

Trip Report

Little Crakes & Long-legs!

Sat 6th - Sat 13th August 2005

Leaders: Graham Clark & Janos Olah Jr.

Trip Diary

Eastern Hungary is a terrific place to watch birds at any time and in the late summer there are a wealth of young birds to add numbers to the breeding adult populations and, in the Hortobágy, big numbers of waders returning from their arctic breeding grounds. We recorded 176 species of birds on this tour including 21 waders and 17 raptors plus some excellent butterflies including Swallowtail, Scarce Copper, Purple and Lesser Purple Emperor and Map.

We began our tour in the Hortobágy, with its flat, dry steppe lands or puszta with numerous areas of shallow open water. Here, János's local knowledge was particularly important, this being his local patch. Little Bitterns were always on view around the hotel and special birds like Common Crane, Pygmy Cormorant and Glossy Ibis were all seen around the adjacent wetlands while raptors in this rich marshland included White-tailed, Short-toed and Lesser Spotted Eagles, the majestic Saker and big numbers of Red-footed Falcons. Both the headline species of Long-legged Buzzard and Little Crake were seen very well, Bluethroats and Stone-curlews performed dutifully, shrike numbers in the open country were impressive throughout and good views were obtained of the four 'exotics' — Bee-eater, Roller, Hoopoe and Golden Oriole. Also of note in the Hortobágy were the unique domestic animals including the famous Woolly Pigs, Hungarian Grey Longhorn Cattle, spiral-horned Racka Sheep and Komondor, Kuvasz and Puli dog breeds all of which János took the trouble to show us well.

We moved on to the Zémlen via the plains with their majestic Great Bustards, then Great Black-headed Gull and Caspian Tern, and Middle Spotted Woodpecker at Debrecen. Here, where Zoli was the master and on his home ground, we were based in the wine producing town of Tokaj and the rolling, wooded hills and surrounding country were home to the spectacular Black Woodpecker,

Eagle and Ural Owl and a whole 'parliamentary' gathering of Long-eared Owls. To finish, we enjoyed the spectacular sight of both Imperial and Golden Eagles soaring together over a fairytale castle. The hospitality we received and food we ate (especially the lunches!) were particularly enjoyable throughout the trip.

Day 1. Saturday 6th August. Our BA flight to Budapest was reassuringly uneventful and after teaming up with János we set out on an evening drive across Hungary to our hotel in the Hortobágy. Three White Storks fed in a ditch en-route and our first Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrikes perched up prominently. There were plenty of raptors in the open country with four Common Buzzards, 15 Kestrels, ten Red-footed Falcons and two Hobbys. Our first mammals were also out in the open fields with six Brown Hares and three Roe Deer. We enjoyed a packed supper by the side of the bus at Kisújszállás and reached the hotel in darkness.

Day 2. Sunday 7th August. Our first early morning walk around the head of the lake and woodland adjacent to the hotel produced fantastic views of Little Bitterns plus Black-crowned Night Herons as expected. Also in the reeds were Sedge, Reed and Great Reed Warblers for good comparison while in the adjacent trees Nightingale, Wood Warbler, the resident Spotted Flycatcher and two migrant Pied Flycatchers all showed well. After breakfast we made for Balmazújváros, which held 80 Little Grebes, eight Black-necked Grebes in rather drab plumage, a pair of Ferruginous Ducks and a family party of Penduline Tits. The real target was Little Crake however and a couple of young birds duly obliged to give close, if rather brief views. We then headed for an area of open, dry steppe or puszta where a Saker put on a quite magnificent aerial display right above us. Back in the village three well grown White Storks were in one of the many still occupied nests we were to encounter in this particularly late breeding year.

The first of our delicious lunches was taken at a csárda in the Hortobágy village in the centre of the reserve after which we were able to view the famous 'nine-arch bridge'. Moving on to the fishpond we encountered a whole host of birds out on the drained mud. Three Black Storks looked rather forlorn, the larger gulls were in a ratio of roughly 3:1 in favour of Caspian over Yellow-legged, an adult Curlew Sandpiper fed systematically and Whiskered and Black Terns hunted the remaining pool at our feet which was home to a bonanza of dead and dying fish, many too large for the terns but with a very good selection of smaller items. Our final stop of the day was at the Csécs fishponds where five Great-crested Grebe nests were attached to emergent vegetation, a Water Rail was heard and another pair of Ferruginous Ducks were out on the open water. On the track adjacent to the

ponds a Green Woodpecker and a male and juvenile Bluethroat hunted for insects along the mown bank while Fire-bellied Toads serenaded us as we were leaving.

