



Forest Dormouse in Dobrudja (Zoltán Gergely Nagy)

ROMANIA MAMMAL TOUR with **SAKERTOOURS** 26th of August – 3rd of September 2022

Leader: Zoltán Gergely Nagy

Sakertours has been specializing in birdwatching and bird photography tours in the last 28 years. Since 2020 we have also started tours for mammals and our fine-tuned main tour is the so called Romania Mammal Tour, which was run for the third time this year.

Logistics are not easy, and it is quite hard work, but this tour is special: **it offers the biggest list of European mammals on any available mammal watching tour on our continent!** If you plan to visit Europe for mammals, this tour is ideal for you as it is only 9 days long and has a long list of sought-after species!

The 2022 tour certainly lived-up to its expectations and delivered a list of special mammals to our clients. This year the tour was run at the end of August and early September, offering almost all of the species that have been seen on the previous two tours, with the last species of the tour this year (European Hamster) on the last day, put the count on exactly 50 mammal species that have been seen!

During the 9 days of the trip, we have travelled across the stunningly different but all very interesting regions of Romania – one of the most biodiverse countries in Europe, where thanks to all these different habitats, there are many species of mammals present, and some particularly special species too. Rare mammals, like European Mink, Romanian Hamster, Steppe Polecat and Bechstein's Bat were all seen on the tour, as well as some more common but equally fascinating species such as Wildcat, Carpathian Brown Bear, Golden Jackal, Harvest Mouse and Forest Dormouse.

Seeing 50 mammal species on this tour was definitely our 'dream' when we started 3 years back but now as this new record is set we are hoping for more in the future! In 2022 the weather was not very kind during the second part of the trip (Transylvania) with an unusually long spell of rainy days, thanks to which we have missed a few common species.

It is a lot of field work before the tour for our team, especially trying to locate exact locations for some of the most sought-after species such as the European Mink. Indeed, not only did we manage to find and observe the behaviour of two individuals on the trip, but we have also managed to find two individuals on our subsequent shorter trip specifically tailored for the European Mink. This Critically Endangered species is certainly a flagship species and this tour is probably the best chance to see it in the World. But as with everything you also need luck as the water level in the Danube Delta is important and it is out of our arrangements. In 2022 we also had Steppe Polecat and a Forest Dormouse, both new species for any of our mammal tours, and both made it to the the top 5 mammals at the end of the trip!

Just as last year we have spent a lot of time on the field at night as most of the mammal species are nocturnal. The light pollution is minimal in the regions we have visited, and it is quite incredible in the Danube Delta which is part of the dark sky network in Europe. Anybody wishing to take part in such a mammal watching tour must be prepared for long nights out in the wild. Apart from our own experiences we have also used the help of local mammal experts. Most of the time we have tried to locate the mammals by sight (spotlighting at night) but we have also used some live traps and visited bat monitoring places. Our tour dates are carefully planned to coincide with such monitoring events so we can maximize our chances of seeing some interesting species and to minimize the disturbance at the same time!



Romanian Hamster in the Dobrudja area (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Dobruja and the Danube Delta

The tour has started in Bucharest Airport and we made our way to our first base near Constanta in Dobrudja region. Nice weather, and warm, pleasant nights awaited us here. We have spent two nights spotlighting near the lagoon areas of the Danube Delta, scanning the steppes and agricultural areas more inland on the first night and focusing more on areas closer to the lagoons on the second. Some of the fields were teeming with rodents, and our team member Zsolt Babos, who was the main spotter of the trip, quickly built on his reputation as a small mammal catcher, by running after and successfully catching a young Steppe Mouse, a Sibling or Common Vole and a few hours later a beautiful Romanian Hamster. An impressive feat and a great start to our night sessions at our first base. Other highlights from the first two nights were seeing 6 Northern White-breasted Hedgehogs, 16 Golden Jackals, 3 Romanian Hamsters in total and finally, a stunning Steppe Polecat. A great start!



Sunset in Dobrudja (top,) Northern White-breasted Hedgehog (left) and Common or Sibling Vole (right) (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Common species regularly encountered were Red Fox, European Hare and Badger. During the day we have seen 20 European Ground Squirrels, and have visited a cave system to look for bats. The main attraction for us were the Schreiber's Bent-winged Bats, of which we have seen about 75 individuals, just like last year. As a side note, it was fascinating to use one of the newer mirrorless cameras on the tour, just like some of the participants. Not only do they offer silent (and very fast) shooting – a huge advantage for a mammal watcher wanting to reduce disturbance to a minimum, clean images at very high sensitivity values, and some AI enhanced autofocus modes that were so good, it was possible to track and photograph flying bats just in the light of a torch.



