

Bulgaria: Rhodope Mountains & Black Sea Coast

Fri 4th – Sun 13th May 2012



*Photos (clockwise, from top left): A beautiful portrait of “Philip”, the **White Pelican** • A close encounter with a pair of **Wallcreepers** at Trigrad Gorge was the highlight of the trip for many • Scarce Swallowtails pleased the group as they glided about in good numbers © all by tour participants Nick & Stella Laughton • **Our group** enjoys the Wallcreepers at Trigrad © Chris Murphy/Limosa • One of the ‘special’ birds of a visit to Bulgaria in spring, a male **Pied Wheatear** at Karmen Bryag © tour participants Nick & Stella Laughton*

**report compiled by tour leader:
Chris Murphy**

Trip Diary

Tour Leaders: Chris Murphy and Yordan Kutsanov
with Mike Cousins, Barry Green, Sean Hogan, Nick & Stella Laughton, John & Janet Rodgers, David & Hilary Ruffett, and John Underwood

Top notch sites, pristine habitats and ten fine days contributed to the success in finding birds as wonderful and diverse as Ferruginous Duck, Dalmatian Pelican, Yelkouan Shearwater, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Eagle Owl, Black Woodpecker, Wallcreeper, Savi's Warbler and Semi-collared Flycatcher. Spring passage was late, pinioned south of the Med. Luckily, we were staying in just the right place at Kavarna on the Black Sea coast, as a change of weather released the force of *Via Pontica*, bringing such exciting migrants as Marsh and Terek Sandpipers, Red-footed Falcon, Thrush Nightingale, Lesser Grey Shrike and Red-breasted Flycatcher.

Fri 4th May

Sofia, 14:00 hrs. There was Yordan, a giant of a man with a smile to match. Yordan led us out of the terminal to where George was waiting as always beside a gleaming white, Mercedes stretch-sprinter and we are soon driving south on the E79, everything new and exciting, including a Goshawk soaring above Studena! White Stork, Crag Martin, Nightingale, Yellowhammer and Corn Bunting could all be seen or heard from a roadside vantage overlooking the River Struma at Blagoevgrad - this is where we saw our first Roller. A closer look at the sparrow crew revealed three species: House, Spanish and Tree, the first two were plentiful.

Stopping again near Razlog to look for Scarlet Rosefinch it seemed we were a little early, either that or spring was late this year (it was to be the latter). Nearing our hotel we encountered the only significant rain of the trip, heavy enough to cut short a look at some fish ponds near Goce Delcev though not before we had nice views of a Grass Snake and a Great Reed Warbler. After all our travelling, by the time we arrived at our hilltop hotel in the forested Western Rhodopes, close to Greece, we could only summon enough strength to check in. Checking out the hotel's swifts would have to wait 'til tomorrow.

Sat 5th May

An early morning walk through the grounds of the hotel as far as the adjoining forest provided an opportunity to study the very obliging swifts, which proved to be Pallid, here at the northern edge of their range within the Eastern Med. Wood Lark, Redstart, Lesser Whitethroat, Serin and a party of Crossbills were among other birds seen, the latter posing outside the breakfast room. On leaving the hotel our first destination was the impressive, pine-clad Trigrad Gorge where we hadn't long to wait to enjoy close views of a pair of Wallcreepers down to a few feet, quite brilliant! Yordan then found us a Green Stream Frog and a Yellow-bellied Toad before we enjoyed a trout lunch at a cracking riverside restaurant while being entertained by a pair of Dippers.

Then followed a long drive into the arid Eastern Rhodopes, the journey enlivened by short breaks to see Peregrine, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Rock Bunting and admire fields of orchids amid melting snow and valleys of Acacia, Cherry, Horse Chestnut and Plum, all in blossom. Our base for the next two nights was a comfortable hotel on the edge of Madjarovo on the River Arda. Little and Scops Owls called during the night.

Sun 6th May

Oh, what a wonderful morning! Our pre-breakfast walk in heavenly sunshine unearthed some of the songsters that had performed such a brilliant dawn chorus including Cuckoo, Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, Golden Oriole, Nightingale and Whitethroat. Then it was off to the scrub-covered hills of Potochnitza where we watched Griffon and Egyptian Vultures soaring above one of their feeding stations. Hobby, Isabelline Wheatear, Eastern Subalpine Warbler and Wood Lark were new as was a Balkan Green Lizard

and several species of butterfly and *Odonata*, the latter including a Club-tailed Dragonfly and White-legged Damselfly that Yordan and Hilary found as we picnicked by a limestone stream.

