

HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA & TRANSYLVANIA GT 2013
with **SAKERTOUR**
3-14 May 2013



White-backed Woodpecker (János Oláh)

Leader: Sándor Borza

This was the second time our GT tour was running with this itinerary and it was just as successful as in 2012. The weather was mainly dry and hot, although we had rainy and windy days as well. We recorded a total of 213 species in 10 days of birding while covering almost all major bird habitats of the Carpathian Basin. This tour also gives a superb insight of the fantastic sceneries in the countries visited: Hungary, Slovakia and Romania. May is certainly a magical month to birdwatch in Eastern Europe and one of the most productive periods of the year when breeding and migrating birds are both present. This year's highlights were all the European breeding woodpeckers including superb views of the rare and declining White-backed Woodpecker and the enigmatic Three-toed Woodpecker; six species of owls including Ural and Eagle Owl; nineteen species of raptors including Booted, Short-toed and Imperial Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, Red-footed Falcon and Saker; Great Bustard, Little Crake, Corncrake, Collared Pratincole, Wallcreeper, Red-breasted and Collared Flycatchers, Thrush Nightingale and a wide range of warblers including River Warbler. We were looking into 2013 with high hopes for Aquatic Warblers but following the very wet spring the habitat was totally flooded and again (following 2012 when the habitat was dry) there were no breeding Aquatic Warblers in the Hortobágy.

Friday, 3rd of May

The tour has started from Budapest with one hour drive to the south with Fabio and Rita. The first destination was the Kiskunság region, because we had a lot of time while the other flight had arrived to the airport. We took a short birdwatching trip near Apaj so we could see several waterbird species, including Mediterranean and Common Gulls, Avocets, Stilts. After the wetland area we have visited Apaj town, where we observed a female Syrian Woodpecker. When we left the Kiskunság region, we picked up George at the airport and moved to Zemplén Hills in the remote northeast corner of Hungary. Because of the late arriving we just finished the day with a pleasant traditional dinner and good home-made wine.



Savi's Warbler in Kiskunság NP (Sándor Borza)

Saturday, 4th of May

On this day we had assistance by our local guide, Zoltán Petrovics who knows every corner of this fantastic area as been birdwatching here for 30 years. His nickname is 'woodpeckerman' and without a doubt he deserves this name as he is simply outstanding in finding them! After breakfast we started the day with a short walk near the accommodation, where we could observe many superb birds such as Collared Flycatcher, Wood warbler, Lesser-spotted Woodpecker just to name but a few. In addition to this, we got an amazing view of the rare and declining White-backed Woodpecker at an active nest hole (see image above). Our next port of call was a good observation site for raptors near Bodrogkeresztúr, where we saw several interesting birds like the rare breeder Short-toed Eagle, Lesser-spotted Eagle, Honey Buzzard and Black Stork. In the afternoon we have visited a territory of Eastern Imperial Eagle where we saw an adult bird successfully, which was followed by a nice Ural Owl in the forest! And the day was not over yet! We swiftly moved to an abandoned quarry where we located an Eurasian Eagle Owl but the afternoon wind hampered our birding at a nearby

meadow for Corncrake. To celebrate this action and bird-packed day we had an enjoyable wine tasting with dinner in the World Heritage Tokaj region. The 'Sun King' of France (Louis XIVth) said the famous words (which became a motto) when he first tasted the wine from Tokaj: 'vinum regum rex inorum' (the wine of kings and the king of wines).



Ural Owl in the Zemplén Hills (Sándor Borza)

Sunday, 5rd of May

After an early breakfast we left for the Érc Mountains in Slovakia. We had a few stops en route to look for various birds though. Our first stop was still in the Zemplén Hilly where we added a fine Barred Warbler to our list. Later while we were driving to the border we heard a singing River Warbler which was also tracked down. We got brilliant views of this secretive bird. By lunch time we arrived to the base of the Stolica Mountain near the Slovensky Raj National Park. We had our packed lunch while Willow Warbler and Goldcrest were singing constantly around us. The afternoon was spent in search of the key target birds. First of all we visited a nest hole of Eurasian Pygmy Owl which was unfortunately abandoned. This winter was very snowy, cold and long, so these conditions affected the owls and other birds badly. However we got absolutely amazing looks of a fantastic male Three-toed Woodpecker which was much appreciated! It was time to drive to our accomodation but we still picked up a pair of Willow Tit.



