

# Saker eNews

6th edition, 2017

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Male Hazel Grouse in Transylvania (Photo: Zoltán Gergely Nagy)

### Dear Birders and Bird Photographers!

Yet another year has passed and we are happy to present our annual newsletter to you!

We have prepared it carefully to give you an insight about our tour-developments in Hungary and Romania as well as a little recap of the 2017 happenings.

This year was the first time we have run the Transylvania Birding Tour and it was a great success! It is a relaxed tour in some fantastic habitats with a wide range of exciting birds.

Regarding the photography tours we came to the final stage of launching yet another and new destination: **Transylvania!**

We believe Transylvania is a fantastic wildlife watching destination – the last wilderness in Europe with Wolves, Lynx and Brown Bears roaming in its vast forests! Adding this amazing area to our regular Hortobágy and Danube Delta photography tours is a major step in our history.

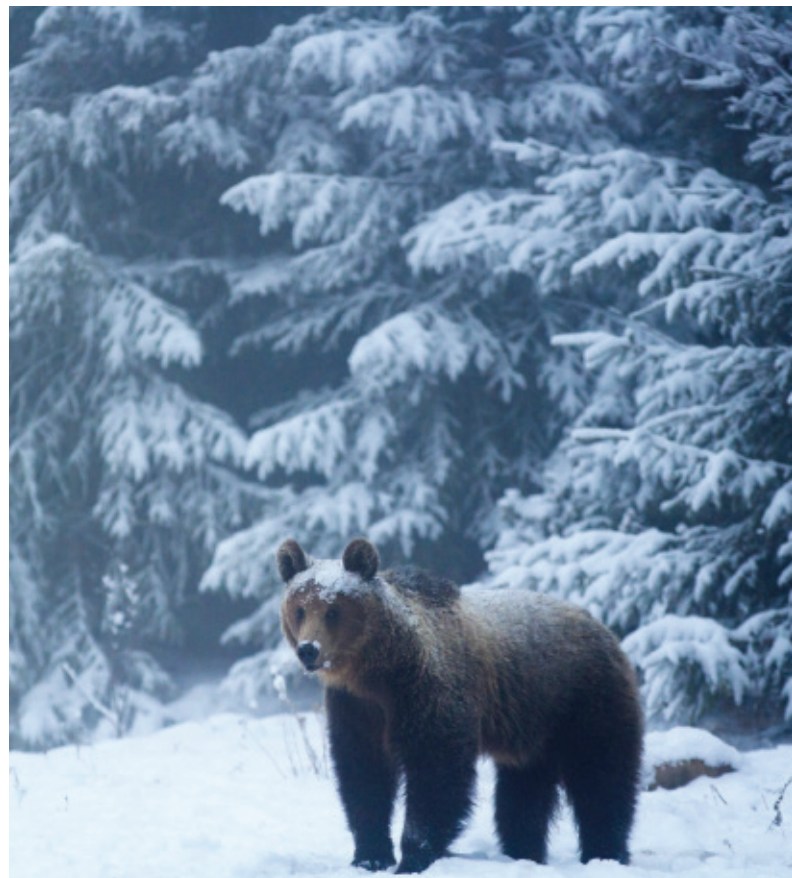
If you have any questions relating with any of our tours please contact our office at any time! We hope you will have a productive and enjoyable tour with us in 2018 or beyond!

Thank you for choosing Saker tours for your wildlife holiday!

Best wishes,

**János OLÁH**

*managing director*



Carpathian Brown Bear (Photo: Zoltán Baczó)

## LATEST NEWS

### ↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY

- **Birds & Bears in Transylvania** Photography Tour is our new offer where the main targets will be local breeding birds and Brown Bears from a well-elaborated hide system! This tour will be a combination of hide and stalking photography. The Carpathian forests give home to some exciting wildlife in Europe so our attempt is to offer you a **weeklong photo tour** with many exciting possibilities from landscape to birds and 'Carpathian predators'. The new Birds & Bears in Transylvania Tour with dates **will go online from August 2018**. So if you are already looking into holidays for 2019 keep this in mind!



