



ORIOLE BIRDING



Squacco Heron (Lawrence Hurst)

TOUR REPORT

ROMANIA – DANUBE DELTA & DOBRUGEA PLAIN

2ND – 9TH JUNE 2018

TOUR LEADERS

David Pearce (Oriole Birding) and Alex Ifrim

TOUR PARTICIPANTS

Neelam Bakshi
Christopher Gibson
Rita Harrigan
Wilkie Harrigan
Elisabeth Hodson
Lawrence Hurst
Pamela Myers
Michael Roberts
Maureen Sibbons

SATURDAY 2nd JUNE – *Sunny, bright, hot 28C, high cloud.*

The group assembled at the Blue Air check-in desk at Luton Airport from 08.30 and we departed on the flight to Bucharest at 10.40. After a three hour flight we arrived in Bucharest, Otopeni airport at 15.40 local time (+ 2hrs GMT) and proceeded swiftly through immigration. We met our guide, Alex Ifrim, then loaded the baggage into the mini-bus and trailer and left the airport for Tulcea at 16.40, stopping a couple of times for refreshments along the way. Our first birds of the tour were **House Sparrows** around the airport terminal buildings, but the drive to Tulcea produced several **White Storks** including nests in some of the villages, and a single **Long-legged Buzzard** down in a field west of Misleanu. **European Rollers** began to appear more regularly after Slobozia, with birds on roadside telegraph poles, and after crossing the River Danube on the large road bridge at 19.30, we had single **European Bee-eater** and **Eurasian Hobby** over the road. We arrived in Tulcea towards dusk at 20.50, boarded the hotel boat moored on the River Danube, allocated the cabins and had our evening meal.

SUNDAY 3rd JUNE – *Sunny, bright, warm, hot later 26C, light SW breeze.*

Pre-breakfast birding from the top deck of the hotel boat provided us with several **Common Terns** fishing along the Danube and six **Caspian Gulls** and a single **Yellow-legged Gull** over the river, whilst also overhead five **Whiskered Terns** and four **Great White Pelicans** moved over, a taster of the birds yet to come in the delta. After breakfast we boarded the small boat at 09.00 and sat on deck in the comfy chairs and began our journey into the delta, as the tug-boat moved our hotel boat to the next mooring, in the delta on the Danube at Maliuc. We sailed down the Danube and entered the delta along Channel Mile 36 at 09.20, sailing along several small channels in the northern part of the delta, pausing for a tea and coffee stop on the boat along the way, then finally sailing through Lake Fortuna. Birds and bird song were everywhere along the channels, which were lined with willows, White Poplar trees and reed-beds, and we had four hours of excellent birding before arriving at the hotel boat at 13.40 for lunch. **Common Nightingale**, **Blackcap**, **Common Chiffchaff**, **Common Redstart** and **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** were heard singing, with **Common Cuckoo** and **Eurasian Golden Oriole** singing and often seen in flight over the channels. **Hooded Crows** were very common and **Common Kingfishers** were occasionally seen flying low over the water or perched on bankside branches. Herons and egrets increasingly featured as we sailed further into the delta, with **Little Egret**, **Squacco Heron**, **Black-crowned Night Heron** all common and **Great White Egret** and **Grey Heron** less so but still evident. **Glossy Ibis** were seen flying over in small groups, **Pygmy Cormorants** in ones and twos and **Great White Pelicans** circled in large flocks, with a single **Dalmatian Pelican** seen. **Great Reed Warblers** were

heard frequently and occasionally seen, singing from the tops of large reed stems, but of five **Icterine Warblers** singing from within channel-side trees, unfortunately none showed. Woodpeckers were also present, with a couple of **Great Spotted** and **Grey-headed Woodpeckers** and a single male **Black Woodpecker** noted, whilst several **European Rollers** were seen and **Eurasian Penduline Tits** were occasionally heard. As we sailed across Lake Fortuna, the colony of **Whiskered Terns** provided us with excellent close up views of this typical delta species, with **Common Terns** also present in good numbers, and four **Caspian Terns** and single **Black** and **White-winged Black Terns** hawking over the lake. Other water-birds included small numbers of **Ferruginous Ducks**, 140+ **Mute Swans**, 40+ **Great Crested Grebes** and single **Red-necked** and **Black-necked Grebes**, with six drake **Garganey** and four **Eurasian Spoonbills** also seen. Raptors featured highly too, with three **White-tailed Eagles**, two cracking male **Red-footed Falcons** and single **Marsh Harrier**, **Eurasian Hobby** and **Common Kestrel**. After a three course lunch, we had a couple of hours downtime as it was by now quite hot, boarding the small boat and resuming birding again at 16.00, sailing different channels to this morning and also across Lake Fortuna again. A very productive afternoon with similar species to this morning, including uncountable numbers of **Squacco Herons**, a flock of over 200 **Great White Pelicans** and cracking views of a male **Black Woodpecker** on a dead tree beside the channel. Several **Green Sandpipers** flushed up from muddy margins as we negotiated the channels, whilst on the lake there were over 100 **Gadwall**, two drake **Common Pochard**, a drake **Northern Shoveler** and single **Dalmatian Pelican** and **Little Grebe**. A male **Red-backed Shrike** was seen and a male **Red-footed Falcon** gave good views too, whilst a second year female **Peregrine** showed briefly but well in trees and in flight. After a fantastic first day birding in the delta we returned to the hotel boat at 19.00, freshened up before our evening meal and completed the days extensive bird notes.