Three-toed Woodpecker in the Érc Mountin (Sándor Borza)

Monday, 6th of May

After a quick breakfast we left the hotel for some more birding in the Érc Mountin. The first destination was the base of the Stolica Mountain where we had a good views of Northern Goshawk. Unfortunately, the weather conditions were very bad so we quit early and left Slovakia behind. On the way to the Hortobágy National Park in Hungary we had two stop en route. One was to locate the highly localised Short-toed Lark – which was unsuccesfull but the other in the Great Wood of Debrecen produced Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Short-toed Treecreeper, Collared Flycatcher and Black Woodpecker. Exhausted we settled into our lovely Trófea Hotel near Nádudvar.



Nutcracker in Transylvania and Grey Wagtail in Slovakia (Sándor Borza)

Tuesday, 7th of May

The World Heritage Hortobágy National Park! This was our first full day at this premier birdwatching site. There were so many things to do but we had to take our time and do it one by one. The spring of 2013 is very wet one with amazing waterbird spectacles! The entire Hortobágy area was a great wetland in April and a paradise for birds. Our first port of call was an emergency reservoir near Nádudvar. If the Tisza River endanger the human settlements the Southern Hortobágy emergency reservoir opens up to take 40 million cubic meter of floodwater. We had plenty of waterbird species here the highlights being summer plumaged Red-necked Grebe, hundreds of White-winged Tern, Common Cranes, White-tailed Eagle and so on. After this fantastic wetland we have visited a Saker territory where we had great looks of this special bird – at least for Hungarians it is special as it is THE national bird! Still before lunch we saw another localised raptor, the ginger-coloured Long-legged Buzzard. After the tasty lunch at Tiszacsege Fish Csárda we drove to one of the many fishponds of the region. The freshly exposed mudflat held a wide range of waders here such as Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Godwit, Little Stint and Little Gull. We also added two unexpected bonus species to our growing list here, one of them was a Kentish Plover and the other one was the Osprey, which showed a spectacular and successful fishing presentation. The last destination was a vast grassland area where we saw Montagu's Harrier and Grasshopper Warbler though our real target was the fantastic Great Bustard. We located two male birds and could study them for as long as we wanted and they even performed their 'foam-bath' display - it was a fantastic experience!



Osprey in Hortobágy region (Sándor Borza)

Wednesday, 8th of May

After breakfast we left for Transylvania. Not much later when we crossed the border to Romania we stopped at the Élesd's reservoirs where we saw several new birds for our list. There were plenty of Great Crested Grebes, a few Black-necked Grebes and Little Grebe too. The reservoir was also good for terns, marshterns (Whiskered, Black, White-winged and Common) and gulls (Black-headed, Yellow-legged, Caspian). There were also two unseasonal Black-throated Divers on the lake. We had several singing Common Whitethroats and Ortolan Buntings nearby. After this stop we continued towards Torockó, where we had enough time to take a short trip to limestone outcrops of the Székelykő Mountain. Highlights included Golden Eagles, Peregrine Falcon, Alpine Swifts, a fine male Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Northern Wheatear and Rock Bunting. After a traditional dinner we saw a singing Scops Owl at center of the village.



Rock Bunting in Transylvania (Sándor Borza)

Thursday, 9th of May

After breakfast we continued our drive towards the Hargita Mountain, but we had several stop en route. Still near to Torockó the Kőköz is another limestone area. This place added two scarce species to our list, Eurasian Crag Martin and Red-rumped Swallow. Both of these species are on the most northern border of their distribution range. We had another stop at the Dracula's Castle of Segesvár, where we did a pleasant walking around this place. We had also a quick stop near the Hargita Mountain along a riverine habitat where we located Thrush Nightingale, Garden Warbler and River Warbler. The last birding destination was the Szentpál-fishpond, which place gave an excellent experience. There were several drained pond so we could observe lots of wader species like Grey Plover, Temminck's Stint, Curlew Sandpipers (in breeding plumage), Greenshanks and so on. In late afternoon we arrived to our

rural accommodation in Déság, where we were waited by a local welcome drink and tasty dinner.