These were the highlights of the day but many other species of interest were recorded including a wealth of herons (Squacco, Little Egret, Great White Egret, Grey and two Purple), 60 Spoonbills, 300 Greylag Geese of the race *rubirostris*, ten Black-winged Stilts, 30 Garganey, Green, Wood and Common Sandpipers, Crested Lark, ten Yellow Wagtails of the nominate race *flava*, two pairs of Stonechats, Bearded Tit and flocks of Tree Sparrows.

Day 3. Monday 8th August. The east of the Hortobágy was our first stop this morning and a Quail welcomed us on arrival with a brief appearance on the track. A 'ring-tail' Montagu's Harrier was distant and a female and two young Great Bustards much more so. Moving on to Nagyván, Dr. Kovacs pointed out four Stone-curlews from his porch but the rain had set in when we reached Kis-Jusztus although we still managed a brief flight view of a Bittern, eight Bee-eaters around and perched up, 300 distant Common Cranes and a bedraggled Short-toed Eagle which we pursued down a muddy track in our four-wheel drive for excellent views.

Lunch was at the Patkós csárda with the usual wholesome fare (including 'boy-catcher' soup!) before we proceeded on to Fényes where an adult and two juvenile Red-necked Grebes were the highlight. Ohat proved difficult to access but we managed it eventually and were rewarded with at least 50 Pygmy Cormorants, 30 Gadwall and three Mute Swans before returning to the Derzsi fishpond which still held the three Black Storks, Black Terns now numbering 63, Avocets which had increased to 23 and a major flock of 378 Black-tailed Godwits recently arrived. János had got word of a juvenile Marsh Sandpiper so we headed off there and eventually found it via a terrific juvenile Saker on the way in. Very good numbers of waders were out on the mud on the drained pond and included at least 200 Ruff, 150 Spotted Redshank and 50 Wood Sandpipers while single Ringed Plover and juvenile Redshank were new.

Other species and numbers of note during the day included at least 50 Marsh Harriers, 90 Red-footed Falcons, 6 Cuckoos, a flock of over 100 Corn Buntings and a single roadside Roller.

Day 4. Tuesday 9th August. A Thrush Nightingale and six Common Terns entertained us outside the hotel first thing before we made for the managed wetland in the northern Hortobágy where János had been working this year. This proved very worthwhile with at least 50 Glossy Ibis, 20 lingering White-winged Black Terns, 15 Common Snipe, two more Marsh Sandpipers, another flight view of a Bittern, a magnificent flypast from an adult White-tailed Eagle and a Little Owl perched up warily on the way out. We then made various stops as we proceeded west through the dry steppe and managed to locate another hunting 'ring-tail' Montagu's Harrier and a very close Lesser Spotted Eagle flushed from the ground.

Lunch was a delicious bowl of thick fish soup taken at the riverside csárda where two Kingfishers flew up the river and perched distantly on over-hanging branches and males of both Syrian and Lesser-spotted Woodpeckers showed very well. Heading back we finally spotted a magnificent juvenile Long-legged Buzzard on a hay-bale while in the village the spectacular winter roost of Long-eared Owls had begun to collect and we were lucky enough to spot 13 of these birds either fast asleep or peering at us with bright orange eyes. We still had enough time to cruise around the grazed steppe where there were plenty of Skylarks and a flock of at least 150 Common Cranes and another young Long-legged Buzzard in a stubble field below the higher ground, an Osprey and 40 Red-footed Falcons, hunting over the woodland to the east and a Swallowtail, a Pale Clouded Yellow and Painted Ladies around a thistle covered hillock. The Osprey was perched up magnificently in a dead tree on the way out. Other species and numbers of note today included eight Hoopoes, ten Tawny Pipits and 15 Northern Wheatears.

