

# Saker eNewsletter

10th edition , 2021



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Common Cranes in the first ray of light (Photo: Attila Szilágyi)

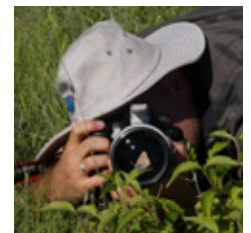
## Dear Birders, Mammal Watchers and Nature Photographers!

I have just realized that this is our 10<sup>th</sup> annual newsletter! Time is flying, the World is changing but we are still here and working hard to serve our clients and friends in the best possible way! We don't wish to speak much about Covid, it is still here and perhaps will be for a few more years but we are positive that we can run most of our planned tours in 2022 and beyond. There are inevitable changes in tourism (more papers, tests and requirements, increasing prices) but this will not stop nature lovers to explore the wilderness, seeing new and exciting birds, mammals, and butterflies plus ideally make great and lasting photographs too!

In the last two years we maintained our hides, tested new places, created our mammal watching division and just as usual we have new ideas and we will explore even further in 2022 and 2023. We will keep our standards high, offering competitive and enjoyable small sized tours for our customers.

In this Newsletter you can find new information about 2022 tours and news from the past year.

Please enjoy reading and we very much hope to welcome you in our wildlife watching and wildlife photography tours in 2022!



János Oláh  
managing director



## LATEST NEWS

### ↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR IMPROVEMENTS

- **Rebooting the Sakertours hide network** in the second half of 2021 was a priority for us! Several hides had to be renovated or replaced as even though there were no clients the weather was just as harsh as usual. We are still working on our hides in Romania which were a bit more effected however our hide network in the Hortobágy National Park is ready for the next season.

Our main goal for 2022 is to welcome you with the usual hide variety and comfort!

- Beside all the **restoration works** we would like to open a new Bear Photography hide in Transylvania. The hide will be ready by Spring 2022. In certain part of the year this hide will be used for other subjects such as Red Deers and raptors like Golden Eagle and Goshawk in winter besides being a Brown Bear Photo Hide.

It will also be possible to sleep in this hide as an option.

**UT** Ultimate tours by Sakertours

- **Eurasian Lynx Photography Tour** - a very special and a brand-new photography tour in Transylvania where we try to stalk and photograph the 'ghost of the forest' in late winter during their mating period. You will have 5 full days for the Lynx operation in temporary blinds, natural shelters and stalking with the help of our expert guide. You can find more information under this **LINK**



Some of our hides needs restoration but not the subjects  
(Photo: János Oláh)



A stunning male Eurasian Lynx from Transylvania (Photo: Alpár Ferenc Gotthárd)

## ↓ BIRD AND WILDLIFE WATCHING TOUR IMPROVEMENTS

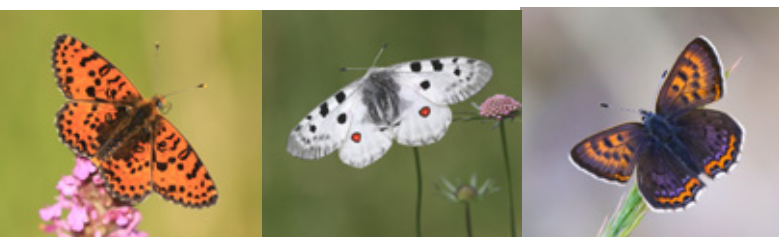
- Sakertours **birding** tours were designed to offer the best possible birding experiences with a long list of birds focusing on the specialties. You can select from our fixed date departure tours and see all Eastern European specialties on our tours visiting Hungary, Slovakia, Romania or Croatia. Our tour programs, dates and prices are all updated!

**Ultimate Sakertours`** Those who are seeking a full experience about birds of Eastern Europe can join us on a 19 days long tour with two endings option to select from. [LINK](#)



Lesser Spotted Eagle in Transylvania (Photo: Dániel Balla)

- Some of Sakertours guides and particularly Janos was able to study **Butterflies** during pandemic times. It was his childhood interest which was sparked again in recent times. We have been visiting many locations in our region and gained valuable information of seeing some of the special butterflies. We will not have fixed date tours but if anybody interested we can tailor and run custom itineraries for **Butterflies Watching Holidays** in Hungary, Slovakia and in Romania. If you're interested in a dedicated Butterfly watching tour, please contact our office for more details!



- The biggest progress achieved by Sakertours team (logistics and field work) however during the Covid pandemic period was launching **Mammal Watching Tours**. There is an increasing interest for mammals and we are eager to guide you for our special Eastern European specialties.

