

Sakertours eNewsletter

13th edition, 2024



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Marbled Polecat, a real highlight on a Sakertours Mammal tour to Romania in 2024 (Photo: Zoltán G. Nagy)

Dear Birders, Mammal Watchers and Nature Photographers!

It is our 13th annual newsletter, and we are happy to tell you our tour improvements and also to summarize the past season while looking into the upcoming years! Being in nature is the real holiday nowadays which would relax you from everyday life in a changing World. We do try to make your wildlife holiday as relaxing as possible, but this often means action-packed outdoor activities whether it is photographing seldom seen or colorful birds or looking for rare mammals at night under a fabulous starry sky!

Our aim is to offer you the best possible wildlife tour, and for this we divide our tours into several categories.

Please look at the categories you prefer and select your tour!

However, if you have your own idea how you want to spend your precious time and cannot find a tour matching your taste, please let us know and we may be able to help you to customize one! Our team is capable and always happy to help!

Please visit our new website where you can select and book your favorite tour! Join us for an exciting tour to discover the diverse nature habitats of Eastern Europe in 2025!

Yours sincerely,



János Oláh
managing director



LATEST NEWS

↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR IMPROVEMENTS

We at Sakertour` are working hard to offer you the best possible wildlife photography experience while you are exploring our hides in Hungary and/or in Romania.

Every year we try to do a little bit more for you to maximize the chances in experiencing or capturing unforgettable moments in nature!



Golden Jackal from the Danube Delta (Photo: Zoltán G. Nagy)

What we are offering to our guests in 2025?

- Well-designed and comfortable photo hide network
- Exceptional local knowledge and expert local field guides
- Nature friendly accommodations-guesthouses



A brand new hide will open in Transylvania (Photo: Gothárd F. ALPÁR)

- In 2025 we are offering a new photo tour for you: **Danube Delta in Winter.**

A short tour with 4 nights/5 days to experience the winter beauty of this diverse area. During this wildlife holiday we are hoping to photograph Dalmatian Pelicans in breeding plumage, White-tailed Eagles catching fish, Pallas`s Gulls and Great Cormorants in their full breeding dress, Golden Jackals in their winter coat, Long-eared and Tawny Owls at night and with a bit of luck even Wildcat.

A true adventure and we still have some late availabilities between **28th January – 1st February, 2025.**

Check out our website for booking!

Select and book your desired wildlife watching tour through our new website! However, if you are a professional tour operator we are open to cooperate with you and design a tour for your need!

Please ask Marianna and Zoli at the office for a customized offer!



Displaying Common Redshank (Photo: János OLÁH)

↓ BIRD AND WILDLIFE WATCHING TOUR IMPROVEMENTS



Sakertour's brand new website is clearly defining our running birdwatching, mammal watching and nature tours. The latter covers dedicated butterfly watching tours in Eastern Europe!

We always design our tours to give you the most memorable experiences through our expert, english speaking guides.

What we are offering to our guests in 2025?

- A selection of Spring and Autumn **birdwatching tours to Hungary and Romania**
- **Mammal watching tours** exclusively developed in Romania including our well-trying and adventurous Romania Mammal Tour which has been a great success in the past years!
- Selection of special tours/extensions which we run only once like the upcoming **'special Mole-rat tour'**
- A **butterfly watching tour** to Serbia in June 2025
- A range of **expert local field guides** if you wish to design your own tour!

- In 2025 we going to offer these new wildlife watching tours for you:

1. Special Mole-rat Romania tour in April 2025: a 12 days long mammal watching tour to Romania, focusing on seeing four species of Mole-rats, like: Lesser Blind Mole-rat – *Nannospalax leucodon*, Hungarian Blind Mole-rat – *Nannospalax hungaricus*, Bukovina Blind Mole-rat – *Spalax graecus* and Mehely's Blind Mole-rat – *Spalax antiquus*.

We still have free places if you are interested to come between **2-13 April, 2025**.

2. Serbia Butterfly Tour in June 2025. This 7 day tour was designed to visit some prime butterfly areas in eastern Serbia. We are hoping to connect with the rare **False Comma** but there will be many other sought-after butterflies on this tour!

We still have free places if you are interested to come between **11-17 June, 2025**.

Come and join us in one of your favoured tour in 2025!



Mammal watching in Romania is a great fun (Photo: Zoltán G. NAGY)

2024 IN REVIEW

↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE HORTOBÁGY NATIONAL PARK



Our bird photography tours in Hungary are essentially hide based photography tours.