Day 5. Wednesday 10th August. Sue spotted a Red-breasted Flycatcher on a bench outside the hotel this morning and we finally obtained an excellent view of a Golden Oriole which delighted Marilyn and Trevor in particular. At the beet factory 10 Shovelers flew across, four Green Sandpipers were around the edges and a Common Whitethroat perched up. We then headed south to the plains in search of Great Bustards in the company and vehicle of the head warden who was a friend of János. We weren't disappointed either with magnificent views of 19 regal males both feeding leisurely on the ground and in flight whilst a party of four Red Deer, including a pristine stag, ran past them. At the fishponds János located the expected moulting Great Black-headed Gull and a similarly plumaged Caspian Tern along with three Temminck's Stints and six distant Little Stints. Our best count of 30 Little Ringed Plovers was also here along with another 200 Black-tailed Godwits and 20 each of both Great and Pygmy Cormorants.

We took lunch at the Leveles csárda in Debrecen (usual high standard!) where a Middle Spotted Woodpecker flew across briefly. This species was seen much better after lunch though in the mature

woodland of the Debrecen great forest with a conspicuously feeding adult on show, plus 20 magnificent Bee-eaters both in flight and perched, and Nuthatch and Short-toed Treecreeper although the latter was not seen well. We made good time to the wine producing town of Tokaj which gave us time to explore to the west of the town in the company of the intrepid Zoli, finding a Black Redstart and an immature male Sparrowhawk and the target species, an Eagle Owl, squatting horizontally under a bush.

Day 6. Thursday 11th August. A pair of Serins, the male singing vociferously from an overhead wire, welcomed us outside our hotel before we climbed the track above the town which was to become our regular pre-breakfast excursion for three days. Here we were rewarded with another twenty Bee-eaters (present each day), two Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers heard and seen in flight only, good views of juvenile Hawfinches and a tail-flicking adult Chiffchaff. On the way down a Wryneck showed briefly. We made for the northern Zemplén after breakfast via a flock of 50 Hawfinches across the road and hundreds of Turtle Doves on roadside wires. Our walk through the woods took us all morning and the highlights were three magnificent Ural Owls, including one perched through the 'scope, and a Black Woodpecker, which was finally located after calling adjacently for ages, and then flew all around us. Other woodpeckers included four Great Spotted and two Middle Spotted while two Honey Buzzards overhead were called in by János's whistle and ten Marsh Tits, four Treecreepers and six Jays also provided support. A Yellow-bellied Toad was extracted from a puddle, a Common Toad crawled across the trail and a Red Squirrel, a classic brick-red colour including tail, was seen very closely.

We took our only picnic of the trip on a pile of logs at the bottom of the trail where a Woodland Grayling cruised past, a Jersey Tiger moth was in the rank growth and a Duke of Burgundy was on the track to add to the excellent selection of butterflies we had seen earlier which had included ten 'second-brood pattern' Maps, 30 Silver-washed Fritillaries and plenty of Speckled Woods. A Willow Warbler and a Coal Tit were in the trees along the road. Heading for two more woodland trails after lunch we spotted our best Hobby of the trip over the vehicles in open country. The woodland produced our first Grey-headed Woodpecker, a juvenile, and a Tawny Owl flushed from a nest box it had been roosting in while a Green Toad was at the entrance to one of the trails and a Black Stork was flushed from a roadside ditch. Out in open country a pair of magnificent Imperial Eagles soared closer and closer, we stopped at Tállya, with its sculpture signifying the centre of Europe, and made another visit west of Tokaj which produced a Common Tree Frog.

Day 7. Friday 12th August. The early morning walk gave us a brief view of the Thrush Nightingale, an even briefer view of an unexpected River Warbler and a singing Garden Warbler before we headed

up the west side of the Zemplén. Here a terrific selection of raptors awaited us with a male Goshawk mobbing a Common Buzzard and an immature and a pair of adult Imperial Eagles alongside an immature Golden Eagle for good comparison. Next we made for the woods where another Grey-headed Woodpecker, this time a male, was eventually located, four Willow Tits were with Coal Tits and eight Goldcrests and another Golden Eagle cruised across along with up to four Ravens. Butterflies were also very well represented with females of both Purple and Lesser Purple Emperor in quick succession, Scarce Copper, Queen of Spain Fritillary and Wood White plus two more Jersey Tiger moths.