Dipper (Photo: Zoltán Gergely Nagy)

- **Zemplén Hills Photo Safari** is another new item to our photographer clients. Now we can do targeting woodpecker and Ural Owl photography from portable hides in late April and early May (about one month period). This can be a great extension to your Hortobágy Photography Tour or taken as a new and exciting adventure on its own!

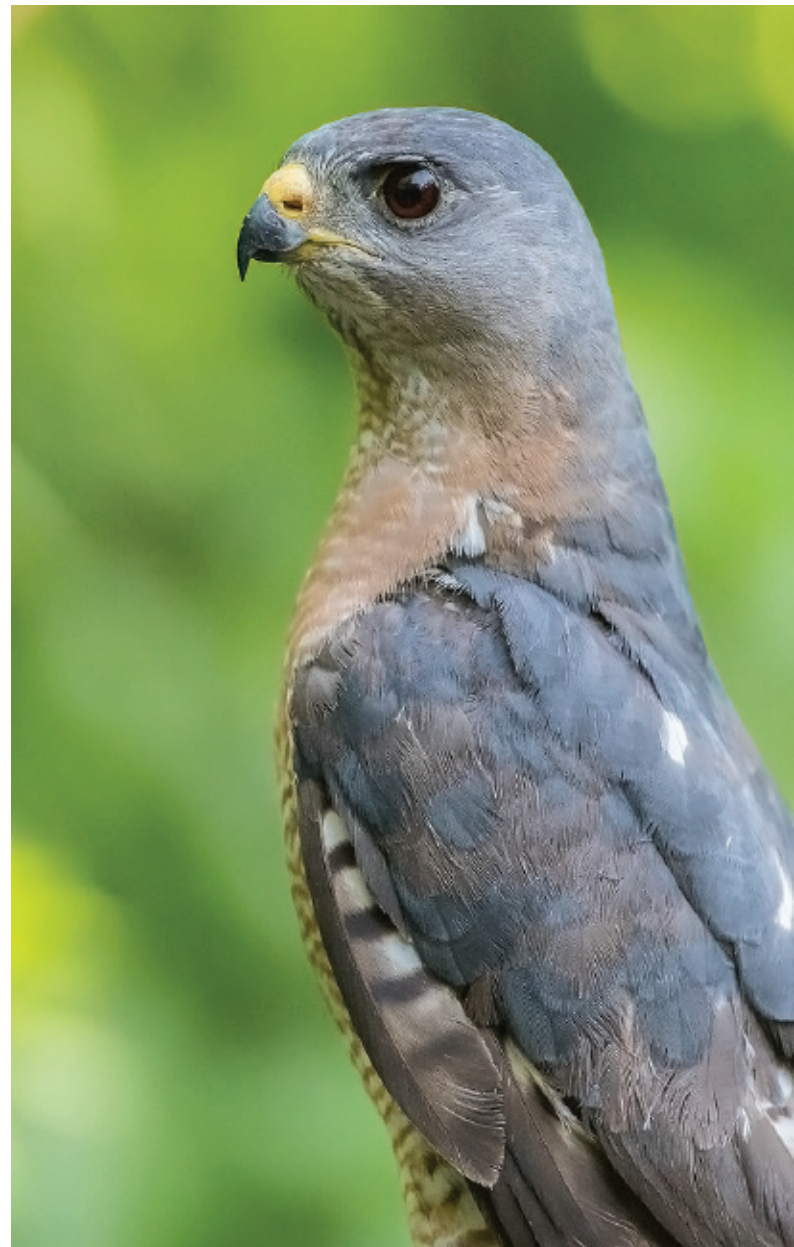
- We continuously developing our Hortobágy and Danube Delta Photo Tours every year:

- Now you can use professional **floating hides** in the Danube Delta if you like
- or you have the chance to photograph **Levant Sparrowhawk** in the Macin Mountains
- or you can try a new hide at **reedbed passerine feeding station** in the Hortobágy where we hope to photograph Little Crake!

