

HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA & TRANSYLVANIA

2 – 13 MAY 2005

TOUR REPORT

LEADER: JÁNOS OLÁH Jr

The Hungary, Slovakia & Transylvania trip is a classic Eastern European bird tour. This was the fourth time for Birdquest to visit Hungary, Slovakia and Romania within one tour. Hungary is well-established as one of the prime birding destinations in Europe and both Slovakia and Transylvania offer an additional selection of exciting specialities. This tour transects the Carpathian Mountains, foothills and lowland in search of the marvellous Wallcreeper of the higher elevations to the skulking Aquatic Warbler of the lowland marshes. Raptors are abundant and include Saker, Red-footed Falcon and both Eastern Imperial and White-tailed Eagles. There is also the prospect of all the European woodpeckers, an excellent selection of owls and a series of interesting 'backup' species such as Western Capercaillie, Little Crake, Corncrake, Great Bustard, Moustached Warbler and Collared Flycatcher. Equally memorable is the opportunity to look for Carpathian Brown Bears in Transylvania. This year the weather was cooler than average with a lot of rain for the season which made birding difficult at times. Despite most of the migrants and breeding birds being very late to arrive, we recorded 205 species during the 12 days, which is undoubtedly a very good total for Europe but most importantly we saw most of the specialities. We recorded 18 species of raptors, seven species of owls, 10 species of woodpeckers and 17 species of warblers. Apart from the regular good birds we had an unusually late Pallid Harrier and two mega rarities in the form of the first Red-rumped Swallow for Transylvania and the first Great-spotted Cuckoo for Hungary!

On the first day we left Budapest at 1200, and headed straight for Tokaj. After a little more than three hours later we arrived in Tokaj where we spent three nights while birding in the Zemplén Hills. The Zemplén area is a range of rounded chalk hills, cloaked in ancient deciduous forest, with the occasional peculiar volcanic outcrop on which there is invariably a castle, most of which were ruined in the battles against the Turks in the sixteenth century. We were greeted by White Storks on nests and singing Common Nightingales everywhere. In the afternoon we started some forest birding with the guidance of 'Woodpecker Man', our local guide. First we visited oak woodland in the Eastern Zemplén Hills to look for the enigmatic Ural Owl which had a poor breeding year. We took a little side valley and soon we found a gorgeous female Ural Owl, and could take delight in a prolonged view of this small-eyed, long-tailed owl by telescope. Meanwhile a silent female White-backed Woodpecker flew in but allowed only glimpses. We did try another valley later where we saw a lovely rufous morph Tawny Owl mobbed by thrushes. Flushed with success, we decided to try

for a third species of owl and drove to a quarry where we were greeted by an obliging Common Nightingale perched on the top of a bush. After silently walking into the quarry we heard Eurasian Eagle Owl chicks calling from the rock face and soon a big female emerged from the bushes and sat on a tree in full view. She is the heaviest and most powerful owl in the world and she was calmly staring at us so we could watch her as long as we wanted. After this exciting afternoon with three daytime owls we got back to the hotel and had our first taste of the famous Tokaj wine at dinner.

The next day, after a substantial early breakfast, we drove to nearby woodland in Slovakia. Just after crossing the border we had two different migrating Montagu's Harriers on their way to the north. Reaching Rejdova village we had Fieldfares everywhere in the gardens. We soon set off for a longer walk in the mixed deciduous and spruce woodland deep in the Carpathian Mountains. First we had looks at Crested Tit and a skulking but curious Spotted Nutcracker. We started to see signs of Hazel Grouse being present around us like droppings and dust-bathing pools and it was not much later when we flushed one from the ground and as it flew and glided away most of us had good views of it. After having our picnic lunch we looked for Three-toed Woodpecker and Eurasian Pygmy Owl. The woodpecker did not show up at its regular place but we had an excellent look on a female Eurasian Pygmy Owl looking out of her nest hole. The nest hole was amazingly just 1.5 meters above the ground and was excavated and used by Three-toed Woodpeckers last year! We found other higher elevation birds here such as Firecrest, Willow Tit, Willow Warbler and Eurasian Bullfinch. On the walk back we flushed another Hazel Grouse. After this long but pleasant walk we watched a Golden Eagle on the nest. On the way back to our Hotel we stopped at the Csozota Valley in the Northern Zemplén Hills to look for woodpeckers. We had brief views of a male White-backed Woodpecker plus at least four or five singing Collared Flycatchers to finish this exciting day. We had dinner and tasted the famous Tokaj wine again, out of which the "5 puttony" Tokaji Aszú made this region well-known several hundred years ago.