After lunch we checked out some tamarisks along the Krumovitza River where we saw our first Bee-eaters, Black-headed Buntings and Eastern Olivaceous Warblers. By the Studen Kladenets dam we found our first Blue Rock Thrush and Black-eared Wheatear and had nice views of some Hawfinches. As we were inspecting a small hole in a tree some of the party caught a glimpse of what was most likely a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, one of the few species of woodpecker we were not to record with certainty.

We ended the day in the company of a very helpful local guide who gave us a lot of information about the hundreds of amazing Thracian rocky niches (c.4th Century BC) that were carved into the vertical cliffs high above the dramatic Arda River. A colony of Alpine Swifts wheeled around their cliff-nests but it was the thought of such ancient, heroic deeds that captivated us most. After dinner some of us had a pleasant stroll through the village listening out for owls. Alas, not a hoot.

Mon 7th May

Checking out at 8am this morning, we had a long drive to the coast, though not before a little more birding on the wooded slope behind the hotel and some more time in the mountains watching Long-legged Buzzard, Blue Rock Thrushes, Ortolan Buntings, Subalpine Warblers and handsome Black Storks by the picturesque River Arda. At Borislavci, another Eastern Olivaceous Warbler gave us the run around though we did enjoy marvelous views of a sub-adult Egyptian Vulture, one of 12 species of raptor today. An otherwise leisurely picnic beside a stream in the quaintly named village of Kapitan Petko (honouring a local hero) was variously interrupted by shouts of 'Lesser Spotted Eagle', 'Thrush Nightingale', 'Golden Oriole' and, 'Mole Cricket!' As well as preparing lunch with George, multi-tasking Yordan studiously identified the scarce Bulgarian race of Beautiful Demoiselle while pointing out Ornate Damselfly and calling on a network of local people.

We were specifically here to look for one of Bulgaria's most sought after birds, the Eastern Imperial Eagle. Thanks to Yordan's contacts we were not to be disappointed! After lunch we were met by two of the village elders who led the way across a few miles of steppe to a vantage point where we could watch an occupied eyrie without fear of disturbing these magnificent birds of prey. The eagles had built their nest in the canopy of a tall tree in a streamside copse. The female eagle was sitting, her pale shawl just visible above a great bundle of sticks. Then the male appeared, rising from the copse to circle long enough for everyone to have a good look at him through a 'scope. Just fab!

Thanking the two gentlemen of Kapitan Petko, we began retracing our way back to a hard surface, encountering some of the eagle's likely prey, a Souselik and a Fox - indications of a thriving ecosystem. Near Boljarovo we made two important stops, first to watch four gorgeous Montagu's Harriers then to spend time on the edge of a dry oak wood where David made the thrilling discovery of a Masked Shrike, singing from the top of an oak. With spring coming late this year it was to be our only Masked Shrike. Reaching Burgas we stopped for diesel flushing a Little Bittern from a reed-filled ditch adjacent to the petrol station, which posed on top of a reed stem long enough for us all to see. The hotel in Pomorie, our base for the next two nights overlooked the sea. It had been an exciting and eventful day and now we looked forward to exploring the coast.

Tue 8th May

From the balcony of our hotel early risers trained their 'scopes on Harbour Porpoises and Black-throated Divers before we walked a short distance to the salt pans. Many birds were nesting: Common, Little and Sandwich Terns, Mediterranean Gull, Avocet, Black-winged Stilt and both Kentish and Little Ringed Plovers. Pygmy Cormorant and Slender-billed Gulls were also noted. After breakfast we visited the big Atanasovsko salt pans and adjacent Lake Burgas. Despite being on the edge of the Black Sea's busiest city these wetlands are of great importance to a wide range of species. Outstanding among these are both

White and Dalmatian Pelicans both of which we found along with many species of heron, Black-necked Grebes, Spoonbills and other water birds.

Lunch was on the platform roof of the Poda Protection Area's nature centre. Essentially a large reedbed with pools and a nature trail on the shore of Burgas Bay, Poda has a series of hides from where it is possible to see nesting Spoonbills, Glossy Ibis, Night, Purple and Squacco Herons and most impressive of all a rare colony of Cormorants which breeds on disused pylons rather than in reeds or trees; the pylons not being effected by the birds' acidic excrement which would soon kill any vegetation. We counted 624 occupied nests with most of the young about to fledge. From our vantage we could see a White-tailed Eagle's eyrie. One of these huge birds was looking out from an adjacent tree, its mate presumably sitting on the nest. The afternoon was spent circumnavigating Lake Mandria with various stops to see Garganey, Purple Heron, marsh terns, Turtle Doves, our first Lesser Grey Shrikes, another White-tailed Eagle and a Black Hairstreak Butterfly. At Dimcevo we stopped to admire a particularly photogenic White Stork nest, complete with Spanish Sparrows.

