



Pied Wheatear at Cape Kaliakra (Chris Kehoe)

BULGARIA

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LEADER: CHRIS KEHOE

Our recent tour to Bulgaria produced an excellent selection of southeast European specialities and more widespread Palearctic species. Particularly notable were the likes of Dalmatian Pelicans, Paddyfield Warblers, Olive-tree Warblers, Black-headed Buntings, Levant Sparrowhawks, Syrian Woodpeckers, Masked Shrikes, Pied Wheatears and Semicollared Flycatchers. Further highlights included Eastern Imperial Eagles, Red-footed Falcons, Eurasian White Pelicans, Lesser Kestrels, Ferruginous Ducks, Sombre Tits, Eurasian Eagle Owl and Eurasian Griffon, Cinereous and Egyptian Vultures. Bird of the trip though was an unexpected and extremely cooperative Corncrake. Perhaps most striking of all though was the experience of seeing large numbers of birds in agricultural areas where the likes of Red-backed Shrikes, Eurasian Cuckoos and Corn Buntings were positively common, as were many other species that are sadly in serious decline in more intensively farmed Western Europe. Apart from a couple of wet afternoons at the start of the tour, fortunately mostly while we traveled, the weather throughout was very pleasant and the tour logistics ran smoothly.

Our birding began with an unscheduled stop near Vakarel just 30 minutes from Sofia Airport where a calling Corncrake had been reported. On arrival we quickly saw our first European Golden Orioles and a Red-backed Shrike, two species that were to become frequent sights in the coming days, while both Long-legged and Common Buzzards and a Short-toed Eagle appeared overhead. After a short while a Corncrake began

calling and we eventually managed to persuade it to show itself, initially at some distance but ultimately at just a few metres range where it posed in full view while giving its distinctive rasping song. Well satisfied with this we resumed our journey towards Pamporovo in the Rhodope Mountains but rain soon set in and continued almost until we reached our hotel in a clearing in attractive spruce forest. A short stop nearby gave us a couple of very obliging Firecrests and European Crested Tits while a Black Redstart sang from the top of a nearby tree.



Our hotel near Pamporovo (Chris Kehoe)

Birding from a chilly dawn near our hotel produced several upland species we wouldn't encounter again such as Dunnock, Eurasian Wren and a Eurasian Treecreeper but more appreciated were a smart male Common Crossbill, further Firecrests and bustling groups of low flying Pallid Swifts. After breakfast we set off towards Trigrad Gorge but a stop before reaching there gave us great views of Alpine Swifts and Eurasian Crag Martins nesting on a roadside cliff while the stream below held a White-throated Dipper. On reaching Trigrad Gorge we were greeted with the unwelcome news that no Wallcreepers had been seen there for at least two weeks. We searched nonetheless but without success, though we did see a Black Stork and numerous European Serins and a few other bits and pieces. After a tasty lunch at a nearby trout restaurant we set off on the long drive to the Eastern Rhodope hills. Heavy rain soon set in, scuppering plans for stops at some en route river crossings, but it eased off enough to allow some birding overlooking the Arda Reservoir just east of Karzali where several Dalmatian Pelicans were on show along with numerous Great Cormorants and a few Great Crested Grebes. Continuing our journey we stopped to admire a smart Little Owl at the roadside and reached our hotel near Studen Kladenets just in time for some to see a late-singing Cirl Bunting. The rain returned during dinner, preventing us from searching for European Scops Owl and it remained wet throughout most of the night.

Early the next morning we found the singing Cirl Bunting again with a Lesser Whitethroat nearby and a Black Stork on the river below. A short walk along the road near the hotel gave some a brief view of one of the many singing Common Nightingales but everyone enjoyed fine views of our first Black-headed Buntings and a showy male Spanish Sparrow right alongside both House and Tree Sparrows. Pride of place though went to a very obliging male Barred Warbler that sang heartily as both Peregrine and Egyptian Vulture were scoped on the high crag above. After breakfast we set off towards the vulture feeding area above nearby Studen Kladenets but stopped first at the Arda Dam where Blue Rock Thrushes were on show as a Short-toed Snake Eagle soared in the distance. Up on the hill above Studen Kladenets we watched a roadside

Tawny Pipit, Woodchat Shrikes, a rather distant Black-eared Wheatear and a couple of showy Sombre Tits as Griffon Vultures rose in search of thermals and a few Egyptian Vultures, Northern Ravens and a Red Fox investigated the remains of previously laid out carcasses.



