

# HORTOBÁGY – ZEMPLÉN AUTUMN TOUR 2018 (HUNGARY)

with **SAKERTOURS**

29 September – 5 October 2018



Ural Owl was seen well in the Zemplén Hills (Tamás Zalai)

## **Leader: Tamás Zalai**

This was the second year we run our autumn tour in this late September and early October date. We decided to run this tour in this timeframe – just like last year – as the Scandinavian Lesser White-fronted Geese only stayed for a few days in the Hortobágy area recently. Sadly 2018 was the first year ever when the geese did not stop in the Hortobágy area but migrated from Norway to Lake Kerkini, Greece directly! From satellite tracking we know they did fly over but perhaps because of the very dry conditions and hence the lack of suitable habitat they decided to press on to the final wintering area. So as birders plan and God execute.

Otherwise the timing was perfect and a few early migrants were still in Hungary. The first half of the week was a bit cloudy, sometimes cold and windy, but later we enjoyed a really nice ‘Indian summer’ or as we call in Hungary ‘Old ladies summer’ with almost cloudless blue sky with chilly mornings and warm daytime temperatures. We have observed 133 species, with the highlights being the mighty Saker and Red-footed Falcons, Long-legged Buzzard, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Great Bustard, thousands of Common Cranes, Eurasian Dotterel, Eurasian Eagle, Ural and Long-eared Owls, 8 species of Woodpeckers, Northern Grey and Red-backed Shrikes, a vagrant Yellow-browed Warbler, Bearded Reedling, Firecrest, Red-throated Pipit and Hawfinch. We had a good selection of eastern European specialities and some memorable sightings during the tour!

### **Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> of September**

The tour started at Liszt Ferenc International Airport at Budapest. A short drive took us to our first destination, a grassland area with a mosaic of agricultural fields. As soon as we got out from our minivan two female Great Bustards were spotted close to us. As the two birds slowly started to walk away and hide we spotted that one of them had a radio transmitter! While we had a picnic lunch here we found another 7 birds around us and then finally a flock of 60 birds were spotted in close range (including a group of 30 males). Fantastic! A good flock of Stock Doves fed on the same agricultural field and we had our first Western Marsh Harriers too. It was time for us to move on towards the Hortobágy National Park. As we arrived to our accommodation near Nádudvar at dusk we saw three juvenile Black-crowned Night-Herons as they were circling over us. A nice welcome sight for the hotel garden!



Eurasian Dotterel on the Hortobágy puszta. We saw a flock of 260 individuals (János Oláh)

### **Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> of September**

During our pre-breakfast walk we continuously heard the unmistakable sound of Common Cranes - not a bad background sound for the morning birding! After breakfast we started to explore the mighty Hortobágy. As we left our accommodation it became evident that Common Cranes were everywhere, in the agricultural fields, on the grasslands, along canals, etc. We moved to one of the most ancient looking grassland of the Hortobágy, called Szelencés 'puszta'. The only trees were on the horizon outside of the national park and along the Hortobágy River. Our main target at this remote and beautiful location was to find the Eurasian Dotterel as they prefer well grazed grassland with scattered bare soil patches. We were not disappointed as we found a big group of about 260 birds and could enjoy excellent looks as they were all around us! With the Dotterels we also had three Eurasian Golden Plovers, loads of migrant Red-throated Pipits, White Wagtails and Eurasian Skylarks. But apart from this, the autumn puszta was rather empty. After this fantastic experience we moved on to find yet another major bird, the mighty Saker Falcon. We had to check several places

