

Saker eNewsletter

8th edition, 2019

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Pallas's Gull was a highlight on our 2019 tours to the Danube Delta (Photo: János Oláh)

Dear Birders and Bird Photographers!

In 2019 we have celebrated the **25th anniversary** of Sakertours! It is an important milestone in our company life; to achieve this performance was only possible with an exceptional team who dedicated their lives to bird protection, habitat conservation, wildlife photography and of course for eco tourism!

Many years have passed since our unique hide photography tours started in 2006 but nowadays the challenge to create successful wildlife photography or bird watching tours is much higher than before. Sakertours' strength is being a local tour company with special focus on a small part of Europe where we are able to improve, renew and develop tours in a much more responsive and innovative way.

I kindly invite any wildlife enthusiast to come and join us to a tour in Eastern Europe where we have amazing offers from the Hortobágy Steppes through the Carpathian Wild Forests to the magical Danube Delta Wetland! Please welcome our **Newsletter** where you can browse our new products and tour developments as well as highlights of the previous season from first hand.

Thank you for choosing Sakertours for your wildlife holiday!



János Oláh
managing director



LATEST NEWS

↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR IMPROVEMENTS

- **Ultimate Photo Tour by Sakertours.** A specially designed new product for overseas photographers! We fulfilled a need of a compact, [16 days long photography tour](#) which covers all the three operational areas of Sakertours. This trip starts in Budapest, Hungary and finishing in Bucharest, Romania and covers the lowland of Hortobágy, the Mountains of Transylvania and the wetlands of the Danube Delta.

The next tour will run between **14 – 29 May 2021.**

You can find more informations under this [LINK](#)

- **New Red-footed Falcon tower hide.** A brand-new Falcon tower hide was built to offer you higher comfort and different setup when photographing Falcons. This hide is air conditioned so even in the hottest summer days you can keep focusing on birds in a perfect temperature.

- **Saker Falcon Photography.** We will try our best again in the 2019/2020 winter photography season to attract the interest of the enigmatic Saker Falcon.

In the last two winters we successfully managed to get these beautiful birds to one of our hide and we are very optimistic again!

- **Common Crane roosting hide.** In 2019 we built and successfully tested a hide for roosting Common Cranes. Now we offer you a [special day-tour](#) in the Hortobágy National Park, in October. This new hide overlooks a lake where hundreds of Cranes sending the night in the peak of their migration!

The atmosphere is fantastic and memorable.

[You can photograph Cranes without using glass!](#)

UT Ultimate tours by Sakertours

- **Special Brown Bear Photography Tour in June.**

A special photo tour to capture Brown Bears in backlight conditions as well as mother-cub actions. We only run a single tour every year in Transylvania, when the sun position is suitable plus wild flowers are abundant.

Click [HERE](#) for more info.

- **Winter Brown Bear Photography Tour**

In February we going to test a photography tour in Transylvania. The special element in this time of the year is the snow which gives an unique milieu and light conditions for Bear photography. A **'Winter Bears'** tour has a great potential and hopefully will be available from 2021 February. We keep you updated about this possibility.

- **Capercaillie Photography in Transylvania.** In our *"Bears and Birds Photography Tours"* in April guests will have the opportunity to try a special new hide dedicated to capture Capercaillies. The hide is located in a remote mountain-top lekking area where photographers have to spend the night if they want to capture the lekking males next morning.

- **Long-legged Buzzard Photography.** On our *"Danube Delta and Dobrudja classic tour"* we are going to offer you a chance to capture Long-legged Buzzard from a new hide.

- **Pallas's Gull Photography.** On all our Danube Delta tours in 2020 we will make special efforts to photograph Pallas's Gull around the inner lakes of the Delta, where they usually hang around with Pelicans and Cormorants. In 2019 we were successful and keep working on this truly special subject!



