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Corncrake by Alpár F. Gotthárd

Alpár-Ferenc Gotthárd

Corncrake in Transylvania (Photo: Alpár-Ferenc Gotthárd)

Dear Birders, Mammal Watchers and Nature Photographers!

Thank you for choosing Sakertours as your wildlife holiday company!

Most of you who are reading this report have been with us over the years, or at least heard about our dedicated tours and guides!

We are still here and offering our services to wildlife enthusiasts. After the covid years it was a great pleasure to complete a large number of birding, mammaling and photography tours in 2022.

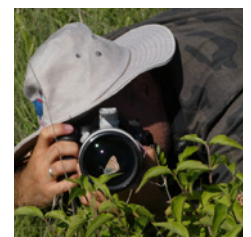
Our Romania destination was completely safe in 2022 despite the ongoing war and we hope it will stay like this in 2023 as well! Unfortunately, the war is affecting us all with the increased inflation and with the continuously increasing prices.

Inevitably, holidays and wildlife tours are also getting more and more expensive.

We are now working on a new idea for 2024, in which we will try to run tours with slightly less comfort but not compromising the photography experience. We hope these new set of tours will meet our clients' needs and this way we can keep our prices competitive. We will also keep our standard tours, so no need to worry if you happy to pay for your comfort!

All in all, we are working hard to keep the level of our tours as high as possible. We also try to offer you the most diverse wildlife tour schedule to Eastern Europe. Our birding and mammaling tours are offering the best results in the region.

In fact, we are now offering you the best mammal watching trip in Europe! Our photography tours are under constant improvement as well. Guides and their knowledge are the number one criterion on any tours, and this is where we certainly offer you our very best!



János Oláh
managing director



LATEST NEWS

↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR IMPROVEMENTS

- We carefully maintain our nature in-built hide network and our special and highly mobile photo boat in order to keep our photography hide network as diverse as possible for 2023 too!

Our **Egret and Stork hide** in the Hortobágy just recently has been **rebuilt** and improved! Also one of our drinking stations has a new design and ideas!



New and improved Egret and Stork hide (Photo: József Kecskés)

- **New Brown Bear hide** was built in Transylvania! It will be in testing mode in 2023 than soon there will be **four** available **Bear hides** for wildlife photographers all in different surroundings.

- **Lesser Spotted Eagle Photography** in Transylvania. A new photographic possibility from blind/or hide during our Spring Bears and Birds photography tours.

- **Levant Sparrowhawk Photography** in the Macin Mountains. Greater chances to capture this species form one of our drinking hide during our Danube Delta and Dobrudja Spring tours!



Female Levant Sparrowhawk (Photo: Szabolcs Kovács)

UT Ultimate tours by Sakertours

- **New photo tour: Winter Golden Jackals** Photography tour in the **Danube Delta**! We will be testing this new, short break tour in this upcoming winter! Golden Jackal is a common mammal species in the Danube Delta and this tour will be combined with bird photography possibilities too! Look out for the details from summer 2023!



Lesser Spotted Eagle landing (Photo: Franz Schallmeiner)



Male Levant Sparrowhawk (Photo: Franz Stadtbäumer)

↓ BIRD AND WILDLIFE WATCHING TOUR IMPROVEMENTS

- Our 12 days long Grand Tour in Eastern Europe still has the best itinerary. All safe destinations and going to run in 2023 too!
- Our Ultimate (grand) Tours on [ultimatesakertours](https://ultimatesakertours.com) site going to run in 2023! We are still offering you available places!
- Following our inaugural **Eurasian Lynx Tour** in 2022 we run this tour again in 2023 too. A really difficult subject but during 6 nights we will try our very best to find it for you!
- **Romanian Mammal Tour in 2023!** Currently the best mammal watching trip in Europe! In 2022 we have seen 50 species but our goal is to find even more! A very exciting mammal watching experience with many interesting (common and rare) species!
- **Supporting wildlife conservation projects** and helping our birdlife. Part of our team is working on the newly starting HEA wetland restoration LIFE project in the Hortobágy National Park. You can read about the project visiting hortobagyte.hu website.
- Maintaining and expanding our nest boxing program for both birds and mammals are always our priority, as well as winter bird feeding.
- Our fixed date tours are the best value for money but we can customize your birding or mammaling tour in Eastern Europe! **Let's design together a special birdwatching and/or mammal watching tour for your needs!**
Contact us at any time!