but finally still before lunch we found a perched pair allowing good looks. Later we headed to a riverside restaurant, where we enjoyed a really tasty, traditional Hungarian fish soup and our first pancake of the tour. This was followed by a rather quiet walk along the Tisza River but only Lesser Spotted and Middle Spotted Woodpeckers were seen briefly. Our next place was a natural wetland where we had our first of many White-tailed Eagles, Eurasian Wigeons, Mallards, Northern Shovelers, Common Teals and a single Pintail. Waders were well represented too with Northern Lapwing, Grey Plover, Common Snipes, Spotted Redshanks, Dunlins, Common Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers. Time was running, so we had to drive to a special place in between the feeding and roosting site of the cranes, deep inside the national park. As we waited it seemed that nothing will happen this evening and no Cranes going to roost. It was also cloudy, windy and a bit cold. Finally as we scanned the horizon a few flock of distant cranes were seen, and a few more, and more and more! Suddenly we were in middle of a superb Crane roost flight. Thousands and thousands of cranes passed close by, virtually they came from all directions. And just before got dark the sun came out from the clouds and painted the sky to violet. The cranes passed in front of the falling sun made the first evening a memorable one! Filled with this amazing experience and the sounds we drove back to our accommodation.



Seeing the Cranes going to roost is a memorable experience in the Hortobágy (János Oláh)

### **Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> of October**

The pre-breakfast birding in the hotel grounds produced the usual birds, like Common Kingfisher, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Long-tailed Tit (with white-headed forms in the flock too) and a single Brambling. After breakfast we moved to the world famous Hortobágy-fishponds (or “halastó”, as the foreigners now). This year we made a short walk and visited a few ponds only. We just started when the unmistakable calls of Bearded Reedlings were heard, and within a minute we were able to study a nicely patterned male in the scope as long as we wanted. A fine male started to feed just meters from us. Anyway, it was a very good migration day for passerines. Eurasian Blue Tits and Common Chiffchaffs were virtually everywhere, European Robins, Northern Wrens and Dunnocks called from the willows. We just discussed how good are these fishpond for vagrants, when Richard spotted a Yellow-browed Warbler, which is still a good bird in Hungary and less than 10 records from the Hortobágy area. The bird responded well to the tape just to twitch it by another Sakertour group! We continued to some lakes with open water, where our first Pygmy Cormorants appeared, with good number of Gadwalls, Great Crested and Little Grebes and even four late



Ferruginous Ducks. We walked to an observation tower, where we had reasonably views of a small flock of Penduline Tits. We returned to our minivan where Zoli, our driver prepared a proper picnic lunch for us. After the tasty lunch we visited some smaller fishponds where we found a few lingering Whiskered Terns and our only Tufted Ducks for the trip. From here headed to the west to try for some very late Red-footed Falcons. We took a maze of dirt roads and tracks to a location where the falcons were seen recently. We saw impressive number of White-tailed Eagles, when a male Red-footed Falcon flew past very close to us. Success! We still continued and found three juvenile birds and finally an adult female as well. The set of all plumages was completed. We drove across some agricultural fields and grasslands and just on the edge of a village finally spotted a hiding and well-camouflaged Eurasian Stone Curlew. We finished our busy day in a dried fishpond, where Richard gave us a nice lecture on gull identification.



Bearded Tit is always great to see (János Oláh)

### **Tuesday, 02<sup>nd</sup> of October**

We started our last full day in the Hortobágy area but today we were about to visit a wetland area south of the Hortobágy region. This artificial wetland managed by the national park with large numbers of water buffalos. The main reason to visit this wetland was the unusually high number of Eastern Imperial Eagles lingering around this year. We were not disappointed at all and as soon as our bus parked we spotted a first year bird perched in a dead tree! We walked to an abandoned observation tower to check the wetland. Here we counted no less than six different Eastern Imperial Eagles, two adults, two first year and two immature birds. Most of the time they sat on the trees or on the grounds but we also had great flight views. At least 12 White-tailed Eagles were present too – a total of 18 eagles at one site was impressive indeed! As we checked the marshy area we added Black-necked Grebe, Black-tailed Godwit, and Greenshank to our list. Then suddenly thousands of Greylag Geese arrived to the pond for the midday bathing, making the day almost as impressive as the crane watching! Our next port of