Wed 9th May

A brief seawatch from the hotel balcony revealed 50 Harbour Porpoises, six Black-throated Divers, Black-necked Grebe and an Arctic Skua over a glass-like sea. On the road by 08:30, heading north to Kavarna. On the outskirts of Pomorie we stopped at the salt pans to admire a flock of Slender-billed Gulls and waders: Curlew Sandpipers, Little Stints and Ruffs, all in summer plumage. Against an azure sky a wavering line of 40 White Pelicans 'flap-flap-glided', most likely making for the Danube Delta where 90% of the European population breeds. Having overwintered as far away possibly as tropical Africa it was nice to think they were nearly home.

Despite finding little water at Poroy Lake we did find Ruddy Shelduck and Black Stork along with a host of birds anyone would love to see in Great Britain and Ireland: Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, Bee-eater, Roller, Golden Oriole, Lesser Grey, Woodchat and Red-backed Shrikes, Hawfinch and Black-headed Bunting, all showing well. Butterflies included Granville and Spotted Fritillaries while a 5ft Eastern Four-line Rat Snake quite literally stopped us in our tracks.

Lunch was in a brilliant little café near Gorica after which we walked in an oak wood, finding Semi-collared Flycatcher without trouble; Hawfinches drank from a deeply rutted track. The flycatchers were surprisingly common and could not have been more obliging, males frequently singing beside their nest hole. We arrived in Kavarna at 18:00 after a journey of 220 km; dinner at 19:00 was interrupted after two of the courses so that we could have a look for a bird that waits for no man, Eagle Owl. Yordan knew of a discreet ravine on the coast where with a bit of luck and some patience we might be able to see one. And so we did! As night fell this huge, tufted silhouette just appeared on the cliff top. We were exhilarated, and ready for pudding.

Thu 10th May

With the promise of Paddyfield Warbler and Pied Wheatear, this was always going to be a special day and so it proved. The day began with a short drive to Durankulak where we found the reeds alive with *Acrocephalus* warblers: Great Reed, Reed and Paddyfield, all singing and dancing. Savi's Warblers were plentiful too, and all the time we were watching the reeds parties of marsh terns, herons, sandpipers, Turtle Doves and hirundines passed before, behind and above us. A Marsh Sandpiper nearly slipped through with some Wood Sandpipers; amongst a flock of Curlew Sandpipers whizzing through, David noticed one had an upturned bill. Terek Sandpiper! High fives. A total of twenty Ferruginous Ducks and a single Bearded Tit were another two species that were new for the trip this morning.

As Yordan and George prepared lunch we had great views of Thrush Nightingale and Red-breasted Flycatcher, both out in the open. Shabla Tuzlata later produced yet more migrants including lots more Lesser Grey and Red-backed Shrikes, our first Syrian Woodpecker working its way along a wooden

fence, another 40 Ferruginous Ducks and a flushed Corncrake. On the coast at Karmen Bryag we found our first Pied Wheatears - with Black-eared, Northern and Isabelline for good measure - it was that sort of day - and a pair of Stonechats, a surprisingly uncommon species in Bulgaria.

Arriving at Yaialta late afternoon we soon found ourselves immersed in Calandra Larks and in sun-drenched ancient history. Well-preserved remains of lost civilizations were everywhere, as was the beautiful, endemic flora including red Kaliakra peonies. Despite the attractions on land it was the sea that demanded our attention as pods of Harbour Porpoises and Bottle-nosed Dolphins surfaced among several thousand perfectly-lit, plunge-diving Yelkouan Shearwaters. It was time for a cold beer.

Fri 11th May

Another fabulous morning. We made an early excursion to Cape Kaliakra where we watched 200 *acredula* Willow Warblers in quick succession make landfall in an isolated cliff-top bush; single Pied Wheatear, Lesser Whitethroat, Icterine Warbler and Red-breasted Flycatcher added some spice. As we made our way back for a late breakfast a careful scan of the Balgarevo steppe revealed some Stone Curlews, Tawny Pipits and Short-toed Larks, all species of note. Then it was inland towards the Danube and wonderful Lake Srebarna, via Balchik and Dobric with a woodland stop on the way: Nuthatch, Norfolk Hawker dragonfly and Green-underside Blue butterfly.