Cranes at roosting site, Brown Bear in backlight and Saker Falcon amongst 2020 new offers (Photos: János Oláh and Attila Szilágyi)



• **Ultimate Birding Tour by Sakertours**

A specially designed product for overseas birders! We realized a need of a birding tour which covers the whole operational area of Sakertours. This compact tour was based on the 'Hungary, Slovakia and Transylvania Grand Tour' with an extension to the Danube Delta or to Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia.

The next tour will run between **5 – 23 May, 2020**
Have a look this new tour itinerary under this **LINK**

• **Birding theater(s) for birding groups.** Over the years we have realized the need of a hide(s) where birding groups can sit down for a few hours and enjoy forest birding from a different perspective. The transformation of one of the woodland drinking photography hides in Hungary was the first step in this long-term project. From 2019 this hide can offer unique experience for birding groups with up to 15 person. This place is a real 'birding theater' with such 'actors' as Hawfinch, Sparrowhawk, woodpeckers, different kind of warblers and flycatchers...

• **Danube Delta Spring Tour has new itinerary!**

From 2020 we are offering a slightly modified itinerary to experience the best birds of the Danube Delta and Southern Romania. Now we are including such new species on this tour like *Semi-collared Flycatcher*, *Pallid Swift*, *Short-toed Treecreeper* or *Cetti's Warbler*. This tour perfectly fits into our Ultimate Sakertours offer as well.

• **Capercaillie watching hide.** The Western Capercaillie is a sought-after shy forest denizen on our Transylvania tours and never easy to find let alone to obtain a good view for the entire group. In 2019 we have built a special viewing platform where hopefully our group can enjoy good looks of this enigmatic coniferous species from a relative comfort but under strict viewing rules.

• **New wildlife watching boat in the Danube Delta**

The 'Harrier' wildlife watching boat was designed and custom-built in 2019 and quickly become a first class boat to discover the Danube Delta wildlife in the most comfortable and safe way on our tours!



The "Harrier" wildlife watching boat of Sakertours (Photo: Zoltán Baczó)

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

2019 IN REVIEW

↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE HORTOBÁGY NATIONAL PARK

Our **network of hides**, the **Bibic Nature Lodge** and **local knowledge** makes our tours very productive and enjoyable. All our hides offered some nice time with local birds. In 2019 we have used such **new hides** like a **brand-new Red-footed Falcon Tower hide**, a **reedbed hide** and a **new hide for roosting Cranes**.

The year started with the **Winter Eagle Photography** between December and March. 'White winters' are quite rare nowadays but we were lucky as the Hortobágy Pusztas was covered with snow throughout January.

All our guests were able to photograph White-tailed Eagles, Common Buzzards, Saker Falcons and few occasions even Eastern Imperial Eagle and Red Fox.

The **highlight of this season** was definitely the **Saker Falcon** pair which regularly appeared in front of the hide!

The **Spring – Summer Photography** tours between April – July took the biggest attention of visiting photographers.

It was a very busy time for us and for the guests as well. More than 15 different hides were functional and more than 60+ bird species was captured by the photographers.

In addition to the birds, several mammal species were on the list as well like Brown Hare, Red Squirrel and Beech Marten.

Highlights of the last season were Red-footed Falcons from two different hides, Black Stork, Spoonbill, White-tailed Eagle, Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, Hoopoe, Roller, Little Owl, Water Rail, Red-backed Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Savi's Warbler, Black Woodpecker, Syrian Woodpecker, Collared Flycatcher, Hawfinch.

Autumn Tours to the Hortobágy were created to experience the **Common Crane migration**.

Our late Summer Crane Photography Tour was excellent in this year. All our guests were taking many excellent images of drinking and bathing Cranes.

We also created a special photo tour from October when we have the peak of the Crane migration!

This year our guests were also very lucky with the dry weather conditions throughout October.

This special day started with from our new special Roosting hide, then we moved to a different hide for drinking and bathing Cranes and finished the day with landscape photography (sunset with Cranes).