Eurasian Griffon and Egyptian Vultures above Studen Kladenets (Chris Kehoe)

It was rather overcast and most of the vultures eventually drifted off south towards distant sunnier skies so we made our way slowly downhill and tried to tease out singing Subalpine Warblers, they proved rather uncooperative but later in the day we did finally enjoy great views of this attractive species. As our picnic lunch was being prepared we watched a Woodlark on overhead wires while in the valley below an Olive-tree Warbler was a prized find and posed in the scope briefly with Barred Warblers and a couple of Eastern Orphean Warblers as a supporting cast. As we ate our lunch a dapper Lesser Grey Shrike was on view and nearby a couple of Crested Larks showed well. We were about to leave to explore another area when a dead cow was driven up towards the vulture feeding area so we decided to return there to see if it enticed down any carrion eaters. In the event large numbers of Griffon's appeared and sat around on the crags above but did not approach the carcass. Several Egyptian Vultures showed more interest, as did a few Black Kites, but our main reward was fly-by views of a Cinereous Vulture, a Northern Goshawk and a pair of European Honey Buzzards, though a Levant Sparrowhawk was too distant and brief to be at all satisfying. Back down the hill we played cat and mouse with a couple of Sardinian Warblers before returning to our hotel as the light began to fade. After dinner we went in search of European Scops Owl, eventually tracking down a calling bird that frustrated by remaining resolutely out of view, though very close, before eventually moving away to an inaccessible area as it began to rain.

Birding near the hotel before breakfast again produced a Black Stork on the river below and we finally found a showy Common Nightingale plus a couple of Eastern Olivaceous Warblers. After breakfast we set off on the long journey towards the Black Sea coast but made several stops during the morning, firstly at a spectacular rocky area near Madjarovo where a pair of Western Rock Nuthatches were attending their nest on a high cliff above the road while a singing Rock Bunting and a couple of Blue Rock Thrushes were also found. Nearby, a large gorge provided us with fine views of a singing Ortolan Bunting as several Eurasian Griffon Vultures launched themselves into the blue sky. Continuing our journey we descended into the Maritska Valley where an overflying immature Eastern Imperial Eagle led to a rapid departure from the minibus. Nearby, we stopped at a small side valley near Yerusolimova where we quite quickly found the hoped-for Masked Shrike at one of its few Bulgarian breeding sites and also another Olive-tree Warbler that showed well in the scope plus another Sombre Tit. Just before reaching our lunch spot in Levka, a roadside stop gave us good views of a Greater Short-toed Lark, a few distant Calandra Larks and a rather distant adult Eastern Imperial Eagle.



Ortolan Bunting near Madjarovo and Eastern Imperial Eagle at Levka (Chris Kehoe)

At Levka Lesser Kestrels showed very well (the thriving population here initially seeded by an reintroduction programme) as we ate our picnic lunch, two groups of Rosy Starlings flew by, a Cirl Bunting posed nicely on wires but the real highlight was two adult Eastern Imperial Eagles, one of which performed its spectacular swooping display flight. By early evening we were on the outskirts of Burgas where we visited three rich roadside wetlands, the first of which held several ducks including two Garganey, several Common Pochards and a single Ferruginous Duck as up to 1000 migrating Eurasian White Pelicans soared overhead. At the next stop we watched Pygmy Cormorants and our first Sand Martins while the final stop gave us numerous Pied Avocets, Eurasian Spoonbills and a few Gull-billed Terns. We concluded the journey to our overnight stop at Pomorie via a short stop to admire Collared Pratincoles hawking overhead.