- **Harghita Bear Lodge**, a brand new accommodation for wildlife enthusiast opened in 2017 in **Transylvania** and will be our new base in the future tours in the area with bird hides in the garden!

We hope it will be just as popular with our clients as the now well-established BÍbic Nature Lodge in the Hortobágy area.

- **Rent a Canon lens** during your wildlife photography holiday. Through our company photographers have a possibility to rent various lenses from Sakertours. Have a look the possibilities and prices under the link below: [http://sakertour.com/equipment\\_rental.php](http://sakertour.com/equipment_rental.php)



Levant Sparrowhawk, a new photo subject in the Macin Mountains NP. photo base (Photo: Raimund Braendstaetter)

Please visit our  
**HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR CALENDAR**  
for dates, availabilities and extra information!

## ↓ BIRDWATCHING

- Our **new tour** was launched in 2017: **Transylvania Birding Tour** – it was running with a completely new itinerary in some really amazing habitats and wonderful landscape. We designed this tour with our 20 years' experience in the region.

A fantastic birding area, highly recommended!

Please read the tour report **HERE**.

- **Wallcreeper** on the list of the Red-breasted Goose Special tour. A part of the Wallcreeper population from the Carpathians wintering in Hungary and now the Red-breasted Goose Special Tour participants have the possibility to see this magnificent high altitude species in its wintering ground. Also a possible northern hills extension can be added to this short break with Ural Owl and White-backed Woodpecker. Read the report of the 2017 tour with extension **HERE**.



Wintering Wallcreeper in Hungary (Photo: János Oláh)

- **Saker Falcon protection** has resulted new breeding pairs in Dobrudja/Danube Delta area. Both of our tours in this region in 2017 encountered this enigmatic species however it still remains a rare breeding bird of the area.

- Our team made efforts to relocate the globally threatened **Aquatic Warbler** in the Hortobágy area.

Sadly the Hungarian population crashed with no sign of breeding since 2012 but most probably this is down to problems in the wintering grounds in West Africa. Despite this fact our team and friends have spent several days to look at all the former breeding places within the Hortobágy NP but there was no sign of any breeding Aquatic Warblers.

We will not give up and continue searching in the coming years too.

- Our well established tours like the **Hungary, Slovakia & Transylvania GT** and the **Danube Delta – Dobrudja** tours had amazing results in 2017 as well. These are still very popular as we see more special birds on these tours than any other tours to the region. Our team is really up-to-date with bird news!

Please take a look for the 2017 reports **HERE**.

- In 2017 we installed up to 50 **Ural Owl nestboxes** in Hungary and Transylvania. For a successful tour in these regions we believe supporting the breeding success of some species is crucial.



Feeding Ural Owl (Photo: Zoltán Gergely Nagy)

Please visit our **BIRDWATCHING TOUR CALENDAR** for dates, availabilities and extra information!

## 2017 IN REVIEW

### ↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE HORTOBÁGY

Our photo hides were designed to offer some amazing photographic opportunities for every travelling nature photographer!

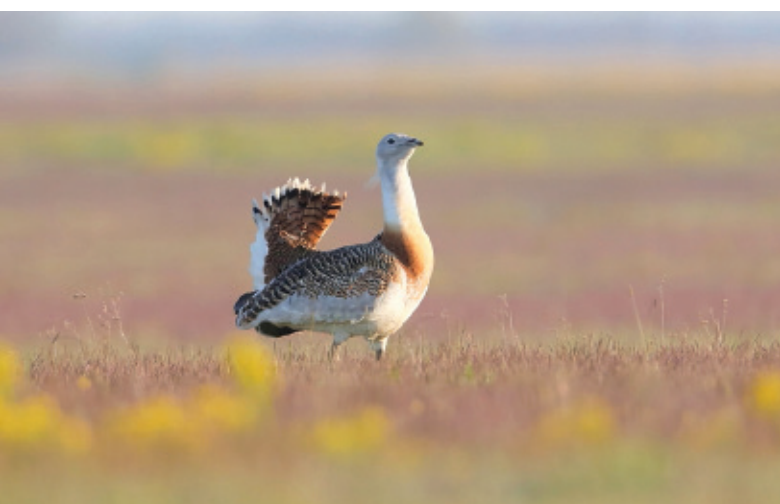
Have a look at the results of the last year below.