Whiskered Tern (Lawrence Hurst)

MONDAY 4th JUNE – *Cloudy, cool, 18C, sunny intervals, occasional showers.*

A **Little Owl** was calling from the trees and buildings close to the hotel boat before dawn. Birding from the top deck before breakfast at 07.00 revealed a **Grey-headed Woodpecker** in the trees nearby, **Pygmy Cormorant**, **Black-winged Stilt**, **Whiskered Tern**, **Squacco Heron**, **Black-crowned Night Heron**, **Marsh Harrier** and a **Eurasian Hobby** flying over and a **Sedge Warbler** and a **Corn Bunting** singing from scrub across the river. After breakfast we left the mooring at Maliuc and birded from the top deck of the hotel boat for two hours as the tug-boat moved us eastwards along the mighty Danube to Crisan. **Purple Herons** were much in evidence along the river, with at least 12 seen flying over, likewise **Black-crowned Night Herons** with at least 16 noted and **Pygmy Cormorants** with around 20 recorded. **Golden Orioles** were seen and heard frequently as they moved through the riverside trees and woodland edge, **European Rollers** and **Corn Buntings** were common and **White Stork**, **Glossy Ibis**, **Eurasian Spoonbill**, **Black-winged Stilt** and **Northern Lapwing** were noted feeding on wetland areas beside the river. **Great Reed Warblers** were singing from reed stems, whilst **Common Chaffinch**, **Common Chiffchaff**, **Common Redstart**, **Blackcap** and **Garden Warbler** were singing from riverside woodland, single **Red-backed Shrike** and **Eurasian Hoopoe** showing along the way. Several **Marsh Harriers** were seen quartering the fields and wetlands, with three **Eurasian Hobbies** over and an adult **White-tailed Eagle** close to the river. We arrived at Crisan at 10.00 and transferred to the small boat, the tug-boat moving the hotel boat to the next overnight mooring near Iacob Lake. From the small boat we entered the Crisan Caraorman Channel, sailing along this channel, the Ceamurlia Channel, the Litkov Channel and across Swan Lake before arriving at the hotel boat for lunch at 12.30. We paused at a small enclosed side lake for a tea and coffee stop at 10.30 and had at least one **Savi's Warbler** singing from the reeds, three pairs of **Red-necked Grebes**, excellent close views of **Pygmy Cormorant** and several **Ferruginous Ducks**. Continuing along the channels **Great Reed Warblers** were everywhere, their distinctive grating song heard almost constantly, with three more **Savi's Warblers** heard 'buzzing', two **Eurasian Reed Warblers** singing, three male **Eurasian Penduline Tits**, many family groups of **Blue Tits** and good views of a female **Grey-headed Woodpecker** in a riverside tree. Overhead, two **Common Goldeneye** flew over, a single **Gull-billed Tern** flew past and several **Common Terns** and **Black-headed Gulls** were noted. Herons and egrets continued to be seen frequently, with the first **Little Bittern**, a female, seen briefly as it flew from a clump of reeds. After lunch back on the hotel boat, we had a couple of hour's downtime, some opting to relax on the main deck whilst others birded from the top deck. A male **Blackbird** gave its familiar song from trees nearby, an **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** delivered its scratchy repetitive song by the hotel boat, a **Savi's Warbler** could be heard singing across the river and a male **Penduline Tit** was in trees along the river. Several **Great White Pelicans** and two **Common Swifts** moved over, and at least six **Marsh Harriers** were seen. We boarded the small boat at 15.00 and sailed along the Crisan Caraorman channel for an hour, birding on our way to Caraorman village. The birding was excellent with an area of wet grassland by the river holding three **Collared Pratincoles**, four **Black-tailed Godwits** of the continental race *limosa*, six **Northern Lapwing**, a single **Ruff**, several **Ferruginous Ducks** and at least a dozen **Glossy Ibis** which showed exceptionally well. We docked at Caraorman village and disembarked to good views of **European Bee-eaters** over the village and sat on the buildings, whilst on wet grassland nearby there were around 30 **Pied Avocets**, some with chicks, 19 **Black-tailed Godwits** and small groups of feeding egrets, with seven **Great White Egrets** and 12 **Little Egrets**. We walked along the track through the village and noted several **White Wagtails**, **Common Starlings**, **Feral Pigeons**, **Collared Doves** and numerous **Barn Swallows**, plus a male and a juvenile **Northern Wheatear** and four **Eurasian Hoopoes**. A **Little Owl** showed briefly but well in a disused building and there were two **White Stork** nests in the village. On the pools and wetland area on the far side of the village there were 11 **Common Shelduck**, two **Garganey**, a **Eurasian Spoonbill**, four **Green Sandpipers** and single **Wood Sandpiper** and **Eurasian Teal**, with six **Collared Pratincoles** in flight over the area. Pelicans were conspicuous, with a large flock of 70+ **Great White Pelicans** overhead which included a