Part of a huge flock of migrating Eurasian White Pelicans over Burgas (Chris Kehoe)

The next morning we visited nearby Pomorie Lagoon where many Sandwich, Common and Little Terns were nesting along with several Mediterranean Gulls. An Eastern Olivaceous Warbler showed very well as did countless low flying Common Swifts and we found a late Eurasian Wigeon and several Kentish Plovers.

After breakfast we explored some of the wetlands further up the coast, finding a smattering of migrant shorebirds including Little Stints, Ruffs and Curlew Sandpipers. We then turned inland and visited a small wetland near Poroy where several Ruddy Shelducks were on show along with two Wood Sandpipers and a few Black-headed Yellow Wagtails, nearby our first Isabelline Wheatears posed nicely near a colony of European Bee-eaters as a Lesser Spotted Eagle soared in the distance. Continuing our journey north we stopped for lunch at Goritska, where a Booted Eagle flew over, before going in search of the very localised Semicollared Flycatcher in nearby oak woodland. Although a couple of flycatchers were glimpsed they proved extremely uncooperative but during our search we added Short-toed Treecreeper, Middle Spotted Woodpecker and Blue Tit to our list. At a nearby site we finally connected with a pair of cooperative Semicollared Flycatchers that showed well for several minutes. Relieved by this we continued towards our next base at Kavarna. Roadworks on the bridge to Varna resulted in a long diversion around Lake Varna but we reached our hotel in time to freshen up before dinner.

A short walk near the hotel before breakfast produced prolonged views of a male Syrian Woodpecker while our first Skylarks were singing over the fields nearby. After breakfast we set off north towards the wetlands of the nearby Black Sea coast. Before reaching Durankulak Lake we stopped to admire a superb male Red-footed Falcon on roadside wires and went on to see several more plus plenty of Eurasian Rollers before finally arriving at the north end of the lake. Our primary target here was the very localised Paddyfield Warbler but we were soon distracted by the numerous Great Reed Warblers chuntering away and showing well, a male Little Bittern, Spanish Sparrows, flying Bearded Reedlings for some, a male Reed Bunting (here of one of the 'thick-billed' southern forms), Ferruginous Ducks and some obliging Squacco Herons. Careful scanning of the reedbeds revealed a singing Savi's Warbler that sat up nicely for the scope while several furtive Eurasian Reed Warblers put in appearances. On the sea behind us a Black-necked Grebe was found and a Harbour Porpoise surfaced a few times but with no sight or sound of Paddyfield Warblers we were on the verge of leaving to try elsewhere when one finally popped into view and went on to show exceptionally well for several minutes. Moving on we visited an area where Eurasian Penduline Tits sometimes breed but instead satisfied ourselves with a group of hawking Red-footed Falcons and a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker that gave stellar views. One further stop before our picnic lunch at Shabla Lakes produced a couple of Eurasian Hobbys, Spotted Flycatchers and a Common Stonechat.



Eurasian Eagle Owl at Balchik and Great Reed Warbler near Cape Kaliakra (Chris Kehoe)

After lunch we made our way south towards Cape Kaliakra, first stopping a few kilometres north of there to admire a pair of dapper Pied Wheatears along the clifftop where a few Calandra Larks were songflighting and our first Eurasian Shags were found. At Cape Kaliakra itself we found further Pied Wheatears while migrants included a few Eastern Olivaceous Warblers and Common Whitethroats and an overflying Eurasian Hobby showed well. Offshore several Mediterranean Gulls were gathered and a small pod of Bottle-nosed Dolphins was seen. At a small valley just north of the cape a Cetti's Warbler performed well and a surprise Paddyfield Warbler, apparently the first record for this site, was also found. We finished the day with a walk in the nearby steppe where a Eurasian Stone Curlew was eventually found along with a couple of Isabelline Wheatears and numerous songflighting Calandra and Greater Short-toed Larks.