We currently offer three different Mammal Tours for 2022:



Romanian Hamster (Photo: Zoltán G. Nagy)

**(1) Eurasian Lynx Tour in Transylvania** between **5-11 March, 2022**. A specialized tour in search for the Eurasian Lynx in the Carpathian Forest. Before this new tour came out, we have tested the program in March 2021. We will see many tracks and with patience and good technical background we have good chance of finding this enigmatic mammal on our tour.

**(2) Romania Mammal Tour** between **26 August – 3 September, 2022**. Sakertours very best mammal watching tour in Romania where we will cover the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube Delta. On this tour we have recorded 48 species in 2020 and 49 species in 2021. This is a blockbuster tour if you want to start your mammal list or you are visiting Europe for mammals. It was designed to see as many mammals within a mere 9 days as possible.

**(3) European Mink Special** between **9-13 September, 2022**. A specialized short mammal watching tour to look for the critically endangered European Mink in the Danube Delta. Our 2021 tour was a great success, seeing the European Mink again!

Please visit our [HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR CALENDAR](#) and [BIRDWATCHING TOUR CALENDAR](#)

for dates, availabilities and extra informations!

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## 2021 IN REVIEW

### ↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE HORTOBÁGY NATIONAL PARK

The year of 2021 was a slow recovery. After a depressing 12 months the beginning of the year was still a challenge!

In spring only a limited number of guests could reach us but just as in 2020 by summer the politicians decided we are free to travel! If you have been vaccinated you can go with various minor restrictions. So from late June and July we had a few foreign visitors after a long gap!

The second half of the year we saw continuous improvement in travelling.

**Winter Eagle Photography** in the Hortobágy National Park was very exciting but only local photographers could enjoy it. White-tailed Eagles were regular subjects in front of our hides but **Long-legged Buzzard**, **Saker Falcon**, **Eastern Imperial Eagle** and both **Common** and **Rough-legged Buzzards** had visited our feeding station.

The **Spring-Summer** vibes were again fantastic but only for limited number of photographers. Our shorebird hide performed well and all the well know hides were very reliable.

The Egret and Stork Hide was a great favorite beside the Red-footed Falcon tower hide. Plus the usual colorful friends like Hoopoe, Roller and Bee-eater where there to satisfy the photographers in our hides.

The Autumn **Crane Photography** tours were just fantastic.

We have expanded our Crane hide network and 2021 autumn was a dry period allowing great Crane photography possibilities!

We have a well elaborated 1 day Crane Photography tour now on our website and for foreign visitors we suggest to book several days of this!

Every day is different, especially in the roosting Crane Hides.

In this place Cranes are spending the night and the photography is taking place in the early hours when the birds are starting to leave the roosting site.

The atmosphere here is fantastic. We also used our fixed drinking and bathing Crane hides, plus used temporary hides and found perfect places to capture Cranes in the sunset.

All the locations were continuously changing throughout the season.

The Hortobágy is ever changing!

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



Long-legged Buzzard and Black Storks by János Oláh; calling Crane pair by Attila Szilágyi



## ↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE DANUBE DELTA

In 2021 the situation in the Danube Delta was similar to Hungary. We only had few guests because the vaccination was slow, but by early summer we could organize few tours with our special photo boat.

The result was excellent as always. Our well known places worked well and had some really nice experiences with every group.

Red-necked Grebe families in the soft evening light, fishing and preening Pelicans, Glossy Ibises in the open, fishing Purple-, Squacco- and Night Herons, Whiskered Terns with nesting materials were amongst the main highlights in 2021. The Hotel garden in the Delta produced such surprises like breeding Little Owl, Hoppoe, Red-footed Falcon and Penduline Tit. We can't wait to return again in 2022 and see what we can find!

Over the summer our team member, Daniel Balla has found a decent breeding colony of Rose-coloured Starlings in Dobrudja. About 2000 pairs were breeding in an active rock quarry. Seeing and photographing breeding Rosy Starlings as they hunt for grasshoppers is a fantastic experience for a wildlife photographer. We would love to see them every year but their breeding in the region is very hectic and unpredictable.

Last time they bred was back in 2018!

If you would like to join a bird photography tour to the Danube Delta we still have available places! On the classic Danube Delta photo tour we are visiting three places and cover a larger area of coastal Dobrudja plus have 3 days in the Danube Delta with our special photo boat. The Danube Delta Special tours are 1 night shorter and only visiting the Danube Delta with our photo boat between the end of June - and mid July. You can find more detailed information on our website.



Inside the photo boat (Photo: Zoltán G. Nagy)

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



Red-necked Grebe; White-tailed Eagle with Pelicans and a stuning male Rosy Starling (Photo: Zoltán G. Nagy and János Oláh)



## ↓ BROWN BEAR AND BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY IN TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA

In Transylvania we have started the season with the Western Capercaillies at a lekking site. That was a very nice experience in the deep snow and it worked until the first week of May.

We had breeding Dippers and a Ural Owl pair in our special nest boxes built for them.