Steppe polecat (top) and Golden Jackal (left) on the steppes and the surrounding agricultural areas. Schreiber's Bent-winged bat flying in a cave in Dobrudja (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Before arriving to Tulcea - the gateway to the Danube Delta, on the third day, we made a stop at a forest where we have placed many nest boxes for dormice following our first tour in 2020. Our nest box project has started working well, and we were treated to a fantastic views of Forest Dormouse that patiently waited for us to leave. It was looking down from the safety of a big tree after we have opened up the nest box. Later we made our way to our hotel deep in the Danube Delta with the 'Harrier' – the Sakertours wildlife watching boat. Right on our first night session with the boat we have managed to observe two stunning European Minks!! Some of the other highlights from the two night sessions in the Delta include seeing a Stone Marten, 3 Eurasian Otters, 2 Harvest Mice and 2 Striped Field Mice. There are also Raccoon Dogs, and lots of Brown Rats foraging along the channels, we have counted 42 individuals of the latter on the second night alone.



European Mink (top) Eurasian Otter (left) and Stone Marten in the Danube Delta (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

There was also lots of bat activity, not quite the unforgettable frenzy from the first night of the 2021 trip, but we still managed to see a few more interesting species among the slew of Daubenton's Bats and Nathusius Pipistrelles, such as at least 6 Serotine Bats and 3 Soprano Pipistrelles. We have used the Echo Meter Touch II Pro to help us in ID-ing the flying bats.

During the day it was nice to catch up with some sleep in the hotel, and to prepare for the last night in the Delta and the second part of the trip. We went on an afternoon boat ride, to see the lakes and channels of the unique Danube Delta also during the day, and to try to spot some of the resident mammals that could be on the move during the day too, such as wildcats. No wildcats were encountered on the boat trip, but we did manage to see 3 Golden Jackals.



Golden Jackal (left) looking for food at the edge of the reed, observed from the 'Herrier' (right) in the Danube Delta (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Transylvania

After leaving the Danube Delta on the next day, we headed straight towards Transylvania. After dinner at the foothills of the mighty Carpathian Mountains we have started our night-drive across the mountains, towards our hotel near Zetea in the Harghita Mountains.

On this exciting leg of our journey we have seen a massive change in habitats, and also lots of the resident mammals that we were hoping to see. We have found a beautiful wildcat hunting on the edge of this road across the wilderness. Other highlights were seeing 4 Edible Dormice and 5 Hazel Dormice, 2 Eurasian Beavers, a whopping 9 Brown Bears, and a massive Wild Boar at the edge of one of the villages. Thanks to Zsolt - who had once again managed to catch some of the small rodents on the side of the road, we had great views of numerous Long-tailed Field Mice too. Common species were Red Deer, Roe Deer, Red Fox and Brown Hare. Once we have crossed into Transylvania we were almost constantly in potential Wolf and Lynx habitat, but unfortunately these very secretive species have managed to remain elusive during the days of our trip.

On our first morning in Transylvania we had visited a Sakertours hide in the forests of the Harghita Mountains where we had great views of a Eurasian Red Squirrel amongst Crested Tits and other birds that were visiting the feeder. We were hoping to see the resident Brandt's Bats, but a huge storm the day before has damaged their roosting place at the edge of the hide. After putting everything back in place, we were checking on it every day, and it looked like they would not return, but thankfully we got lucky right on the last day of the trip and managed to see this scarce species too!



Hazel Dormouse (top) and Western Barbastelle in the forest (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

After our session with the squirrels, we have visited a small cave near Zetea village, where we have seen 5 Lesser Horseshoe Bats. After some rest and a nice meal back at our hotel, we headed out for a night-session of spotlighting. By the afternoon the weather has turned for the worst, as a very wet weather system has moved in, that only dispersed after the trip has ended a few days later. Still, we had good periods of little or no rain, and on our first night-drive in the Harghita Mountains, we had plenty of active mammals, that were out and about right after a storm has passed. We manage to find a roosting Western Barbastelle in the forest and 4 more Brown Bears. Common species were Red Deer, Roe Deer, Badger, Red Fox, Northern White-breasted Hedgehog, Edible Dormouse and Hazel Dormouse. The latter is common but still one of the star cuties of the tour, usually offering multiple great looks!