Ring Ouzel (Photo: Zoltán Baczó); Eurasian Lynx (Photo: Alpár F. Gotthárd) and Forest Dormouse (Photo: Zoltán G. Nagy)

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

2022 IN REVIEW

↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE HORTOBÁGY NATIONAL PARK

Our bird photography tours in Hungary are strictly hide based photography tours. All our hides here were carefully designed and placed to the best places to photograph different kind of bird species without disturbing them.

In the Hortobágy area we have 15 – 20 hides but due to hide dynamics we usually have 10-12 hides working in a given time slot. It is changing from 15 April to early July. In 2022 we had many old friends as well as new wildlife photographers visiting us and they captured many amazing images!

The photography season in Hungary starting at the very beginning of the year. Our standard winter eagle photography tours (between December – February) are the **6 days long White-tailed Eagle Photography Tours**.

In 2021-2022 winter we had a very nice and successful photography season and when writing this report we just about to start our 2022-2023 season.

Apart from the standard **White-tailed Eagles** our guests photographed Eastern Imperial Eagles, Long-legged Buzzards, Saker Falcons and even Hen Harrier. Not as seeing 20-100 White-tailed Eagles together is not a great experience on its own!

Between April – July we are running our amazingly diverse **7 days long Spring-Summer Hide Photography** tours. This period always characterized with high bird diversity and high hide disparity! 2022 was not an exception and participants often managed to photograph 40-50 bird species.

All-time favourite of the guests were the Black Storks, Red Footed Falcons, Honey Buzzard, Pygmy Cormorants and different kind of reed living birds like Little Crake and Water Rail and of course the colourful species like Hoopoe, Roller, Bee-eater.

The early season (April and early May) always produce different species than the late season (late May to early July). 2022 was exactly like this and while April and early

May was better for Black Storks, Spoonbills, waders and generally for water birds late May, June and July was great for Roller, Bee-eater and Shrikes. Also Little Crake and reed critters were better in June.

The exceptionally dry summer (the biggest drought for 100 years on the Hungarian Great Plain) was followed by rainy September. The `puszta` turned back green in a few weeks and all the depressions were filled with water. The entire **Crane photography** season was very unusual. In September the well-known Crane roosting hides were not in use as the Cranes were roosting at 35 different temporary wetlands in the park. Interestingly the roosting hides started to work again from mid-October (in normal year this is the time when they finish). So we had to play by ear and re-plan some of our tours in September or use our mobile blinds to photograph Cranes.

Please visit our
Hortobágy Photo Blog
for more pictures!



Black Stork fishing (Photo: Martial Queyer)



↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE DANUBE DELTA

In the mighty Danube Delta one of the main highlight during our photo tours was our highly mobile **photo boat** specially designed for 4 photographers.

We have started the season with the **8 days long Danube Delta and Dobrudja Bird Photography tours** between mid-May and late June. From late June to mid-July we were running the **7 days long Danube Delta Special tours** concentrating only on to the Danube Delta.

On our first type of tour we have covered a larger area and beside the Delta we explored the Macin Hills as well as the Black Sea lagoons.

In 2022 the delta part itself was fantastic too! With over 10 years' experience we know exactly where to look for which species. White and Dalmatian Pelicans, Whiskered-, Black and Common Terns, Red-necked and Black-necked Grebes, Squacco Herons, Night Herons, Glossy Ibises, Spoonbills, Pygmy Cormorants, Pallas's Gulls, White-tailed Eagles, Bearded Tits, Penduline Tits, Kingfishers, Little Bitterns, Purple Herons, White-winged Black Terns were on the list of the photographed species.