Arriving early afternoon at Lake Srebarna we enjoyed a fine spectacle of breeding Dalmatian Pelicans, many Ferruginous Ducks, grebes, terns, Red-footed Falcons and Hobbies, plus more dragonflies and butterflies. We picnicked on the north side overlooking the lake's mixed heronry and watched a Night Heron dispatching a Grass Snake. Common Glider and Large Wall Brown were two new butterflies for us.

After an early check in, we took the opportunity to relax a while by the brook in the Pelican Lodge's sheltered garden. Even here there were birds and butterflies to view: Dalmatian Pelican, White Stork, Bee-eater, Nightingale, Lesser Whitethroat, Tree Sparrow, Golden Oriole, Marsh Harrier, Syrian Woodpecker, Red-rumped Swallow, Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, Red-backed Shrike, Hawfinch and Black Hairstreak! Before dinner we looked across from the banks of the Danube toward Romania: wide water, woods and barges. Then the skies opened and we bid a hasty retreat to the bus. The rain looked set so we made a change of plan and returned to Srebarna, a good move as the rain soon stopped here leaving the air clear and the light magical. The birds weren't bad either with fine views of a group of seven Red-necked Grebes both in flight and on the water plus Whiskered Tern, Middle-Spotted Woodpecker, Penduline Tit and Savi's Warbler. A Scops Owl called during the night.

Sat 12th May

Not surprisingly the dawn chorus included contributions from most of the songbirds noted in the garden yesterday. A highlight of our early walk this morning was listening to the ringing 'klee-klee-klee' of a distant Black Woodpecker and some new butterflies including Purple-shot and Large Copper, the latter a real beauty. Once we had negotiated our way out of Srebarna, where the village festival was about to get under way, we stayed on the minor roads as much as possible. This allowed us to meander through the meadows and marshes of the lower Danube finding good habitat and interesting birds, butterflies and dragonflies along the way.

Night Herons and dipping Whiskered Terns entertained us at Malek Preslavek where we found an excellent range of dragonflies including Norfolk Hawker, Scarce Chaser, Downy Emerald, Red-eyed and Variable Damselfly. Nearby we watched a Black Woodpecker's nest hole, the red-topped male in attendance. Bee-eaters were nesting by the roadside beyond Tutrakan where hundreds of Silver-studded Blue butterflies basked in botanically rich grassland. Our picnic lunch was prepared near former fishponds where we walked along an elevated path overlooking huge reed beds. From the path we saw Marsh and Savi's Warbler, while on it settled a handsome Freyer's Purple Emperor. An adult and juvenile Lesser Spotted

Eagle showed well as did Hobby, Garganey, Penduline Tit and Red-backed Shrike. The seeing of the latter two side by side made for an interesting comparison of plumage. A Bittern boomed unseen. Pale Clouded Yellow, Large Skipper, Eastern Bath White, Emperor Dragonfly and our fourth or fifth Grass Snake of the trip were also noted.

Running late we pressed on into the Balkan mountains and our final stop for the night, at the 'museum village' of Etara where a wedding reception was just finishing. Before dinner we met on the veranda overlooking a fast flowing river, complete with Dipper and Grey Wagtail.

Sun 13th May

Many of the birds on our early walk beside the ethnic village reminded us of home: Wren, Robin, Nuthatch, Song Thrush, Blackbird and Swallow. Only the Black Redstarts and the swallows with the orangey rumps would have been out of place in Britain or Ireland - Nuthatches are on their way, Sean! An hour before Sofia en route to the airport, we made a stop at Sopot where we trod carefully through meadows bedecked in purple orchids, listening to Icterine Warblers, Red-backed Shrikes and the faint craking of *Crex crex*.

From the rugged Rhodopes to the verdant Danube via the headlands and wetlands of the Black Sea, no doubt we had travelled far in ten days. Thanks go to Yordan, a first class ecologist and all-round naturalist, and George, a great driver and friend to all. Together we saw a total of 206 species of birds, with a nice variety of amphibians, reptiles, butterflies and dragonflies along the way. As well as the rare and dazzling species such as Eastern Imperial Eagle and Wallcreeper, memorable was the spectacle of 200 Willow Warblers making landfall in a leafless bush. Less spectacular but just as pleasing were fields and hedgerows adorned with Hoopoes, Rollers and Red-backed Shrikes and listening to Turtle Dove and Golden Oriole announce the beginning of a new day, blue skies and sunshine! It was a privilege to witness life in a proud country emerging from its Eastern-bloc history and a pleasure to be your leader. Thanks for travelling with us.