On the next day a local biologist and small-mammal expert has joined our team, to help track down some of the resident, but more elusive small mammals. Unfortunately, the heavy rain has interfered with his planned trapping sessions, but at least we tried to catch up on sleep, before another demanding night-session. We did manage to go and spend some time looking for Ermines and Least Weasels, in some great habitats for both species – a place with known populations of both. Despite our efforts, they have remained elusive not only on that day, but throughout the trip.

In the afternoon we have joined a local bat expert in his fieldwork, netting and studying the bats in one of the most important cave systems of the Eastern Carpathians, in the Varghis Gorge. Csaba has a fantastic knowledge on the bats of Romania, and the few hours we have spent with him passed by incredibly quickly. Even before setting up the traps, we had great views of a Noctule hunting in the gorge. As the sun set, the bats from the resident colonies started leaving the cave system, so we had great views of Schreiber's Bent-winged Bats, as well as Lesser and Greater Mouse-eared Bats, it was great to really see and learn the differences between them from up close.



Part of the group approaching the misty Varghis Gorge (left) and a Geoffroy's Bat in Transylvania (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Despite periods of rain, bats were still somewhat active in and around the caves, and as the evening progressed, we had caught single individuals of some really great species: Geoffroy's Bat, Bechstein's Myotis, Western Barbastelle, Common Pipistrelle and a Lesser Horseshoe Bat. In total 8 species have been caught and released - a great success thanks to Csaba who was also keen to teach us how to ID bats, and to answer all our bat related questions. On the drive back during the night, we went slowly on a few stretches of the way, hoping to spotlight some of the secretive large carnivores that are still doing well in Transylvania and a few other parts of Romania. Lynx and wolves however have remained elusive.



An Edible Dormouse on a beech tree in a mixed forest (top), and a top predator of small mammals: Ural Owl. One of 7 owl species seen on the tour (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

On the next morning we went to see what had been caught in the traps, by the biologists. Despite the continuing long spell of cool and wet weather, quite a few small mammals have been caught. We had, from the surrounding forests and meadows, a Field Vole, a Yellow-necked Field Mouse, a Striped Field Mouse, a Eurasian Pygmy Shrew a Water Vole, two Long-tailed Field Mice and a House Mouse from the garden of the Harghita Bear Lodge. Later in the day we drove to the Bicaz Gorge, one of the few places where it is possible to see the Carpathian Chamois from near a main road. Despite the low hanging fog and heavy rain, our perseverance has paid off, and we managed to observe one distant, but beautiful individual on the cliffs of the Eastern Carpathian Mountains.



A large wild boar (top left), Roe Deer (top right), a young Brown Hare (left) and a Badger in Transylvania (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

On our last evening we visited a bear hide, to have a look at these animals also in daytime. We had lots of bear activity, even a mother with cubs passing by on the meadow in front of the hide. After the hide session we have stayed in the general area, still hoping for a sighting of wolf or a lynx but we had no luck. It was time to return to our base and get some sleep.

On the last morning, before setting off towards Bucharest, we checked on the Brandt's Bats at the hide in the forest, and were delighted that two individuals were roosting again on their usual spot that was damaged by the storm a few days earlier. Before crossing the Carpathians, on our way towards Bucharest, Szabi – one of our colleagues at Sakertours, was waiting for us with one more catch in the traps: a Common Hamster. We had great views of the second hamster species of the tour. We soon released him back in to the wild.

With the Common Hamster marking the 50th species seen on the tour, the 2022 Romania Mammal Tour has ended. Some of the participants were continuing on an exciting extension looking for the Tatra Pine Vole, and others departing towards Bucharest to fly home.