It is quite a selection!

This year the water level was constantly decreasing due to the exceptional drought and in many places access became difficult or impossible for boats.

Quite often the guides were successfully pushing the boat towards the subjects (often Glossy Ibises) in a knee deep water.

The Macin Mountains National Park gave us great photography possibilities with Black-headed Buntings, Isabelline Wheatears, Red-rumped Swallows, Cuckoos, Bee-eaters, Rollers, Hoopoes and Shrikes.

Our woodland drinking hide due to the dry summer was regularly visited by a pair of **Levant Sparrowhawks**.

We have seen this pair in other years too but they were **REGULARLY** seen and photographed in 2022.

The drinking hide often had Turtle Dove, Syrian Woodpecker, Hawfinch, Sombre Tit and various other goodies. With patience you could see a lot from these hides!

Following our superb experience in 2021 the nomadic **Rose-coloured Starlings** were breeding again in 2022 and were just as memorable as usual!

Some of the 2022 tour participants were able to photograph them! It is an unforgettable experience when you can spend quality time with the shaggy haired birds.

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



Glossy Ibises feeding on shallow water (Photo: Gábor Simay)



↓ BROWN BEAR AND BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY IN TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA

Our wildlife photography tours in Transylvania are hide based photography tours.

Here we have fixed hides but we also use professional mobile blinds for highly mobile and difficult target subjects such as Lesser Spotted Eagle, Western Capercaillie, Dipper or Corn Crake.

The Brown Bear Photography is strictly hide based but in some case we can open the glass windows (if all circumstances are adequate). We are also offering two non-bear fixed hides: one for Red Squirrels where the photography takes place through a camo net and a classic drinking hide in the Hargita Bear Lodge garden where the photography is done through glass.

The Transylvania photography season starts in April with the **8 days long Bears and Birds Photography tours**.

In 2022 these tours were great and we could photograph Brown Bears from two different hides plus birds like Dipper, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Common Redstart, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Three-toed Woodpecker and Western Capercaillie.

Our Capercaillie Hide was in a remote lekking area and requires to overnight at the location.

If weather is kind the next morning photo session can be quite magical – as it was in 2022 too.

Early June we offered the **7 days long** so called **Special Brown Bear Photography tour** where the morning and afternoon sessions were all spent in the Bear hides in order to capture Bears in different light, and yes, even in backlight! Fantastic!

The **5 days long Autumn Bear and Hazel Grouse Photography** tours were organized in September when many young Bear families were visited our hides.

Last September the year long drought turned to extremely rainy but even so we could manage to capture many Bears. The shy Hazel Grouse remained elusive in 2022.

Looking back to the photographic season in Transylvania I would mention as a **highlight** the many different Bears, sometimes up to 10 individuals just in one afternoon. The **Lesser Spotted Eagle, Western Capercaillies** and the **Corn Crake** photographic opportunities were also outstanding.

The Dipper and owl breeding attempts mostly failed in our nest boxes.

In August a lone **Grey Wolf** had visited one of our hides several times. One group and several photographers were able to capture it! A very special moment indeed!

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



Grey Wolf in front of the Bear photography hide (Photo: Alpár F. Gotthárd)



↓ BIRDWATCHING TOURS IN 2022

The current world political situation had a deep negative influence on birdwatching tourism in our operational area. We really hope the tension in Europe will be over soon and will be able to adapt changes as quickly as possible.

In 2022 we had run our classic Grand Tour visiting **Hungary, Slovakia and Transylvania**. We also had our inaugural **Hungary-Slovakia Spring Tour** and our winter **Red-breasted Goose Special Tour**.

All tours were excellent with a high number of special birds seen!