The **winter** of 2016/2017 season was really nice with snow and cold temperatures for more than 8 weeks long. Such beautiful scenery highlighted every photography day in the hide. Sakertours is supporting winter feeding for Eagles in the Hortobágy National Park since 2006 and every season surprised us with some unforgettable moments. **White-tailed Eagles** visited the places in big numbers and everybody had a chance to photograph all the different ages and some great interactions. Bonus species in the last season were Ravens, Long-legged Buzzard, Imperial Eagle and best of all a fantastic **Saker Falcon**.



White-tailed Eagle landing (Photo: Arie Ouwerkerk)

In **April** the hard-core spring photography started with displaying **Great Bustards**. However this is a special target and you need patience and at least 2-3 days for the success.



Great Bustard from the Hortobágy (Photo: Kazuyasu Kisaichi)

From **April to July** is the main **Spring photography time** with the widest range of available hides and species!

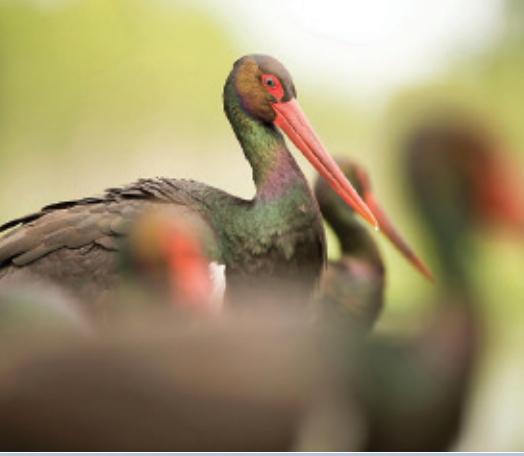
We usually operate up to **12 hides** in this period targeting Red-footed Falcon, Roller, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Little Owl, Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrike, Black Stork, Spoonbill, Pygmy Cormorant and many more. Early in the season in the last two weeks of April and first two weeks of May the Shorebird Hide was also operational and Ruff, Marsh Sandpiper and other goodies were photographed. This was also the prime time for Red-footed Falcon mating and for Black Storks. Later in the season the more colorful birds like Roller and Bee-eater plus the Shrikes stole the show!



A fantastic looking Red-footed Falcon (Photo: Attila Szilágyi)

Our **Crane Photography Tour** was slightly effected by the 'usual' mid-September rainy weather arriving earlier but still all our guests could photograph Cranes as well as White-tailed Eagles, Dotterel and a wide range of water birds and passerines.

See you next year!



## ↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE DANUBE DELTA

**Danube Delta in Spring - Summer** was a fantastic experience for many wildlife photographers.

All our tours in this area offered some excellent possibilities to photograph birds and wildlife. The morning and afternoon lights are very special this time of the year, and provided the perfect setting for the time we have spent out on the lakes.

Occasionally fog or a rainy hour created some excellent and unusual atmosphere for photography. Do not be afraid if it is not sunny! Our photo boat was designed to be a very comfortable mobile hide in many situations, as usual!

The water level of the Danube was rather low throughout the season, a bit different situations than other years but we have found quickly the best spots for photography and enjoyed every hour in the region with Pelicans, Ibises, Squacco Herons, Purple Herons, Little Bitterns, Night Herons, Pygmy Cormorants, Kingfishers, Red-necked Grebes, Black-necked Grebes, Whiskered Terns, Black Terns, White-tailed Eagles or the thousands of emerging Mayflies, literally millions of Frogs, Raccoon Dog, Wild Cat, Wild Boar and all other creatures we encountered.

Our main or most popular tour spend time in the **Macin Mountains National Park** where we usually spending one and a half – two days of photography, depending on the weather conditions.