Though there was nothing new near the hotel the next morning a Common Nightingale showed extremely well and Syrian Woodpeckers were found again. After breakfast we visit the wooded cliffs near Balchik in search of Eurasian Eagle Owl and after about five minutes located a superb adult sitting in full view on a bare tree where it remained for over fifteen minutes, showing very well in the scope. Happy with this we began the journey north towards the Danube but stopped in an attractive wooded valley near Strelkovo where a Grey-headed Woodpecker gave a series of fleeting views, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, European Honey Buzzard and Booted Eagle were all seen along with many Alpine Swifts. By mid-afternoon we were at Lake Srebana where we visited various viewpoints around this large wetland. Highlights at Srebana included a pair of nestbuilding Eurasian Penduline Tits, Dalmatian and Eurasian White Pelican soaring together, overhead White-tailed Eagle and European Honey Buzzard and three Red-necked Grebes along with numerous other waterbirds that included many Ferruginous Ducks and Whiskered Terns, Pygmy Cormorants and our first Glossy Ibises. A final stop overlooking a small marsh near Garvan failed to produce the hoped-for Levant Sparrowhawk but Black-necked Grebe was seen along with several Eurasian Golden Orioles, Common Cuckoos and others. It was then only a short drive to our overnight accommodation in Vetren Village. Despite a still night no Scops Owls were heard in the lodge garden where they sometimes occur.

In a final attempt for Levant Sparrowhawk we spent an hour scanning the wooded valley below the village before breakfast and were rewarded with two fly-past views of a female plus Black Redstarts and a Eurasian Hoopoe. After breakfast we began the journey towards the Romanian border crossing at Ruse but diverted to the Danube banks near Malak Preslavets where a lily covered lake held good numbers of Whiskered Terns. A pair of Common Redstarts here were new for our list, a Middle Spotted Woodpecker was found and we eventually had a good fly past view of a Black Woodpecker after a couple of briefer glimpses. A Semicollared Flycatcher was a surprise find while our final new birds of the tour were a singing Icterine Warbler that perched up on a bare snag for a short while and an overflying White-winged Tern. After completing a few border formalities we crossed the Danube into Romania, drove north towards Bucharest and passed through what remains of the historic city centre before arriving at the airport where the tour ended.



Corncrake near Vakarel (tour participant Gerald Farnell)



Paddyfield Warbler at Durankulak Lake (Chris Kehoe)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **IOC World Bird Names**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* A handful of pink-billed *rubirostris* at Lake Srebana, some with young.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* Noted at several wetlands.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* Small numbers, mostly around Pomorie.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* Up to 20 near Pomorie and two at Lake Srebana.

Gadwall *Anas strepera* Small numbers at several wetlands.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope* A tardy male at Pomorie Lagoon was a surprise.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* Present at many wetlands.

Garganey *Anas querquedula* Two males at Burgas and one at Lake Srebana.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* Several at Burgas and at Lake Srebana.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* About 100 in the Danube Valley, mostly at Lake Srebana, a few elsewhere.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* (NL) A couple at Lake Srebana.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (H) Heard on the steppe near Cape Kaliakra.

Common Pheasant (introduced) *Phasianus colchicus* Several heard and a few seen in the Danube Valley.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Noted on three wetlands.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* Three stunners in the scope at Lake Srebana.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* Present at several wetlands, some with stripy-headed young.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* Singles on the sea off Durankulak Lake and another near Garvan.
Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* Ones and twos on four dates after the first at Trigrad Gorge.
White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* Commonly seen, especially in the lowlands, often nesting in villages.
Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Several in the distance at Lake Srebana.
Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* About 20 at Burgas and a similar number in the Danube Valley.
Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* A male at Lake Durankulak.
Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Several in the Danube Valley and a couple near Burgas.



