them. The main feature of the site birdwise was undoubtedly the often approachable Red-breasted Flycatchers, with at least 10 seen, plus several Redstarts, too.

With the temperature rising and a few hunger pangs appearing, we left the site and decided to find a sheltered spot for lunch. As always, Lyubo and Svetlo did a great job preparing our lunch, after which we decided to walk out into the surrounding open grassland area to search for larks. This proved a good move with both Calandra and Skylark encountered, plus the now expected Corn Buntings and Red-backed Shrikes! A return visit and another section of grassland /steppe habitat at Balgarevo was our destination for the remainder of the afternoon which produced a similar spread of species plus a Booted Eagle and Marsh Harrier. After this we returned to the Guesthouse for a short afternoon siesta, followed by a short drive back to Topola. Arriving again at the Eagle Owl site, Svetlo quickly found one of the birds within seconds of leaving the bus, perched high on the nearby cliff face. Lyubo, not to be outdone, found the second bird on another section of the cliff face 10 minutes later. We spent the next 30 minutes enjoying fantastic views of both birds in ideal, late afternoon light.

Day 7. Friday 21st September

It was transfer day today, to head up to the River Danube at Vetren. Time though for one last pre-breakfast trip so we ventured out to the edge of town then down to the harbour. A pleasant but largely uneventful walk followed, though Stonechat was a new addition to the list and it's always nice nowadays to see Corn Buntings and Tree Pipits! Leaving Kavarna after breakfast we headed north on our longest drive, though a couple of roadside stops broke the journey up nicely. At one of these stops we enjoyed views of a Northern Goshawk being harassed by a Kestrel and other species encountered at the various stops included Booted, Short-toed

and Lesser Spotted Eagles plus more Tree Pipits and Tree Sparrows. We reached the banks of the mighty River Danube in time for lunch at Popina. scanning the river whilst Svetlo prepared the lunch.

A group of 46 Spoonbills and 38 Ruddy Shelduck were the first birds noted, along with a selection of gulls, including Caspian and Yellow-legged of various ages. Two Ringed Plovers, a Great Egret and five Dalmatian Pelicans were also noted before we couldn't resist lunch any longer! After lunch a further look over the river produced several Romanian Lesser Spotted Eagles and a distant adult White-tailed Eagle, the latter a good spot by James. A relaxed post lunch ice-cream followed at the nearby, newly opened hotel, after which we tore ourselves away and headed onto Maluk Preslavetz, a lake on the bank of the Danube again. A couple of Spotted Flycatchers, Kingfishers and Grey Wagtails plus a Reed Warbler was the best we could manage before we headed on to Vetren and the Pelican Lodge, our accommodation for the last evening of the trip.

Day 8. Saturday 22nd September

It was our last morning before heading to Bucharest for our return flight to London. So to make the most of it we went for a pre-breakfast stroll through the village down to the Danube. Lots of birds this morning and our list included six species of Woodpecker, several flyover Hawfinches, Spotted Flycatcher, Blackcap, Tree Sparrow and Great and Pygmy Cormorants when we reached the river.

After breakfast, loaded up and ready to go, we set off for nearby Srebarna Lake. A Honey Buzzard greeted us as we arrived, relatively close, circling over the bus before disappearing over the nearby wood. Several Lesser Spotted Eagles were also seen plus an adult White-tailed Eagle, this latter bird flying along the edge of the lake before perching in a dead tree for us. Before long it was time to make tracks to cross the mighty Danube on a small flat-deck ferry into Romania. The journey across produced two Ruddy Shelducks and two Caspian Terns in amongst the commoner gulls and wildfowl on the sand bar on the edge of the channel. Once across we headed for Bucharest and our flights home.

ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED (176 species)

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Three dates, with largest numbers seen on our last morning at Vetren and the Danube.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Common on freshwater lakes - seen daily at Pomorie, Vaya and Mandra.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

As above seen daily at Pomorie, Vaya and Mandra Lakes.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Forty birds were counted on the bank of the Danube on the 21st, with two more seen as we made the ferry crossing to Romania.

Garganey *Spatula querquedula*

Around 30 noted on Atanasovsko Lake and three each on Vaya and Shabla Lakes.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

Seen daily on five dates during the first part of the trip.

Gadwall *Mareca strepera*

As above, though only in small numbers

Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope*

Five dates, again during the first half of the week with a maximum count of five.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

As expected, common and easily seen.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Five dates, with larger counts made on 16th (40) and 19th (30).

