



## Birdwatching Holidays in Spain, Morocco & more...

BOLETAS Birdwatching centre  
22192 Loporzano (Huesca) – Spain  
tel/fax 00 34 974 262027 or 01162 889318  
e.mail: josele@boletas.org  
WWW.BIRDINGSpain.COM  
Josele J. Saiz - NIF 38491538A

---

### **Bulgaria** **6 – 15 May 11**

**Mark Easterbrook**



#### **References:**

A. The Collins Pocket Guide, *Birds of Britain & Europe, with N Africa and the Middle East* by Hermann Heinzel, Richard Fitter & John Parslow.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

My wife and I travelled with a group from the Boletas Birdwatching Centre, Spain, Huesca with 10 other participants and 2 leaders. The group consisted of:

**Leaders:** Josele J Saiz & Simeon

**The Group:** Mark & Deb Easterbrook, John & Val Sanders, John Packer, Andy Levitt, Jay & Jo Whetham, Gwyn McCreanor, Ron & Susan Martin (U.S.) and Alberto Galofre (U.S.)

With the administration and organisation taken care of, the wine was good, the beer cheap and the local foods interesting. It must be said that the fish from the Black Sea was very good and few stomach upsets were encountered while the company and birding were outstanding. The report consists of 15 pages with daily itineraries, a consolidated species list and summary.

## DAY 1 – 6 May

With the group departing from various airports in the UK and arriving in Sofia at different times the tour did not finally get underway until about 1530 on the first day. While we were waiting for Josele to arrive from Madrid, some brief but productive birding at a small pool next to the airport, produced Little Bittern, at least 2 Great Reed Warblers, and a Nightingale. Those who had arrived earlier had birded the mountains close to Sofia and were rewarded with Spotted Nutcracker and Firecrest amongst others – birds that were not recovered throughout the remainder of the tour.

We headed east towards the historic town of Koprivshitsa stopping along the way and birding from the bus. One brief stop produced the first Isabelline Wheatears, a Tawny Pipit, various expected *hirundines* and a Whinchat, with a Yellowhammer being heard. Our arrival at Koprivshitsa was greeted by breeding Dippers with 3 young and a Grey Wagtail on a small river in front of the hotel. Some good food and a glass of red concluded the day.

## Day 2 – 7 May

After breakfast we added Willow Tit and Serin to the list before departing for the hills in the Beklemedo National Park. The wind was chilly when we arrived but we soon added Water Pipits, Whinchats and a Black Redstart before viewing an adult Golden Eagle making rapid progress along the escarpment which was a highlight for many. Cuckoos called constantly, flocks of Bee-eaters made steady progress north and a male Ring Ouzel of the *alpestris* race showed well, while a Hen Harrier quartered in the distance.

We departed the location for lunch and shortly after visited a beech forest below the restaurant. A Redstart was heard and seen, along with a couple of Treecreepers. However, Gwyn first heard and then eventually we all saw the star of the day – a male White-backed Woodpecker that drummed in front of us and put on a territorial display.

The drive back to the hotel brought a stop at Rozino, which produced several good raptors including Short-toed Eagle, Honey Buzzard, Long-legged Buzzard and a distant Red-footed Falcon. The supporting cast consisted of a Black-headed Yellow Wagtail, a showy Cuckoo and a Black Stork.



An obliging Cuckoo at Rozino

## DAY 3 – 8 May

Departing and making progress towards Topolovgrad, our next destination, the transit day was punctuated by a number of stops at "birdy" locations that resulted in some good sightings.

Stopping firstly at Mariza/Svilengrad – an area of varying habitat next to the river was well worthwhile. We were greeted by Rollers and Bee-eaters and departed to a Grey Partridge. In between we had our picnic lunch and sighted a pair of Levant Sparrowhawks, our first Syrian Woodpecker, several Golden Orioles, one of a few Eastern Olivaceous Warblers and one of only 2 Kingfishers along with a cast of commoner migrants.