Chris Murphy

ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS

*(A total of 206 species recorded by the group, another three marked * were leader only)*

[Quail *Coturnix coturnix]**

heard at Sopot on 13th]

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

two dates, 11th and 12th

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

recorded on seven dates with 400 counted on 8th

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

recorded on four dates at various coastal sites, max. 40 on 8th

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

one at Poroy on 9th

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

20 in the Burgas area on 8th and 20 incl. min. four pairs at Lake Srebarna on 11th and 12th

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

one at Lake Srebarna on 12th

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

noted on eight dates, max. 12 on 8th

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

noted on three dates, max. three at Lake Mandra on 8th

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

recorded on three dates near Pomorie and Srebarna

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

20 at Durankulak and 40 at Shabal on 10th, 20 at Srebarna on 12th

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

one at Lake Burgas on 8th

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

six remained off Pomorie 7th - 9th

Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*

recorded on three dates, best were 3,000+ feeding close in-shore off Yaialta on 10th

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

three sites, max. four at Lake Burgas on 8th

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

seven beauties at Lake Srebarna on 13th

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

five dates, max. 20 Burgas area on 8th

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

seven, Lake Burgas on 8th, 1 off Pomorie on 9th, one off Durankulak on 10th

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

five dates, max. ten River Arda 6th - 7th

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

seen every day; several nests near Lake Mandra on 8th hosted nests of Spanish Sparrow

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

two dates, max. 35 at Srebarna on 11th

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

three dates, max. 20 Burgas and Srebarna

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

one booming at fish ponds nr. Tutrakan on 12th

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

female in Atanasovsko culvert, on 8th

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

four dates in variable numbers at, Burgas, Kavarna, Srebarna; max. 36 along R. Danube on 12th

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

five dates, max. 20 on 10th

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

seven dates at coastal and Danube wetlands

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

four dates among which, early on 11th, were four birds arriving over the Black Sea at Cape Kaliakra

Great White Egret *Casmerodius alba*

seen on three days, small numbers, max. three Burgas and Srebarna

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

six dates in small numbers, all at coastal and Danube wetland sites, max. 12 at Burgas and Srebarna

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

three dates, max. 40, migrating north nr. Pomorie on 9th

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*

30 on Lake Burgas on 8th and 50 including well-grown juveniles at Srebarna on 11th and 12th

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*

max. 100 at various sites around Burgas, Pomorie, Durankulak and Srebarna

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

noted on eight dates at all coastal sites with c.3,000 at Poda outstanding.; several inland (mostly Danube) sites

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

four off Pomorie on 7th, 40 at Karmen Bryag on 10th

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

noted daily in small numbers, typically three or four

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

male nr. Dospat, Western Rhodopes on 5th, then nine on 10th at Drankulak, two at Lake Srebarna on 11th and three males on wires near Srebarna lit by morning sun on 12th

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

six dates, small numbers with exception of 20 hunting over Lake Srebarna on 11th

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

a juvenile and two adults at Trigrad Gorge on 5th, singles on three other dates

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

migrants noted on six dates in small numbers, max. three at Jerusalamova on 7th

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

one, Burgas on 7th

White-tailed eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

one at nest nr. Lake Mandra on 8th, another Lake Burgas later the same day

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

nr. Majaravo, three on 6th, two on 7th

Eurasian Griffon *Gyps fulvus*

noted same dates and places as previous species, but in larger numbers: 35 at Potochnitza - same number as that recorded in 2011

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

one nr Majarova on 6th

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

seen on seven dates, with the max. of 15 on 10th

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

four on 7th nr. Boljarovo

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

noted on three dates, a total of four birds

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

one over Studena, nr. Sofia on 4th

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

seen every day in low numbers

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

seen on three dates in the Rhodopes, max. three on 5th

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*

a total of five at three sites: one at Kapitan Pesko and two at Boljarovo on 7th and an adult and juvenile nr Tutrakan on 12th

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

pair nr Kapitan Pesko on 7th

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

noted on five dates in small numbers

Coot *Fulica atra*

noted on six at coastal and Danube wetlands, max. 100 around Burgas on 8th

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus*

one at Bolgarevo, 11th

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

one Poda, 8th

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

up to at Pomorie salt pans on three dates 7th-9th

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

seen on three dates, max. 100 at Pomorie salt pans on 8th

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

small numbers on two dates, max. three on 10th

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

eight flew over at Durankulak on 10th

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

max. four on four dates 8th-11th

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

one on River Struma nr. Blagoevgrad on 4th, pair on River Arda on 6th, three at Atanaskova on 8th, two at Durankulak on 10th