Dalmatian Pelican at Lake Srebana and Squacco Heron at Lake Durankulak (Chris Kehoe)

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* A handful at the Black Sea wetlands.
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Present at most wetlands.
Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* Small numbers at the Black Sea wetlands on three dates.
Great Egret (G White E) *Ardea alba* Ones and twos at a few wetlands and several at Lake Srebana.
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Small numbers at several wetlands.
Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Up to 1000 over Burgas and about 15 over Lake Srebana.
Dalmatian Pelican ◊ *Pelecanus crispus* Ten at Arda Reservoir, 30 at Burgas and about 40 at Lake Srebana.
Pygmy Cormorant ◊ *Microcarbo pygmeus* Common at Burgas and at Lake Srebana, a handful elsewhere.
European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* About 10 in the Cape Kaliakra area.
Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* Especially numerous at Burgas where many were nesting.
Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* At least six above Studen Kladenets with a couple more nearby.
European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* Seen best at Lake Srebana and above Studen Kladenets.
Griffon Vulture (Eurasian G V) *Gyps fulvus* Up to 50 above Studen Kladenets, others in nearby hills.
Cinereous Vulture (Eurasian Black V, Monk V) *Aegypius monachus* One above Studen Kladenets.
Short-toed Snake Eagle (Short-toed E) *Circaetus gallicus* One near Vakarel and two above Studen Kladenets.
Lesser Spotted Eagle *Clanga pomarina* Singles near Burgas and north of Pomorie.
Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* Singles near Burgas, Goritska and Strelkovo.
Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* Three, including a breeding pair, in the Maritska Valley.
Levant Sparrowhawk ◊ *Accipiter brevipes* Singles above Studen Kladenets and twice at Vetren.
Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* One near Strelkovo.
Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* One above Studen Kladenets.
Western Marsh Harrier (Eurasian M H) *Circus aeruginosus* Common at lowland wetlands.
Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Three or four above Studen Kladenets and another near Durankulak.
White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* One over Lake Srebana.
Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* Noted near Vakarel, Pamporovo and Studen Kladenets.
Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* Scattered records on six dates.
Corn Crane ◊ *Crex crex* Fantastic views of one at Vakarel near Sofia - voted Bird of the Trip.
Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Noted near Studen Kladenets and at Garvan.

Eurasian Coot (Common C) *Fulica atra* Present on several wetlands.

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oediconemus* One on the Kaliakra steppe.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Several at Burgas and Pomorie sites.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* Common at Burgas and Pomorie.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* Most prominent in the Black Sea area, noted on four dates.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* One at Pomorie salt pans.

Common Ringed Plover (Great R P) *Charadrius hiaticula* Three or four at Pomorie salt pans.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* Noted at the Arda River and near Pomorie.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* About eight on the beach at Pomorie.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Two north of Pomorie.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* About 100 at Pomorie salt pans.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* About 50 at Pomorie salt pans.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* Up to 10 females at Pomorie salt pans.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* About six near Pomorie.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* Small numbers at Burgas and Pomorie.

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus* A breeding colony at Pomorie and several off Cape Kaliakra.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* Present at the coast and on larger inland wetlands.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* A handful at Burgas and Pomorie.



Red-footed Falcon near Kavarna and Gull-billed Tern at Burgas (Chris Kehoe)

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis* Common at the Black Sea coast, breeding at Pomorie Lagoon.

Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* Numerous at Pomorie where breeding.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* Present on most larger wetlands in small numbers.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* Most conspicuous at Malak Preslavets with a few elsewhere.

White-winged Tern (W-w Black T) *Chlidonias leucopterus* One briefly near Malak Preslavets.

Rock Dove (introduced) *Columba livia* Small numbers in some urban areas.

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* Scattered sightings throughout.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* Fairly numerous in the lowlands, especially in the Danube Valley.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* Widespread in small numbers.

Common Cuckoo (Eurasian C) *Cuculus canorus* Present throughout but most common in the lowland wetlands.

Eurasian Scops Owl (European S O) *Otus scops* (H) Heard near Studen Kladenets but frustrating elusive.

Eurasian Eagle-Owl *Bubo bubo* Great scope views at the cliffs near Balchik.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* A full grown youngster near Strelkovo, heard near Studen Kladenets.

Little Owl *Athene noctua* Several in the Eastern Rhodope with a couple elsewhere.

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* Most conspicuous in the Rhodope uplands with a few elsewhere.

Common Swift *Apus apus* Common at the Black Sea coast, especially around Pomorie.