The next stop was a rocky valley in the area of Yerusolimovo. This was a picturesque area that was predicted to hold several target species, and did not disappoint. Woodchat Shrikes were evident, Cirl Buntings sang but never gave themselves up and the ubiquitous Corn Buntings were becoming monotonous. That said, on the way to the bottom of the valley Mark found a male Black-eared Wheatear, a bird that is at the northern edge of its breeding range and which was missed on the previous tour and Simeon found the first Eastern Orphean Warbler. At the bottom of the valley there were some pools. A calling tit soon proved to be a cracking male Sombre Tit; the only one of the tour, whilst Honey Buzzards, a surprise Glossy Ibis and Short-toed Eagles were overhead. Another short stop a little later provided views of a singing Ortolan Bunting.

#### **Day 4 – 9 May**

We made an earlier start from the hotel at Topolovgrad and heading for the Mramor plains in the Saker Hills region. On our arrival we noted a Tree Pipit, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler and several Isabelline Wheatears. The stars of the show here were a pair of Eastern Imperial Eagles. The male hunted, caught and fed whilst putting on an aerial display that was unforgettable and a great spectacle. Supported by kettles of storks including one Black Stork, Lesser Spotted Eagles and a raft of commoner raptors, so that the morning was a great success. A stop before lunch rewarded us with a Wood Warbler, Pied Flycatcher, Black Kite and a heard but not seen Eastern Bonelli's Warbler.



**A Majestic male Eastern Imperial Eagle**

After lunch we headed for oak woods near Shtit in search of the next target bird. The woods were alive with Woodchat Shrikes, Eastern Orphean Warblers and Woodlarks, however our quarry was not evident. Eventually, we tracked down a pair of Masked Shrikes and the male posed beautifully for the camera. The woods also revealed several Golden Orioles, a single Ortolan Bunting and a Syrian Woodpecker. It was becoming clear, that migration was a bit late due to the poor weather before the tour commenced

and as a result the stronghold of the Olive-tree Warbler (one of our key target species) was worryingly quiet. – more of this later!

## **DAY 5 – 10 May**

Our departure from Topolovgrad was fairly uneventful but before leaving the town, we stopped for a colony of Pallid Swifts. Andy was on fire and spotted a Little Owl on top of a chimney that was very grey compared with ours in Britain. Soon after Andy found a nice pair of Red-footed Falcons sitting on a telegraph wire that were scoped and enjoyed by all. Heading further east, we paused briefly by the road for a pair of Lesser Spotted Eagles before proceeding to another woodland stop a little further on. The woods here produced several Hawfinches, at least 2 Eastern Bonelli's Warblers, several Ortolan Buntings, a couple of Nuthatches and a Black Kite. With lunch approaching we proceeded on our easterly course.

A stop for lunch at Srededs produced a pair of Semi-collared Flycatchers at the nest along with a breeding pair of Middle Spotted Woodpeckers, likewise at the nest hole. A Raven was noted whilst a 3 White Pelicans above us were the shape of things to come.

After lunch we were close to Bourgas and stopped at Vaya Lake. Here the first 4 Dalmatian Pelicans were noted with Squacco Herons and hundreds of marsh terns, with all three species being represented. Around the eastern side of the lake at least 40 Pygmy Cormorants were breeding, accompanied by 2 Glossy Ibises, a suite of various herons and once again numerous marsh terns.

Before moving to the hotel we stopped at the Atamasovsko Lake and Reserve. Next to the garage on the roundabout a pair of Little Bitterns revealed themselves whilst a Sedge Warbler and Penduline Tit became evident. A Moorhen feeding young was the first of the trip, before we finally entered the reserve.

The reserve here was very good for water birds with a Ruddy Shelduck, several Garganey and waders including, Spotted Redshank, Wood, Common and Curlew Sandpipers with the only Turnstone and Dunlin of the trip being noted. A pair of Gull-billed Terns passed overhead whilst John remarkably spotted a pair of distant Kentish Plovers. Cetti's Warblers were seen by a lucky few whilst Reed Warblers were easier. On our departure a very showy Nightingale sang and grabbed the attention of many.



### Nightingale performing for the crowds

A very tasty fish dinner and some excellent Bulgarian red, washed down with a couple of beers, resulted in a headache the next day.

### DAY 6 – 11 May

Today was billed as the Woodpecker day and although this aspect proved to be a little disappointing, some good sightings were made. The hills and wooded reserve at Strandja Mountain was the destination (the oldest reserve in Bulgaria). Woodpeckers were conspicuous by their absence with only Great Spotted, Syrian and a very brief Lesser Spotted being seen while Blacks were only heard distantly. The woods did allow for a photo opportunity of a male Semi-collared Flycatcher that sat still long enough. We took a picnic lunch in a wet valley in the reserve where Mark spotted the first Lesser Grey Shrike while at least 3 Corncrakes called. These last birds played their usual hard to get routine and the result was another heard only record for the trip. A Goshawk was noted by a few prior to our departure.