The first attempt of the Urals Owls has failed, as none of the eggs have hatched, but they tried again later and successfully raised one chick.

Red Squirrel photography was fantastic throughout the year!

We have a whole bunch of Red Squirrels in front of our forest feeding station. Great fun to capture and 'freeze' the movement when jumping.

All the three Brown Bear photography hides worked well between April and October.

Late Summer and Autumn Bear photography tours were all successful. A mother Bear with 4 cubs was a highlight in front of the so called 'stream' hide. In that place a second mother Bear with two cubs was also often visible, so some lucky guest could see them all in one place.

Nice memories indeed!

Beside the Bears we often had Red Foxes and different kind of birds including Stock Dove, Wood Pigeon, Raven, Jay, Mallard, Grey Wagtail...

In late September a young Lesser Spotted Eagle appeared in front of the stream hide.

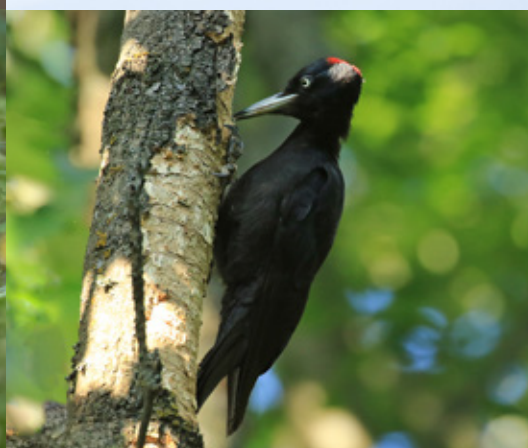
We were hoping to see Hazel Grouse again in front of the hides but we only came across them on the way to the hides or back to the Lodge, mainly along forestry roads.

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



Dipper with Caddisfly larvae (Photo: Alpár-Ferenc Gotthárd)





## ↓ BIRDWATCHING TOURS IN 2021

We would like to share the main highlights from all our birding tours from the past season.

You can find detailed informations of each tour under the trip reports [LINK](#).

- **Danube Delta Spring Tour:** • This tour was run with an improved itinerary and it was a very enjoyable trip with such goodies seen like Semi-Collared Flycatcher, Pallid Swift, Paddyfield Warbler, Pied Wheatear, Saker Falcon, Pallas`s Gull, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Rose-coloured Starling to name just a few. We have recorded 178 species! Read the trip report under this [LINK](#)

- **Danube Delta Autumn Tour:** • A very productive tour which covers the best places for migratory birds in South East Romania. Tour highlights were Levant Sparrowhawks, Greater Flamingos, Pallas`s Gulls, Black-winged and Collared Pratincoles, Broad-billed Sandpipers, Paddyfield Warbler, Pied Wheatear. We have recorded 179 species! Read the trip report under this [LINK](#)

- **Red-breasted Goose Special Tour** in the Hortobágy National Park was successful with many excellent looks of the two main targets: Red-breasted and Lesser White-fronted Geese! Additional supporting cast included many Eastern Imperial Eagles, Greater Spotted Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, Saker, Great Bustard and various passerines

- In November during a synchronised Geese count a **record number of 210 LWG** were counted in the Hortobágy National Park! See you next year!



Semi-collared Flycatcher in South Romania (Photo: János Oláh)



Broad-billed Sandpiper, Danube Delta (Photo: Zoltán Baczó)



Red-breasted Goose in the Hortobágy (Photo: János Oláh)



## ↓ MAMMAL WATCHING TOURS IN 2021

- **Romania Mammal Tour.** After a successful inaugural tour in 2020 we repeated this tour in 2021 with Zoltan Gergely Nagy as principal guide. The tour was successful again and the group recorded 49 species with highlights including **Romanian Hamster, Wildcat, Brown Bear, Lesser Blind Mole Rat, Bechstein's Bat and Kuhl's Pipistrelle.** Read the full trip report under this [LINK](#)

- **European Mink Special Tour** in the Danube Delta. It was our first dedicated European Mink tour to the Danube Delta and was successful. We managed to find and observe a European Mink very well and 31 species of mammals during the tour. Success!

A critically endangered species which has one of the last strongholds in the Danube Delta in Europe.

Read the full trip report under this [LINK](#)



European Mink in the Danube Delta (Photo: Zoltán G. Nagy)



Lesser Horseshoe Bat; Edible Doormouse and Golden Jackal (Photo: Zoltán Gergely Nagy)





Crested Tit in winter (Photo: Zoltán Baczó)

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 team member and guides for the nice selection of images: Alpár-Ferenc Gotthárd, Attila Szilágyi, Dániel Balla, Gábor Simay, János Oláh, Sándor Borza, Szabolcs Kovács, Zoltán Baczó, Zoltán Gergely Nagy