**Highlights** in this area were Bee-eaters, Rollers, Turtle Dove, Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrike, Red-rumped Swallow, European Sousek, Isabelline Wheatear, Ortolan Bunting, Wood Lark and a fantastic male Levant Sparrowhawk visiting one of our drinking hide regularly!

We also visit the **Black Sea Coastal area** on this tour. This is a very bird rich area with many interesting subjects from Collared Pratincole, feeding Hoopoes, Pied Wheatear, Stone Curlew, Yellow Wagtails, Spanish Sparrow, Calandra Lark, Short-toed Lark, Grey Partridge, Rosy Starling, Little Owl and waders.

### During the **Danube Delta Special Tour**

first time ever we have used floating hides for extremely low angle photography in a silent bay where Glossy Ibises, Grey Herons, Little Egret, Sandpiper, Ruff, Black-winged Stilt, Black-tailed Godwits were regular and worked perfectly! **Thank you Mr.JanGear!**

### **Ultima Frontiera Photo Tour**

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 nights in the reserve!

In 2017 the **highlights** were the Golden Jackals and White-tailed Eagles but we had great photo opportunities with Bee-eaters, Little Owl, Purple Heron, Bearded Tit, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Thrush Nightingale. Wild Cat night photography with flashes and remote controller was a new opportunity for those who were prepared for this event. Later in the year Raccoon Dog night photography was also implemented.

Please visit our **Delta Blog** for more pictures!



## ↓ BROWN BEAR PHOTOGRAPHY IN TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA

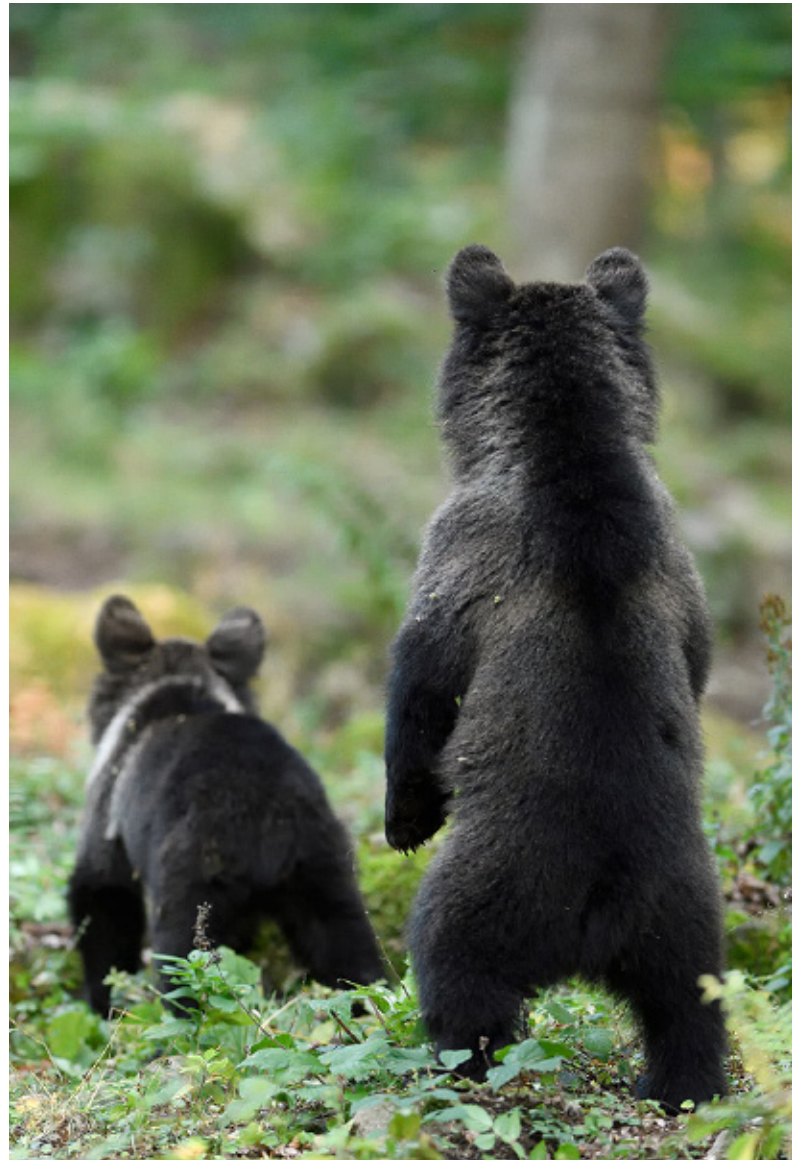
We are proud to tell that this year we have had the **best photography season** for Carpathian Brown Bears since we have started working with them many years ago.