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

six at Pomorie, one at Durankulak on 10th

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

three at Atanasovsko on 8th

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

one at Durankulak on 10th

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

one at Durankulak on 10th

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

seen on 8th, 9th and 10th with max. eight at Durankulak on 10th

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

four flew north at Karmen Bryag on 10th

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

ditto

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

40 at Pomorie on 9th and 30 at Durankulak on 10th

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

100 at Atanaskova on 8th, 70 at Pomorie on 9th and 100 at Durankulak on 10th

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

noted on just two dates, with fine summer plumaged birds, perhaps of the race *centralis*, at Pomorie on 9th and two at Durankulak on 10th

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

one Durankulak, flew past amongst a flock of Curlew Sands on 10th

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

four dates near the coast, with several flocks of up to 50 birds in summer plumage

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

seen on seven dates, but obviously most common on the coast

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus fuscus* (Baltic Gull)

three at Durankulak on 10th

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

three dates near the coast: 50 at Poda on 8th, five at Durankulak on 10th and one at Srebarna on 11th

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

20 at Pomorie on 8th

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*

at Pomorie, two on 8th and nine on 9th

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

20 at Pomorie where it breeds on 8th and 9th and 7 at Durankulak on 10th

[Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica**

one from the bus near Kavarna on 11th]

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

several flocks up to 100 on the coast and in the Danube Valley

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

small numbers (max. 20) at several sites including Durankulak and Srebarna

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

ditto (max. 40)

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

seen on four dates, max 200 at Pomorie where breeds

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

six dates at coastal sites and in the Danube Valley

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Pomorie on 8th and 9th

(Feral) Rock Dove *Columba livia*

feral birds seen daily; three at Yailalta on 10th looked pure

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

five dates, only six birds in total

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

seven dates and with small flocks on the move at several sites, a daily max. of 40 on 10th

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

seen daily

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

seen or heard daily, most numerous at Srebarna and in the Danube Valley generally where 20 recorded on 12th

Scops Owl *Otus scops*

heard at Majarovo and Srebarna

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

heard at Majarovo

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*

30 River Arda cliffs nr. Majarovo on 7th and ten Cape Kaliakra on 11th

Common Swift *Apus apus*

100s, almost daily

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

20 around Dabrash Hotel on 4th and 5th, 4 at Majarovo on 7th and two at Etara on 13th

Roller *Coracias garrulus*

seen almost daily, max. 12 on 10th

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

recorded on the River Arda on 6th and River Danube on 12th

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

up to 100 daily between 6th and 12th including several colonies

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

a total of 34 birds between 6th and 12th

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius*

one heard at Poroy on 9th, one seen at Srebarna on 11th

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus*

single birds seen on 4 dates with a pair at Srebarna on 12th

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

two in the Rhodopes, east of Trigrad on 5th

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*

a total of four birds, all on 12th including a male at its nest by River Danube near Malak Preslavek

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

seen or heard on four dates

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*

one seen and heard near Malak Preslavek on 12th

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

seen daily from 5th usually in single figures with max. 60 between Shabla and Durankulak on 10th

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*

seen daily from 8th; max. 40 between Shabla and Durankulak on 10th

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

seen on four dates, mostly inland in the south, max. 20 on 6th

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus*

only one, but seen well! A male in song on the edge of oak woodland near Boljarova on 7th

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

seen and heard daily from 5th; a trip total of 88 birds

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

daily from 6th

Magpie *Pica pica*

daily

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

daily

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

ten from bus on outskirts of Sofia on 13th

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

seen daily

Raven *Corvus corax*

recorded on six days, all inland, max. 10 on 13th

[Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris**

heard by the Krumovitzka river on 6th]

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

ten around Dabrash Hotel on 5th

Great Tit *Parus major*

seen daily

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

less frequent than Great Tit; five dates only

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*

encountered on five dates between 7th and 12th at Burgas, Durankulak, Srebarna and along the River Danube; often first located by the call or discovery of its distinctive nest

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

seen on four dates, including several thousand at Durankulak and Shabla on 10th

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

seen daily, max. c.1,000 on 10th

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

noted on five dates at inland riparian areas and cliffs, max. 50 on 5th

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

like Swallows, numerous

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

noted almost daily in small numbers, mainly inland with max. 30 on 6th

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

four at Jerusalemova on 7th

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*

observed on breeding on the coastal steppe north of Kavarna on 10th and 11th, especially numerous near Karmen Bryag, where males put on great show attracting mate and protecting their territory