Lunch was taken back at Tokaj before we headed for the woods again. Here a very nervous adult and a young Black Woodpecker flew around us, an Agile Frog was on the trail, Dryad was another new butterfly and Migrant Hawkers and Emperor were two dragonflies identified just outside the woods. We then made our way back down the east side of the Zemplén via a field of 50 feeding White Storks, three Stock Doves on wires, four Serins and the first of a number of small flocks of Linnets which eventually totalled 60. Out on the river floodplain two Whinchats were with 43 Red-backed Shrikes on rank ground and we found a small pond which held an immature Purple Heron, pairs of Teal and Garganey which flew around for good comparison and a persistently hunting young Marsh Harrier. A Wryneck made a brief flypast. In the evening we sampled a number of table and desert wines in a crypt-like wine cellar above Tokaj which provided an interesting finale.

Day 8. Saturday 13th August. Our early morning walk was still productive with a good but brief view of a young Barred Warbler, a couple of 'white-headed' Long-tailed Tits, six Black Redstarts and a Lesser Whitethroat while 290 House Martins were gathered on wires at the bottom of the hill before we headed for our final field excursion around an area of open parkland. Here a well-known and older female Imperial Eagle cruised along a ridge, an adult Lesser Spotted Eagle was very adjacent, another male Grey-headed Woodpecker was on a dead stump, a family party of five Woodlarks was flushed eventually and Dusky Meadow Brown was another new butterfly. Our later flight allowed for a leisurely lunch at the now familiar csárda at Tokaj and the journey to Budapest was notable for two roadside Rollers and a magnificent female Goshawk which cruised across our bow. We negotiated the outskirts of the city and arrived at the airport in good time and after a bit of confusion with the gate numbers were on our way arriving back in London virtually on schedule.

Systematic list of species recorded

(A total of 176 species was recorded by the group. Of these, 3 were heard only).

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Daily from 7th to 9th with at least 80 at Balmazújváros on 7th.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

On 7th, 8th and 10th with 5 nests attached to the emergent vegetation at the Csécs fishponds on 7th.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

An adult with two juveniles of this smartly dressed species on the Fényes fishpond on the afternoon of 8th.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Eight at Balmazújváros on 7th and four on the Ohat fishpond on 8th all in a rather surprisingly early moult into something approaching a winter plumage.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

About 40 in all, with all but one in or around the Hortobágy.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*

Fifty of this dumpy little Cormorant on 8th, mostly on or around the Ohat fishpond where they were seen very well, and another 20 at the Biharugra fishponds on 10th.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Flight views at Kis-Jusztus on 8th, at János' wetland at Vókonya on 9th and at Biharugra fishponds on 10th.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

Seen very well every morning from 7th to 10th around the lake at our Hortobagy hotel which must be one of the best places in the world to get great views of this species!

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Again, best seen around the lake at the Hortobagy hotel early in the morning.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

Seen on three dates in and around the Hortobágy with a maximum of at least 25 on 7th. Amazing how they look bright buff on the ground and almost pure white in the air.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Seen from 7th to 10th in and around the Hortobágy with a maximum of at least 80 on 7th.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba*

Seen from 7th to 10th in and around the Hortobágy with a maximum of at least 50 on 7th.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Seen daily from 7th to 12th but less common than the white egrets.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Seen daily from 7th to 10th with a maximum of eight on 8th and another seen very well in the Bodrog water meadows on 12th.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

Three loafing on the Derzsi fishpond on 7th were still present on 8th, three were distantly in flight at János's wetland on 9th, and singles up from the roadside near Erdöbénye and over the Bodrog water meadows in the Zemplén on 11th and 12th respectively.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Seen every day including many birds still at the nest in the villages at the end of this particularly late season.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

At least 50 at János' wetland at Vókonya on 9th.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Daily in and around the Hortobágy from 7th to 10th with a daily maximum of at least 110 on 8th and about 200 altogether.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Three on the Ohat fishpond on 8th and another on 10th.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Daily in and around the Hortobágy from 7th to 10th. These birds were of the eastern race *rubrirostris* with pink bills.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Thirty on the Ohat fishpond on 8th and again on 10th.