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

Noted on six dates, maximum number c100 on 16th.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Four dates in total, largest number counted on Pomorie Lake, c300.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

Five on 16th on Vaya Lake viewed from our elevated position there and three on 19th at Shabla Lake.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*

Two roadside coveys, one of seven and another of five.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Heard calling briefly from the car park at Cape Kaliakra

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Heard on the morning of 20th at Cape Kaliakra and heard and seen whilst at Vetren.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Seen daily on freshwater lakes on four dates during the first part of the trip.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Two, an adult and Juvenile seen offshore from the dyke at Pomorie on our pre-breakfast walk, on 17th.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Seen daily on freshwater lakes from the 16th-19th with a maximum of c80 on Pomorie Lake.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Noted on five dates with several smart summer plumaged individuals seen.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*

Distant birds around 80 and presumably the same flock were seen on two dates, 15th and 17th.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

About 20 on the drive from Sofia to Burgas.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Four seen on the drive from Sofia to Burgas with eight more noted the following day.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Noted on six dates, the maximum numbers at Atanasovsko Lake (20), Atanasovsko saltings (30) and Danube lunch stop at Popina (46)

Little bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

One flew over us as we stood by the ringing site at Atanasovsko Lake.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

A Juvenile roosting bird found near the ringing site at Atanasovsko Lake.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

Singles in flight at Vaya Lake and Shabla Lake.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Seen daily at various locations

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Singles at Vaya Lake and Atanasovsko Lake on 16th and three at Durankulak Lake on 19th.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Seen on five dates, the largest number on Pomorie Lake, c10.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Noted daily on the first four days of the trip.

Great White Pelican *Pelicanus onocrotalus*

Large numbers were seen, an estimated 5000 on 16th and 2000 on 17th.

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelicanus crispus*

Noted on four dates with a maximum count of c100 on 16th.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*

Relatively common in the right habitat and most numerous in the Pomorie area with birds noted on all but one day of the trip.

European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotellus*

20 at Kamen Bryag and 50 at Cape Kaliakra.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Common and seen almost daily.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

A high flying bird was spotted by Lyubo at our lunch stop at Atanasovsko Lake with other singles seen at Balgarevo and Durankulak Lake.

European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Noted on two dates 16th (4) and 17th (15)

Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

Seen on six dates, some nice views at times with a maximum of ten on 16th.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Clanga pomarina*

Noted on five dates, with a maximum of around 50 on the 16th.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*

Six dates, with both dark and pale phased birds seen well. Highest number, ten on 16th.

Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes*

Recorded on three dates, a flock of six on 16th, five on 17th and a single on 19th.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Four dates with a maximum of 20 on 16th.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

One at a roadside stop as we headed to Vertren on 21st, seen well and watched being mobbed by a Kestrel.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Noted virtually daily, with at least ten noted on 16th.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

A high flying male bird was seen well but albeit briefly at Mandra Lake on 16th.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

One seen on the 16th.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

An adult gave us great views at Mandra lake with an immature bird seen later and more distantly at the same site. An adult bird was also seen earlier at Vaya Lake and on our last day an adult was seen at Srebuna lake.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

Single birds were seen on three dates.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Seen regularly and daily throughout the trip.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Heard on three occasions, but unsurprisingly none were seen.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Surprisingly scarce and only recorded on two dates.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Only seen on four dates, but large numbers present at most of the lakes we visited.

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus*

A single bird on the Balgarevo Steppe.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Seen in small numbers during our time around Pomorie Lake.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Recorded on four dates with an impressive flock of over a thousand birds at Atanasovsko Lake/salt pans.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus, vanellus*

Small flocks recorded on four dates.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Two distant birds were seen on Shabla Lake.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Noted on five dates, the majority seen on our visits to Pomorie Lake.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

A single bird seen during our visit to the west side of Pomorie Lake.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Ten seen during our visit to the west side of Pomorie Lake and singles at Shabla and Dobrich.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Maximum of two birds on three dates.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Only seen on three dates, the maximum being thirteen on Atanasovsko Lake.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Two at Atanasovsko Lake saltings on 17th and two more the following day again at Pomorie Lake.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

A very distant flock of around 18 at Atanasovsko lake/saltings, with six the following day at Pomorie Lake.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

75 was the count at Atanasovsko Lake/Saltings, with smaller numbers at both Pomorie and Shabla Lakes.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus*

Two distant but discernable individuals at Shabla Lake were a welcome addition to our list.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Two juvenile birds on the west side of Pomorie Lake on 18th.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

A distant bird was a good find by Nick during our visit to the west side of Pomorie Lake.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

A typically active flock of 28 birds on the beach tideline at Durankulaka Lake.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

20+ birds seen the Atanasovosko Lake/saltings, the west side of Pomorie Lake and Shabla Lake.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Smaller numbers of this species were also noted at the above mentioned site.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

A maximum of ten at Shabla Lake with birds also noted at three other sites.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Another welcome addition to our list at Shabla Lake.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

One or two Antanasovsko and Pomorie Lakes

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Singles, Antanasovsko and Pomorie Lakes

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Noted daily and easily seen on the first five days of the trip.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

Noted on four dates during the first part of the trip, with highest counts being an impressive 72 at the west side of Pomorie Lake and four at Shabla Lake.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

As above noted on four dates, highest count around thirty on the edge of Vaya Lake viewed from our elevated position on the hill top.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

Five dates, maximum eight on Atanasovosko Lake.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Three dates in and around Pomorie Lake.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*

Two hawking birds were seen at Mandra Lake from our hillside view point.

Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei*

Four dates, maximum counts, ninety on Atanasovosko Lake/saltings and five on Mandra Lake.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Common and seen daily, often in 100s.

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

Noted on five dates with three figure counts made at Pomorie Lake on two occasions.

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

Common and easily seen during our time in Pomorie and recorded on five dates in total.

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*

A single adult bird found on the west side of Pomorie Lake with at least ten of varying ages on the sand bar in the Danube River during our lunch break at Popina.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Common, everywhere throughout the week.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Ones and twos on Pomorie Lake.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

A distant bird viewed from our elevated hillside position at Vaya Lake.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

Four in total at Lake Shabla on 19th,

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Seen on six dates with largest number around Pomorie Lake.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Four near the Pomorie Salt Museum and two on Lake Atanasovosko saltings.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Recorded daily.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

Two on our first pre breakfast walk with two more at Vaya Lake later in the day and a single winter plumaged bird at Shabla Lake later in the week on 19th

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

At least ten were watched amongst Black Terns at Pomorie Lake on 17th with a single bird seen on Shabla Lake on 19th.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

A flock of around thirty were seen on Pomorie Lake with White-winged Terns (the above birds) in amongst them and a smaller flock of ten were seen at Mandra lake.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

A pale morph adult bird was watched chasing terns on our second pre-breakfast walk at Pomorie Lake.

Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Common – towns, villages and drive-by birds.

Common Wood Pigeon *Colomba palumbus*

Low numbers, but seen daily.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Noted on five dates, the majority roadside birds. Highest count 20 on 21st.

Eurasian Collard Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common, recorded daily.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

One was seen well in flight at Durankulaka Lake.

Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*

An afternoon siesta was followed by a short drive back to Topola where within seconds Svetlo had found one of the birds high on the nearby cliff face. Lyubo not to be out done found the second of the pair on another section of the cliff face ten minutes later.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

One heard calling during the night by James and Nick during our time at Kavarna.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

One calling during the night at Varna was a 'leader only' with only Gary and Lyubo hearing it.

[European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*

A leader only, with Gary disturbing a day roosting bird from the ground, which perched briefly on a horizontal branch before returning to the safety of the ground again and out of view.]

Alpine Swift *Tachymartus melba*

Around ten high over the raptor watch point at Atanasovosko Lake and around forty over and around Cape Kaliakra during our time there.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Small numbers were noted high above us on five dates in total.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

A total of eight birds seen, on three dates, at various locations.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Three dates and four flocks with some nice views of perched birds had.

European Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Two singles, one on 16th at Mandra and one on 19th at Kamen Byrag

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos media*

One seen well at Goritza, with another heard here and at Albena, then one heard the next day at Vetren.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*

Noted on five dates, the majority heard, though nice views were had of a pair at Goritza and birds at Vetren and Srebuna on the last day.

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus*

Seen on six dates; with pairs seen on three occasions and best views probably in the dead trees at the bottom of the valley viewed from the rear of Kostas hotel in Kavarna.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Seen on three dates with one also heard on our last morning at Vetren.

European Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Noted on four dates, with again best views in the valley at Kavarna.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*

Again our pre breakfast at Kavarna gave us the best views with a perched bird seen very well on the dead tree in the bottom of the Valley. One was seen well in flight at Vetren on our pre-breakfast walk.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Up to six seen daily.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

A high flying distant bird on the west side of Vaya lake on 17th

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Up to six seen daily encountered at most sites visited.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

A bit of a surprise, found perched on some roadside wires on 20th, a winter visitor to the area.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Quite common, several recorded daily, mostly drive-by birds.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*

Common, recorded daily.

Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Recorded on six dates, in low number.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

The least common of the corvids, with birds only seen on the last two days of the trip.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

Recorded daily.

Northern Raven *Corvus corax*

Only one, seen at the first of our stops when leaving the airport on day one.

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Low numbers, noted on most days

Great Tit *Parus major*

Low numbers, noted on all days.

Eurasian Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*

A family party of six birds moving along the reed-edged path during our visit to the west side of Pomorie lake.