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

noted only on 11th on coastal steppe near Kavarna where six seen well at Bolgarevo

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

noted in small numbers, typically up to ten per day

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

seen on four dates, with max.6 near Boljaravo on 7th

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

noted on six dates in small numbers, max. 8 on 10th

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

seen or heard near Burgas on two dates

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

seen or heard on four dates at Poda, Durankulak, Srebarna and Danube Valley; a total of 12 birds

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

a noisy inhabitant of reed beds, both coastal and inland

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*

as one of Bulgaria's special birds it was good to see six different birds and hear others at Durankulak on 10th

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

seen at coastal reed beds only

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

two at the former fishponds near Tutrakan on 12th

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida*

seen and heard on three days, including four birds singing well from within tamarisks along the Krumovitza river on 6th

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

migrants on the coast at Durankulak and Nos Kaliakra on 10th and 11th, respectively; two singing nr. Sopot on 13th

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

heard on two dates only until a total of ten on the 10th preceded fall of thousands at Cape Kaliakra on 11th

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

seen or heard on just four dates at inland sites including the Rhodopes; none was observed among fall of above species at Cape Kaliakra on 11th

Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus orientalis*

one or two birds among the migrants observed in the trees surrounding our picnic site at Durankulak on 10th

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

two on the 5th whilst travelling through the Rhodopes

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

seen or heard on seven dates

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*

two at Gorica on 9th

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

noted on four dates in low numbers including a migrant at Nos Kaliakra on 11th

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

seen or heard at various sites on seven days

Eastern Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia [cantillans] albistriata*

noted on just two dates, the best being those that performed around us at Majarovo on 7th

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*

one calling near Boljarevo on 7th

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

two at Durankulak on 10th

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

heard in forest near Hotel Dabrash on 5th

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

seen or heard in mountainous riparian habitats on 5th (nr. Hotel Dabrash) and 13th (Etara)

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

one at Gorica 9th, one at Malak Preslavek 12th and two at Etara 13th

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*

a major highlight of the trip at Trigrad on 7th was finding then watching at length, sometimes at point blank range, a pair of these crimson treasures

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

two in pine forest beside the Dabrash Hotel on 5th

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

two at Gorica on 9th

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

seen daily

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

seen daily

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

seen or heard on four dates

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

seen on three dates

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

noted in damp woodland on four dates

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

as many as 40 seen or heard daily; numbers around our hotel in Majorovo were astonishing!

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*

one, possibly two, was discovered while picnicking in Kapitan Petko on 7th; one was along the nature trail at Poda on 8th and one showed extremely well at Durankulak on 10th

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

seen on three dates: in the old mountain towns of Trigrad and Etara on the 5th and 13th as well as in Srebarna on 11th

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

one singing nr. Malak Preslavek on 12th

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

one by River Arda on 6th

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

noted on just two dates: a male at Jerusalemovo on 7th and a pair at Karmen Bryag on 10th

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

another species on the western edge of its range, it was noted on five dates - in the eastern Rhodopes on 6th and 7th and on coastal steppe from 9th to 11th

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

seen in low numbers on five dates, max. eight on 7th

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*

superb views of 14 birds at Karmen Bryag and Kaliakra over 10th and 11th

Eastern Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe [hispanica] melanoleuca*

seven birds seen at Studen Kladents and Majorovo over 6th and 7th with another, possibly a migrant, on the coast at Karmen Bryag on 10th

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

a total of 11 birds in the Majorovo area over 6th and 7th

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

seen on seven dates in low numbers

Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata*

another highlight was to see and hear ten birds (five pairs) in the old oak forest at Gorica

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

migrants at Durankulak on 10th and Kaliakra on 11th

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

seen on three dates on mountain streams in the Rhodope and Balkan Mountains

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

seen daily

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

ditto; several colonies in stork nests

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

almost daily; typically 10-20 birds

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

seen and heard on a total of six dates; the buzzy call of Black-headed *feldeggs* being most frequent whilst only three Blue-headed *flava* were seen; one bird at Durankulak on 10th showed the characters of the variant '*dombrowskii*' which breeds in Romania (and northern Bulgaria?)