All our hides were carefully designed, developed and continuously improved year after year in order to give you the best possibility to capture great wildlife pictures. Maintaining hides and keeping them at its best is a huge task but our team continuously working on this every year!

The Hortobágy National Park area is an amazingly peaceful and very diverse place where wildlife is still well presented and very well preserved. Our team here has a lot of experience and will advise you the best hides fitting your needs!

Year 2024 started with **Winter Eagle photography** in which occasion we have used 4 different hides with different backgrounds and comfort.

It was a very successful season with many White-tailed Eagles and some occasional Eastern Imperial Eagles. Also we regularly had a pair of Saker Falcon visiting our Buzzard Hide.

The **Spring-Summer season** was the most active time for many of us. Up to 15 hides were performing every day for wildlife photographers willing to capture such species like *Bee-eater, Roller, Hoopoe, Red-footed Falcon, Little Owl, Red-backed Shrike, Pygmy Cormorant, Black Woodpecker, Collared Flycatcher, Black Stork, Little Crake* and so on.

In 2024 the early spring season in April was excellent for shorebird photography and we hope 2025 will be similar!

Hortobágy in Autumn had a different face when thousands of Cranes migrating through the area.

This time of the year we organize tours primarily to capture the spectacle of Crane migration combined with other hides and available subjects. Every Autumn is different and 2024 was not an exception.

Unfortunately, our roosting Crane Hide was not in operation as this year the Cranes were not roosting in the area at all.

Slightly disappointed we and some guests were but we could still photograph Cranes during their daytime activities or photograph them on their flight to the roost sites!

Come and photograph Hungary's wildlife with us in 2025!



Colorfull Bee-eaters (Photo: János OLÁH)





↓ HIDE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE DANUBE DELTA

The Danube Delta is an outstanding place for a wildlife photographer. One of the most diverse and most remote wilderness found in Europe and it **was fabulous again, and albeit being close to a conflict area, did not affect our tours at all! Romania is a safe tourist destination!**

In 2024 we tested several **winter tours**, then we witnessed a fantastic **Spring-Summer season** and were able to return to the area in **August** as well. It was the first time we had an autumn photography tour, and this gave us an insight to new subjects!

Back in 2022 we started to think about a Winter tour to the Danube Delta and made the first steps and trials in 2023.

By January 2024 we had our trial tours up and running and our regular clients had a chance to test it! Weather is a key factor in the winter tours and naturally every single test tour was different, but we could enjoy some excellent photography time with such species like *Golden Jackal*, *White-tailed Eagle*, *Dalmatian Pelican*, *Pallas's Gull*, or *Wild Cat*! Winter photography is even more challenging in terms of planning as weather is totally unpredictable nowadays, but our tour has been designed to have several subjects!

. Our **Spring-Summer season** was amazing as always. Our hides in Macin Mountains area performed well and nicely supplemented the Delta itself! Such colorful species were photographable in Macin like *Roller*, *Bea-eater*, *Hoopoe*, *Turtle Dove*, *Black-headed Bunting* or *Levant Sparrowhawk*! Exploring the Delta birdlife from a special photo boat was the highlight for many of us. Groups of fishing Pelicans were a common sight every time, then being with terns and grebes were really special.

Our **Danube Delta Special** is one of the most relaxing photography tour, a really favorite one!

The Delta photo season continued for **one week in August** as well and we have visited Macin and the Delta just like in Spring time. We had the opportunity to photograph many species in juvenile plumage and some secretive species like *Little Bittern* were easier this time of the year!

In the Macin area many of the known breeding species were changed to migrants, while in the Delta we could still find the well-known breeding species still feeding their youngsters.

Come and photograph Romania's wildlife with us in 2025!



A fishing Pallas's Gull (Photo: Zoltán BACZÓ)



↓ BROWN BEAR AND BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY IN TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA

Our wildlife photography tours in Transylvania are hide based photography tours. We have **7-8 fixed hides** but also use professional mobile blinds for highly mobile and difficult targets.

We have started the photo season already in late February with our very special **Lynx Photography Tours**. In 2024 one out of two tours managed to photograph wild Eurasian Lynx in the daytime! Well done for the photographers and our Lynx tracker Ferenc!

In March we had a bear photography tour with great hope to capture them in snowy conditions! Sadly, this remained a hope only as the Carpathians experienced the mildest winter ever and there was no snow in early March (typical unluck for a new tour I would say!).

As snowy conditions are getting increasingly unpredictable, we are launching a 'waiting list' where people are interested in photographing bears in snowy conditions and can react in short term.

If you are interested to photograph `Bears in snow` please contact our office for details!