A stationary male Semi-collared Flycatcher

Whilst returning to the hotel we stopped at Mandra Lake and although a few Great Reed Warblers sang and the lakes were full of marsh terns, the area looked fairly unremarkable. However, that's why you have a guide. With previous local knowledge a pair of White-tailed Eagles performed well and allowed everyone to gain excellent views of this majestic bird.

A further stop at Podo Visitor Centre run by the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds allowed viewing of several Black-necked Grebes, 2 brief Spoonbills and once again hundreds of marsh terns with a few Common and Sandwich Terns present for good measure.

After dinner the hunt was on for a Eurasian Scops Owl that had been heard singing close to the hotel the night before. With minimum effort, the bird was located, sitting in the open on a telegraph wire, not 50 metres from the hotel. It soon retired to a nearby tree but most agreed that it was the easiest Scops Owl they'd ever seen.



## DAY 7 – 12 May

We left the hotel and paused at Vaya Lake once more to gain better views of Dalmatian Pelicans and were also rewarded with views of Little Gulls, Night Herons and a Little Bittern.

Continuing our journey to the north-east we headed for Krapets and a lovely hotel on the Black Sea. Stopping on route throughout the day allowed for some rewarding birding experiences. We stopped near Pomorie Lake and some salt pans, which soon produced some new birds for the trip. 4 Mediterranean Gulls along with Slender-billed and Black-headed were noted, whilst behind us Kentish Plovers and Little Terns posed for the camera. A collection of waders included Avocets, Little Stints and Curlew Sandpipers accompanied a single Pygmy Cormorant.

We moved on stopping at another area further along Pomorie Lake. It was agreed that nobody had ever seen so many marsh terns feeding along with Little Gulls, a couple of Little Grebes, and good numbers of herons. A group of Ruffs fed and a Greenshank was flushed whilst a Willow Warbler caused momentary confusion before it sang.



**Kentish Plover**

The day continued with a stop at Camchia Riverine Forest and although there remained no Olive-tree Warblers to be heard or seen it did produce the first female Red-backed Shrike, a few Semi-collared Flycatchers and a couple of Hawfinches.

The final stop of the day was in Baltata and although the lap dancing bar and ice cream looked inviting it was on with the birding in a nearby wood. As it turned out, the wood was a very good stop. It produced 3 Little Bitterns, a female Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, along with Great and Middle Spotted and the only Long-tailed Tits of the trip.

We arrived at Krapets on the Black Sea, allowing time for a little sea watching. The only Oystercatcher of the trip was seen and hundreds of Cormorants flew to roost but little else.

## DAY 8 – 13 May

The early morning crew scored outside the hotel in an area of scrub and trees with evidence of visible mass migration, a trend that continued for the next 3 days. At least 2 Collared Flycatchers, a female Red-breasted and Pied were noted, accompanied by

Barred Warblers, numerous Golden Orioles, Turtle Doves and Rollers. A stunning male Pied Wheatear added to the experience.

Today was the day for one of the main target birds of the trip at Duramkulak Lake. The lakes are about 3km from the Romanian border and were very close to the hotel, allowing for maximum birding time. Our arrival was greeted by several singing Great Reed Warblers and shortly after, there in the scope was the prize – a cracking singing Paddyfield Warbler. At least 5 of these striking little birds were eventually seen. The next 2 hours at the site revealed yet more visible migration in the form of a male Montagu's Harrier, Ruddy Shelduck, Collared Pratincole, Hobby, Sparrowhawks, Marsh Harriers, Red-footed Falcons, and a single Baltic Gull all heading north. Meanwhile, in the reed beds there were at least 3 reeling Savi's Warblers, a couple of Citrine Wagtails and a pair of Reed Buntings, all of which our U.S. contingent appreciated.