call was a remote grassland area in search of Long-legged Buzzard, which proved to be very difficult to locate. We checked all the tress favoured by the buzzard, but had no joy. Disappointed we just got into the bus when a Long-legged Buzzard flew by and landed on the grassland. We walked closer and finally had good perched and flight views too. Our only Hen Harrier of the tour was also observed here (wintering bird). Next we headed to our lunch place, the very well situated Bíbic Lodge, at the edge of Balmazújváros as well as the national park. Here Tibor, the owner waited is with an adult Peregrine in his scope – not many restaurants can offer this service! After the tasty lunch we walked in the lodge's garden, when a Saker Falcon flew across quite close to us which was the 9<sup>th</sup> species of raptors for the day! Most of the villages on the Hungarian Great Plain have a roosting area for Long-eared Owls. We visited one in the heart of Balmazújváros, where some 10 birds were already present. We could approach these lovely creatures up to 5 meters. While we watched the owls a Syrian Woodpecker called nearby and it did not take long when we studied a bird in our telescopes. For the rest of the afternoon we have dedicated one more visit to the Dotterel area. This time we found less bird on the best spot, but as we moved around we finally found a bigger flock again mixed with Eurasian Golden Plovers. As the sun went down we enjoyed fantastic up close and personal experiences with perfect lights and a perfect double rainbow. For most of us it was one of the most unforgettable moment of the trip.



Juvenile Eastern Imperial Eagle (János Oláh)

### **Wednesday, 03<sup>rd</sup> of October**

Next morning was windy and the group has decided to skip the Debrecen Great Wood area and visit some fishponds instead before we left for the Zemplén Hills. First we made a quick visit to the half drained Elep-fishponds. Most of the birds were a bit distant as the mudflats were on the far side of the pond. Despite this we added two Black Storks to our list. From here we moved to the northwest corner of the Hortobágy, to Polgár-fishponds. Here the birds were much closer and enjoyable. Flock of Dunlins, Common and Little Ring Plovers, Pied

Avocets, a single Common Sandpiper and two Common Shelducks were on the menu. It was time to leave the Hortobágy area and after a short drive and an interesting ferry crossing we reached our riverside restaurant on the bank of the Bodrog River for a tasty lunch with a traditional “poppy seed dough”. Our local guide, Zoli joined us, to help to locate the most difficult birds in Hungary. It was obvious that something different will come, as the landscape changed dramatically. The vast grasslands transferred to rolling hills, with beautiful autumn colours and the endless vineyards of the World Heritage Tokaj Wine area. After lunch we visited a quarry where Zoli spotted a roosting Eurasian Eagle-Owl in the morning. We approached the site quietly, but the bird was well hidden and only the dark back was visible. It just looked like a dark rock amongst the leaves. Definitely a better view was required, so we moved to another quarry. This one looked perfect, as there were many owl droppings on the rocks. But apart from the many Black Redstarts we had nothing, no sign of any owls. However as we walked from the quarry Zoli checked a few poplars and flushed a Eurasian Eagle-Owl which gave fantastic flight views! Next we drove to a nearby forest, where sometimes Ural Owl can be observed. We drove along very slowly and also walked along the road but no owl was spotted this time. We enjoyed great scope views of two Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers and the lovely scenery. We had several feeding flocks with Great Tits, Common Chiffchaffs, Goldcrests and a single Firecrest. After this introduction we occupied our accommodation at Komlóska, in a tranquil forested valley.



White-backed Woodpecker in the Zemplén Hills (János Oláh)

#### **Thursday, 04<sup>th</sup> of October**

We started our pre-breakfast walk in a clear but chilly morning. As we stepped out from our lovely hotel Black Redstarts already were out too. We walked to the edge of the village seeing several Great Spotted Woodpeckers and it did not take a long when a Grey-headed Woodpecker started calling. Later it flew out from the old beech forest just to land to an apple tree not far from us. Excellent! Soon we had our first Hawfinch in the scope and very satisfied

