

SAKER eNEWS

5th edition, 2016



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Collared Pratincole (Photo: Gerald Reiner)

Dear Birders and Bird Photographers!

Next year we will be celebrating the **10th year anniversary** of starting the hide photography section which was a unique and pioneer move back in 2006 at the dawn of digital photography. It took us 10 years of creative work to fulfill all the ideas of tours and hides we have dreamed about but it was well worth it as we could share the beauties of Hungary and Romania with many visiting photographers.

Please scroll through our latest e-newsletter carefully because it contains lot of new information and nice images from the past season as well as some of our visions for 2017 and beyond.

We always try to put more and more value into each and every tour to maximize the comfort, the results, and first of all the enjoyment level of your holiday. So whichever trip you decide to join we ensure the greatest birding and/or photo experience with our professional guides and carefully designed itineraries.

Our website has all the necessary information to choose and book your next holiday with us.

Thank you for choosing Sakertours for your wildlife holiday!

Best wishes,

János OLÁH

managing director



Fishing White Pelican (Photo: Zoltán Gergely Nagy)



LATEST NEWS

↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY

- Let's start with an [amazing news](#): Brown Bears, Wolves, European Lynxes and Wild Cats can finally live more peacefully in the Carpathian Forests since the trophy hunting large carnivores has just been banned in Romania. This is a major step and achievement against the very strong European hunting lobby. If we remember well this 'fight' started back in 25th of November 2003 when the first petition was sent to the Romanian and EU governments to stop hunting these endangered mammals.
- The new [TRANSYLVANIA BIRD & BEAR TOUR](#) is going to be a completely new tour in our photo calendar from 2018 and will include hide and stalking photography too. It will partly replace the existing Brown Bear Hide Photography Tour which will only be running in the late summer period from 2018. We have a new base for all our tours in the new [HARGHITA BEAR LODGE](#) designed for wildlife enthusiast and going to open [IN SPRING 2017](#). A specially designed, cozy place for wildlife photographers and birdwatchers. So after the Bibic Nature Lodge in Hortobágy yet another place designed by photographers to photographers.
- On the Danube Delta Photo Tours (except Ultima Tour) from Spring 2017 we will be offering the chance of [two floating hides](#) for our guests for certain subjects – the first year will be a testing mode but hopefully we can incorporate the usage of these hides into the program.

- A second drinking hide is now in full operation in the [Macin National Park](#) which is featured on our regular Danube Delta Photography Tour. The hide has a new setup and we have had several visits from Levant Sparrowhawk in June 2016! Let's hope these will be captured by our guests in 2017!
- It was the first year for our [Danube Delta Special Tour](#) and was a great success in 2016 so next year we will be repeating these tours. However we only run maximum 3 tours in one calendar year so you need to be quick for 2017!
- [Red-backed](#) and [Lesser Grey Shrikes](#) will be an extra photo target during your photo holiday in the Hortobágy National Park in Hungary. We have tested these new photo opportunities in 2016 and they will be featured on the list of photographable birds in 2017 too. These birds are best in June as they late arrivals and breeding is mostly in late May and June.
- Our team designed a [special mobile hide for shorebirds](#), especially for **Ruff** and for different **Sandpipers** in Hungary. This hide will be used in 2017 too if water conditions allow the installation in the Hortobágy National Park. In 2018 we will be using a similar hide in Transylvania too for various subjects like Dipper.

Please visit our
[HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR CALENDAR](#)
for dates, availabilities and extra information!



Brown Bear after rain in Transylvania (Photo: János Oláh)



Red-backed Shrike from a new 'Shrike' hide (Photo: Attila Szilágyi)

↓ BIRDWATCHING

- The **Red-breasted Goose Special** was designed to be a short break (5 days) primarily to find the magnificent **Red-breasted** and **Lesser White-fronted Goose** in a single tour. The Hortobágy NP is probably the easiest place to see both species within one tour. Since the reconstruction of **Nagyszik Soda Pan** and the opening of **Bíbic Nature Lodge** this became a fantastic tour! You can see such species as well like Great Bustard, Saker Falcon and Imperial Eagle. A Zemplén extension is possible upon request for Ural Owl and woodpeckers!

Excellent setup by choosing the best time, the best place, the best accommodation and the best guide for you for an unbeatable price!

For more information click **HERE**.