Great Reed Warbler

After lunch we visited Shabla Lake adding many new species for the trip. A Little Ringed Plover was obvious, as was a Little Bittern, with a pair of Garden Warblers being a bit more difficult. As we worked our way around the lake we recorded all the herons with the exception of a Bittern and several surprise wildfowl including, Widgeon, single male Pintail and Tufted Duck and a couple of Teal, together with Ferruginous Ducks which were more expected. Later at the coast at Shablenska Tuzla several Sanderling and a superb Black-throated Diver in full breeding regalia was noted. Of interest was a record of a Cattle Egret, which is apparently not that common in Bulgaria that surprised our local guide Simeon.

A little sea watching produced the usual fair but a flock of 38 feeding Yelkouan Shearwaters was a good record.

## **DAY 9 – 14 May**

Things were now getting desperate with absolutely no sign of an Olive-tree Warbler. Undeterred, we continued with our morning round outside the hotel and were pleased to see that Sylvia warblers were very much in evidence including, more Barred Warblers, Lesser Whitethroats, Whitethroats, Blackcaps and a Garden Warbler. Red-breasted, Pied and Spotted Flycatchers flitted about with Rollers, Turtle Doves, Bee-eaters and Night Herons passing above. The surprise find of the morning was a male Siskin that was new for the trip. Simeon recorded a Caspian Tern offshore heading north and a number of Black-throated Divers.

We proceeded to the Sveti-Nikola Steppe area near to Cape Kaliakra Reserve. The plains produced a number of interesting species with Calandra Larks being the most numerous. Greater Short-toed Larks were in shorter supply and although 6 Red-throated Pipit were a surprise the numerous Tawny Pipits weren't. Eventually 3 Stone Curlews were recorded in the day and a Quail was heard.

We continued towards the cape stopping on a road with trees, scrub and bushes bordering it. This area provided excellent cover and feeding opportunities for tired migrants and as a result an excellent birding opportunity for us. In a small stretch of road, Redstarts, a male Red-backed Shrike, Thrush Nightingale, Wryneck, Pied Wheatears, male Collared Flycatcher and numerous Red-breasted Flycatchers were noted. Then came the news, a singing Olive-tree Warbler had been located by Josele. The group quickly convened and the search began. The bird was incredibly skulking but audible and remained unseen. A singing Icterine Warbler was more obliging. By lunch the bird had still not been viewed satisfactorily.

After lunch we proceeded to the Cape noting at least 3 pairs of Pied Wheatears, many migrating flycatchers, a number of Alpine Swifts and the remarkable site of several hundred Yelkouan Shearwaters feeding above a pod of Harbour Porpoises. At least 15 Shags of the Black Sea and Mediterranean form *desmaresti* sat on the rocks nearby.

We moved on to an Eagle Owl roost that proved unproductive but which did provide views of Savi's Warblers, Purple Herons and Red-rumped Swallows and an opportunity to return to the Olive-tree Warbler site for one last ditch attempt.

As the vehicle slowed the bird could once again be heard singing continuously from deep vegetation at the side of the road. The group piled out and stood silently listening. Eventually there was a little movement and with steerage the group found itself looking at a singing Olive-tree Warbler hidden and sitting completely still in deep bracken. Satisfactory views were eventually gained by all, of this remarkably big yet difficult to see warbler – the end of a great day and good tour!

## **DAY 10 – 15 May**

Despite much merriment and involvement in a local party by some members of the team (Jay's dancing was very memorable so I am informed), another early morning check outside the hotel produced further evidence of migration with Barred Warblers, Turtle Doves, Hoopoes and Rollers all being represented. Simeon and Josele spotted another 2 Caspian Terns and John found 2 Grey Plovers. Before our departure a single Greenshank on the rocks made for a lonely sight. Prior to our flights home via Bourgas, Varna and eventually Budapest we had time for a little birding. The only new bird added was a Redshank on some marshes near Varna and a solitary Spoonbill was also noteworthy.