All the three hides we had been using were reliable throughout the season which is a fantastic achievement. In three different habitats as many as **40+ different Carpathian Brown Bears** were seen and photographed!

**March and April** we had few chances to take pictures from Bears in the snow. As with photography generally you need luck with weather. Especially nowadays when it is not very predictable. In 2017 we were especially lucky when in mid-April, winter came back for two days again with thick fresh snow. We made the best ever 'winter' pictures so far.



Red Fox (Photo: Zoltán Baczó)



Bear cubs looking to something strange (Photo: Zoltán Nagy)

**Spring and Summer** Bear Photography Tours were all successful with many of different Bears in different ages. The first young cubs were seen in July.

We finished the photo tours in September with some nice memories with Bears and **Hazel Grouse** in front of us! Couldn't have been a better end. We are looking forward to an exciting new season as we have improved the setup in front of two hides and started building an extensive bird hide network in Transylvania too.

We are looking forward to a great season again in 2018.

Please visit our **Transylvania BLOG** for more pictures!





## ↓ BIRDWATCHING TOURS IN 2017

Sakertours birding tours were carefully designed to see the characteristic species of a specific region or / and witness the migration feeling in the right time of the year.

We had a very enjoyable birding season with lots of nice birds and memories. Thanks for all our tour participants for such a great company on these various tours!

We also need to emphasize that we have included in our 'booking conditions' that with the usage of eBird and various other portals people are uploading breeding bird data to the internet straight away. We accept the usage of these online lists but please consult your guide where you can put your location point! The breeding success is THE MOST important for us and we MUST minimize pressure on sensitive birds (owls, woodpeckers, raptors etc).

**We do ask please do not upload exact nesting sites of any bird species seen on these tours with GPS coordinates to any website without consulting your guide! Thank you!**

- **Hortobagy - Zemplén Spring Tour** is a short version of the GT but includes really good birds! You can read the more detailed trip report [HERE](#).
- **Hungary, Slovakia and Transylvania GT** was amazing again with 223 species seen just within 12 days. You can read the trip report [HERE](#).
- **Danube Delta Spring Tour** was a nice birding experience with many interesting species and some memorable moments in the Danube Delta. You can read the trip report [HERE](#).
- **Danube Delta Autumn Tour** was a very productive tour with many species and very good migration time for Shorebirds. You can read the trip report [HERE](#).
- **Red-breasted Goose Special Tour** was just fabulous. We have seen extremely well Red-breasted Goose and Lesser White-fronted Goose, alongside with such species like Saker and Great Bustard. The possible custom extension was running this year and was core on Ural and Eagle Owls, Wallcreeper, Black and White-backed Woodpeckers, Alpine Accentor. Please read the report [HERE](#).



Ural Owl (Photo: Dániel Balla)



Eagle Owl (Photo: Gábor Simay)



Adult Red-breasted Goose (Photo: Gábor Simay)





Carpathian Brown Bear (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:

Raimund Brandstatter, Stephan Bonneau, Jaap La Brijn, Inge Diujsens, Wim Dirckx, Bastien Juiff, Kazuyasu Kisaichi, Zoltán Nagy, Frans Pelsmaekers, Marchhart Pál, Gordon Follows, Arie Ouwerkerk, Simay Gabor, Mike Lane, Philip Mugridge, Yvan Martin, Sabine Schroll, Attila Szilagy, Jan Zanders