A Brown Bear running for cover next to a road in Transylvania (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Romania has once again proved to be a very rewarding and diverse place to look for mammals, and the trip has certainly been a very memorable one to all the participants. The combination of Dobrudja and Transylvania provides uniquely varied opportunities for Mammal watching in Europe, and the sheer number of 'mega' species possible means that chances are high that at least one or two of them will be seen every year on this tour. This year the uncontested mammal of the tour has been the very rare European Mink. This tour might have just ended, but we are already looking forward to what we can tweak and fine-tune for 2023! After the secret vote of the participants, the TOP5 mammals of the tour were:

- 1) European Mink
- 2) Forest Dormouse
- 3) Steppe Polecat
- 4) European Wildcat
- 5) Romanian Hamster

A special thanks to the whole Sakertours team for the help and support for the trip, especially to János Oláh for bringing it all together, Szabolcs Kovács, Zsolt Babos and the brilliant experts we have collaborated with: Zsolt Hegyeli and Csaba Jére. It was a fantastic tour with many great memories. We hope to repeat this adventure in 2023 as well!

MAMMALS –list of mammal species seen on the 2022 tour

European Hare *Lepus europaeus*

A commonly encountered species on the tour. We saw a total of 51, even more than last year. There were 29 in the Dobrudja area and a further 22 in Transylvania. It is also known as Brown Hare and it is among the largest hare species in the World which adapted to temperate, open country.

Northern White-breasted Hedgehog *Erinaceus roumanicus*

A commonly encountered species, and this year we saw 8 on the tour. It is interesting that all individuals seen in Dobrudja were rather dark individuals. Taxonomically, it was for a time considered to be a subspecies of *E. europaeus*, and later a subspecies of *E. concolor*. Since the 1990s, it has been considered a separate species in its own right.



Romanian Hamster and a Eurasian Pygmy Shrew (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Romanian Hamster *Mesocricetus newtoni*

One of the true highlights of the tour, this rarely seen hamster species only lives in the Dobrudja region of Romania and in a few spots in Bulgaria. It has a mostly nocturnal lifestyle, using steppe grasslands and agricultural fields where suitable within its range, but it is very localized. We were very fortunate to have had the help of a biologist with experience regarding this protected species. In total 3 individuals have been seen at night, in two separate areas.

Common Hamster *Cricetus cricetus*

The last new mammal species of the tour was trapped and released in southern Transylvania, as we were driving to the airport. Szabolcs Kovács has caught 4 individuals, but only waited for the group with one still in the trap. This hamster species is much larger than the Romanian Hamster, and also much more common. Sadly in parts of Eastern Europe they can still be hunted with local permission.

Eurasian Beaver *Castor fiber*

In total 3 individuals have been seen on the tour, all of them in Transylvania. Two individuals have been seen near a massive beaver dam close to a road, and one more individual has been seen in the river near the Varghis Gorge.

Field (Short-tailed) Vole *Microtus agrestis*

A single individual was caught in the traps in Transylvania.

Common Vole *Microtus arvalis* / **Sibling Vole** *Microtus levis*

Zsolt had caught one individual in Dobrudjaa, but without DNA analysis they are impossible to tell apart. We had seen at least more than 20 individuals on the agricultural fields.

Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius*

One individual was caught with a trap in Transylvania. Just like the Steppe Polecat, this was the first time that we have seen it on our mammal watching tours.

Common Muskrat *Ondatra zibethicus*

In total 3 individuals of this introduced species were seen on the tour, all of them in the Danube Delta.

Edible Dormouse *Glis glis*

A total of 9 were identified in Transylvania on the night sessions but several got away which were most likely to be this species. It was common in various forest habitat but most often in mixed beech and pine woodland.

Hazel Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*

A total of 7 were seen on the night sessions in Transylvania. There were most probably more that have gotten away before we could have identified them. It is the only living species of the genus and the distribution is across Europe from the UK to Russia. They make their own little nest and hibernate in October.



Forest Dormouse (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Forest Dormouse *Dryomys nitedula*

Excellent looks of one individual in our nest box project for mammals. On our pre-tour checks we have found that 4 of the boxes were occupied by this charismatic species. The work we have started in 2020 is coming to some results!

Striped Field Mouse *Apodemus agrarius*

A total of 4 individuals were seen on the tour. 1 in Transylvania and 3 in Dobrudja. The striped field mouse has an extensive but disjunct distribution, split into two ranges. The first reaches from central and eastern Europe to Lake Baikal (Russia) in the north, and China in the south. The second includes parts of the Russian Far East and from there reaches from Mongolia to Japan. Its expansion across Eastern Europe appears to be relatively recent. The species is thought to have reached Austria in the 1990s.

Long-tailed Field Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*

In total 6 individuals were seen, some caught masterfully by Zsolt, and some caught by the traps.