we headed for breakfast. In the morning we drove deep inside the Zemplén Hills. We started our walk in a nice but otherwise very quiet oak forest. We only had a few Great Spotted Woodpeckers and a calling Middle Spotted. We crossed some clearings when Zoli saw a Ural Owl flew past but no one had even a glimpse of the bird. Zoli suggested the owl usually would not go far so we started to check all the trees when suddenly the owl took flight again and this time only Paul saw it with naked eyes. Zoli went after the bird and within a minute he found the bird perched. We slowly approached him and studied this forest ghost for a half an hour! Spectacular! As we came back to the track a Black Woodpecker called and gave some flight views and the walk back to the minivan gave us a nice Middle Spotted Woodpecker. From here we moved to a lovely picnic place with a lot of walnut trees and we had our lunch together with some Marsh Tits. From the shade of the walnut trees we drove a short distance to explore a really old beech forest. We walked through this nice forest but it was quiet again. We positioned ourselves and sat down on a fallen tree and tried for the White-backed Woodpecker. It did not take long when a bird started to response and suddenly flew across and started to drum. Europe's most difficult woodpecker posed in our scopes for a lengthy study! Later a Black Woodpecker called too and had very good scope views with this huge beast too. This means we had seen all the available woodpeckers on this tour again! Next we visited a cemetery in a nearby village, which was much birdier than all the forests we visited today. Here we had some Linnets, Greenfinches, Great Spotted and a nice male Syrian Woodpecker, which means we saw seven species of woodpeckers in a single day! We headed back to our accommodation to change the clothes and drove to a family run winery. Here we visited a cellar and learned a lot about the Tokaj wine region and how to make a real Tokaj wine. After this short study we had enough time to taste these very special wines too, starting from the dry ones until the real dessert wine, called "aszú". And while we were wine-tasting, we also had an excellent dinner. Different homemade food arrived continuously, always aligning with the wine we just tasted. What a perfect evening to finish a perfect tour and birdwatching!

### **Friday, 05<sup>th</sup> of October**

Our last morning gave us a Green Woodpecker in the scope, but after this we needed to say farewell to our accommodation and leave the region behind us. But as we still had time before the tour officially finished we visited a few place in the Zemplén Hills. First we birded a pine plantation where we observed a small flock of Coal Tits. Later we drove to a nice forested valley, where Tawny Owl occurs. We were not disappointed as we located the owl and allowed enough time to study. Another flock of Coal Tits were around and a flock of Common Crossbills flew over. It was time to leave for the airport where we arrived in time. It was a great tour with countless great experiences and some really special birds!





Seeing the Common Crane migration was a major highlight (János Oláh)

### SYSTEMATIC BIRD LIST

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

Species which were seen only by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

**Common Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*: Daily observation from this established bird.

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*: Very good numbers on the lowlands. Thousands were had on Andaháza wetland.

**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor*: A few were seen on the fishponds.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera*: This was the commonest duck on the Hortobágy-fishponds.

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope*: Preferred the shallower water. The maximum was 100 on our second day at the Boca-lapos.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*: It was very common throughout the tour.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*: Large flocks were observed on the fishponds.

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*: We had several small flocks on the Hortobágy and the Bihar plains.

**Common Teal** *Anas crecca*: Regularly seen on the fishponds and wetlands.

**Common Pochard** *Aythya farina*: Surprisingly only one observation of five birds.

**Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*: Only four were seen from this globally threatened species on Hortobágy-fishponds.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*: Observed only once at Fényes-fishponds on the Hortobágy.

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: Some of them were observed on the fishponds.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*: We had several small flocks on the fishponds and Andaháza.

**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*: A single bird was seen at Bihar plains.

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra*: Two birds were observed at Elep-fishponds.



**Black-crowned Night-Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*: We observed three juveniles at our accommodation on our first evening.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*: Small numbers were recorded nearly at all the visited wetlands.

**Great Egret** *Egretta alba*: Regularly observed during the tour near the wetlands and sometimes on agricultural fields too.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*: One late individual appeared on Hortobágy-fishponds.

**Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*: Some late juveniles were seen on the Elep-fishponds

**Pygmy Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*: A few tens were on the first pond of Hortobágy-fishponds.

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*: Small numbers were seen on the Hortobágy-fishponds.

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

**Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus*: Three juvenile, an adult male and a female were observed on the western flank of the Hortobágy.

**Saker Falcon** *Falco cherrug*: We had two pairs around and on pylons and later had very good views of a flying bird at the Bíbic Lodge.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*: One adult was on the Nagy-szik, Balmazújváros, observed from the terrace of the Bíbic Lodge.