## **Bird of the tour**

### **Ron Martin - Semi-Collared Flightcatcher**



**Susan Martin – Ortolan Bunting**

**Mark Easterbrook – Paddyfield Warbler**

**Deb Easterbrook – Savis Warbler**

**John Sanders - White Backed Woodpecker**

**Val Snaders – Savis Warbler**

**Albert Gallofré - Black Throated Diver**

**John Packer – Easter Imperial Eagle**

**Joanne Whetham – Easter Imperial Eagle**

**Jay Whetham – Easter Imperial Eagle**

**Andy Levitt – Marsh Shrike**

**Gwyne McCreanor – Easter Imperial Eagle**

**Josele Saiz – Easter Imperial Eagle**

**Simeon Gigov – Citrine Wagtail**

### **Systematic Species List**

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	Seen in small groups around the Black Sea coast
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	3 seen, at Sofia airport pool and Pomorie Lake
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Common in the east at lakes and wetlands
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	Several from Podo Visitor Centre and 2 from Cape Kaliakra
Yelkouan Shearwater	<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>	A group of 38 from Krapets and several hundred from Cape Kaliakra
Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pygmeus</i>	At least 40 breeding at Vaya Lake and singles elsewhere
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis</i>	Numerous in the east at wetlands and the Black Sea
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmaresti</i>	The Black Sea and Mediterranean form most easily seen from Cape Kaliakra
White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	Seen on Vaya lake and a large kettle of 300 migrating near Camchia
Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	Seen in small groups at Vaya Lake
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Common at wetlands in the east
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Common and widespread
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	1s & 2s seen at wetlands
Great White Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	1s & 2s seen in suitable habitat
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	1 seen at Shabla Lake and a disputed group

		of 8 seen from the vehicle
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Small numbers at wetlands
Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	5 at Vaya Lake, 3 at Krapets and 1 at Shabla Lake
Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	Surprisingly easy to see at various wetlands
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	1s & 2's seen throughout
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	Common & widespread
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	1s & 2s at wetlands
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	2 at Poda and 1 near Varna
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	Numerous on lakes
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	1 at Atamasovsko Lake Reserve and 1 at Duramkulak Lake
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Common at wetlands and lakes
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	6 at Shabla Lake
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Pairs seen at wetlands
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	At least 2 seen at Shabla Lake
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Common at wetlands
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	1 male seen at Shabla Lake
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	Several at all wetlands in the east
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Not numerous but seen at several wetlands
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya farina</i>	Common at Vaya Lake
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Common at wetlands in the east
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	1 drake seen at Shabla Lake
Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	Common and seen almost daily throughout
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Only 2 seen, 1 near Mramor and one <i>en route</i> to Bourgas
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	A pair seen at Mandra Lake
Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	1s & 2s seen in hilly wooded country
W Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Many seen throughout
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	1 seen at Beklemedo NP and 1 over fields in the east
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	1 male seen at Duramkulak Lake and two ringtails noted over fields in the east of the country
Levant Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter brevipes</i>	A pair at Mariza Svilengrad and 1 over Vaya Lake
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	1s in widespread wooded locations
Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentiles</i>	1 confirmed over woods in the Strandja Mountains
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Seen throughout
Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	Singles seen throughout
Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila pomorina</i>	At least 5 over Mramor Plains and 2 over the road nearby
Eastern Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>	A pair at Mramor Plains
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	1 adult over the hills at Beklemedo NP
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	A dark and light phase in the Rozino area
Eurasian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Widespread – singly or in pairs
Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>	A few migrating in the east and a pair at Topolovgrad
Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Singles in widespread locations
Grey Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	1 seen in fields at Mariza Svilengrad
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	Widespread and heard only
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	1 heard at Vaya Lake
Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>	3 heard in a wet valley near the Strandja Mountains
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Not numerous but seen in suitable habitat
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Fairly common at wetlands
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	1 at Krapets on the coast

Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Numerous at wetlands
Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	Common at lakes
Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>	3 at Sveti-Nikola Steppe
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	2 seen on the last day at Krapets
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	1 at Duramkula Lake and 1 over Krapets
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	1 at Shabla Lake and 2 at the coast at Shablenska Tuzla
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Small groups seen at Pomorie Lake salt pans and Atamasovsko Lake Reserve
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	1s and 2s in agricultural fields in the east
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	1 was seen at Shabla Lake
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	At least 7 seen at Atamasovsko Lake Reserve
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	1 was seen on marshes near Varna on the last day
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	2 Pomorie Lake and 1 at Krapets
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	1s & 2s at wetlands
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos hypoleucos</i>	1 at Atamasovsok Lake Reserve with the above
Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	1 at Atamasovsok Lake Reserve
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	At least 8 at the coast at Shablenska Tuzla
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	The most common wader at wetlands
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	1 seen at Atamasovsok Lake Reserve
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	Common at wetlands and the coast in the east
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Groups seen at most wetlands
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	Common at the coast and wetlands
Baltic Gull	<i>Larus fuscus fuscus</i>	1 adult seen at Duramkula Lake
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Common and widespread
Slender-billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>	Several at Pomorie Lake Salt Pans
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	4 at Pomorie
Little Gull	<i>Larus minutus</i>	Small groups seen at Vaya Lake, Pomorie Lake and Shabla Lake
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Sterna nilotica</i>	2 at Atamasovsok Lake Reseve and several at Duramkula Lake
Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	Fairly common on the lakes and a large colony at Pomorie Lake Salt Pans
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Common in small parties at the coast and a large breeding colony at Podo visitor centre
Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	1 at Vaya Lake and 3 at Pomorie Lake salt pans
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	Widespread at all wetlands in the east
White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	As above
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	The most common as above
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	A good candidate was seen on the cliffs at Cape Kaliakra
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	1s & 2s in wooded habitat
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Common in small groups and singles throughout
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Common in villages
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Heard and seen everywhere
Scops Owl	<i>Otus scops</i>	1 seen well at Bourgas outside the hotel
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	At least 3 seen on buildings and widespread
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>	Only seen near Cape Kaliakra
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Seen throughout
Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	A colony at Topolovgrad with others seen sporadically throughout
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	2 seen, 1 at Mariza Svilengrad and 1 at Duramkula Lake

European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	Common seen and heard throughout
European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	Seen in 1s & 2s in the east and a large group of seven at Krapets
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Singletons throughout
Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	1 seen on a track at the Sveti-Nikola Steppes
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	1 female seen in the woods at Baltata
Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>	A pair at a nest hole at Srededs and one at Baltata
White-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>	1 male in beech woods at the Beklemedo NP
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	1s seen and heard in woodlands
Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>	1s seen in widespread locations
Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	Several heard drumming in the Strandja Mountains
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	Heard on several occasions and 1 seen at Meriza Svilengrad
Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	Seen in many locations but large numbers on the Sveti-Nikola Steppe.
Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	Only on the Sveti-Nikola Steppe
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata randonii</i>	Small numbers throughout in suitable habitat
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	1 at Sveti-Nikola Steppe and 5 in woods near Shtit
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis harterti</i>	Common & widespread
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Widespread and numerous
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	As above
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica rufula</i>	Small numbers throughout
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	As above
Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	Singles seen throughout but 5 at Sveti-Nikola Steppe
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Singles seen in suitable habitat
Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	6 seen at Sveti-Nikola Steppe area
Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	Several seen in the mountains at Beklemedo NP
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Seen throughout
Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>	Several only seen at Duramkula Lake
Black-headed Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava feldegg</i>	Several in wetland habitats
Blue-headed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava flava</i>	1s seen at Duramkula Lake and Cape Kaliakra
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava thunbergi</i>	1 seen at Krapets on the last day
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	1 or 2 seen at Koprivshitsa
Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	A family group seen at Koprivshitsa
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	1s seen throughout
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Several seen in the hills at Beklemedo NP
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Singletons in widespread locations
Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	1 showed well on a track near the Sveti-Nikola Steppe and 1 at Krapets on the penultimate morning
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	Heard and seen throughout
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros gibralteriensis</i>	Seen in the mountains in the Beklemedo NP
Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Several males seen in woods at Beklemedo NP and Srededs
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	Seen throughout
Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	Seen throughout in small numbers
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	1s and 2s seen throughout
Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>	Only seen in the east of the country breeding at Cape Kaliakra
Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe melanouca</i>	1 male seen at Yerusalimovo valley was a good record

Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	Widespread and seen throughout
Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	1 singing male of the race <i>alpestris</i> was seen at the Beklemedo NP
Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula mauretanica</i>	Common
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	1s seen in wooded areas
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	1s seen in suitable habitat
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	Heard and seen in suitable habitat
Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	Seen well in reed beds in the east particularly at Duramkulak Lake and Shabla Lake
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	1 at the garage near Atamasovsko Lake Reserve
Paddyfield Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>	At least 5 at Duramkulak Lake
Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	Seen and heard throughout in suitable habitat
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	As above but more numerous and noticeable
E Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Hippolais pallida</i>	1s seen singing at various locations
Olive-tree Warbler	<i>Hippolais olivetorum</i>	1 singing male was seen on the penultimate day in dense scrub on a road in the Sveti-Nikola Steppe
Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>	At least 2 in the same location as the above
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	The most common Sylvia – seen everywhere
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	2 at Shabla Lake and 1s at Sveti-Nikola Steppe and Krapets
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Common throughout
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	1 at Mariza Svilengrad and singles at Krapets
Barred Warbler	<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>	Several superb singing males in the Krapets area
E Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>	1s seen in the Saker Hills area
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	2 or 3 seen in the east near to the coast
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Heard and seen widely
Eastern Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus orientalis</i>	1s heard in woodlands in the Saker area
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	1 seen in woods in the Mramor area
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	In the mountains near Sofia and 1 in conifers at Koprivshtitsa
Firecrest	<i>Rugulus ignicapillus</i>	Seen in the mountains near Sofia on the first day.
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Common throughout
Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	1s & 2s in suitable habitat
Collared Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>	Migrants at the Black Sea towards the end of the tour
Semi-collared Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula semitorquata</i>	Singing males on breeding grounds in woods around Srededs, Strandja Mountain and the Camchia Riverine Forest
Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	Male and female migrants along the Black Sea coast at Krapets towards the end of the tour.
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	2 seen in woods at Baltata
Sombre Tit	<i>Parus lugubris</i>	1 male in a wooded valley at Yerusalimovo
Willow Tit	<i>Parus montanus</i>	In conifers outside the hotel at Koprivshtitsa
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	As above
Great Tit	<i>Parus major excelsus</i>	Seen in wooded areas
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	As above
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	Pairs seen in woodlands
Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	1 seen in woodland in the west
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla mauretanica</i>	Seen in the woodlands in the east at Strandja Mountain
Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	Singles seen at Mariza Svilengrad and



		Atamasovsko Lake Reserve
Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	Widespread in small numbers
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	Birds began to appear in the east at the Black Sea towards the end of the tour
Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	Never numerous but encountered in singles in the east
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	The most common shrike throughout in good numbers in suitable habitat
Masked Shrike	<i>Lanius nubicus</i>	A pair in woodland near Shtit
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Widespread although not numerous
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Widespread
Spotted Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	Seen early in the tour by some participants in the mountains around Sofia
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Widespread in varying numbers
Rook		1 seen near to Sofia airport with larger numbers throughout
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	Widespread in small numbers
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax tingitanus</i>	1s seen in widespread locations
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Common throughout
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus tingitanus</i>	Common
Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	Common throughout increasing in numbers towards the east
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	Relatively common in small numbers anywhere
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Common in woodlands
European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	Several seen around the hotel in conifers at Koprivshtitsa
European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Small groups seen throughout
Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	1 male at Krapets
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Small groups seen throughout
Eurasian Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	A few seen in suitable habitat
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	In the mountains near Sofia and pairs in various woodlands throughout
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citronella</i>	1 heard on the first day at a stop <i>en route</i> to Koprivshtitsa
Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	At least 2 heard at Yerusolimovo
Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	Small numbers in wooded areas throughout
Black-headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>	1s and 2s throughout
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	2 seen at Duramkulak Lake
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	The most common bird and widespread throughout

### OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

#### MAMMALS

Souslik

Brown Hare

Red Fox

Red Squirrel

Harbour Porpoise

#### ANPHIBIANS & REPTILES

Marsh Frog

Wall Lizard

Meadow Lizard

Balkan Wall Lizard
Eastern Spade Foot
Grass Snake
Agile Frog
Balkan Whip Snake
Hermann's Tortoiseshell
Tree Frog Stripeless
<b>BUTTERFLIES</b>
Grizzled Skipper
Orange Tip
Small Cooper
Small Heath
Green Hairstreak
Brimstone
Common Blue
Scarce Swallowtail
Small White
Large White
Speckle Wood
Sooty Cooper
Easter Dapple White



by Josele Saiz

## **SUMMARY**

This was a great week, excellent birding, good company and finally lovely weather. A total of 218 species seen and heard by the group was a good count with more being possible if some easy birds had been picked up. The bird of the trip was voted as the Eastern Imperial Eagle, hunting, catching and feeding as we watched for an hour. Bulgaria is well worth a visit and could be done on a budget if necessary. The infrastructure is good and getting around relatively easy with the use of a map. Sites and locations are well signposted and navigation is fairly straightforward. Many thanks are due to all those who participated and for ensuring the week was productive and very enjoyable.