Long-tailed Field Mouse in Transylvania (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Yellow-necked mouse *Apodemus flavicollis*

In total 1 individual of this species have been seen on the tour, caught with the traps in Transylvania.

Eurasian Harvest Mouse *Micromys minutus*

Two individuals were seen on the tour, both of them in the Danube Delta. One of them was swimming across the channel in front of our boat. They are one of the smallest mammal species in Europe.



Eurasian Harvest Mouse in the Danube Delta (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

House Mouse *Mus musculus*

One individual was seen, caught by the trap in the garden of the Hargita Bear Lodge.

Mound-building Mouse (Steppe M) *Mus spicilegus*

A very common species in the steppe area of Dobrudja, with at least 25 seen on the agricultural fields in Dobrudja. We managed to get very close views of an individual that has been caught by Zsolt. It is found in grasslands and other open areas from Austria eastwards.

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*

It was common in the Danube Delta on the night session, we counted minimum over 50 individuals. They were all along the edge of channels as well as in the more forested areas too.

Eurasian Pygmy Shrew *Sorex minutus*

One individual was seen in Transylvania, it has been caught with one of the traps overnight.

European Suslik *Spermophilus citellus*

The most widespread ground squirrel species in Europe is very common in the steppes of Dobrudja. We had seen 29 individuals on the tour at numerous locations.

Eurasian Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

Still common in the forests of Transylvania, we had great views of an individual visiting a feeder in Transylvania at a forest photography hide.



A darkly colored Eurasian Red Squirrel feeding in front of a Sakertours hide (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Golden Jackal *Canis aureus*

A locally common species in Dobrudja, where a total of 31 were seen on the tour. This species was once sporadic in Romania but since the late 1990's their numbers increased in the Dobrudja area and especially in the Danube Delta and around the lagoon system to the south where suitable reed beds (hiding places) can be found. In the lagoon system the extension of reed beds rapidly increased when the lagoons were blocked from the sea and the brackish water became increasingly less salty (almost freshwater for most lagoons nowadays). Both Wild Boar and Golden Jackal found refuge in the reed beds and their numbers started to increase.

Raccoon Dog *Nyctereutes procyonoides* (introduced)

An introduced mammal in Romania and the main stronghold is in the Danube Delta. On our night session we spotlighted 13 individuals. This species is native to Asia (Eastern Siberia, China, Vietnam, Korea and Japan) and was introduced to Europe and Russia between 1927 and 1957 by the fur-farming industry.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

A commonly encountered species on the tour. We saw a total of 68 individuals on the tour. There were 36 in the Dobrudja area and a further 32 in Transylvania.



Raccoon Dog on one of the channels in the Danube Delta (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

European Wildcat *Felis silvestris*

One superb individual was seen, during the night session while crossing into Transylvania. It was looking for small rodents very close to the road in the mountains.



Two images of the same (and only) wildcat that was seen on the tour, in Transylvania (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Eurasian Otter *Lutra lutra*

Three individuals were seen, all of them in the Danube Delta. They are widespread in Romania in all sort of habitat but difficult to observe in riverine habitat and somehow in the Danube Delta they tend to be very shy. The best bet to connect with one is on the large fishpond systems scattered around the country. On this trip we had some great and very lucky sightings.

Stone (Beech) Marten *Martes foina*

One individual was observed on the tour, on one of the channels in the Danube Delta at night. It is a fairly common species around villages but they are infrequently seen due to their secretive and nocturnal habits.

Eurasian Badger *Meles meles*

A total of 5 individual were seen, 3 in Dobrudja and 2 in Transylvania at night. They are rather secretive in Eastern Europe due to hunting pressure.

European Mink *Mustela lutreola*

Two individuals of this critically rare mammal were seen on the first night session in the Danube Delta. It looks like the Danube Delta is still a major stronghold for this protected species.

Steppe Polecat *Mustela eversmanni*

One individual was seen in the steppes of Dobrudja. It was probably out hunting late into the night. Although we regularly encounter this species in spring on our birdwatching or bird photography tours, this was the first time that we have seen it on our mammal watching tours.

Carpathian Brown Bear *Ursus arctos arctos*

The nominate race occurs in the Carpathians. We saw 20 individuals in total, 7 at our special bear hide one afternoon and there were 13 more sightings at night, all in Transylvania.