Red-breasted Goose from the Hortobágy (Photo: Attila Szilágyi)



Lesser White-fronted Goose from the Hortobágy (Photo: János Oláh)

- In 2017 we will welcome yet another birding tour on our itinerary. This is the **Transylvania Birding Tour** which has been developed to see this fantastic area in the very best time. It was created for those who wish to discover this region's exciting nature and birdlife within a full tour and it features highlights like Corncrake, Three-toed and White-backed Woodpeckers, Ural, Pygmy and Scops Owls, Wallcreeper, Shore Lark, Red-breasted and Collared Flycatchers, Rock Thrush etc. For more information click **HERE**.



Scops Owl in Transylvania (Photo: Gábor Simay)

- Our **Hungary, Slovakia & Transylvania Grand Tour** had amazing results in the last 5 years and it is already confirmed to run in 2017 again. If you want to see all the major birds of Eastern Europe and visit three countries in just 12 days this tour is for you!

- For **overseas birders attention**, when you are planning a birding visit to (Eastern) Europe you should know that our well known Hungary, Slovakia & Transylvania Grand Tour is linkable to the Danube Delta Spring Tour and the Danube Delta Spring Tour itself linkable with Transylvania Tour so you have the chance to do 2 or even 3 trips in Eastern Europe in one visit to have a true insight of the birdlife of this region!

Please visit our **BIRDWATCHING TOUR CALENDAR**

for dates, availabilities and extra information!

2016 IN REVIEW

↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE HORTOBÁGY

We started the season with great improvements as the **Bibic Nature Lodge** finally opened its gates in Balmazújváros and all our guest stayed in this fabulous place and enjoyed it very much.

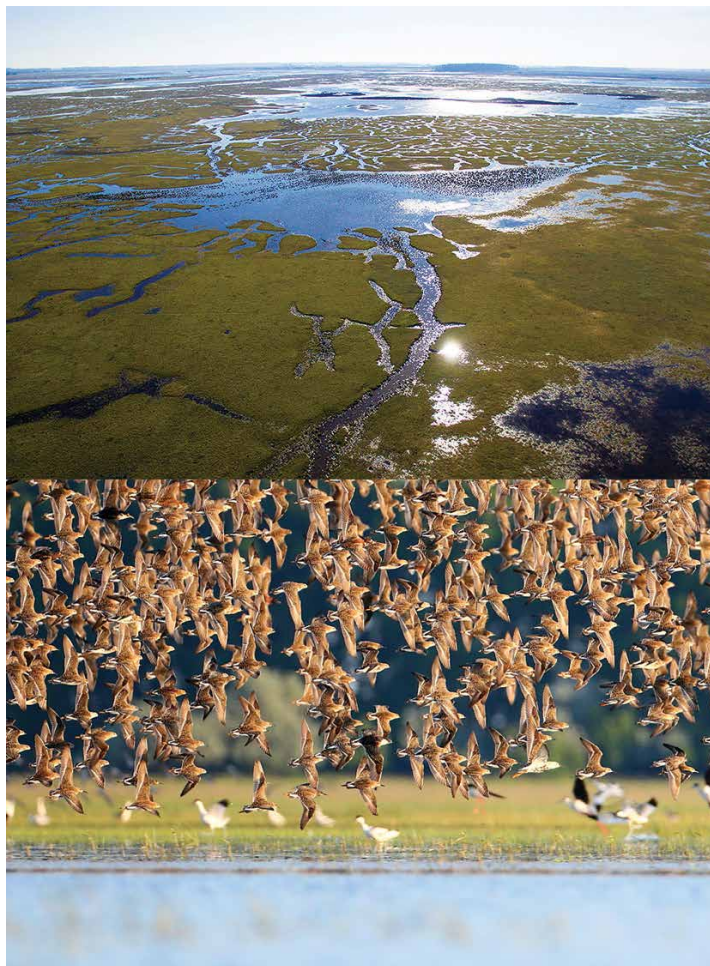
A big step forward in quality eco-tourism indeed!

The year started with the usual **Eagle Photography** and all the hides worked perfectly well. Everybody had seen and photographed White-tailed Eagles, some had the chance to take pictures in real winter because we had several weeks of cold frosty conditions and even snow cover in January. Also more and more Eastern Imperial Eagles are seen from the hides! The most unique morning however was when White-tailed Eagle, Imperial Eagle and a Golden Eagle were seen on one tree right in front of the hide! Special!