The following day we drove to the Erdőbénye area to look for raptors. As soon as we got out of the bus we found a perched adult Imperial Eagle and had brilliant views of this rare and stunning eagle. Later a second bird circled up so we even had good flight comparisons with Common Buzzard. We also saw a pair of Eurasian Hoopoes, at least six Eurasian Wrynecks, two Wood Larks, Golden Orioles, "white-headed" Long-tailed Tits and Red-backed Shrikes. The best of all though was the male Black Woodpecker which flew right in front of us allowing a prolonged good look. Still before lunch we had a Lesser Spotted Eagle catching a big green lizard and flying away with it. After lunch we had Short-toed Eagle, Black Kite, Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Northern Goshawk before entering the beech and hornbeam forest of Csozota valley again. Here we saw Ural Owl and Collared Flycatchers among the magnificent trees but had no luck with woodpeckers as we were rained out. We tried another beech wood further away where we had another Ural Owl but again as we were waiting at a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker hole we got heavy rain. In fact the rain that afternoon was the worst in the Zemplén region for twenty years and caused a lot of damage! Just before dusk we tried Corncrake and River Warbler in a scrubby area around Tokaj. We saw a minimum of five River Warblers but the Corncrakes were not active in the wet grass. We had a wonderful dinner that evening in a local World Heritage Wine Cellar tasting all the best Tokaj wines.

Next morning before breakfast we went to Erdőbénye in the hope of finding Corncrakes but the weather was not favourable. Slightly disappointed on the way back to the hotel we stopped to listen for Marsh Warblers when a Corncrake started to call very close to us. We had multiple great flight views of the Corncrake finally! River Warblers and Barred Warblers were singing around too. After breakfast we drove to the Romanian border stopping briefly at Újfehértó where we saw at least five Greater Short-toed Larks which is a highly localized bird in the Carpathians. We could study them in display flight and on the ground as well. Later we crossed the Hungarian-Romanian border and had our first stop at a reservoir near Alesd, where we saw Great Crested Grebes, Common Sandpipers and a displaying pair of Little Ringed Plovers. Our main target bird was the Ortolan Bunting here of which we managed to see three or four singing males very close by. In the late afternoon we arrived at

Torockó (Rimetea) again in heavy rain. In this lovely World Heritage Village the windows of the houses we stayed in looked out on limestone walls near the settlement. After a dinner of local specialities, we did try some owling. It was still raining but we finally heard two different European Scops Owls but they soon went silent and never responded.

The following morning we walked up to the bare rocks before breakfast, where three male Rufous-tailed Rock Thrushes were singing. The first one was far but we gradually had better views and Sally found one very near at the end. We could also observe a singing male Rock Bunting from a distance. Wood Larks were singing everywhere in the area and we scoped one of them. After breakfast we still birded the same valley and had great views of Golden Eagle, Great Grey Shrike, Whinchat and as a great surprise a pair of Red-rumped Swallows way outside their usual range. Later we left for Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc) and had our packed lunch at Segesvár (Sighisoara) in the Dracula Castle, where Dracula spent five years in his youth. Nearer to our final destination we saw Lesser Spotted Eagle and Eurasian Sparrowhawk and then arrived at our comfortable hotel in Székelyudvarhely where we were to spend three nights. We then left for the bear hide. Altogether we saw three bears and all appeared while it was still daylight. Lots of Eurasian Jays and a Firecrest entertained us too. Our happy group had a substantial dinner in the hotel that night!