Red Deer in Transylvania (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Carpathian Chamois *Rupicapra carpatica*

We made a visit to the scenic Bicz Gorge where we managed to see one individual on the cliffs. This is the *carpatica* race in Romania.

European Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

In total we have observed 67 individuals. One of the most common mammals and we often see them on our birdwatching tours as well. They are active at daytime as well but most of our sightings were at night and at dawn. They are the main prey item for Eurasian Lynx in the Carpathians.

Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*

The Red Deer were preparing for their autumn rut, and despite not hearing them at all on the tour, we could see that their antlers have fully grown and they are ready for the mating season to start. In total we saw 49 individuals, all of them in Transylvania.

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*

Since the African swine fever virus has decimated the wild boar populations in the past few years, numbers have started to recover recently, and we did manage to observe 5 individuals on the tour, all of them in Transylvania.

Lesser Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

In total we have seen 6 individuals. They have already started gathering at their overwintering caves.



Schreiber's Bent-winged Bat in the hand of a biologist (Zoltan Gergely Nagy).

Western Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*

In total 2 individuals have been seen on the tour, one of them was roosting quite low down on a tree in a forest, and the other one has been caught in the Varghis Gorge.

Schreiber's Bent-winged Bat *Miniopterus schreibersii*

It was the most numerous bat species on the tour. We have observed 75+ in the cave in Dobrudja and another 20+ were seen in the Varghis Gorge area. We have also trapped several. This species is a fast flyer (60-80km/hour) and has got very long wings. The only species in Europe where the end of the wing folds in hence the name 'bent-winged bat'. It is classified as Near Threatened.

Geoffroy's Bat *Myotis emarginatus*

A single individual was trapped and seen in Varghis Gorge in Transylvania.

Bechstein's Bat *Myotis bechsteinii*

We have trapped and seen one individual in the Varghis Gorge. An amazing mammal species with huge ears (only the *Plecotus* bats have larger ears) and it is severely declining and now considered as Vulnerable.



Portrait of a Bechstein's Myotis (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Brandt's Bat *Myotis brandtii*

A rather hard to come by species. They prefer forest habitat and rarely visit caves. We saw 2 individuals roosting under the roof of our forest photography hide. It is a supposedly rather rare in Romania but ID problems and roosting habitats could cause this status.

Lesser Mouse-eared Bat *Myotis blythii*

A large sized bat resembles the following species which is more common. It is possible to ID in the hand. They usually whiter below, have a pale spot on the top of the head, the ears are slimmer and the top of the tragus usually not dark. We have trapped and seen 7 individuals in Varghis Gorge. It is classified as Near Threatened.

Greater Mouse-eared Bat *Myotis myotis*

A large and common bat species. We have seen a total of at least 13 individuals. At least 5 were seen in the cave in Dobrudja and 8 individuals were trapped in the Varghis Gorge. It was great to see them in hand and see the differences with the previous species.

Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentonii*

The most common bat species seen in the Danube Delta, we could see them hunt all around our boat. In total we had seen at least 31 individuals on the tour. It is always associated with water and their main prey items are flies, midges and caddisflies. They roost in tree holes and there is plenty of suitable habitat for them in the delta.



A group of Schreiber's Bent-winged Bats, together with a few Greater and Lesser Mouse-eared Bats in Dobrudja (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*

These large bats are often seen flying at dusk, and were observed in Dobrudja and Transylvania too. We had one individual in the Danube Delta, and at least one in Transylvania, hunting in the Varghis Gorge before sunset.

Serotine Bat *Eptesicus serotinus*

Observed in the Danube Delta, in total we had seen at least 6 individuals.

Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

Two were seen on the tour, one in the Danube Delta and one individual was caught in the Varghis Gorge.

Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

At least three individuals were seen hunting above the lakes and channels of the Danube Delta.



Two Lesser Mouse-eared Bats in the Varghis Gorge (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Nathusius's Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*

This small bat was widespread in Dobrudja, and it was the second most common bat species seen in the Danube Delta, with over 20 individuals seen. Interestingly we have not seen or detected it in Transylvania this year either.



Up close with the stunning European Mink (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Next tour dates:

2023: 2 – 10 September (1990 euro/person; SRS 200 euro/person):
availability and updates on our website: <http://www.sakertour.com/romania-mammal-tours.php#romania-mammal-tour>

2023 extension: 10 – 15 September (price TBA)

The extension will target Mehely's Blind Mole Rat – *Spalax antiquus*



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