single **Dalmatian Pelican**, identifiable by the largely pale underwing in contrast to the all-black flight feathers on the underwing of Great White Pelican. After a couple of hours birding around the village we returned to the small boat and sailed back to the hotel boat via different channels and also had a short stop where we disembarked and walked along a banking adjacent to a lake and large reed-bed and viewed the area from a watchtower. This area provided us with 'booming' **Eurasian Bittern**, a calling male **Little Crake**, four **Red-necked Grebes**, three **Black-necked Grebes**, both **Little** and **Great Crested Grebe**, **Bearded Reedling** (Tit) and a singing **Savi's Warbler**. To finish the day we had a large adult **Wild Boar** with three young swimming across the river in front of the boat as we neared the hotel boat to round off another fantastic days birding in the delta. Arriving back at 19.20 we freshened up and had another tasty evening meal and completed the day's bird notes.



Purple Heron (Lawrence Hurst)

TUESDAY 5th JUNE – *Sunny, bright, hot 28C, cloudy, humid later, light breeze.*

Pre-breakfast birding from the top deck between 06.30 and 07.30 revealed a wide range of birds of 35 species nearby. Two male **Eastern Olivaceous Warblers** were heard singing, with one bird gathering nest material in the trees and scrub behind the hotel boat. Over the river, a **Savi's Warbler** was 'buzzing' and a **Eurasian Bittern** 'booming' from the massive reed-bed and a pair of **Eurasian Penduline Tits** were also gathering nest material in trees opposite the hotel boat. **Eurasian Golden Oriole**, **Common Cuckoo**, **Common Reed Bunting**, **Great Reed Warbler**, **Common Redstart**, **Great Tit**, **Garden Warbler**, **Blackcap** and **Eurasian Reed Warbler** were all either seen or heard and two male **Little Bitterns**, two **Purple Herons**, four **Whiskered Terns** and a female **Marsh Harrier** were seen in flight. After breakfast we boarded the small boat, settled in the comfy deck chairs again and set off at 08.30 along the Crisan Caraorman Channel to join the Danube briefly, then sailed along the Old Danube channel via Bogdabroste Lake and Treilezere Lake. The weather was hot and sunny but very pleasant, and we had an outstanding mornings birding, which included the traditional mid-morning stop on the boat for tea, coffee and the very tasty biscuits that Alex provided, before returning to the hotel boat at the next mooring site close to Lake Baclanesti

for lunch at 12.30. **Common Cuckoo** and **Great Reed Warbler** were very evident, as were **Great White Pelican** with flocks of 60+ and 70+, **Ferruginous Duck**, **Glossy Ibis**, **Caspian Gull**, **Purple Heron**, **Black-crowned Night Heron** and **Whiskered Tern**. We had eight **Marsh Harriers**, three **Eurasian Hobbies** and three **White-tailed Eagles**, with five **Little Ringed Plovers** on a muddy margin along the Crisan Caraorman Channel and nine **Black-necked Grebes** on Treilezere Lake. However, what was perhaps the bird of the day was **Great Black-headed Gull** (Pallas's Gull), with three cracking adults in full summer plumage on Treilezere Lake, and after cutting the engine, the boat slowly drifted in to give everyone excellent close views of this beautiful gull. **Common Redstart**, **Common Chiffchaff**, **Garden Warbler** and **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** were all heard singing, with some also seen too. We arrived back at the hotel boat at the new overnight mooring site on the Lopatna Channel in time for lunch at 13.00, another three course meal, which was very good. After some downtime we boarded the small boat again and set off at 15.00 along the Lopatna Channel on the Lake Babina circuit. This was a different circuit to the one in the morning, sailing clockwise via the channels, lakes and ponds. The birding was excellent. Herons and other waterbirds were everywhere, countless **Squacco Herons**, **Purple Herons** and **Black-crowned Night Herons**, several **Great White Egrets**, **Little Egret**, a female **Little Bittern** and also **Glossy Ibis**, **White Stork**, **Pygmy Cormorant**, **Whiskered Tern**, **Great White Pelican**, **Ferruginous Duck**, **Red-necked Grebe**, **Black Tern**, six **Red-footed Falcons** and two **White-tailed Eagles**. We did well for small birds too, with five singing **Savi's Warblers** heard, countless **Great Reed Warblers**, four **Lesser Whitethroats**, **Sedge Warbler**, **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** and a male **Ortolan Bunting** singing briefly from channel side vegetation. **Eurasian Tree Sparrows** were common, as were **Great Tit** and **Blue Tit** with numerous family parties of both tit species in bankside trees and woodland edge. We had just re-located the three adult summer **Great Black-headed Gulls** on Lake Babina as the sky darkened considerably and we sailed back to the hotel boat in a thunderstorm with heavy rain. Arriving at the hotel boat at 18.30, we enjoyed a leisurely tea and coffee on the main deck, before refreshing and having our evening meal and going through the days extensive bird notes.