Teal *Anas crecca*

Daily in and around the Hortobágy from 7th to 10th and a pair at the Bodrog water meadows on 12th.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Daily from 6th to 10th and seven over Tokaj on the morning of 12th.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Daily in and around the Hortobágy from 7th to 10th and a pair at the Bodrog water meadows on 12th.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

At least thirty in and around the Hortobágy on 7th, 9th and 10th.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

In and around the Hortobágy on 7th, 8th and 10th.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

A pair at each of Balmazújváros and the Csécs fishponds on 7th and ten on the Fényes fishpond on 8th.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Two on the Csécs fishponds on 7th and three on the Fényes fishpond on 8th.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Two calling birds eventually seen well over the woods of the northern Zemplén on 11th, a wing-clapping bird above the Boldogkövára Castle west of the Zemplén on 12th and two above Erdőbénye on 13th.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

A super adult cruised across János' wetland at Vókonya on 9th.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

We drove right up to a woebegone bird in a lone tree and got excellent views both perched and in flight through the rain at Kis-Jusztus on 8th. Another was in hunting flight north of Tokaj on 12th.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

A common raptor throughout the country especially in the Hortobágy where we saw at least 50 on 8th.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

A distant female from the old airfield tower in the Hortobágy on 8th and a slightly closer female quartering the steppe in the northern Hortobágy on 9th.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

A male mobbing a Buzzard above the Boldogkövőralja Castle on 12th and a cracking female across the motorway on our way to Budapest on 13th.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

An immature male in a quarry west of Tokaj on 10th was the only one.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Common and seen every day.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

Two young birds on 9th, the first a real highlight and seen exceptionally well perched on a hay-bale and then in leisurely flight in the northern Hortobágy and another more distantly perched similarly below the Angyalháza the same evening. Much paler and longer winged than Common Buzzard.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*

One flushed from the northern Hortobágy on 9th, three east of the Zemplén on 11th and a very close bird above Erdőbénye on 13th.

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

A pair soared ever closer and almost overhead near Gibárt west of the Zemplén on 11th, perhaps the same two adults and a juvenile were over the Boldogköváraja Castle on 12th and an old adult female was above Erdöbénye on 13th.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

An immature bird soaring over the Boldogköváraja Castle on 12th with Imperial Eagles. This gave us an excellent opportunity to appreciate the differences, especially the obvious dihedral of the Golden Eagles and the much flatter wings of the Imperials. Another Golden Eagle, this time an adult, soared across the track in the woods at Hejce later the same morning.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

One soaring distantly and then perched much more closely at the Angyalháza on 9th.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Quite common and seen every day.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

Seen nearly every day and particularly common in the Hortobágy although less so in the Zemplén. We saw the best part of 100 on both 8th and 9th.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Six birds altogether on four dates.

Saker *Falco cherrug*

Four or five in the Hortobágy on 7th, 8th and 9th with the adult overhead near Balmazújváros on 7th and the almost as close immature at Elep on 8th the best.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

A brief view of one on the track near the old airfield in the Hortobágy on 8th and four others heard.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Seen nearly every day but not especially common away from our Hortobágy hotel.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

A young bird was calling at the Csécs fishponds on 8th.

Little Crake *Porzana parva*

Two juveniles near Balmazújváros on 8th were seen well but briefly.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Ten in all on four dates.