• Hungary, Slovakia & Transylvania Grand Tour in Spring

In 2022 we have recorded **220 species** including a very high percentage of the region's specialities. In the lowlands was almost summer but higher in the Transylvanian mountains the landscape was snow covered. **Highlights of the tour** includes good views of Western Capercaillie, Imperial Eagle, Saker Falcon, Great Bustards, Corn Crake, Broad-billed Sandpiper, River Warbler, Wallcreeper and so on. You can read the trip report from Dániel **HERE**.

• Hungary and Slovakia Spring Birding Tour

Sakertours very first tour in this new combination and with a completely new itinerary developed by our team members. The inaugural tour went successful and we were able to observe **191 species** among them such species like Little Crake, Great Bustard, Saker Falcon, Imperial Eagle, Ural Owl, Pygmy Owl, Three-toed Woodpecker, Red-breasted Flycatcher and so on. You can read the trip report from Tamás **HERE**

• Red-breasted Goose Special Winter Birding Tour

Sakertours well known winter short break tour specially created to observe the rare Red-breasted and the Lesser White-fronted Goose and other wintering bird species of the Hortobágy National Park.

In our 2022 tour we were able to find up to 70 Redbreasts and 9 Lesser Whitefronts! Beside the goose species the 2022 group found Greater Spotted Eagle, Imperial Eagle, Great Bustard, Sociable Lapwing, Saker and thousands of Common Cranes. A very productive tour indeed! You can read the trip report from Dániel **HERE**

Lets join us to a birding tour in 2023!



Ural Owl in flight (Photo: Zoltán Baczó)



Saker Falcon in flight (Photo: János Oláh)



Red-breasted Goose in flight (Photo: Attila Szilágyi)



↓ MAMMAL WATCHING TOURS IN 2022



Romanian Hamster (Photo: Zoltán G. Nagy)



Steppe Polecat (Photo: János Oláh)



European Mink (Photo: Zoltán G. Nagy)

In 2022 all our mammal watching tours were running!

Just as we were hoping these mammal tours are getting more and more popular. We will need to look into new future possibilities but for the time being we try to keep the standard of the current tours which require a lot of field work!

Our first mammal watching tour started in March, the **7 days long Eurasian Lynx Tour in Transylvania**.

It was a very interesting tour. We were in Lynx territories, tracking them, capture them with camera traps, trying to understand what they doing and where they are.

Actually some of us had glimpses of two different Lynxes on two different nights but hopefully we will have even better results in future tours.

A difficult but not impossible subject and we will try to find it again in 2023 too.

You can read the trip report [HERE](#).

The all-time favourite and currently the **best mammal watching tour in Europe** was running in late August and early September in 2022. This is our **9 days long Romania Mammal tour**. In 2022 we were able to observe **50 species** with such a highlights as Steppe Polecat, Romanian Hamster, European Mink, Wildcat, Brown Bear, Carpathian Chamois and a great variety of bats.

This is Sakertours most successful mammal watching tour and a real must for mammal watchers!

You can read our latest trip report [HERE](#)

In 2022 we have finished the mammal watching tours with the **5 days long European Mink Special Tour** in September. It was a short break tour focusing on the rarest European mammal.

We had great success tracking down not one but two Minks and other interesting species too!

You can read the trip report [HERE](#)

Looking forward to a great next season!

Lets join us to a mammal tour in 2023!





Ghost of the Carpathians, the Eurasian Lynx (Photo: Zoltán Gergely Nagy)

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 guests, team members and guides for the nice selection of images: Zoltán Baczó, Dániel Balla, Alpár-Ferenc Gotthárd, István Hodász, József Kecskés, Szabolcs Kovács, Zoltán Gergely Nagy, János Oláh, Attila Szilágyi, Franz Stadtbäumer, Franz Schallmeiner, Geerie Schermer, Gábor Simay, Romica Tiganov, Martial Queyer