Pallid Swift ♦ ***Apus pallidus*** Good views around our hotel near Pamporovo in the Rhodope Mountains.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* Several in the lowlands, especially prominent north of Kavarna.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* Singles briefly near Studen Kladenets and Malak Preslavets.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Fairly numerous in the Black Sea lowlands.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Scattered encounters throughout, mostly as we travelled.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor* Great views near Shabla with a couple elsewhere.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius* Singles at Goritska and near Malak Preslavets.

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus* A showy pair at our Kavarna Hotel.



Syrian Woodpecker at Kavarna and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker near Shabla (Chris Kehoe)

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* Seen best at Goritska where nesting.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* Good flight views, and briefly perched for some, at the Danube.

European Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* One at Lake Srebana, a couple of others heard.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus* A rather uncooperative bird near Strelkovo, mostly seen in flight.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* Several in Levka Village, part of a successful reintroduction programme.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* Fairly common throughout.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* Up to 15 north of Kavarna with one male seen particularly well.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* Noted on five dates, seen best at Lake Srebana and Cape Kaliakra.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* Seen a few times in the Eastern Rhodope.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* Common in the lowlands with up to 30 per day noted at times.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* Seen on five dates after the first in the Eastern Rhodope.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* A handful in the Eastern Rhodope and one in the Maritska Valley.

Masked Shrike ♦ ***Lanius nubicus*** At least two in the Maritska Valley gave some good scope views.

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* Fairly common, especially in the lowlands, seen almost daily.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* Regularly seen throughout.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica* Widespread.

Western Jackdaw (Eurasian J) *Coloeus monedula* Small numbers at widespread sites.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* A few near Sofia and north of Kavarna.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix* Widespread in fairly small numbers.

Northern Raven (Common R) *Corvus corax* Most conspicuous in the Eastern Rhodope.
Coal Tit *Periparus ater* Several in spruces at higher elevations.
European Crested Tit (Crested T) *Lophophanes cristatus* Two or three near Pamporovo.
Sombre Tit *Poecile lugubris* Good views above Studen Kladenets and more briefly in the Maritska Valley.
Eurasian Blue Tit (European B T) *Cyanistes caeruleus* Noted at Goritska and near Strelkovo.
Great Tit *Parus major* Small numbers throughout.



Sombre Tit above Studen Kladenets and Eurasian Penduline Tit at Lake Srebana (Chris Kehoe)

Eurasian Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* Great views of a nest building pair at Lake Srebana.
Bearded Reedling (B Tit, B Parrotbill) *Panurus biarmicus* (NL) Flight views for some at Lake Durankulak.
Woodlark *Lullula arborea* A handful above Studen Kladenets.
Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis* Several at and around Kavarna.
Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* Ones and twos at several widespread sites.
Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* One near Levka and common on the Cape Kaliakra steppe.
Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* Common in the Cape Kaliakra steppe and a few near Levka.
Sand Martin (Bank Swallow) *Riparia riparia* Several at Burgas and Pomorie.
Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Common and widespread.
Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Fairly numerous in the highlands.
Common House Martin (Northern H M) *Delichon urbicum* Widespread, often common.
Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* Widespread encounters.
Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* Seen well near Cape Kaliakra, others heard in the Black Sea lowlands.
Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* Noted near Studen Kladenets and Goritska.
Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* Scattered encounters, more heard than seen.
Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* Common and noisy in all larger reedbeds, some fine views.
Paddyfield Warbler ◊ *Acrocephalus agricola* Great views at Lake Durankulak and, unusually, near Kaliakra.
Eurasian Reed Warbler (European R W) *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* Small numbers at Lake Durankulak.
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida* Several good views after the first in the Eastern Rhodope hills.
Olive-tree Warbler ◊ *Hippolais olivetorum* Good scope views above Studen Kladenets and near Yerusolimovo.
Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* A singing bird at the Danube near Malak Preslavets.
Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* Good scope views of a singing bird at Lake Durankulak.
Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* Widespread, more often heard than seen.
Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* A showy male near Studen Kladenets and three briefer singles elsewhere.
Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* One near Studen Kladenets and two at Lake Srebana.
Eastern Orphean Warbler ◊ *Sylvia crassirostris* Two above Studen Kladenets.
Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* Small numbers throughout after the first near Studen Kladenets.
Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* Eventual good views above Studen Kladenets, several others heard there.
Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* Two furtive males above Studen Kladenets.