Coot *Fulica atra*

Daily in and around the Hortobágy from 7th to 10th.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

About 300 flighty birds at Kis-Jusztus on 8th and at least 150 in a stubble field below the Angyalháza on 9th.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

A female and two young birds very distantly from the old airfield tower in the Hortobágy on 8th were followed by, for many, the highlight of the trip with 19 superb males both in sedate feeding mode and in flight over the Bihar plains near Darvas on 10th.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Twenty-one of these incredibly elegant birds in and around the Hortobágy on three dates.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Fourteen including a young bird on the Derzsi fishpond on 7th with 23 there on 8th and again at the Biharugra fishponds on 10th.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus*

Four seen very well from Dr. Kovac's porch at Nagyiván on 8th.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Ten on the Derzsi fishpond on 7th with 16 there on 8th and 30 on the Biharugra fishponds on 10th.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

A single bird on the Elep fishponds on 8th was the only one.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Daily from 6th to 10th most of which were in the Hortobágy.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Six seen distantly on the Biharugra fishponds on 10th.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Three on the Biharugra fishponds on 10th Biharugra fishponds on 10th were the only ones.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

An adult on the Derzsi fishpond on 7th, four on the Elep fishponds on 8th and an adult at the Kaba beet factory on 10th.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Forty on three dates in and around the Hortobágy.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Daily from 7th to 10th in and around the Hortobágy with at least 200 on the Elep fishponds on 8th.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Daily in the Hortobágy on 7th, 8th and 9th with at least 50 altogether.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Good numbers in and around the Hortobágy from 7th to 10th with 378 on the Derzsi fishpond and 100 on the Elep fishponds on 8th and 200 on the Biharugra fishponds on 10th.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*

In and around the Hortobágy on three dates.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

Daily in and around the Hortobágy from 7th to 10th with 150 on the Elep fishponds on 8th.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

A juvenile on the Elep fishponds on 8th was the only one.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

A juvenile on the Elep fishponds on 8th and two at János's wetland at Vókonya on 9th.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Two on the Derzsi fishpond on 7th and eight on the Elep fishponds on 8th.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Two on the Derzsi fishpond on 7th and four at the Kaba beet factory on 10th.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Daily from 7th to 10th in and around the Hortobágy with at least 50 on the Elep fishponds on 8th.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

In and around the Hortobágy on three dates with 10 on the Derzsi fishpond on 8th the best daily count.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

Seen daily from 7th to 10th in and around the Hortobágy.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Daily in and around the Hortobágy from 7th to 10th.

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*

Again, daily in and around the Hortobágy from 7th to 10th. Recently split, this bird is slimmer and less compact than *michahellis* with a thinner bill and longer legs and, in the adults, less sharply defined black wing tips and a paler mantle. Both are, of course, a split from Herring Gull. Caspian Gull is the commoner of the two in the Hortobágy at this time of year and we estimated at least a 3:1 ratio in this species' favour at the Derzsi fishpond on 7th.

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

A moulting adult on the Biharugra fishponds on 10th. Formerly known as Great Black-headed Gull.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*

A moulting adult on the Biharugra fishponds on 10th.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Daily in and around the Hortobágy from 7th to 10th with the best at the hotel early mornings and at Kaba beet factory on 10th.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*

Daily in and around the Hortobágy from 7th to 10th. The best numbers and the best views were at the remaining puddle at the drained Derzsi fishpond on 7th and 8th which was full of stressed fish prey.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

As above. There were 63 Black Terns in a variety of plumages at the Derzsi fishpond on 8th.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*

At least 20 at János' wetland on at Vókonya 9th which was a remnant from the big numbers that had bred there this year.

Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Seen every day mostly around human habitation.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

At least three in a stubble field and on wires east of the Zemplén on 12th.

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Seen nearly every day.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Seen nearly every day.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Seen every day with hundreds on wires east of the Zemplén on 12th. What a pleasure after the decline at home!

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

A dozen in the Hortobágy from 7th to 9th and one in the Zemplén on 12th.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*

A wary adult crouched in a quarry west of Tokaj on the evening of 10th.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

One perched up in some rubble amongst some farm buildings near János' wetland at Vókonya on 9th.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

One flushed from its roost in a nest-box perched up prominently in the surrounding trees west of Erdöbénye on 11th.

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis*

Super! Three in the woods of the northern Zemplén on 12th included one perched in the 'scope and two flight views.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

Thirteen at a roost in three trees in Balmazújváros on 9th were a real highlight and the forerunner of the much bigger winter roost.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Ten on five dates.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Heard at the hotel on 7th and two along the Tisza river at the lunchtime stop at Tiszacsege on 9th.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Eight at Kis-Jusztus on 8th, 20 feeding and preening in the Debrecen great wood on 10th and a similar number in the quarry above Tokaj on the last three mornings.