Singing Thrush Nightingale in Transylvania (Sándor Borza)

Friday, 10th of May

After a substantial breakfast we drove to the highest peak of the Harghita Mountain. We slowly worked our way up towards the high elevation areas where we could find Short-toed Eagle and a migrating rarity in the form of a dark morph Booted Eagle. In the high elevation spruce forest we saw Firecrest, Eurasian Nutcracker and a pair of Water Pipit in a nearby clearing. The plan for the afternoon was to visit a special Sakertour Brown Bear hide. We met with our local forester guide, who accompanied us to the hide and explained about the Carpathian Brown Bears. We were extremely lucky, because when we reached the hide, there have already been three Bears (female and cubs) in front of the hide. We could study this fabulous mammal for a long time. Little bit later we recognized a fourth Bear as well, this time a young male. That was a fantastic experience for us!



Brown Bears in Transylvania (Sándor Borza)

Saturday, 11th of May

It was the day to visit the fabulous Békás (Bicaz) Gorge. This is a fantastic location – apparently the most scenic of all Carpathian Gorges – and one of the easiest to see the sought-after Wallcreeper. It is not only easy to get to (by car) but holds several pairs of these unique birds. We were not disappointed because we had a good view of Wallcreepers. We could see the special 'butter-flying' movements. We also had White-throated Dipper again and lots of Grey Wagtails. On our way back we have visited a higher pass where we had a male Ring Ouzel and Common Redstart. We were very lucky to find the secretive European Adder on the trail.



European Adder in Transylvania

Sunday, 12th of May

It was time to leave Transylvania behind and after breakfast we started our long return journey to Hungary. Later we had a quick stop at one of our stake-outs and we soon located a young male Red-breasted Flycatcher and a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. We also had several singing male Collared Flycatcher and a Wren at the same location. Later we stopped again at Élesd's reservoir adding Northern Grey Shrike and Grey Partridge to our growing list, and we had a fantastic view of some low flying Alpine Swifts. Our last birding stop was at Andaháza wetland in Bihar (already in Hungary), where we spotted an Eurasian Teal and a Spotted Redshank. It was late afternoon when we arrived to the familiar Trófea Hotel near Nádudvar.



Black Stork en route Hungary (Sándor Borza)

Monday, 13th of May

We were back to the birdy Hortobágy. This was also the last all-day-long birding of the tour and we were mainly looking for birds we have not seen previously. Unfortunately the weather was cloudy and windy so we had hard work to see our remaining target birds. First we visited the Hortobágy Fishpond complex where we had several Squacco Herons, Purple Herons, Black-crowned Night Herons, several singing Bluethroats, Icterine Warbler and Bearded Tits. In the afternoon we have checked a Red-footed Falcon colony which was magnificent. The birds were in the peak of mating so the little forest patch was alive with calling and fighting birds. What a superb raptor this colonial breeder with a strikingly different plumage of the sexes. After the falcon-excursion we have visited another wetland a calling Little Crake proved to be elusive with only a perched up Little Owl to be seen. In the late afternoon a news came in from our fellow Sakertour leaders that two breeding plumaged Broad-billed Sandpipers were located on a floodwater. We enjoyed good views of these stunning waders and then returned to our hotel for the farewell dinner.



Bearded Tit in Hortobágy (Sándor Borza)

Tuesday, 14th of May

After breakfast we took a short birding around the accomodation. We could add the Pied Flycatcher to our list, and we saw an Icterine Warbler again. Because of the early departing time of George we had to say goodbye to the Hortobágy and started our drive towards the Liszt Ferenc Airport of Budapest. We had one stop en route on the paddyfields of Kisújszállás where we had a good looks of Collared Pratincoles, Curlew Sandpiper and Little Gull. Finally we got Budapest airport in time for the flight. This was a truly memorable tour through the transect of the Carpathian range from the high mountains to the steppes of Hortobágy with an amazing selection of birds! We also had an insight into three Central-Eastern European countries with great natural heritage.

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).

Hazel Grouse *Bonasa bonasia* (H): We heard one bird in Slovakia, but unfortunately we couldn't see it.