**White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla*: Regularly observed in the Hortobágy, Bihar and even in the Zemplén too, sometimes in good numbers.

**Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*: It was seen every day on the Hortobágy.

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*: Only one juvenile observed on the Bihar Plains.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*: Almost daily observations.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*: The commonest raptor throughout the tour.

**Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus*: We saw one individual very well at the Bihar Plains.

**Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca*: We saw at least six different birds at Bihar plains, allowing some very good observations.

**Great Bustard** *Otis tarda*: We had great view of some 70 birds on the Kiskunság, including 30 males.

**European Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*: Only heard on Hortobágy-fishponds (H).

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*: Two were seen on the Kiskunság.

**Common Coot** *Fulica atra*: We observed only on two days on the Hortobágy.

**Common Crane** *Grus grus*: Huge flocks were seen on the grasslands and agricultural fields. The rangers counted 46.000 birds two days before on the roosting site we visited. Altogether there were more than 80.000 birds in the Hortobágy when we were there.

**Eurasian Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oediconemus*: One very well camouflaged bird was seen on the western flanks of the Hortobágy.

**Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*: Up to 100 at Polgár-fishponds was our only record for this species

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*: Several small flocks were observed near the wetlands and grasslands.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*: We saw a few late birds on the western Hortobágy and later on Polgár-fishponds.

**Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*: Several observed on the wetlands and fishponds.

**Eurasian Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria*: Only seen on Szelencés and Angyalháza often close to the Dotterels.

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*: Two singletons during the tour.

**Eurasian Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus*: Very good year we had. First we observed some 260 birds on Szelencés with 35 on the next visit.



Dotterels delighted us on this tour several times (Gábor Simay)

**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*: Several sightings on the fishponds and natural wetlands.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*: Two were seen on Bihar plains with another two on Polgár-fishponds.

**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata*: Several flocks were seen on grasslands and on bigger fishponds.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*: Some were seen on the drained fishponds and on the Bihar Plain.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*: We saw one on Bihar plains with five on Elep fishponds.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*: One individual fed on the fishpond's edge at Polgár.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*: Small flocks observed daily on fishponds and natural wetlands.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*: Only a few were seen on Bihar plains and Polgár-fishponds.

**Common Gull** *Larus canus*: Only a few were seen during the trip.

**Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis*: Some of them were on the fishponds.

**Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans*: It was common everywhere around the fishponds, wetlands and plough fields too.

**Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus*: It was common in the Hortobágy.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus*: Some of them were observed on Fényes-fishpond.

**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia* f. *domestica*: A very common resident throughout the tour.

**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas*: Up to 80 were counted at Apaj.

**Common Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*: Daily observations we had.

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

**Eurasian Eagle Owl** *Bubo bubo*: We had good flight view of a bird in daylight in the Zemplén.

**Ural Owl** *Strix uralensis*: We found one perched bird on our only full day in the Zemplén where we had scope views.

**Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco*: A single bird at the nesting box in the Zemplén.

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua*: We saw some birds in the Hortobágy.

**Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus*: Some 10 birds were on the roosting place in the heart of Balmazújváros.

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*: One was seen on the Hortobágy.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos minor*: We saw the first one in the Tisza floodplain. We scoped one female on the Tokaj Hill.

**Middle Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos medius*: A brief view in the Tisza floodplain, much better views in the Zemplén.

**White-backed Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos leucotos*: Very good view we had on a drumming female in the Zemplén.

**Syrian Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos syriacus*: We had fantastic view of a male in Balmazújváros, later another one we had in the Zemplén.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*: Regularly were seen on the tour.

**Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius*: Good scope views on a male in the Zemplén.

**Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis*: We heard this species several times, but the best views were in Komlóska.

**Grey-headed Woodpecker** *Picus canus*: We had a fantastic view of one bird on our first day close to the accommodation in the Zemplén.

**Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio*: One late juvenile was seen on the Hortobágy.

**Northern Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor*: Several sightings on the roadsides.

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*: They were everywhere in the Zemplén and a few were seen in the Hortobágy.