Great Black-headed Gull (*Pallas's Gull*) (Christopher Gibson)

WEDNESDAY 6th JUNE – *Cool early, clear, sunny, bright, hot 30C, light breeze.*

Birding from the top deck from 06.00 to 07.30 before breakfast was very profitable, with excellent light and comfortable conditions. The hotel boat was moored on the Lopatna Channel in a fantastic position on a long bend in the channel and birds were literally everywhere. At least 50 **Squacco Herons** were feeding on the channel in an area with extensive water lilies and along the margins of the channel, a group of at least 40 **Great white Pelicans** also feeding amongst the water lilies. **Whiskered Terns** were passing by feeding along the channel, their distinctive rasping call an almost constant sound. Another almost constant sound was the 'buzzing' of a **Savi's Warbler** singing from the large reed-bed opposite the boat. After much searching through the 'scope we eventually located the bird singing from the top of a reed stem and showing quite well. After hearing several in the delta during the previous few days it was pleasing to get good views of this bird. **Great Reed Warblers** were also singing loudly from the reed-bed, occasionally showing on the tops of reed stems, and a pair of **Little Bitterns** showed well in the reeds opposite the hotel boat. **Purple Heron, Great White Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, Little Egret and Glossy Ibis** were all seen flying over, also several **Caspian Gulls, Great Cormorant and Common Tern. Common Cuckoos** were calling and **Common Reed Bunting, Eurasian Reed Warbler and Lesser Whitethroat** were singing close by. After breakfast we boarded the small boat and set off for our final tour of the delta, this morning covering the channels in the north-west section around Stipoc. The last tour did not disappoint, as we encountered large numbers of **Squacco Herons** and **Black-crowned Night Herons** along the channels and large flocks of **Great White Pelicans** soaring overhead, two **Dalmatian Pelicans** also picked up in amongst the flocks. **Purple Herons, Pygmy Cormorants and Ferruginous Ducks** were frequently seen, **Great Reed Warblers** were singing from almost every reed-bed and we heard five singing **Savi's Warblers**. On the lakes were five drake **Garganey, Great Crested Grebe**, two **Black-necked Grebes, Common Coot, Mute Swan**, several **Common Pochard, Mallard and Common Moorhen**. Raptors featured well again too, with a **Short-toed Eagle** which circled and hovered briefly before heading away, three **White-tailed Eagles** showing well overhead, five **Marsh Harriers**, four **Eurasian Hobbies** and a pair of **Red-footed Falcons**. We paused on the boat for the traditional tea, coffee and biscuit break provided by Alex's mobile café at 10.45, whilst watching **Western Yellow Wagtails** of the race *flava* (Blue-headed Wagtail) on the banking next to the boat, a **Green Sandpiper** on a muddy margin, a male **Red-backed Shrike** nearby and a **Collared Pratincole** which flew over. After a fantastic morning's birding we returned to the hotel boat, which had been moved to a new mooring prior to our return journey back to Tulcea, for lunch at 12.30. After lunch we packed our luggage, then spent the afternoon birding from the top deck or relaxing on the main deck as the tug-boat pulled the hotel boat along the main channels and finally onto the Danube as we returned to the port at Tulcea. The journey provided us with further excellent birding, including many of the species we had already encountered, and it was interesting to note the change in abundance of heron and egret species as we were heading out of the delta. **Little Egrets** became more frequent and **Squacco Herons** less so, as the habitat became dominated more by trees and woodland along the channels, rather than open pools and lakes. The channel side trees held numerous singing birds, including **Common Chaffinch, Common Redstart, Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff, Lesser Whitethroat** and four each of **Icterine Warbler and Eastern Olivaceous Warbler. Grey-headed Woodpecker and Eurasian Golden Oriole** were occasionally seen, also **Eurasian Penduline Tit, and Common Kingfisher** were frequently seen dashing by or perched on branches over the channels. Two adult **White-tailed Eagles** showed well, one perched up in a tree next to the channel with a large fish, while single **Eurasian Hobby, Common Kestrel and Eurasian Sparrowhawk** were seen overhead. As we neared the Danube a **Thrush Nightingale** could be heard singing from an area of wet woodland, then as we sailed westwards on the Danube to Tulcea **Common Swift and Common House Martin** could be seen over the suburbs and **House Sparrow and Feral Pigeon** on boathouse buildings next to the river. We docked at 17.30 and disembarked, saying our farewells and thanks to the crews of the hotel boat, tug-boat and the small boat.