After a very early wake-up, we drove to Balánbánya in the Hagymás Mountain. It just started to rain as we left the hotel and did continued until the evening. Still in darkness Sándor, our local guide helped us reach the top of Nagy-Hagymás, one of the Western Capercaillie lekking grounds. We arrived at dawn but because of the rain there was no lekking at all. We had several brief views of at least three male capercaillies and one actually flew across a glade right in front of us. Sally found a White-throated Dipper and several Grey Wagtails on the stream nearby. After our packed breakfast we left for Békás (Bicaz) Gorge and after about an hour of driving we arrived to this really scenic gorge. It took us about five hours to see the Wallcreepers as they were not too active in the rain. Finally we found two birds while above the gorge Alpine and Common Swifts crossed the air. Still in the rain we drove back to the hotel seeing a bonus Goosander on the way at one of the reservoirs. We settled for an early dinner after a tiring day and tasted the local blueberry brandy.

On the next day before breakfast we had a productive early morning walk in a nearby park adding Grey-headed Woodpecker, Syrian Woodpecker and European Green Woodpecker to our list. Soon after breakfast we visited the Görgényi Mountains in search of Three-toed Woodpecker. As we drove further up we realised the higher parts still had thick snow cover so we physically could just hardly reach the Three-toed Woodpecker's territory. We started our birding in the high Carpathian coniferous zone and soon a lovely male Ring Ouzel was chacking on a tree top followed by singing Tree Pipits and more thrushes. It took us a while but eventually we found a nice drumming Three-toed Woodpecker which was ever so obliging and all of us had great views of this special woodpecker. On the way back to our Hotel we saw a thermal of eight Common Buzzards and two European Honey Buzzards joined them. In the afternoon we visited the only fish ponds in the region, where besides the common waders we saw a Black Stork, Ferruginous Ducks, Red-footed Falcons, Little Gull, Black, Whiskered and White-winged Terns, Little Owls, Great Reed Warblers, Great Grey Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrikes and different forms of Yellow Wagtail, most notably the Transylvanian "*dombrowski*" and the Black-headed type "*superciliaris*". The best of all was the female Pallid Harrier that was chasing a Western Marsh Harrier.

After breakfast we started our return journey to Hungary. We drove along the Maros River Valley and had our first stop at Élesd reservoir. While having our picnic lunch we saw a Montagu's Harrier, Tufted Ducks, Common Terns and the first Dunlin of the trip. At four o'clock we crossed the border and drove to Debrecen Great Wood for our last bit of forest birding. The old oak woodland was very productive partly because of the improving weather. On the woodpecker scene we had good view of a drumming Black Woodpecker, two or three Middle Spotted Woodpeckers, several Great Spotted Woodpeckers and a preening male Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. We also saw European Honey

Buzzard, European Bee-eaters and the speciality of this site, a Short-toed Treecreeper. We finished the day with a distant Saker and Ravens on the Hortobágy and then moved on to Öregtő Lodge where we were to spend our last four nights.

Prior to breakfast we did some birding in the Lodge "garden" which is the Hortobágy Fishpond complex itself. We had a male Little Bittern, singing Grasshopper and Savi's Warblers in the scope, Spotted Flycatcher, Golden Orioles and Wood Warbler in the willow trees, several singing Common Nightingales, both Bearded and Eurasian Penduline Tits and various herons, egrets and ducks. After breakfast we visited the Nagyváni-pusztá, where we could not find Great Bustards so had to return in the late afternoon. With patience we did manage to see a minimum of two different male Little Crakes and got good looks of these skulkers. Still before lunch we visited a colony of Red-footed Falcons where male and female birds were flying around us and we had excellent views of both sexes through the scope. Also a few Long-eared Owl chicks were entertaining us but we did not see the adults. After a nice lunch in the Patkós Csárda we watched a colony of European Bee-eaters and a pair of European Rollers displaying and soon after we found the very localized Moustached Warbler at Zám marshes. In the afternoon we returned to Nagyván and eventually got two magnificent male Great Bustards from a reasonable distance and even flushed two Common Quails from the long grass. After a short drive we arrived at an endless meadow, where at least three male Aquatic Warblers were singing among the swarm of mosquitoes. It took some time to find one on the top of a dead *Rumex* stem but then he gave excellent prolonged views. We also flushed two Red-throated Pipit in the wet grassland and had some fly over Pygmy Cormorants at Fényes Fishponds. So we got both rare warblers this afternoon on the Hortobágy and this was followed by a good local dinner in the Hortobágy Csárda.