Highlight of the season was the roosting Crane hide!

Please visit our **Hortobágy Photo Blog** for more pictures!



Saker Falcon (Photo: János Oláh); mating Red-footed Falcons (Photo: Inge Duijsens); and Common Cranes (Photo: Attila Szilágyi)



↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE DANUBE DELTA

Photographing birds and other wildlife in the Danube Delta gives a [fantastic opportunity for a wildlife photographer](#). This region has one of the most diverse birdlife in whole Europe but it is also equally important to have an up-to-date and thorough local knowledge as well as the special infrastructure for a successful tour.

Sakertours has it all!

The [2019 Spring-Summer](#) season was fabulous. With our special photo-boat we could photograph many species and got a lovely insight of the Delta wildlife with every group.

The [highlight](#) of the 2019 season in the Delta part was the [Pallas's Gull](#). Supporting cast was also amazing though with two species of pelicans, three species of grebes, herons and egrets, marsh terns, Kingfisher, Hoopoe, Cuckoo, Penduline Tit as well as Little Crake, Little Bittern, Wild Cat and Raccoon Dog for some of the luckier guests!

In the [Macin Mountains National Park](#) area we were finally able to change the tour accommodation to a brand-new place!

This fact was an important and very welcome change. Now we have excellent conditions in the Hotel to rest and new photographic opportunities to work with in the Hotel `garden`.

This new Hotel lies in a rural area and has a huge garden where we have already installed a new drinking station.

The Macin area was our main photography site for Bee-eater, Roller but was excellent for other species like Black-headed Bunting, Red-backed Shrike, Isabelline Wheatear, Corn Bunting, Ortolan Bunting, Red-rumped Swallow, Hoopoe, Stone Curlew and Souslik or Ground Squirrel.

Our woodland drinking hide in the foothills of the Mountains was visited regularly but not daily by a Levant Sparrowhawk in June but we had Common Nightingale, Turtle Dove, Syrian Woodpecker, Sombre Tit, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher and Barred Warbler amongst the regular visitors.

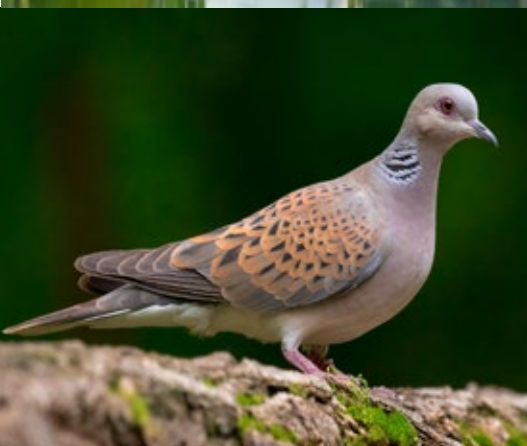
The [Black Sea area](#) was a great place to photograph the special [Collared Pratincoles](#) and other breeding shorebirds like Avocet and Black-winged Stilts as well as Yellow Wagtails, Hoopoes, Great Reed Warbler, Long-eared Owl, Cuckoo and Paddyfield Warbler in the earlier part of the season.

The rocky area of Constanta offered the best chance for [Pied Wheatear photography](#).

See you next year!



Please visit our [Danube Delta Blog](#) for more pictures from the last season!



↓ BROWN BEAR AND BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY IN TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA

Sakertours Photography Season in Transylvania started with an almost complete hide infrastructure. We had just one special hide in test phase.

In 2019 all our guests stayed in the [Hargita Bear Lodge](#). From the Lodge all the hides were easily accessible on foot or by car. Just walking distance we had the [garden drinking and feeding station](#) where smaller passerines were regular.

Also in the Lodge garden we had a mobile blind looking to another feeding station where we fed local breeding species like Red-backed Shrike, Common Redstart and Wryneck.

All these species were photographable with a bit of patience.