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

**Eurasian Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula*: Common in the Hortobágy.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*: We had huge flocks on the tour.

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

**Common Raven** *Corvus corax*: It was common in the Zemplén.

**Marsh Tit** *Parus palustris*: Several seen in the Zemplén.

**Coal Tit** *Parus ater*: Observed only on our last day in the Zemplén.

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

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

**Eurasian Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus*: We had a small flock on the Hortobágy-fishponds.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*: We had small groups almost every day on the tour.

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus*: We saw some small flocks on the Hortobágy and in the Zemplén too.

**Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata*: Several were seen mainly near to the roadsides.

**Eurasian Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*: We had a good migration on the grasslands.

**Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*: Surprisingly a few still were seen on the Hortobágy-fishponds.

**Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*: Good numbers were seen on the fishponds and alleys.

**Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus*: Richard spotted one on the Hortobágy-fishponds. Still a rare bird in Hungary and it was only the 6<sup>th</sup> record for the Hortobágy (the first record was only in 2016!) and the 5<sup>th</sup> for the Hortobágy-fishponds.



The 6<sup>th</sup> Yellow-browed Warbler for the Hortobágy (Attila Szilágyi)

**Bearded Reedling** *Panurus biarmicus*: We had a fantastic view of some flocks when they fed on the bank of the Hortobágy-fishponds only a few meters from us.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*: We observed a few birds in the Zemplén.

**Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapillus*: One was seen with the Goldcrests in the Zemplén.

**Northern Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*: Several were heard and only a few seen on the tour.

**Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*: We had many sightings in the woodlands.

**Eurasian Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris*: Only observed in the Zemplén.

**European Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*: It was very common on every habitat.

**Eurasian Blackbird** *Turdus merula*: Fairly common throughout the tour.

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*: A few observations we had in the lowlands and in the Zemplén too.

**European Robin** *Erithacus rubecola*: It was common in the alleys.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*: It gave to us almost daily sightings.

**Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*: Only one was observed on the Hortobágy.

**European Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata*: We saw some on the roadside on bushes.

**Winchat** *Saxicola rubetra*: We met with this bird only once on the western flank of the Hortobágy.

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

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*: Easy to see them in the villages and reedbeds around fishponds.



**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*: We heard them on the Hortobágy-fishponds, where a few glimpsed too.

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

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*: Only a few were seen in the Zemplén.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*: We had two overflying ones in the Hortobágy.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*: We saw only a few as they passed through.

**Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus*: Daily observations on the Hortobágy, with the best views from the minivan at Szelencés.

**Common Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*: It was common throughout the tour.

**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*: We had one on the hotel grounds in Nádudvar and another heard at Komlóska.

**European Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris*: Finally scored in the Zemplén. Strangely we missed them from the Hortobágy.

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

**Eurasian Siskin** *Carduelis spinus*: Small flock were seen mainly in the villages and around the fishpond.

**Common Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina*: We saw a few birds in the Zemplén only.

**European Serin** *Serinus serinus*: One bird perched on a wire on the western flank of Zemplén Hills (LO).

**Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*: First scoped near Komlóska which followed with other birds later in the Zemplén.

**Common Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra*: We had 12 overflying birds on the Hortobágy-fishponds and only heard in the Zemplén.

**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citronella*: We saw them many times in the Zemplén.

**Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*: It was very common on the fishponds.

**Corn Bunting** *Miliaria calandra*: We had a small groups on the Hortobágy.

### **Mammals:**

**Weasel** *Mustela nivalis*: One Weasel or Ermine *Mustela erminea* crossed the road in the Hortobágy

**Roe deer** *Capreolus capreolus*: We saw them many times on agricultural fields, in the wood also.

**Red Deer** *Cervus elaphus*: Some were seen in the Zemplén.

**Brown Hare** *Lepus europaeus*: A few sightings on the tour.

**Red Squirrel** *Sciurus vulgaris*: They were seen in the Zemplén Hills.

**Wild Boar** *Sus scrofa*: We saw their signs in the Zemplén Hills.