The following morning it was raining again. We started the day with a singing Icterine Warbler right in front of the Lodge entrance door. Still in rain we managed to find a female Saker perched on a pylon as well as Tawny Pipits, a Montagu's Harrier and an unexpected Mediterranean Gull from the Birdquest tower in the Northern section of the national park. We visited a freshly drained fishpond with big exposed mudflats. Alongside the more common waders we got a summer-plumaged Broad-billed Sandpiper, four Sanderlings and a Ruddy Turnstone all of them rare passage birds in spring. We were also able to compare Caspian and Yellow-legged Gulls side by side and saw 24 Little Gulls. While watching the waders, wildfowl and herons three White-tailed Eagles suddenly appeared out of nowhere and we watched them flying around. After our lunch in the famous Tiszacsege Fish Csárda we visited Darassa in the hope of finding a Long-legged Buzzard but we had no luck just a Eurasian Hobby circled above us. Our next stop was at Balvázújváros at a Syrian Woodpecker nesting area. After a little while the female bird came to check us out and we got some very good views! Soon after this the Magdolna pusztá area was giving excellent looks at a female Long-eared Owl with chicks, several Red-footed Falcons, Lesser Grey Shrikes, Black-winged Stilts, Black-tailed Godwit and a wonderful selection of brightly coloured male Ruffs as they were dancing and fighting around. The Hortobágy does not have breeding White-winged Terns every year but this year several colonies were found and we saw over 550 of these awesome and very elegant terns flying around us on the Nagyszik. Just five minutes later the news came that the first Great Spotted Cuckoo for Hungary had been found a couple hundreds of metres from us. We got there first before everybody else and had very good looks of this nice adult rarity. This was an adequate finish to this unforgettable day!

Early the next morning we had a walk before breakfast around the beginning of Hortobágy Fishponds. The reedbed was lively with singing *Acrocephalus* and Savi's Warblers. We saw a male Eurasian Penduline Tit as it was building its tiny hanging nest. After breakfast we were at Darassa in the Northern section of the National Park by the best raptor watching time. In the first place we had European Honey Buzzard, Red-footed Falcon and Eurasian Hobby. We then changed place and finally a fine male Long-legged Buzzard circled up in front of us giving excellent views alongside another European Honey Buzzard and two more Eurasian Hobbies flew over. Still before lunch we visited Kaba Sugar Factory ponds but apart from the common waders only Black-winged Stilts and

two singing male Bluethroats were notable. On the way to our lunch place we finally found two very tame Temminck's Stint on a roadside rain pool and watched them for minutes. After lunch we visited one of Europe's biggest heron colonies where we saw hundreds of Eurasian Spoonbills, Black-crowned Night Herons, Squacco Herons, Purple Herons, Pygmy Cormorants and, to our satisfaction, three Glossy Ibises. They circled three times right in front of us as the sun was catching the glossy sheen on their plumage and then flew away. We had up to a hundred Bearded Tits, a singing male Moustached Warbler and several Ferruginous Ducks too. Our final destination for the afternoon was the far end of the Hortobágy Fishpond complex. Here we added some birds to our ever growing list including Red-necked and Black-necked Grebes, Red-crested Pochard and Common Gull. The Whiskered Tern colony containing around 400 pairs, the seven Mediterranean Gulls, more Little Crakes and Bearded Tits were equally exciting. After this bird-filled day we had our last dinner in the Hortobágy Csárda with nice local red wine and discussed all the good birds we had seen on this very successful 12-day birding trip.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

PODICIPEDIDAE

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: We had one in Transylvania and three in the Hortobágy.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*: It was common on the fish ponds in Transylvania and in the Hortobágy. A maximum of 30 individuals were seen in one day.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*: We saw five birds on our last day at the Hortobágy Fishpond.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*: One was seen at Szentpál Fishponds Transylvania and two at the Hortobágy Fishponds.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: Up to 200 were seen on the Hortobágy.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*: Seen every day in the Hortobágy with a maximum of 70 birds on the 12th at the breeding colony.