Our luggage was loaded into a van and delivered to the nearby Hotel Select for us, as we walked the short distance to the hotel, our home for the next three nights and the land-based part of the tour. After freshening up and some downtime we re-convened in the hotel restaurant for our evening meal as a thunderstorm created wet and breezy conditions.

THURSDAY 7th JUNE – *Cloudy, cool, then sunny, pleasantly warm 21C and breezy later.*

After a leisurely breakfast we left the hotel at 08.45 and drove south to Denis Tepe, our first terrestrial birding stop. An hour at this site gave us a range of new species, including a pair of **Isabelline Wheatears** with two fledged juveniles, two male **Black-headed Buntings**, a **Tawny Pipit**, a pair of **Spanish Sparrows** which had a nest in the top of an electricity pole and a female **Montagu's Harrier** quartering the fields. We also had **European Roller**, **European Bee-eater**, **Eurasian Hoopoe**, a male **Ortolan Bunting** and a **Short-toed Eagle** hovering over the hillside. Moving on towards Lake Sinoe, we stopped a couple of times en route and flushed a **Common Quail** from the roadside and saw several **Western Yellow Wagtails** of the race *feldegg* (Black-headed Wagtail) and another female **Montagu's Harrier**. We reached Lake Sinoe at 11.30 and had an excellent hour and a half birding, which began shortly after arrival, when we had fantastic close range views of two **Paddyfield Warblers**, a key species here, with six birds eventually recorded close to the track in the sedges and reeds. We checked an area of open mud for waders around a series of small pools and located **Common Greenshank**, six **Spotted Redshanks** and a single **Curlew Sandpiper** in summer plumage, two **Marsh Sandpipers**, eight **Little Stints**, single **Kentish Plover**, **Dunlin**, **Ruff** and **Collared Pratincole** and also **Northern Lapwing**, **Pied Avocet**, **Black-winged Stilt**, **Common Redshank** and **Black-tailed Godwit**, an excellent haul of waders by anyone's standards. **Marsh Harriers** and **European Bee-eaters** were overhead, and **Whiskered Terns** were feeding over the wetland, with two **Little Terns** and a **Little Gull** seen briefly. Wildfowl were also evident, with a drake **Red-crested Pochard**, two **Ferruginous Ducks**, five **Gadwall**, five **Common Shelduck** and two **Greylag Geese**. Twelve **Great White Pelicans** and a single **Dalmatian Pelican** were also in flight over the area and *feldegg* **Western Yellow Wagtails** were common. By now lunch was calling, so we drove through Sinoe village where we had single **Lesser Grey Shrike** and **Red-backed Shrike** on wires, and parked up in a shady pull-in south of the village where we enjoyed an excellent and very tasty 'al fresco' lunch prepared by Alex and our driver Christian. At the pull-in there was a colony of **Spanish Sparrows** and birds showed very well alongside a colony of **House Sparrows**, a singing male **Eurasian Golden Oriole** proving more elusive. After lunch we drove south to Vadu and had two **Lesser Grey Shrikes** on roadside wires en route. We birded the lagoons adjacent to the Black Sea at Vadu for the rest of the afternoon and recorded over 50 species in three hours. **European Bee-eaters** were constantly calling overhead and watched perched up feeding on insects, **Common House Martins** were also in good numbers over the village too, and **Red-footed Falcons** performed well catching insects over the area. The first lagoons held over 100 **Little Gulls**, mostly in first summer plumage, with two adult **Yellow-legged Gulls**, 11 **Red-crested Pochards**, 15 **Ferruginous Ducks**, six **Green Sandpipers**, two **Little Ringed Plovers** and a **Wood Sandpiper** present. **Eurasian Hoopoes** were frequently seen and at least two pairs of **Northern Wheatears** had fledged juveniles in attendance. Two **Crested Larks** were on a grassy area, **Corn Buntings** were singing from the small shrubs and a juvenile **Tawny Pipit** showed well. Further on past the village an open area of short grassland held 42 **Collared Pratincoles** and two **Kentish Plovers**, and the adjacent large lagoon enclosed by an embankment held a large colony of **Common Terns** breeding on the island. A single **Ruddy Shelduck** was noted on the embankment and a **Eurasian Bittern** was 'booming' from the extensive reed-bed nearby. Eventually we reached the Black Sea coast and had a **Kentish Plover** flying south over the sea inshore, three **Little Terns** and 63 **Great Cormorants** roosting on fishing net posts close to the beach. We left Vadu at 18.15 for the drive back to Tulcea, noting **Lesser Grey Shrike** and **European Bee-eater** along the way, arriving back at the hotel at 19.45. After refreshing, we had our evening meal in the hotel restaurant and completed the bird notes, then retired after another excellent bird-filled day.