In Transylvania the main Bear and Bird photography season always starts in mid-April when Bears are already very active

and many bird species are preparing for the breeding.

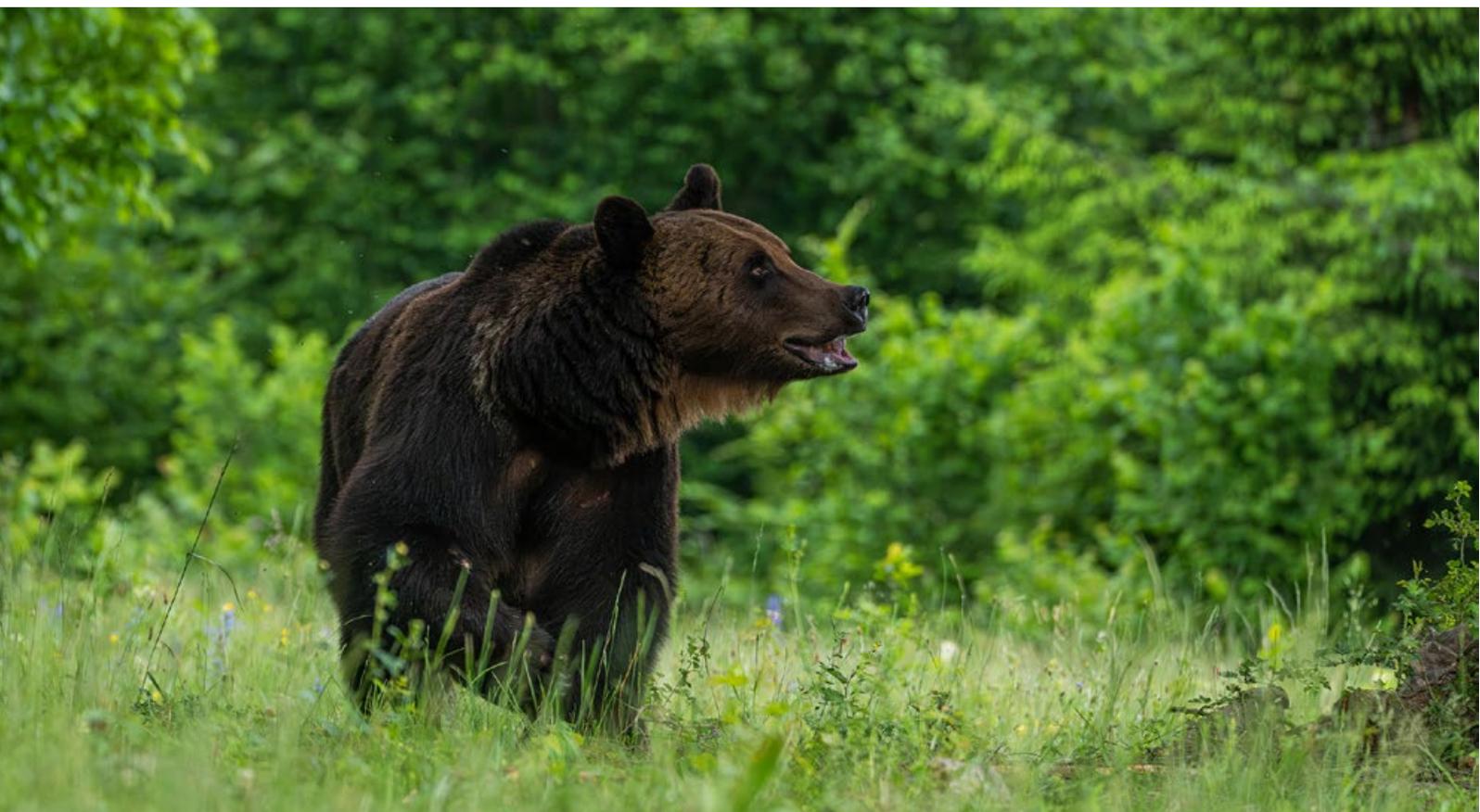
After this early spring period we have a peak season in June when we run the **Bear Special Tours**. These tours are famous for capturing Bears in different surroundings, in backlit conditions and even capture young Bear families with a bit of luck! This tour had the prime focus on bears, and we make special efforts to get unique pictures.

In 2024 we could really enjoy all these special opportunities with the Carpathian Brown Bears. No doubt in Transylvania the prime target on every tour was the Brown Bear!

In Autumn we run again Bear tours combined with some Bird photography. This time of the year the special target amongst birds was the *Hazel Grouse* but we also tried the *Lesser Spotted Eagle* hide successfully. The well know pair successfully raised one chick which we could enjoy photographing before their departure to sub-Saharan Africa.