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*: We saw three birds near the Élesd's reservoir. They were feeding on the agricultural fields. Its such a rare event to see this declining bird nowadays.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (H): We heard this vocal bird on several occasions in the Zemplén area and also in the Hortobágy but it did not show.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*: Common throughout the tour.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*: It was numerous in the Hortobágy area with up to 150 daily. This is the eastern rubrirostris race in eastern Hungary.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*: We could see one individual in Kiskunság region between Greyleg Geese.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*: The first ones were in the Kiskunság area. In the Hortobágy area we observed several individuals.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*: We saw big flocks at Hortobágy-fishpond and there was one bird in the Zemplén area.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*: We had several individuals at Hortobágy-fishpond and Andaháza wetland.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*: Two males were seen at Andaháza wetland in Bihar.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*: It was very common throughout the tour in Hungary, Slovakia and Transylvania.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*: We had several individuals at Hortobágy area and Zemplén foothills.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*: Small numbers recorded in Hungary too.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*: We saw a few birds in Transylvania and large flocks in Hungary.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*: Regular encounters with this globally threatened species on the tour with most sightings in the Hortobágy area.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*: About 30 were seen at Élesd's Reservoir in Bihar and one pair at Andaháza wetland.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* (NL): There was one bird at Élesd's reservoir in Bihar.

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*: This was the surprising of the tour! We saw two late birds in winter plumage at Élesd's reservoir.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: We had several individuals almost every wetland during the trip.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*: It was common on the fish ponds in Transylvania and in the Hortobágy. Up to 200 individuals were counted on Élesd reservoir.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*: One sighting on the tour. There was two individuals on the emergency reservoir in Hortobágy. From the tower we could find the nest of this pair.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*: About ten birds were present at Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania and later saw more at the emergency reservoir.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*: We observed six birds in the Zemplén Hills and there was one bird en route from Transylvania which gave a good view for us.

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

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*: The first observation was at Kiskunság, but we saw little flocks in the Hortobágy.

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* (H): Several birds were just heard almost every wetlands, but we weren't lucky to see it.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*: First we heard it in the Zemplén foothills. There were several individual beside of the Hotel Trófea in the Hortobágy.

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

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*: Regularly seen in the Hortobágy area with a maximum four birds.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: Small numbers were recorded nearly at all the visited wetlands both in Hungary and in Transylvania. Particularly common in some parts of the Hortobágy.

Great Egret *Egretta alba*: It was very common everywhere during the tour near the wetlands.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: Small numbers were recorded nearly at all the visited wetlands both in Hungary and in Transylvania.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*: Up to 5 birds were seen daily on the Hortobágy.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: Small numbers were regularly seen on the tour.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*: About 20 birds were seen near the breeding colony on the Hortobágy.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*: Fairly common throughout the tour.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*: Daily sightings of these very special colonial breeders on the Hortobágy. Sometime we had up to 20 circling together or occupying their abandoned rook nest or an artificial nest box for breeding.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*: Only a single bird was seen in the Zemplén area.

Saker *Falco cherrug*: We had excellent looks of a pair in the Hortobágy area.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*: Two birds were observed near Torockó, later on the tour we saw one individual on the Hargita Mountain.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*: The first observation was at the emergency reservoir at Hortobágy. Later one was seen at Hortobágy-fishpond.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*: We had an amazing view of one bird in the Zemplén Hills. Later we had another bird in Transylvania.

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 were up to 10 individuals.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*: We had two fine males and one female on the Hortobágy.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*: One bird was seen in the Zemplén Hills.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*: There were two observations during the tour. The first one was a poor view in the Zemplén Hills, but later on we could study well a female bird in Slovakia.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*: It was very common throughout the tour in all three countries.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*: We had a distant view of one on the Hortobágy Plain.

European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*: We saw two flying birds in Zemplén Hills.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*: We saw up to three birds in each country, but the best view were obtained in Transylvania. The flagship bird of the Carpathians with over 2000 breeding pairs!

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*: We had good looks of two birds in the Zemplén area.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*: Three birds were seen near Torockó in Transylvania. One was sitting on its nest cliff but later gave good flight views too.

Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata*: This was a surprising find! We observed one dark morph individual in Transylvania.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*: We saw one late bird in Hortobágy. We could study the successfully fishing technic of it.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*: We had a poor view of this secretive bird in the Hortobágy.