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

A singing bird perched on roadside wires prior to our lunch stop at Goritza and at least three at Balgarevo the next day.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Seen and heard daily during the last four days of the trip.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Rather thin on the ground, with birds only noted along the beach at Pomorie and at Balgarevo.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*

Small numbers, c 6+ at Balgarevo and our lunch stop on day seven.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Noted in small numbers on five dates, with best views at the ringing site at Atanasovsko Lake.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Seen daily throughout the trip.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Seen on four dates at various sites.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

Small numbers on five dates, again best birds were at the ringing site at Atanasovsko with several perched birds alongside Barn Swallows and Sand Martins.

Cettis Warbler *Cettia cetti*

One heard briefly at Vaya Lake on day two.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Two flocks, one at Popina and the second at Malak Preslavete on day seven.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Recorded on seven dates, daily totals up to six birds at various sites.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Two heard, but only one seen, the latter at Goritza Forest.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

One heard briefly at Vaya Lake on day two.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Singles, on two dates; at Mandra Lake on 17th and Durankulaka Lake on 19th.

Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Singles, on two dates; at Durankulaka Lake on 20th and Malak Preslavetz on 23rd.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella lusciniodes*

An 'in hand' view was very much a bonus at the ringing site at Atansovsko Lake.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Birds noted on five dates.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

Singles at Vaya Lake on 17th and Atanasovsko Lake on 18th.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

Recorded on four dates, including an 'in hand' view at the ringing site at Atanasovsko.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Three birds on three dates.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Three at Goritza forest on 19th and another heard at our lunch stop at Popina on 22nd

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

Two heard and seen at Goritza Forest, and another heard at our lunch stop at Popina on 22nd.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Common and easily seen. A large flock of c5000 birds descended on us during our visit to the west side of Pomorie Lake, making an impressive sight as they wheeled around and eventually landing to feed along the dried out mud edge of the lake.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Recorded on six dates, in low numbers.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Noted daily during the last five days of the trip.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Up to six seen daily.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Three dates with a maximum of five on 19th.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*

A nice surprise on the path at dusk at Atanasovsko Lake enroute to Pomorie on day one.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

Some great views were enjoyed including some 'red-breasted' birds. Birds were recorded on six dates in total. Largest numbers were at Cape Kaliakra (c10).

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

1-2 seen and heard regularly around the guesthouse at Kavarna.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Up to three birds were recorded on four dates.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

Recorded on two dates, two on our first stop on day one and another at Balgarevo.

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Just one on our last pre-breakfast walk at Kavarna.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Singles at Balgarevo and Durankulaka Lake and at least three around the ruins at Cape Kaliakra.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Easily seen and recorded daily.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

Roadside flocks on two dates, the largest c1000 as we stopped en-route to Atanasovko Lake on day three.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Five dates in total. particularly easy to see around the village at Vetren.

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Recorded daily, the majority over flying calling birds.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

1-2 birds on three dates.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Seen daily, throughout the trip.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Recorded on four dates, a few perched birds usually on wire, though the majority were calling flyover birds.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Recorded on six dates in low numbers, primarily at the latter end of the trip.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Great views were had of birds from our elevated position behind our guest house at Kavarna with birds seen daily here and several others seen on our pre-breakfast walk at Vetren.

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

Small numbers were recorded on five dates in total.

Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Several on our first day and stop en-route from the airport with several calling birds also noted at Balgarevo.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Seen on seven dates in low numbers.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

Recorded daily around Karvana with up to 50 on the steppe habitat we visited during our time there.

Escapes**Wood Duck *Aix sponsa***

Two males at Atanasovsko Lake.

Mammals

Eurasian Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

Western Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

Reptiles and Amphibians

Marsh/Edible Frog *Pelophylax ridibundus/P.kl.esculentus*

Eastern Tree Frog *Hyla orientalis*

Common Wall Lizard *Podarcis muralis*

Eastern Grass Snake *Natrix natrix*
European Pond Terrapin *Emys orbicularis*

Butterflies & Moths

Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*
Large White *Pieris brassicae*
Small White *Artogeia rapae*
Eastern Bath White *Pontia edusa*
Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus*
Eastern Pale Clouded Yellow *Colias erate*
Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*
Lesser Fiery Copper *Lycaena thersamon*
Common Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*
Adonis Blue *Polyommatus bellargus*
Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*
Common Glider *Neptis sappho*
Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*
Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*
Peacock Butterfly *Aglais io*
Cardinal *Argynnis pandora*
Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia*
Great Banded Grayling *Kanetisa circe*
Common Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*
Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*
Common Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*
Oriental Marbled Skipper *Carcharodus orientalis*

Hummingbird Hawkmoth *Macroglossum stellatarum*

Damsels & Dragons

Eastern Willow Spreadwing *Lestes parvidens*
Blue-tailed Damsel *Ischnura elegans*
Emperor *Anax imperator*
Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*