Golden and Imperial Eagle (Photo: Richard Tyler and Molnár Antal)

Right after the eagle photography season the entire hide photography team had a fantastic team building in Norway. We enjoyed lots of great birds like King Eiders, Steller's Eider, Hawk Owl and Pine Grosbeak just to name but a few. This was a great place to discuss all the events of the coming season in April!



Spring in the Hortobágy (Photo: Attila Szilágyi and János Oláh)

The late winter precipitation was good in the area so we expected a nice start with lots of interesting photo subjects and a good start with our new shorebird hide too.

We also made a new attempt for Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrike from late May. Rest of the hides were all functional and offered great time with species like Pygmy Cormorant, Black Stork, Spoonbill, Little Crake, Ferruginous Duck, Red-footed Falcon, Common Kestrel, Roller, Hoopoe, Bee-eater, Black Woodpecker, Little Owl and so on.

Late August and early Septmeber is the short period when drinking, bathing and roosting Cranes can be photographed.



Cranes in the sunset (Photo: Attila Szilágyi)



↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE DANUBE DELTA

Our Danube Delta Photo Tours had great success again and again every week. These tours are different than other hide photo tours mainly because in this place the setup is never pre arranged. We just silently stalk birds with our camouflage boat and wait for the action....and we had lots of action throughout the season.

Just a few minutes drive from the accommodation Glossy Ibis, Night Herons, Pygmy Cormorants were abundant while on the lakes and channels lot's of Red-necked-, Black-necked-, Great Crested Grebes, Whiskered Terns breed on the floating vegetation and many kind of herons, egrets, pelicans came to fish to their favorite lakes.

It was astonishing to witness fishing White and Dalmatian Pelicans around the boat, or finding the best morning spots for feeding Squacco Herons, Night Herons, Purple Herons and many other handsome birds.

Some lucky guests found **Wild Cat** on two occasions in this season and they took excellent images!

In the **Macin Mountains National Park** the colorful Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Ortolan Bunting, Red-backed Shrike, Rollers and Bee-eaters were the highlights but the delightful Souseliks were excellent photo subjects too. Due to the rather wet spring our drinking hides were slow this year but even so Turtle Doves, Corn Buntings, Red-backed Shrike, Hawfinches were regular visitors.

On the **Black Sea Coast** we had exciting photography time with Collared Pratincoles, Common Terns, Cuckoos, Bearded Tits, Lesser Grey Shrikes, Black-headed Buntings, Pied Wheatears, Isabelline Wheatears, Stone Curlews, Spanish Sparrows and even a very secretive **Lesser Blind Mole-rat** was photographed by one group for the first time on any Sakertours photo tour. Wow!

Our new tour, **the Danube Delta Special** was a fantastic experience with lots of birds and many interesting light conditions. This time we had witnessed large concentrations of egrets, ibises and pelicans in a single lake where small fishes were abundant. No doubt this tour will be a firm favorite in future!

It was the first year we were running our **Brown Bear Extensions** for those who participated in a Danube Delta tour only and they proved to be very successful!

Our **Ultima Frontiera Photo Tour** to the forgotten part of the delta was great again. We only run this tour once a year but **we have the best date for this** tour and also we are the only one who utilize all the available time and spend all the nights in the reserve.

In 2016 the highlights were the Golden Jackals and White-tailed Eagles from a special hide but great photo opportunities for Cuckoo, the rare Pallas's Gull, Bee-eaters and Bearded Tits were also very welcome amongst all the other goodies!

We hope to have an equally action-packed season in 2017 as well!





↓ BROWN BEAR PHOTOGRAPHY IN TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA

The winter of 2015/2016 was an unusually mild. Most of the Brown Bears didn't hibernated at all therefore the action started early.

In March a Lynx was seen in the late evening hours from one of the hides. Promisable sighting but it didn't appear again. The Bear activity become visibly better and better in April and our main hide was amazing with **up to 6-8 bears daily in virtually any time of the day.**

At the end of April the mating season started so there was even more action and the male bears were not visiting the area for the food but for the females.

In June and July the days are long and the nights are short so the bear activity was very good in the early morning and late afternoon hours.

Next summer we are expecting at least 2-3 young families!

Later in September the activity was still very good until the beech mast and acorns started to fall. We had a good beech mast year again which is a great source of food before the winter for lots of different animals.

A feature of the autumn tours is the amazing opportunities for landscape photography besides the bears.

In the next season we going to use 3 hides in 3 different locations. The main hide is by a forest clearing in a hillside, the second hide is in a more mature woodland and the third hide is by a small river.