Roller *Coracias garrulus*

Five altogether on three dates.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Fourteen on four dates mostly in the Hortobágy proved very popular.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

At least one above Tokaj on the morning of 11th and one flew over the pond in the Bodrog water meadows on 12th.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*

A juvenile west of Erdöbénye on 11th, a male near Hejce on 12th and a male in more open woodland above Erdöbénye on 13th.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Three on 7th included one performing very well along the track at the Csécs fishponds and another was heard in the Zemplén on 11th.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*

One of this spectacular species was elusive but eventually spotted in the woods of the northern Zemplén on 11th and another nervous adult and a juvenile were west of Erdöbénye on 12th.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Ten on six dates.

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus*

A male at the base of a poplar at our lunchtime stop at Tiszacsege on 9th was the best with further singles on 12th and 13th.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius*

A brief flypast at our lunchtime stop at Debrecen on 10th followed by a much more prolonged view of one feeding in the forest, two in the northern Zemplén woodlands on 11th and another heard near Hejce on 12th.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*

A super male at our lunchtime stop at Tiszacsege on 9th and birds heard and in flight above Tokaj early morning on 11th and 12th.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Roadside birds seen on 7th, 8th and 9th.

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

A family party of five was flushed from rank grassland in the meadow above Erdöbénye on 13th.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Fairly common and seen on five dates.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Seen on five dates.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common and seen every day.

House Martin *Delichon urbica*

Common and seen nearly every day. There were 290 on wires above the hotel in Tokaj early on the morning 13th.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

A young bird on 7th and ten on 9th all in the Hortobágy.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Fairly common in the Hortobágy and recorded on five dates. All those seen well were of the nominate 'Blue-headed' race *flava*.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba*

Fairly common in the Hortobágy from 7th to 10th and one on 13th.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Singles heard on 7th, 9th, 11th and 12th.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Recorded on 10th, 11th and 12th and eventually seen well in the Zemplén woodlands.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*

One behind the hotel on the morning of 9th, one heard above the hotel at Tokaj on the morning of 11th and presumably the same bird seen well but briefly there on the morning of 12th.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Recorded on five dates and seen well behind the hotel early in the mornings.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica cyanecula*

A male and a young bird of the White-spotted race feeding along the track at the Csécs fishponds on 7th.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

One near Balmazújváros on 7th and daily in the Zemplén from 10th to 13th.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

Two active birds at the Bodrog water meadows on 12th.

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

A dozen on three dates.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Twenty on three dates in the Hortobágy.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Seen nearly every day.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

In the Zemplén on 11th, 12th and 13th.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*

One popped up briefly and unexpectedly above the hotel at Tokaj early on the morning of 12th.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

One heard calling at the old airfield in the Hortobágy on 8th.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Two in the reeds at the Hortobagy hotel early on the morning of 7th.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Seen daily in and around the Hortobágy from 7th to 10th especially in the reeds behind the hotel.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Recorded daily in and around the Hortobágy from 7th to 10th especially in the reeds behind the hotel.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*

One briefly above the hotel at Tokaj early on the morning of 12th and another seen much better there on 13th.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

Seen on 7th, 9th, 12th and 13th.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

One at the Kaba beet factory on 10th.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

One above the hotel at Tokaj early on the morning of 12th was still singing there on 13th.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Daily from 10th to 13th.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Recorded on four dates and seen best behind the Hortobagy hotel.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

One above the hotel in Tokaj early on the morning of 11th.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

One in the northern Zemplén on 11th.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Eight near Hejce on 12th.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Seen nearly every day.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

Sue saw one on a bench behind our Hortobagy hotel on the morning of 10th.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Two behind our Hortobagy hotel on the morning of 7th and one there on 8th.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

At least four at the Csécs fishponds on 7th and heard again on 8th.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Two white-headed birds above the hotel at Tokaj early on the morning of 13th.

Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*

Recorded on 10th, 11th and 12th and seen best in the northern Zemplén on 11th.

Willow Tit *Parus montanus*

Four near Hejce on 12th.

Coal Tit *Parus ater*

One in the northern Zemplén on 11th and near Hejce on 12th.

Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*

Recorded daily from 10th to 13th.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Recorded daily from 10th to 13th.

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

In the Debrecen great wood on 10th and in the Zemplén on 11th and 12th.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Four in the northern Zemplén on 11th and another on 12th.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

Up to three calling in the Debrecen great wood on 10th, one of which was glimpsed.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*

A family party of six near Balmazújváros on 7th and heard again on 8th.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Seen or heard nearly every day with a good view eventually obtained at our Hortobagy hotel.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Very common in all open and semi-open habitats and seen every day. There were 43 migrants together in a patch of rank grassland at the Bodrog water meadows on 12th.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*

Seen daily from 6th to 10th in and around the Hortobágy where it was about half as common as the previous species.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

In the Zemplén on 11th, 12th and 13th.

Magpie *Pica pica*

Seen nearly every day.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Two near Balmazújváros on 7th.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

In the Hortobágy on 7th, 8th and 9th.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

Seen nearly every day.

Raven *Corvus corax*

At least ten from 9th to 12th.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Seen every day.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Seen every day.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Common and seen nearly every day.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Seen on five dates. Commonest in the Zemplén.

Serin *Serinus serinus*

A pair outside the hotel at Tokaj on the morning of 11th and four near Szegi on 12th.

Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

Seen nearly every day.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Seen nearly every day.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

An immature near the Csécs fishponds on 7th and about 60 near Szegi on 12th.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Recorded daily from 8th to 13th with 50 flying across the road near Tokaj on 11th the best numbers and some good views of young birds above the hotel at Tokaj on 11th, 12th and 13th.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

In the Zemplén on 11th, 12th and 13th.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Singles in the Hortobágy on 7th, 8th and 9th.

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*

Seen on four dates with some large post-breeding flocks of over 100 in the Hortobágy on 8th and 9th.

Mammals

Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*

Common in the Hortobágy and seen daily from 6th to 10th with fifteen altogether.

Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

One classic animal in the northern Zemplén on 11th.

Stoat *Mustela erminea*

On 7th, 8th and 9th with four altogether.

Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*

Four, including a fine stag, ran past the Great Bustards on the Bihar plains on 10th.

Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

Daily from 6th to 12th with 19 altogether.

Reptiles & Amphibians

Yellow-bellied Toad *Bombina variegata*

One in the north Zemplén woods on 11th.

Fire-bellied Toad *Bombina bombina*

Heard at the Csécs fishponds on 7th. The lowland counterpart of the previous species.

Common Toad *Bufo bufo*

One in the north Zemplén woods on 11th.

Green Toad *Bufo viridis*

One west of Erdöbénye on 11th.

Common Tree Frog *Hyla arborea*

One in a quarry west of Tokaj on the evening of 11th.

Agile Frog *Rana dalmatina*

One in woodland west of Erdöbénye on 12th. This species, with its dark mask, is not particularly aquatic outside the breeding season.

Marsh Frog *Rana ridibunda*

Most of the frogs we saw in aquatic habitats were probably of this species but they are included in a difficult complex with Pool and Edible Frog, *R. lessonae* and *R. esculenta*, which are notoriously difficult to separate.

Butterflies Moths

Swallowtail *Papilio machaon* Jersey Tiger *Euplagia quadripunctaria*

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

Small White *Artogeia rapae*

Green-veined White *Artogeia napi* Damselflies & Dragonflies

Pale Clouded Yellow *Colias hyale* Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans*

Wood White *Leptidea sinapis* Emperor Dragonfly *Anax imperator*

Scarce Copper *Lycaena virgaureae* Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*

Iolas Blue *Iolana iolas* Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus* Scarlet Darter *Crocothemis erythraea*

Duke of Burgundy Fritillary *Hamearis lucina*

Purple Emperor *Apatura iris*

Lesser Purple Emperor *Apatura ilia*

Peacock Butterfly *Inachis io*

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

Map Butterfly *Araschnia levana*

Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia*

Queen of Spain Fritillary *Issoria lathonia*

Woodland Grayling *Hipparchia fagi*

Dryad Minois *dryas*

Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*

Dusky Meadow Brown *Hyponephele lycaon*

Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*