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

noted on three dates on inland rivers

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

seen almost daily in rather low numbers

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

a total of six on two dates at Karmen Bryag on 10th and Balgeravo on 11th

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

one on 6th by the Krumovitzza River and one on 8th by Lake Mandria

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

seen daily

Serin *Serinus serinus*

two seen well in the grounds of Hotel Dabrash on 5th, another two at Gorica on 9th

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

seen almost daily in low numbers

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

up to 20 seen daily

Linnet *Linnarius cannabina*

noted on just two dates: two on the 6th near Majarova and one on 11th at Balgarevo

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

ten showed up as we sat down for breakfast on the 5th

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

two roadside sightings near Trigrad on 5th and Srebarna on 12th

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

excellent views of birds on three dates, some of the best being those 'scoped whilst drinking at Gorica on 9th

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

still a common bird, seen daily

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

seen and heard on six dates inland

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*

three seen well at Majarovo on 7th

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

also three at Majarovo on 7th, plus one at Srebarna on 12th

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

noted on two dates in the Majarovo area

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*

noted daily in small numbers (max. eight) between 6th and 11th

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

one by the Arda river on 6th was our seventh bunting of 'Magic Majarovo'; six at Durankulak on 10th displayed the darker plumage and larger, bulbous bills of the race *reiseri*

BUTTERFLIES

(a simple list of the 41 species seen)

Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*
Scarce Swallowtail *Iphiclides podalirius*
Eastern Festoon *Zerynthia cerisyi*
Clouded Apollo *Parnassius mnemosyne*
Black-veined White *Aporia crataegi*
Large White *Pieris brassicae*
Small White *Pieris rapae*
Southern Small White *Pieris mannii*
Eastern Bath White *Pontia edusa*
Eastern Dappled White *Euchloe ausonia*
Orange-tip *Anthocaris cardamines*
Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea*
Eastern Pale Clouded Yellow *Colias erate*
Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*
Fenton's Wood White *Leptidea morsei*
Eastern Wood White *Leptidea duponcheli*
Black Hairstreak *Satyrium pruni*
Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*
Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeus*
Grecian Copper *Lycaena ottomana*
Large Copper *Lycaena dispar*
Purple-shot Copper *Lycaena hippothoe*
Silver-studded Blue *Plebejus argus*
Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*
Green-underside Blue *Glaucopsyche alexis*
Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*
Freyer's Purple Emperor *Apatura metis*
Common Glider *Neptis sappho*
Camberwell Beauty *Nymphalis antiopa*
Red Admiral *Vanessa vulcania*
Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*
Queen of Spain Fritillary *Issoria lathonia*
Glanville Fritillary *Melitaea cinxia*
Spotted Fritillary *Melitaea didyma*
Marsh Fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia*,
Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*
Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*
Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*
Large Wall Brown *Lasiommata maera*
Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*
Large Skipper *Ochlodes venatus*

DRAGONFLIES

(names and sequence follow Dijkstra and Lewington, 2006; UK names in brackets)

Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens balcanica*
Common Blue-tail (Blue-tailed Damselfly) *Ischnura elegans*
Common Bluet (Common Blue Damselfly) *Enallagma cyathigerum*
Azure Bluet (Azure Damselfly) *Coenagrion puella*

Variable Bluet (Variable Damselfly) *Coenagrion pulchellum*
Ornate Bluet *Coenagrion ornatum*
Large Redeye (Red-eyed Damselfly) *Erythromma najas*
Blue Featherleg (White-legged Damselfly) *Platycnemis pennipes*
Green-eyed Hawker (Norfolk Hawker) *Aescha isoceles*
Blue Emperor (Emperor Dragonfly) *Anax imperator*
Lesser Emperor *Anax parthenope*
Common Clubtail (Club-tailed Drangonfly) *Gomphus vulgatissimus*
Downy Emerald *Cordulia aenea*
Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum*
Blue Chaser (Scarce Chaser) *Libellula fulva*

OTHER INVERTEBRATES

Tau Emperor Moth
Garden Tiger Moth
Mole Cricket

REPTILES and AMPHIBIANS

Grass Snake
Eastern Four-lined Rat Snake
Slow Worm
Snake-eyed Skink
Balkan Wall Lizard
Balkan Green Lizard
Yellow-bellied Toad
Green Toad,
Greek Stream Frog
Stripe-necked Terrapin
Spur-thighed or Hermann's Tortoise (from the bus)

MAMMALS

Bottle-nosed Dolphin (c. 10)
Harbour Porpoise (c. 80)
Eastern Hedgehog
Brown Hare
Rabbit
Golden Jackal (roadkill, sadly)
Red Fox
Red Squirrel
European Souslik
Otter (spraint)
Mole (hill)