ARDEIDAE

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*: Heard at most of the wetlands on the Hortobágy but proved to be elusive this year.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*: One male was seen perfectly at Hortobágy Fishpond near to our Lodge.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*: Small flocks were recorded daily on the Hortobágy.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*: One to four individuals were seen every day at the Hortobágy fish ponds.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: One or two were on the Hortobágy on most days.

Great Egret *Egretta alba*: It was very common everywhere in Hungary near the wetlands.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: Small numbers were seen on most days on the Hortobágy and some in Transylvania.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*: Up to 10 were seen daily on the Hortobágy and one in Transylvania.

CICONIIDAE

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*: A nice adult was seen in Transylvania at Szentpál (Saintpaul) fish ponds.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*: Still a very common breeder in villages in Transylvania and Hungary.

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*: Three were seen on our last day at Derzsi fishpond on the Hortobágy.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*: We saw small flocks in the Hortobágy every day and up to 130 around the breeding colony.

ANATIDAE

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*: Up to eight were seen on the Hortobágy.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*: 50-360 were seen daily on the Hortobágy.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*: Two were seen in Transylvania at Szentpál Fishponds and a few were at the Hortobágy fish ponds.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*: Up to six were seen at Hortobágy Fishpond.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*: Four males were seen at Dinnyés-lapos wetland from the Birdquest tower on the Hortobágy.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*: It was very common in Transylvania and Hungary.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*: Small numbers recorded in Transylvania and in Hungary too.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*: Small numbers recorded in Transylvania and in Hungary too.
Red-crested Pochard *Aythya rufina*: Two males were seen at Hortobágy Fishponds.
Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*: It was common on the Hortobágy.
Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*: We saw the first 14 birds at Szentpál Fishponds in Transylvania of this globally threatened species and around 10-80 daily on the Hortobágy.
Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*: Seven were seen at Élesd (Alesd) reservoir in Transylvania and four at Hortobágy Fishponds.
Goosander *Mergus merganser*: Two female were seen at a small reservoir near Székelyvarság in Transylvania.

ACCIPITRIDAE

European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*: We had two in Transylvania and three on the Hortobágy.
Black Kite *Milvus migrans*: A single bird was seen in the Zemplén Hills near Sátoraljaújhely.
White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*: An adult and two immatures were seen on the Hortobágy.
Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*: We had a distant view of one bird in the Zemplén Hills.
Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*: Small numbers were seen in Transylvania, and it was very common in Hungary, especially on the Hortobágy, where the daily maximum number was 50 individuals.
Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*: We had great views of a female at Szentpál Fishponds in Transylvania.
Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*: Two were seen in Slovakia, a nice close one in Transylvania and two more on the Hortobágy.
Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*: Singles were seen twice in the Zemplén Hills both were picked up by Neil. Well done.
Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*: One was seen in Transylvania circling together with Lesser Spotted Eagle.
Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*: It was very common in Transylvania and in Hungary.
Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*: We saw one very showy individual on the Hortobágy.
Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*: One was seen in the Zemplén Hills and one in Transylvania.
Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*: We had wonderful views of a pair near to its breeding area in the Zemplén Hills.
Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*: One adult was seen in Slovakia and at least one more in Transylvania.

FALCONIDAE

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*: Fairly common in Transylvania and in Hungary.
Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*: We saw the first three males at Szentpál Fishponds in Transylvania and up to 60 were seen on the Hortobágy every day.
Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*: Five were recorded on the Hortobágy.
Saker *Falco cherrug*: We twice saw single females on the Hortobágy.

TETRAONIDAE

Hazel Grouse *Bonasa bonasia*: Two were flushed in Slovakia with good views of them.
Western Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*: Two or three males were seen in the Hagymás Mountain in Transylvania.