We are looking forward to a great season again in 2017. Please visit our **Transylvania BLOG** for more pictures.



Brown Bear (Photo: János Oláh)



Bear cub looking for food (Photo: Zoltán Baczó)



↓ BIRDWATCHING TOURS IN 2016

Sakertours birding tours were carefully designed to show you the characteristic species of Eastern Europe and to witness the migration feeling in the right time of the year.

Hortobagy - Zemplén Spring tour was a very nice and enjoyable holiday with highlights such as Glossy Ibis, Red-footed Falcon, Saker, Imperial Eagle, Great Bustard, Ural Owl, White-backed and Black Woodpecker, Collared Flycatcher and so on.

You can read the more detailed trip report by clicking **HERE**.

Hungary, Slovakia and Transylvania GT was amazing again with 228 species seen. May is a magical month to explore the Carpathian Basin's birdlife. Highlights of this tour were nine species of Owls, all the European Woodpeckers, such raptors like Saker Falcon, Imperial Eagle, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Red-footed Falcon and many other goodies like Little Crake, Corncrake, Great Snipe, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Wallcreeper, Thrush Nightingale, Moustached and River Warblers. You can read the trip report by clicking **HERE**.

Danube Delta Spring Tour was another nice trip with many many great species and superb views. They found all the characteristic breeding species and even a good range of migrants too. Highlights of this tour were Dalmatian Pelican, Red-breasted Goose, Little Bittern, Levant Sparrowhawk, Stone Curlew, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Pallas's Gull, Pied and Isabelline Wheatear, Rock Thrush, Paddyfield Warbler and so on.

You can read the report by clicking **HERE**.

Danube Delta Autumn Tour was very eventful with a long lists of species. During this tour participants witness bird migration along the Black Sea. Highlights of this tour were Dalmatian Pelican, Greater Flamingo, Levant Sparrowhawk, Saker, Little Crake, Stone Curlew, Broad-billed Sandpipers, Dotterel, Pallas's Gulls, Citrine Wagtail, Pied and Isabelline Wheatear, Rock Thrush and so on.

Red-breasted Goose Special Tour was just fabulous. Right from the Lodge terrace we could enjoy the most wanted species like the Red-breasts and Lesser White-fronts too. Thousands of Common Cranes made the atmosphere even more special.

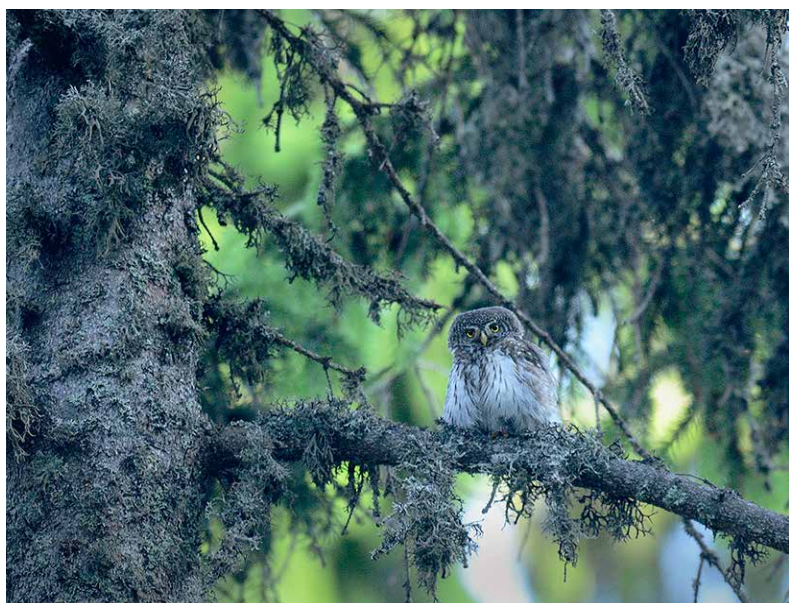
We do kindly ask please do not upload a nesting sites of any bird species seen on these tours with GPS coordinates to any website! Thank you for understanding!



Every Spring group had seen Ural Owl (Photo: Sándor Borza)



A pair of Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush (Photo: Gerald Reiner)



Pygmy Owl in Transylvania (Photo: Zoltán Gergely Nagy)





Ural Owl in winter (Photo: János Oláh)

With best wishes for Christmas and the
New Year from everyone at **SAKERTOURS**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

We would like to say thank you to all of our tour participants and especially for those who allowed us to share their images in this newsletter:

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