Red-Breasted Flycatcher (Lawrence Hurst)

FRIDAY 8th JUNE – *Hot 28-30C, sunny, bright.*

After breakfast we left the hotel at 08.30 and drove west from Tulcea and up onto the hill above Somova village. This vantage point gave us excellent views eastwards over the delta and the hills and land further west. **European Bee-eaters** were overhead, and whilst scanning the hills to the west we picked up an adult **Black Stork** moving over the forested hills. We returned to Somova and the main road and drove a short distance further west, pausing briefly as a **Long-legged Buzzard** showed very well close to the road, another bird circling above. We parked up and as we exited the mini-bus a **European Honey-buzzard** was up over the wooded hillside and a **European Turtle Dove** was on wires nearby. We walked up the hillside on the track through the open oak woodland and after a short distance located two **Sombre Tits** in the trees, which eventually gave decent views. Scanning the opposite hillside we picked up a **Lesser Spotted Eagle** drifting south-east and shortly afterwards a **Hawfinch** flew over calling, but wasn't seen. **Common Chaffinch** and **Corn Bunting** were heard singing, and **Eurasian Hoopoes** heard calling, occasionally flicking through the trees. Towards the top of the hill we picked up three **Common Buzzards** of the race *vulpinus* (Steppe Buzzard) circling the wooded hillside, whilst a singing male **Ortolan Bunting** and a **Middle Spotted Woodpecker** gave us the run-around, but eventually giving good views. Three stunning male **Red-backed Shrikes** were seen perched up on the Hawthorn scrub at the top of the hill and a female **Marsh Harrier** and a **European Roller** flew over. However, what was to become the bird of the tour then appeared, as a pair of **Levant Sparrowhawks** were picked up displaying over the wooded hillside as we descended. They gave fantastic views as they circled low over the woodland, then excellent prolonged views perched up in a tree in full view for at least ten minutes. Elated, we walked down to meet the minibus by the road and had a **Common Nightingale** singing close by. It was midday now and very hot so we moved on to Celic Dere, an area of woodland to the south, where we enjoyed another tasty 'al fresco' lunch in a shady spot while listening to singing **Wood Warblers**, **Red-breasted Flycatchers** and **Icterine Warblers**, plus a **Song Thrush** feeding on the woodland floor and **Eurasian Nuthatches** in the trees. After lunch we walked the track back to the monastery and had a **Short-toed Treecreeper** on a tree in the woodland edge and good views of **Red-breasted Flycatchers**,

but unfortunately the **Wood Warblers** and **Icterine Warblers** remained unseen, although we did have good views of a male **Red-backed Shrike** near the monastery. We left Celic Dere at 14.45 and drove westwards to the Macin Mountains National Park, the road passing close to the Ukrainian border. We arrived at Macin Mountains N.P. at 16.00 and walked slowly up the track into a rocky gorge. We had three **Long-legged Buzzards** overhead, also a **Short-toed Eagle**, a female **Common Kestrel** and a **Black Stork**. Whilst retracing our steps back to the minibus, excellent 'scope views were had by some of the group, of a **Honey-buzzard** which landed on a rock in the gorge and sat for some time before flying south. A single male **Pied Wheatear** was seen briefly on a rock on the hillside, but unfortunately only by the leader and one of the group. We returned to the minibus and drove the short distance east to Greci, where we had the last half hour birding the open flat sandy habitat. **Isabelline Wheatears** were common here with at least 12 seen, including fledged juveniles. The parting shot came when Alex picked up a pale morph **Booted Eagle** which drifted east along the hillside and showed well. We left Greci at 19.10 and drove back to Tulcea, arriving rather late at 20.20 after another excellent day's birding. After freshening up we had our evening meal in the hotel restaurant, completed the bird notes and then packed our luggage in readiness for our departure tomorrow morning.