PHASIANIDAE

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*: We had two in flight near Nagyiván on the Hortobágy.
Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*: Common in Hungary and in Transylvania.

RALLIDAE

Little Crane *Porzana parva*: Two males were seen on the Hortobágy well and others were heard.

Corn Crake *Crex crex*: One was seen well in the Zemplén Hills and others were heard in Transylvania.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*: Three were seen in Transylvania at Szentpál (Saintpaul) fish ponds as they were thrown into the reedbed by the wind..

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*: Common in Transylvania and in Hungary.

GRUIDAE

Common Crane *Grus grus*: A maximum 140 over-summering birds were recorded on the Hortobágy.

OTIDIDAE

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*: Two males were seen on the Nagyiváni-puszta, Hortobágy.

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*: Up to 30 were seen on the Hortobágy.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*: Only 10 were seen on the Hortobágy.

CHARADRIIDAE

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*: A displaying and mating pair was seen in Transylvania and a single was seen on the Hortobágy.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*: Fairly common near the wetlands and grasslands in Hungary and Transylvania.

SCOLOPACIDAE

Sanderling *Calidris alba*: Four were seen at a freshly drained fish pond on the Hortobágy.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*: Two very tame individual was seen very well on the Hortobágy.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*: We saw one in Transylvania and four on the Hortobágy.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*: A summer plumaged adult was seen of this rare migrant on the Hortobágy.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*: Up to 300 were seen daily on the Hortobágy. We had a nice flock of different plumaged males dancing too.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*: One was seen displaying on the Hortobágy.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*: One single was seen on the Hortobágy.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*: Four were seen at Akadémia Fishpond on the Hortobágy.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*: Only two summer plumaged males were seen on the trip in Transylvania.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*: Up to 10 were seen on the Hortobágy.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: Just a few were seen on the Hortobágy.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: Flocks of 10-20 were seen on the Hortobágy.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: A few were in Transylvania and in Hungary.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*: Two single were seen, one on the Hortobágy and one at Kaba.

LARIDAE

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*: Seven birds were seen on the breeding island of the Hortobágy Fishpond.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*: We had flocks of 10-27 on the Hortobágy fish ponds.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*: Common, mainly in the Hortobágy.

Common Gull *Larus canus*: Two were seen at the Hortobágy Fishpond.

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*: Up to 150 a day in the Hortobágy, where we could study its identification.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*: Less common than Caspian Gull in the Hortobágy and two in Transylvania.

STERNIDAE

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: Two were seen at Élesd (Alesd), and up to 45 at the Hortobágy Fishpond.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*: Up to 300 were seen daily on the Hortobágy.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*: We had 47 at Élesd (Alesd) in Transylvania and up to 50 on the Hortobágy.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*: We saw one in Transylvania and up to 550 on the Hortobágy.

COLUMBIDAE

Rock Dove *Columba livia*: Common.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*: Seven were seen in the Zemplén Hills.

Common Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*: Fairly common in Transylvania and in Hungary.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*: Very common in the villages.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*: Fairly common in Hungary, and in Transylvania as well.

CUCULIDAE

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*: We had an excellent look on the adult bird turned up on the Hortobágy. This was the first ever record for Hungary.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*: Common around the fish ponds, with between five and ten daily on the Hortobágy.

STRIGIDAE

European Scops Owl *Otus scops*: Two were heard at Torockó in Transylvania.

Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*: A gorgeous female was seen perfectly in the Zemplén Hills.

Eurasian Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum*: A female was seen well as it was looking out of her nest hole at Rejdova in Slovakia.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*: Two were seen in Transylvania and up to four daily on the Hortobágy.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*: A nice rufous morph bird was seen in the Zemplén Hills as it was mobbed by thrushes.

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis*: Three females were seen well in the Zemplén Hills.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*: Six were seen on the Hortobágy.

APODIDAE

Common Swift *Apus apus*: Up to 50 were seen in Slovakia, Transylvania and Hungary.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*: One was seen in the rain at Békás (Bicaz) Gorge in Transylvania.

MEROPIDAE

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*: Only two were seen in the Zemplén Hills but six were studied well on the Hortobágy.