Common Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla* Some great views around Pamporovo.

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* One seen and a few more heard near Pamporovo.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* Noted at Goritska and near Strelkovo.



Eastern Olivaceous Warbler at Pomorie and Red-rumped Swallow near Cape Kaliakra (Chris Kehoe)

Western Rock Nuthatch ◊ *Sitta neumayer* Two attending a distant nest near Madjarovo gave good scope views.

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* One near Pamporovo.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* A handful at Goritska and one at Malak Preslavets.

Rosy Starling (Rose-coloured S) *Pastor roseus* Two small migrating flocks at Levka.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* Widespread, generally common except at the highest elevations.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula* Small numbers throughout the lowlands and foothills.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* One at Kavarna, others heard at a few sites.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* Several around Pamporovo and in the Eastern Rhodope.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* A handful at scattered lowland woodlands.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula* A few, mostly around Pamporovo.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* Common in the lowlands and foothills, a few showed very well.

Semicollared Flycatcher ◊ *Ficedula semitorquata* Three at Goritska and one near Malak Preslavets.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* A few at Pamporovo and Trigrad, one at Vetren.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* Two near Malak Preslavets.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* A handful in the hills near Studen Kladenets.

European Stonechat (Common S) *Saxicola rubicola* Singles at Maritska Valley and near Shabla Lake.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* One above Studen Kladenets.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* Noted at three widespread sites.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* A handful north of Pomorie and at the Kaliakra steppe.

Black-eared Wheatear ◊ *Oenanthe [hispanica] melanoleuca* Distant views of a male above Studen Kladenets.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* Great views of several pairs around Cape Kaliakra.

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* A handful in the highlands.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Fairly common and widespread.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* Noted at widespread sites.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* Fairly common and widespread.

Dunnock (Hedge Accentor) *Prunella modularis* A couple seen and several more heard near Pamporovo.

Western Yellow Wagtail (Black-headed W) *Motacilla [flava] feldegg* A few in the lowlands.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* A handful around Trigrad Gorge and near Studen Kladenets.

White Wagtail *Motacilla [alba] alba* Small numbers at widespread sites.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* Great views above Studen Kladenets and near Cape Kaliakra, heard at Balchik.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* Often common in woodlands throughout.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* Brief views near Trigrad Gorge and near Strelkovo.

Eurasian Bullfinch (Common Bullfinch) *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* (H) Heard near Pamporovo.

European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* A few encounters at widespread sites.
Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina* A handful in the Eastern Rhodope and near Kavarna.
Red Crossbill (Common C) *Loxia curvirostra* Good views near Pamporovo.
European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* Fairly common and widespread.
European Serin *Serinus serinus* Conspicuous at Trigrad Gorge.
Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* Common in cultivated areas.
Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* One near Vakarel, heard at Goritska.
Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* Scope views near Madjarovo.
Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* Great views near Madjarovo.
Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* Good views on three dates after the first near Studen Kladenets.



Black-headed Bunting near Studen Kladenets and Semicollared Flycatcher at Goritska (Chris Kehoe)

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* Fairly numerous after the first in the Eastern Rhodope.
Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* Singles at Lakes Durankulak and Shabla, race *tschusii*.

MAMMALS

European Hare (Brown H) *Lepus europaeus* One in the Eastern Rhodope.
Eurasian Red Squirrel (Red S) *Sciurus vulgaris* Noted at three wooded sites.
Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* Ones and twos at three sites.
Harbour Porpoise (Common P.) *Phocoena phocoena* One offshore at Lake Durankulak.
Common Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* Half a dozen off Cape Kaliakra.
Fallow Deer (introduced) *Dama dama* A few above Studen Kladenets
Western Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus* One from the moving bus near Studen Kladenets

The Bird of the Trip:

1 - Corncrake
 2= - Red-backed Shrike
 2= - Eurasian Eagle Owl
 4 -Paddyfield Warbler
 5 - Red-footed Falcon