Little Crake *Porzana parva* (H): One bird was just heard in the Hortobágy area. There was wind and this condition affected negatively to this species.

Corncrake *Crex crex* (H): Several birds were just heard in the Zemplén foothills and Hortobágy area. The windy condition affected negatively of seeing this species.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*: We saw several bird in the Kiskunság and Hortobágy area.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*: Commonly seen in most wetlands we have visited throughout the tour.

Common Crane *Grus grus*: We saw several flock at Hortobágy and Zemplén area.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*: We had great view of two displaying birds in the southern section of Hortobágy.

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

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*: We observed small flocks around Hortobágy area and several birds were at Andaháza wetland.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*: We stopped on the way back to airport at the paddy fields near Kisújszállás to see this now much localised bird. We managed to see three birds and it was a great ending of the tour!

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*: Several were seen on the various wetlands, reservoirs and fishponds both in Transylvania, Kiskunság and Hortobágy area.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*: We had two observations during the tour. The first was at Hortobágy, where we saw 17 birds. The second one was at Transylvania.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*: This was surprising bird a local rarity in the Hortobágy nowadays – once a breeding species! One male bird was seen on the drained fishpond in the Hortobágy area.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*: Two birds were observed at Szentpál-fishpond.

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

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*: One individual was seen on drained fishpond at Hortobágy. After we could observe a big flock at Szentpál-fishpond, Transylvania.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*: Two were seen on the drained fishpond at Szentpál fishpond. The other observation was at Hortobágy where we found six birds.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*: A big flocks was seen between a flock of waders at Szentpál fishpond in Transylvania. We found one bird near Hortobágy town.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*: We saw two in Transylvania and up to 130 on the Hortobágy.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*: Two birds were seen between Dunlins near Hortobágy town.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*: Up to 100 were seen daily on the Hortobágy. Some different breeding plumaged males with great ruffs were also observed.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*: There was one flying bird at Kiskunság.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*: Up to 30 were seen on the Hortobágy.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*: One bird was seen at Andaháza wetland..

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*: We saw 5 birds on the Élesd Reservoir and up to 8 on the Hortobágy.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: Small flock was seen on the drained fishpond at Szentpál fishpond, Transylvania.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: We regularly had flocks of 5-10 birds on most visited wetlands in the Hortobágy area.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: We observed this species on the shingle islands of Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania and two birds were also seen on the Hortobágy.

Common Gull *Larus canus*: One bird was seen at Kiskunság.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*: Three birds were seen at Kiskunság.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*: We have seen this species in Hungary two times. One was at Hortobágy, and the other was on the paddyfield, Kisújszállás.

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

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*: We saw several individual at the various wetlands we have visited on the tour.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michaellis*: Two birds were seen at Élesd Reservoir.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: Up to 10 were counted at Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania and we also had a few birds at the Hortobágy Fishpond and Kiskunság.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*: It was very common on the Hortobágy with up to 200 seen daily.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*: Small number of migrants were seen throughout the tour. The biggest count of 70 birds was at Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania.

White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*: It was very common on the Hortobágy with up to 200 seen daily because of the big rate of wetlands.

Rock Dove *Columba livia*: A very common resident throughout the tour.

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

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*: Fairly common in Transylvania and in Hungary too.

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

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*: Still a fairly common sight in most parts of Hungary and Transylvania. We had most of our sightings in the Zemplén Hills.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*: A very common bird throughout the tour from the flat Hortobágy to the top of the Carpathian Mountains.

European Scops Owl *Otus scops*: We had several bird calling in the village of Torockó in Transylvania and we could see one of them.

Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*: One female bird was seen in the Zemplén Hills.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*: We had a single sighting of one bird in the Hortobágy area.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*: The first one was heard from our accommodation the Zemplén Hills where one was also seen later.

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis*: We saw one bird in the Zemplén Hills. 2013 was a poor breeding year for this species unfortunately.

Long-eared Owl *Asia otus*: In the Hortobágy area we saw one bird in nestbox at Red-footed falcon colony.