The **autumn surprise** and the „cherry on the cake„ was finding a Eurasian Lynx mother with two young cubs feeding on a fresh Roe Deer kill. We could watch them from a safe distance for 45 hours while they regularly came to feed until the prey was completely eaten.

Fabulous and special mammal indeed!



A majestic `Carpathian` Brown Bear (Photo: Gotthárd F. Alpár)



BIRDWATCHING TOURS IN 2024

Showing you birds is our key strength here in Eastern Europe!

We always design our tours to give you the best possible chances to see the target species.

In 2024 we could organize the following tours in the region:

• Hungary & Transylvania Grand Tour in Spring

This tour was run with a shortened itinerary for the first time and Daniel Balla and his group broke the long standing record on this tour! They managed to find 234 bird species which included highlights such displaying Great Bustards alongside with Saker Falcon, Ural Owl, Tengmalm's Owl, White-backed Woodpecker, Sombre Tit, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush and so on. You can read the detailed tour report under this [LINK](#).

• Danube Delta in Spring

Sakertours Spring tour to Danube Delta and coastal Dobrudja produced 180+ species and was a very enjoyable tour throughout the week. You can read Márton's detailed tour report under this [LINK](#)

• Danube Delta in Autumn

Sakertours Autumn tour to Danube Delta and Dobrudja was primarily focused on migration but also seen the characteristic breeding species just before they left to the wintering places. You can read Márton's detailed tour report under this [LINK](#)

• Hungary and Zemplén Hills AutumnTour

A classic tour where the spectacle of Crane migration was in focus but supporting cast was superb with Eurasian Dotterel, Great Bustard, Saker, Eurasian Eagle and Ural Owls and a selection of woodpeckers including White-backed. You can read the detailed tour report under this [LINK](#)

• Red-breasted Goose Special Winter Birding Tour

It was a hard work to find Red-breasted Goose this autumn but we eventually managed to find and complete the tour with highlights like Red-breasted Goose, Lesser White-fronted Goose, Tundra Goose, Saker Falcon, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Great Bustard and even Wallcreeper! You can read the detailed tour report under this [LINK](#).



Lets join us to a birding tour in 2025!



Tengmalm's Owl was seen well in 2024 too (Photo: Dániel Balla)



Broad-billed Sandpiper in breeding plumage (Photo: Dániel Balla)



Male Bearded Tit (Photo: Gábor SIMAY)





Eurasian Lynx by tour participant (Photo: Giancarlo Marconi)



Marbled Polecat (Photo: Zoltán G. NAGY)



Northern Birch Mouse was seen in 2024 again (Photo: János Oláh)

Mammal watching in Romania has become a real attraction due to Sakertour's pioneering work. We are proud of this and very motivated to give you our best every year!

Romania is superb mammal watching destination and we have gradually been finding a way to see some of the more elusive and rare species as well.

In **2024** all our mammal watching tours were running!

Eurasian Lynx Photography Tour: The end of February and early March is the best time for such a tour in Transylvania, the mating time of these regal cats! Sakertour's expert guide was able to show a male Lynx to one of the two groups in a well selected area. It was an amazing experience for the lucky participants.

Romania Mammal Tour in Autumn with Grey Dwarf Hamster Extension: This was a real adventure tour while looking for some great mammal species. Our group of guides and experts involved this tour made a fantastic result of 58 species seen among them such species like *Marbled Polecat*, *European Mink*, *Romanian Hamster*, *Forest Dormouse*, *Northern Birch Mouse* and 5 species of *Shrews*. Those who participated to the extension were able to see the cute looking *Grey Dwarf Hamster* as well – a real European rarity! **This is Sakertour's most successful mammal watching tour and a real must for mammal watchers!**

European Mink Tour in Autumn: Despite the huge effort we put into this special tour the European Mink was not observed on this tour. We made a decision after four tours (where the Mink was seen on the first two tours and missed on the last two tours) and are now planning to run it in March 2026 with a revised itinerary and focus ONLY on finding the European Mink!

Looking forward to a great next season!

Let's join us to a mammal tour in 2025!







Pine Marten in winter (Photo: Gotthárd F. ALPÁR)

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, Timothy Charrlesworth, Alpár-Ferenc Gotthárd, Szabolcs Kovács, Giancarlo Marconi, Zoltán Gergely Nagy, János Oláh, Beat Rüegger, Stefan Schlegl, Attila Szilágyi, Gábor Simay, Hanne Wahlström, Martial Queyer