CORACIIDAE

European Roller *Coracias garrulus*: Two were seen displaying on the Hortobágy.

UPUPIDAE

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*: One was seen in the Zemplén Hills and two were seen daily on the Hortobágy.

PICIDAE

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*: At least eight were recorded in the Zemplén Hills.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*: A fine female was seen well at Székelyudvarhely in Transylvania.

European Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*: One was heard in Transylvania.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*: We saw one in the Zemplén Hills, one in Debrecen Great Wood and one was flying along with the bus at 40km/hour for two kilometres on the Hortobágy!

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*: Just a few were seen in the woods in Hungary and Transylvania.

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus*: A female was seen in Balmazújváros city.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius*: One was seen in the Zemplén Hills and three in the Debrecen Great Wood.

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*: Two different birds were seen briefly in the Zemplén Hills.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*: A fine male was seen well in Debrecen Great Wood.

ALAUDIDAE

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*: Five were seen at Újfehértó.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*: Small numbers were seen in Hungary and in Transylvania.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*: Up to five were seen at Torockó (Rimetea) and some more in other places of Transylvania plus two in the Zemplén Hills

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*: Common, especially on the Hortobágy.

HIRUNDINIDAE

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*: Big numbers around the fish ponds in Transylvania and on the Hortobágy.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*: We saw a pair at Torockó in Transylvania which is the first record there.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: Very common throughout Transylvania and Hungary.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbica*: Very common, huge flocks in Hungary.

MOTACILLIDAE

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*: Nine were seen on the Hortobágy.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*: A few were seen in Transylvania.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*: Two were seen on the Hortobágy.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*: The nominate race is common in Transylvania and in Hungary. On the Szentpál (Saintpaul) fish ponds we saw *dobrowski* and *superciliaris* forms too.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*: It was common in the Zemplén Hills and in Transylvania.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*: Fairly common in Transylvania and in Hungary.

CINCLIDAE

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*: Two were seen in the Carpathians.

TROGLODYTIDAE

Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*: It was seen in Slovakia and in the Zemplén Hills.

TURDIDAE

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*: Heard and seen in Zemplén Hills and in the Carpathians.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*: Common in Hungary. Heard daily and seen once or twice.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*: Two were seen at Kaba Sugar Factory.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*: We saw it in small numbers in Hungary and in Transylvania.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*: A female was seen in the Görgényi Mountains in Transylvania.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*: It was seen in small numbers in Hungary and in Transylvania.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*: Fairly common in Hungary and in Transylvania.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*: A few were seen in Transylvania and on the Hortobágy.
Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*: Three males were seen at Torockó in Transylvania.
Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*: At least four male was seen in the Görgényi Mountains in Transylvania.
Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*: Fairly common in Hungary and in Transylvania, rare on the Hortobágy.
Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*: Few breeding pairs in Slovakia and Transylvania.
Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*: Fairly common in the Zemplén Hills and in the Carpathians.
Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*: We saw only one in the Carpathian Mountains.

SYLVIIDAE

Common Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*: One singing male was seen very well near our Lodge on the Hortobágy.
River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*: Heard in the Zemplén Hills daily and we saw about 3 or 4 singing males.
Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*: Common on the Hortobágy, especially at the Hortobágy Fishpond, maximum 10 individuals were seen a day.
Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*: We had at least two different singing male at Zám Marshes and one at Derzsi Fishpond on the Hortobágy.
Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*: We had good prolonged view of a singing male at the Nagyiváni-puszta on the Hortobágy.
Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*: Very common on the Hortobágy.
Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*: We recorded two on the Hortobágy on the last day.
European Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*: Common on the Hortobágy with maximum 50 sightings daily.
Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*: Also quite common on the Hortobágy with up to 15-50 daily.
Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*: We saw three singing males on the Hortobágy.
Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*: At least five were recorded in the Zemplén Hills.
Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*: It was common in Hungary and in Transylvania.
Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*: We saw regularly in Transylvania and on the Hortobágy.
Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*: We heard regularly in the Zemplén Hills and in Transylvania.
Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*: Fairly common in the beech woods of the Zemplén Hills and we saw one on the Hortobágy.
Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*: Fairly common, but mainly heard.
Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*: A few were seen at Rejdova in Slovakia.
Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*: Heard in the Carpathian Mountains.
Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*: We heard several and seen two in Transylvania.