SATURDAY 9th JUNE – Sunny, bright, hot.

After breakfast we said our farewells to Pam, who was staying on in Romania for a few days touring Transylvania before travelling back home to Seattle, U.S.A., and we left the hotel at 08.15 for our transfer to Bucharest, Otopeni airport. We stopped half way at a service station for a tea and coffee break then continued on to the airport, arriving on time at 12.30. The journey was pretty uneventful, the only birds of note being **European Roller**, at least 60 **White Storks** including several nests, with five in one village alone, and flocks of **Western Jackdaws** and **Rooks** on agricultural fields along the way. We consumed our packed lunches, checked in onto the Blue Air flight back to Luton, then proceeded swiftly through security and immigration before departing at 16.35 (local time) 35 minutes late. After a good flight we landed at Luton at 17.45 (local time) 20 minutes late. After collecting our baggage we said our farewells after a thoroughly enjoyable and successful tour in very good company and everyone headed for home, all returning safely.

Thank you to tour participants Lawrence Hurst and Christopher Gibson for supplying photographs, and to Maureen Sibbons for providing identification of Odonata and Lepidoptera.

A total of 157 bird species were recorded on the tour, including birds seen and heard.

Oriole Birding Tour - ROMANIA 2nd - 9th May 2018 (●H = heard only)										
Species Order, Names and Taxonomy follows - Gill, F., & Donsker, D.(eds) 2018. IOC World Bird List (v 8.1). http://www.worldbirdnames.org/ [June 2018]										
No.	Species Name	Scientific Name	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
1	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		●	●	●		●		
2	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		●	●	●	●	●		
3	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>			●			●		
4	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>						●		
5	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>		●	●		●	●		
6	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		●	●					
7	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		●	●	●	●	●		
8	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		●	●	●	●	●		
9	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>			●					
10	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>						●		
11	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>		●	●	●	●	●		
12	Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>		●	●	●	●	●		
13	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>		●	●					
14	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>						●		
15	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		●	●	●				
16	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		●	●					
17	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>		●	●	●	●			
18	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		●	●	●	●	●		
19	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>		●	●	●	●			
20	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>							●	
21	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
22	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>		●	●	●	●			
23	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		●	●		●			
24	Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>			●H	●H		●H		
25	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>			●	●	●			
26	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	●	●	●	●	●			
27	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>		●	●	●	●			
28	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	●	●	●	●	●	●		
29	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>			●	●	●	●		
30	Great (White) Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		●	●	●	●	●		
31	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		●	●	●	●	●		
32	Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>		●	●	●	●	●	●	
33	Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>		●	●	●	●	●		
34	Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo pygmeus</i>		●	●	●	●	●		
35	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		●	●	●	●	●		
36	European Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>							●	
37	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circus gallicus</i>					●	●	●	
38	Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga clanga</i>							●	
39	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>							●	
40	Levant Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter brevipes</i>							●	
41	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>					●			
42	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		●	●	●	●	●	●	
43	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>						●		
44	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>		●	●	●	●			
45	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	●						●	
46	Common Buzzard (Steppe Buzzard)	<i>Buteo buteo</i>							●	
47	Little Crane	<i>Porzana parva</i>			●H					
48	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		●	●	●	●	●		
49	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		●	●	●	●	●	●	
50	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>			●	●		●		
51	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>			●			●		
52	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	●	●	●	●	●	●		
53	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>				●		●		
54	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>						●		
55	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>			●			●		
56	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>			●			●		
57	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>						●		
58	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>						●		
59	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>						●		
60	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa chropus</i>		●	●	●	●	●		
61	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>						●		
62	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>						●		
63	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>			●			●		
64	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>						●		
65	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>						●		
66	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>			●		●	●		