Just 150 meters from the Lodge we had a mobile [Dipper hide](#) by the Tarnava River where the local Dipper and Grey Wagtail pair was photographable until mid-May.

The forest feeding and drinking station was the place where dark colored *Red Squirrels* and *Crested Tit* were regular. In April we have tested our new [Capercaillie hide](#) with success and we are going to use it with guests from the next seasons.

All our [Brown Bear Hides](#) showed us some amazing moments with Bears and one occasion we even had some privileged clients to see and photograph Wolves!

In front of the Bear hides we had very good activity between April and October.

Early Spring was the mating time and was a great period to photograph female and male Bears and older independent cubs. [From early June we started to see the first young cubs.](#)

The Hargita Mountains area is the main wildlife photography destination of Sakertours in Transylvania.

The Bear Photography hides are very reliable nowadays and the bird photography possibilities are developing every year.

We have lots of ideas in our mind so we can ensure you that every coming season will have some surprises for you!

Please visit our [Transylvania Blog](#) for more pictures!



Brown Bear (Photo: Tom McDonell); Red Squirrel (Photo: Tibor Dáné) and Wryneck (Photo: János Oláh)



↓ BIRDWATCHING TOURS IN 2019

We would like to share the main highlights from all our birding tours. You can find detailed informations of each tour under the trip reports [LINK](#).

- **Hungary, Slovakia and Transylvania GT** A 12-day long birding tour covering three countries and most of the different habitats of the Carpathian Basin. In 2019 we have recorded **217 species** with a long list of highlights which included *Ural, Eagle, Pygmy and Tengmalm's Owls* and *8 Woodpecker species*. Read the report [HERE](#)
- **Danube Delta Spring Tour:** We finished this tour with a total **183 species** recorded in 7 days birdwatching in the Eastern part of Romania. The best experiences were both species of *Pelicans, Levant Sparrowhawk, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope*, breeding plumage *Pallas's Gulls, Paddyfield Warbler, Rose-coloured Starlings* and *Barred Warbler*. Trip report [HERE](#)
- **Transylvania Birding Tour:** Our Transylvania tour was the 3rd in a row now. In the pristine woodlands, alpine meadows and limestone gorges of the Carpathians we saw *Caucasian Shore Larks, Eurasian Scops and Pygmy Owl, White-backed Woodpecker, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Sombre Tit* and of course everyone's favourite the *Wallcreeper* in breeding plumage. Trip report [HERE](#)
- **Hortobagy - Zemplén Autumn Tour:** Early October was a great time to explore the Hungarian Puszta and the Zemplén Hills for species like *Dotterel, Saker Falcon, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Ural Owl, Eurasian Eagle-Owl*, seven species of woodpeckers and a vagrant *Pallas's Gull*. You can read the trip report [HERE](#)
- **Danube Delta Autumn Tour:** Focusing on the autumn migration on this tour we recorded **179 species** with highlights of *200 Broad-billed Sandpipers in a single flock, Little Crake, Marsh Sandpiper, Black-winged Pratincole, Pallas's Gull, both Pelican species, Levant Sparrowhawk, Citrine Wagtail, Pied Wheatear, Paddyfield Warbler* amongst others. Trip report [HERE](#)
- **Red-breasted Goose Special Tour** A short break tour with main focus on the masses of wintering wild geese in the Hortobágy. This year we saw well the two main target species. A total **91 Red-breasts** and **10 Lesser White-fronted Geese** beside 52 Great Bustards, Eastern Imperial Eagles, Saker Falcon a few late staying Dotterels and a vagrant Yellow-billed Loon! You can read the trip report [HERE](#)

See you next year!



Tengmalm's Owl in Transylvania (Photo: Szabolcs Kovács)



Broad-billed Sandpipers from the Danube Delta (Photo: Dániel Balla)



Red-breasted Goose in the Hortobágy (Photo: Gábor Simay)





Magpies in flight (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 guides and guests who allowed us to share their images in this newsletter:

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