Common Swift *Apus apus*: Up to 5 were seen near Torockó and several bird above Rejdova.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*: We saw several birds in the Bihar Mountains of Transylvania and four birds at Élesd Reservoir.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*: At the beginning of the tour we only heard birds very high in the Zemplén Hills as they were just moving in from the wintering grounds but later on the tour several individual were seen in Transylvania.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus*: One lovely pair was seen at Hortobágy.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*: We have only recorded one time this lovely bird in the Zemplén.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* (H): Unfortunately we just heard one bird in the Zemplén Hills.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*: One bird was seen in the Zemplén Hills.

European Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*: Unfortunately that was just leader sighting in the Great Wood near Debrecen, Hungary.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius*: At the beginning of the tour we only heard birds very high in the Zemplén Hills. After we had a great view of one pair in Slovakia.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*: Regularly seen in Hungary, Slovakia and Transylvania throughout the tour.

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus*: There were two sightings during the tour. First one was a female at Apaj town. After we had a great view of a male bird in the Hortobágy region.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius*: One male bird was seen in Great Wood, Hungary.

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*: Excellent views of this rare and declining species in the Zemplén Hills. A female bird changed the male in the egg laying so we could study both sexes of it.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*: At the beginning of the tour we only heard the drummings of it in the Zemplén Hills. Later on we found one pair in Transylvania.

Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus*: We had a brilliant prolonged looks of male bird in Slovakia.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*: Small numbers were seen in Hungary and in Transylvania too. Mainly near to the roadside or around farm areas.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*: We had good views of one in Transylvania.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*: A very common bird, especially numerous on the Hortobágy.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*: Small numbers at various locations but the biggest concentration was seen at Élesd Reservoir where up to 80 were counted.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*: Up to eight birds were observed near Torockó, Transylvania.

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

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*: A surprising bird of the tour which has just been found by another Sakertour group a day before us! We had a brilliant sighting of three birds in Transylvania. This is a rare breeder in the Carpathian Basin.

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

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*: There was one bird in the Kiskunság area.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*: Two were seen on the top of Hargita Mountain in Transylvania.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*: Two birds were seen on the Hargita Mountain.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*: The nominate race was common in Hungary and in Transylvania.

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

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*: It was fairly common throughout the tour.

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*: We had a single bird near Torockó. Later we saw another bird at Békás Gorge in Transylvania.

Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*: Unfortunately that was just leader sighting in Transylvania.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*: Several were seen in Slovakia.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*: Several sightings of this shy forest bird in the Zemplén Hills and in the Carpathians.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*: We saw one and heard three bird in Transylvania.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*: It was very common in Hungary. We heard it daily and seen a few at various places.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*: Most of them were busily feeding young but finally managed to see one at Hortobágy Fishponds.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*: A very common birds of the villages al along the tour. We saw several at various places but usually in small numbers.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*: The first male was seen at our accomodation in Transylvania. Later another male bird was seen in the Bucsín Pass in Transylvania.

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

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*: A fairly common bird in Hungary and in Transylvania too especially numerous on some parts of the Hortobágy.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*: A few were seen in Transylvania and on the Hortobágy.

Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*: We managed to see a two fine male and one female at Torockó in Transylvania.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*: We saw one male bird on the Bucsín Pass in Transylvania. This is the more scaly 'alpestris' race here.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*: Fairly common in Hungary and in Transylvania, rare on the Hortobágy.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*: The first one was seen in Zemplén Hills, later we had more in Transylvania.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*: A common bird in the Zemplén Hills and in the Carpathians.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*: We heard one in Slovakia and we saw a few in Transylvania.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*: One bird was seen at Hortobágy.

River Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*: There were two observations during the tour. One of it was in the Zemplén Hills, and the other one was in Transylvania.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*: We heard almost every wetland place throughout this tour. We saw a few individual in Hortobágy and Kiskunság region.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*: We saw it in wet places throughout the tour but it was particularly very common on the Hortobágy.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*: We heard several bird in Transylvania, but we saw one bird beside of the dam of Élesd reservoir.

European Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*: A fairly common bird of the extensive reed beds of the Hortobágy with daily sightings there.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*: It was a fairly common bird on the Hortobágy.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*: Good views of this striking warbler in the Zemplén Hills.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*: It was commonly heard throughout the tour and several were seen as well.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*: We saw this species regularly in Transylvania.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*: It was commonly heard throughout the tour and several were seen as well.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*: We saw one bird near Székelyudvarhely in Transylvania.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*: Fabio saw one bird around the accommodation at Hortobágy, but later on we could observe one bird at Hortobágy fishpond.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*: Fairly common in the beech woods of the Zemplén Hills and later we heard in Slovakia and Transylvania too.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*: It was commonly encountered throughout the tour.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*: We observed few birds in Slovakia and later we heard it in Transylvania as well.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*: It was seen in the Carpathian Mountains both in Slovakia and in Transylvania.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*: Like the previous species, it was seen a few times in the coniferous forests of the Carpathian Mountains in Transylvania.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*: Several were seen on the Hortobágy and in the Zemplén Hills.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*: A young male was seen in Transylvania.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*: We recorded several males of this very handsome species throughout the tour.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*: One female bird was seen around the accommodation at Hortobágy.

Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus*: It was common on the Hortobágy where we had several good views.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*: Two birds were seen in Debrecen Wood Forest. This is the lovely white-headed race here in the Carpathian Basin though there are some intermediate birds too.

Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*: A few were seen in Debrecen Great Wood and Zemplén Hills.

Willow Tit *Parus montanus*: A two birds were seen in the Carpathian Mountains in Slovakia.

Crested Tit *Parus cristatus*: We had good view of this magnificent little bird at higher elevations in Transylvania.

Coal Tit *Parus ater*: Fairly common in the Carpathian Mountains.

Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*: It was common throughout the tour.

Great Tit *Parus major*: It was common throughout the tour.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*: It was common in the Zemplén Hills, in Transylvania and in Debrecen Great Wood.

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*: Minimum three of these stunning birds were seen at Békás Gorge in Transylvania. We could study the remarkable 'butterfly like' flight action of two birds.

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*: It was seen in the Transylvania.

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

Eurasian Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*: A fairly common bird in the reedbeds of the Hortobágy, we had one sight.

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*: Fairly commonly seen throughout the tour.

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

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*: The first pair was seen in the Zemplén area but later others were seen on the Hortobágy.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*: One bird was seen beside of Élesd Reservoir.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*: It was commonly seen in the Zemplén Hills and in the Carpathian Mountains.

Common Magpie *Pica pica*: A very commonly encountered bird throughout the tour.

Spotted Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*: We had one bird in Transylvania. We managed to get good views of the this bird near the top of Hargita Mountain.

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

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*: A very commonly encountered bird throughout the tour.

Hooded Crow *Corvus corone*: A very commonly encountered bird throughout the tour.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*: A several individuals were seen in the Zemplén Hills, and small numbers were common in Transylvania too.

Common Starling *S turnus vulgaris*: One of the most common species and was seen all along the tour virtually in every habitat.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: It was common in or around human settlements.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*: It was common in the Zemplén Hills and on the Hortobágy but distinctly less so in Transylvania.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*: A very common bird in most wooded habitat.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*: Fairly common in the Zemplén Hills and a few were observed in Transylvania and on the Hortobágy too.

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*: It was seen frequently in human settlements.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*: It was seen frequently in human settlements.

Common Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*: It was fairly common in Transylvania and in the Zemplén Hills.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* (NL): Fabio observed several individual in the centre of Torockó.

Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*: One pair was seen in Slovakia very well.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*: A few were seen in the Zemplén Hills and Debrecen Great Wood.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*: It was fairly common in the Zemplén Hills, in Transylvania and in Debrecen Great Wood.

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*: We managed to get good looks of a singing male near Torockó in Transylvania.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*: Three males were seen at Élesd Reservoir in Transylvania.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*: It was fairly common in suitable habitat on the Hortobágy and a few were seen near the Zemplén Hills.

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*: Fairly common in the Zemplén Hills and on the Hortobágy.

MAMMALS

Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*: It was regularly seen throughout the tour but it was especially common on the Hortobágy.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*: Several were seen all along the tour from the Zemplén Hills to the Hortobágy.

Brown Bear *Ursus arctos*: We had a fantastic view of four individuals in Transylvania.

Stoat *Mustela erminea*: One was seen at Hortobágy.

Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*: One individual was seen in Slovakia.

Western Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*: It was regularly seen throughout the tour but it was especially common on the Hortobágy.