No.	Species Name	Scientific Name	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
67	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		•	•	•	•	•		
68	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>						•		
69	Pallas's (Great Black-headed) Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus</i>				•				
70	Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>		•	•	•	•	•		
71	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>		•				•		
72	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>			•					
73	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>		•	•					
74	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>						•		
75	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>		•	•	•	•	•		
76	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>		•	•	•	•	•	•	
77	White-winged (Black) Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>		•						
78	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>		•		•	•			
79	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	•		•		•	•	•	
80	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		•	•		•			
81	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	•	•	•	•	•		•	
82	European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>							•	
83	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
84	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		•	•	•	•	•	•	
85	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>			•					
86	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	•		•		•			
87	European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
88	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		•		•	•			
89	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	•		•			•	•	
90	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
91	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocoptes medius</i>							•	
92	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>		•						
93	Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>		•	•	•	•			
94	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocoptes major</i>		•	•	•	•			
95	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
96	Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco verpertinus</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•		
97	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•		
98	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		•						
99	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	•	•	•		•	•	•	
100	Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>						•		
101	Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>		•	•	•	•	•	•	
102	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
103	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	•	•	•		•	•	•	•
104	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	•					•	•	•
105	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
106	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>							•	
107	Sombre Tit	<i>Poecile lugubris</i>							•	
108	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		•	•	•	•		•	
109	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		•	•	•	•		•	
110	Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>		•H	•H	•	•H			
111	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>			•	•		•		
112	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	•					•	•	•
113	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristatus</i>						•	•	
114	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		•	•	•		•	•	
115	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
116	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	•	•	•		•	•	•	
117	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		•						
118	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		•H	•	•	•H		•H	
119	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>							•H	
120	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>		•	•	•	•	•	•	
121	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>			•H	•H	•H	•H		
122	Paddyfield Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>						•		
123	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>			•H	•	•	•H		
124	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Iduna pallida</i>			•	•	•	•H		
125	Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>		•H			•H		•H	
126	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>			•H	•H	•	•H		
127	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		•H	•H	•	•H		•H	
128	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>		•H	•H	•	•H		•H	
129	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>		•H		•	•H		•H	

No.	Species Name	Scientific Name	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
130	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>							•	
131	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>							•	
132	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
133	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>			•H	•H	•H		•	
134	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>							•	
135	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>							•	
136	Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>					•H			
137	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>		•H			•H		•H	
138	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>							•	
139	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>		•	•	•	•			
140	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>			•			•		
141	Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>						•	•	
142	Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>							•	
143	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	•	•	•		•	•	•	
144	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>						•		
145	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>		•	•	•	•		•	
146	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	•		•		•	•		
147	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
148	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>						•	•	
149	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		•	•	•	•		•	
150	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>							•	
151	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>					•		•	
152	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>						•		
153	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>			•	•	•		•	
154	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
155	Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>				•		•H	•	
156	Black-headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>						•	•	
157	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>			•	•	•	•		
DAILY SPECIES TOTALS			27	80	97	77	85	92	66	10

No.	Sites Visited	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
1	Bucharest - Tulcea	•							
2	Danube Delta Circuit		•						
3	Maliuc - Crisan			•					
4	Crisan Caraorman Channel			•	•				
5	Ceamurlia Channel			•					
6	Litkov Channel			•					
7	Swan Lake			•					
8	Caraorman Village			•					
9	Bogdabroste Lake				•				
10	Treilezere Lake				•				
11	Lopatna Channel				•	•			
12	Lake Babina				•				
13	Lake Baclanesti					•			
14	Stipoc Area					•			
15	Delta - Tulcea					•			
16	Denis Tepe						•		
17	Lake Sinoe						•		
18	Vadu & Black Sea Coast						•		
19	Wooded Hills West of Somova							•	
20	Celic Dere							•	
21	Machin Mountains NP							•	
22	Greci							•	
23	Tulcea - Bucharest								•

No.	Other Wildlife	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
1	Wild Boar			•					
2	Brown Hare			•					
3	Roe Deer							•	
4	Red Fox							•	
5	Lizard sp.						•		
6	Marsh Frog		•	•	•	•			
7	Yellow-bellied Frog		•	•	•	•			
8	Tree Frog			•					
9	Dice Snake			•		•			
10	Aesculapian Snake							•	
11	Grass Snake				•				
12	Southern Skimmer		•	•	•	•			
13	Green Hawker		•	•	•	•			
14	Lesser Emperor*								
15	Vagrant Emperor*								
16	Scarlet Darter		•	•	•	•			
17	Large Red-eyed Damselfly		•	•	•	•			
18	Small Red-eyed Damselfly			•		•			
19	Beautiful Demoiselle		•	•	•	•			
20	Silver Washed Fritillary							•	
21	Lesser Spotted Fritillary*								
22	Queen of Spain Fritillary*								
23	Comma*								
24	Eastern Bath White						•		
25	Marbled White*								
26	Small White*								
27	Escher's Blue							•	
28	Green-underside Blue*								
29	Red Admiral		•	•	•	•			
30	Clouded Yellow*								
31	Small Copper*								
32	Scarce Swallowtail							•	
33	Lesser Purple Emperor					•			
34	Bronze Glandular Bush Cricket							•	

**Where blank cells appear, dates for some species were not confirmed*



Danube Delta (David Pearce)



Danube Delta (David Pearce)



Hills west of Somova (David Pearce)



Black Sea coast at Vadu (David Pearce)



Great White Pelican (Lawrence Hurst)