MUSCICAPIDAE

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*: We saw four on the Hortobágy.
Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*: We recorded at least four or five males in the Zemplén Hills.

TIMALIIDAE

Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus*: Fairly common on the Hortobágy.

AEGITHALIDAE

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*: We had two in the Zemplén Hills.

PARIDAE

Willow Tit *Parus montanus*: We saw one in the Carpathian Mountains at Rejdova.
Crested Tit *Parus cristatus*: We had views of this magnificent little gem mainly at higher elevations.
Coal Tit *Parus ater*: Fairly common in the Zemplén Hills and in the Carpathian Mountains.

Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*: We saw a few in the Zemplén Hills and in Transylvania.

Great Tit *Parus major*: Common in Hungary and in Transylvania.

SITTIDAE

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*: Common in the Zemplén Hills and in the Debrecen Great Wood.

TICHODROMADIDAE

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*: We saw two of these stunning birds at Békás (Bicaz) Gorge in the rain.

CERTHIIDAE

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*: Heard several times in the Zemplén Hills and in Transylvania.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*: A single bird was seen in the Debrecen Great Wood.

REMIZIDAE

Eurasian Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*: Fairly common on the Hortobágy, and a male was building nest near to our Lodge.

ORIOOLIDAE

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*: Fairly common in the Zemplén Hills and on the Hortobágy. Every morning we had several singing males from our hotel window on the Hortobágy.

LANIIDAE

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*: We had some in Transylvania though it was common in the Zemplén Hills and on the Hortobágy.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*: Two were seen in Transylvania and up to 10 daily on the Hortobágy.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*: Two were seen in Transylvania, on their breeding grounds.

CORVIDAE

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*: Fairly common in Zemplén Hills and in the Carpathian Mountains.

Common Magpie *Pica pica*: Common everywhere.

Spotted Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*: One shy but curious bird was seen well at Rejdova in Slovakia.

Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*: Very common in Transylvania and on the Hortobágy.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*: Very common in Transylvania and on the Hortobágy.

Hooded Crow *Corvus corone*: Very common in Transylvania and on the Hortobágy.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*: A maximum of six were seen in the Zemplén Hills, and up to 25 in Transylvania.

STURNIDAE

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*: Very common everywhere.

PASSERIDAE

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Very common everywhere.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*: Common, especially in the Zemplén Hills and on the Hortobágy.

FRINGILLIDAE

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*: Very common.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*: Fairly common in the Zemplén Hills, seen on the Hortobágy and Transylvania too.

European Green Finch *Carduelis chloris*: Very common.
European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*: Very common.
Common Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*: Fairly common in Transylvania, seen in the Zemplén Hills and scarce on the Hortobágy.
Eurasian Bullfinch (Common B) *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*: Seen up in the mountains.
Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*: Common in the Zemplén Hills.

EMBERIZIDAE

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*: Fairly common in the Zemplén Hills, in Transylvania and in Debrecen Great Wood.
Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*: A fine singing male was seen at Torockó (Rimetea) in Transylvania.
Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*: At least five were seen at Élesd (Alesd), in Transylvania.
Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*: Fairly common on the Hortobágy, a few were seen in Transylvania on the fish ponds.
Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*: Fairly common in Hungary and in Transylvania.

MAMMALS

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*: Only one was seen in Transylvania.
Brown Bear *Ursus arctos*: Altogether three were seen in Transylvania.
Stoat *Mustela erminea*: One was seen at Rejdova in Slovakia still in winter coat.
Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*: We had one on the floodplain of the Bodrog and two in the Zemplén Hills.
Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*: Four were seen in Transylvania.
Western Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*: Seen almost everyday in Hungary and in Transylvania.
European Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*: Four were seen in the Zemplén and one in Transylvania.
European Sousek *Spermophilus citellus*: Only three were seen in Slovakia.
Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*: Seen almost every day in Hungary.