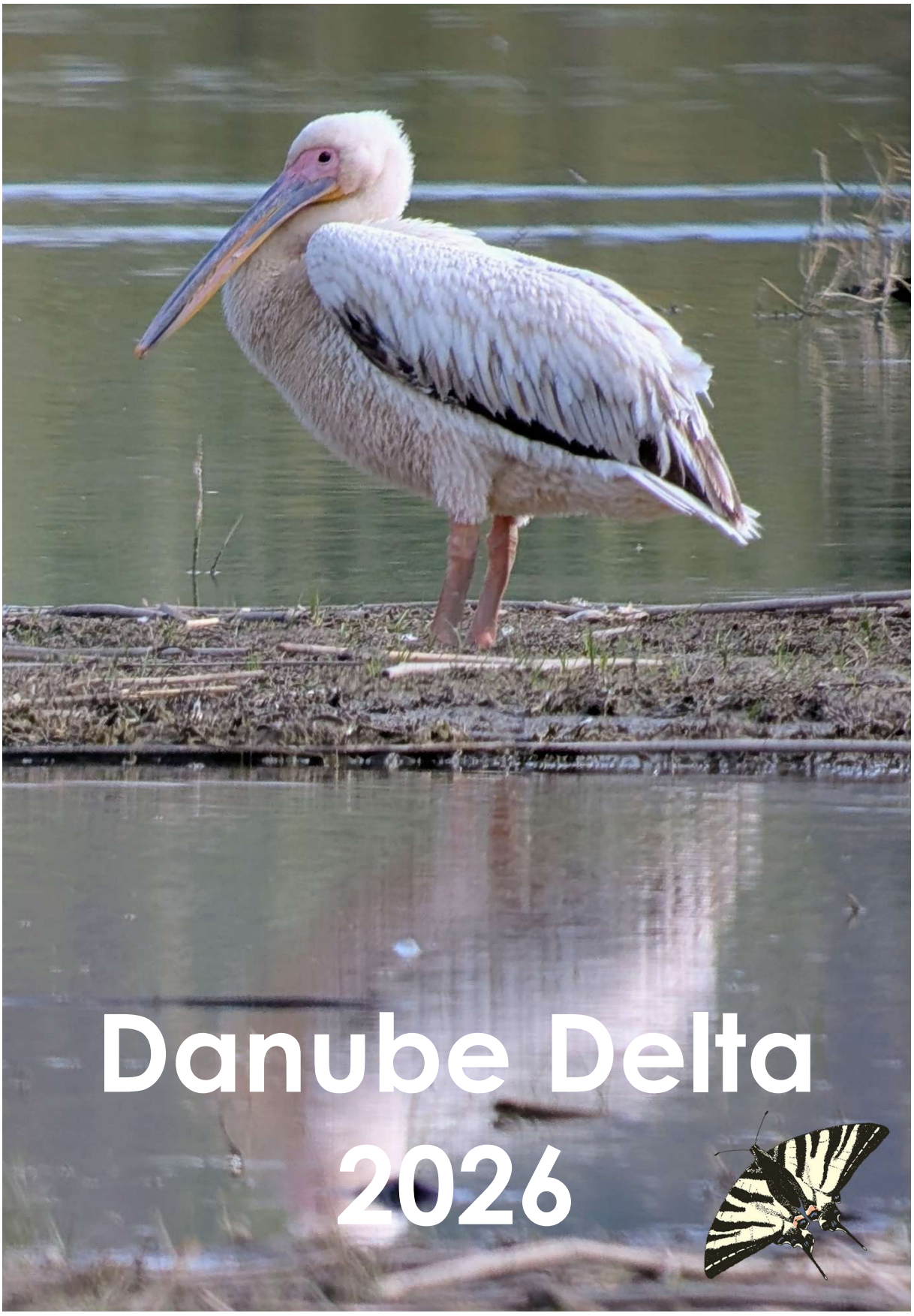
WILDLIFE TRAVEL



#	DATE	LOCATIONS AND NOTES
1	28th Sep	Arrival in Bucharest, transfer to Amara.
2	29th Sep	Lacul Amara, Hârșova, Lacul Hazarlâc, Babadag Forest, and Enisala.
3	30th Sep	Lacul Uzlina, Lacul Isaac, and Lacul Gorgova.
4	1st Oct	Lacul Uzlina and Lacul Isaac area.
5	2nd Oct	Lacul Uzlina, Lacul Potcoava, and Lacul Gorgova.
6	3rd Oct	Lacul Sărăturii, Sabangia, Lacul Babadag, Enisala, Cape Dolosman, and Lacul Sărăturii.
7	4th Oct	Lacul Uzlina, Lacul Isaac, Perivolovca, Lacul Gorgostel, and Lacul Cabloata.
8	5th Oct	Sarichioi, Lacul Babadag, Enisala, and Salcioara.
9	6th Oct	Transfer to Bucharest and return to UK.

Leader

Phil Saunders — Dorset

Guide

George Panait — Romania

A gallery of photos from the trip is at Danube Delta 2026 | Flickr

Photos: Phil Saunders (unless stated). Cover: White Pelican.

Day One: 28th September. Arrival in Bucharest, transfer to Amara.

We sped through London Heathrow, with the entire group managing to meet up in departures before we even boarded the plane. Our good fortune continued, as our flight arrived nearly half an hour ahead of schedule!

Having navigated Romanian immigration, we were met by our driver George and his dependable blue minibus and were soon travelling eastwards. We noted many large corvid flocks in the extensive roadside arable fields as we passed, alongside several Common Buzzard and Kestrel, plus at least one Marsh Harrier and a brace of errant Snipe.

Within a couple of hours of leaving the airport we arrived at (the surprisingly well-wooded) Amara, where we were to spend the night in the Hotel Ialomita. Here we met George Panait, our local guide and owner of the *Kingfisher* and, having made relaxed introductions over a convivial meal, we soon repaired to bed, excited for the next stage of our travels Delta-wards.

Day Two: 29th September. Lacul Amara, Hârșova, Lacul Hazarlâc, Babadag Forest, Enisala.

Some of the group were treated to the Hitchcockian spectacle of huge, noisy, flocks of Rooks and Jackdaws leaving their roost alongside the hotel at dawn. Then, following a tasty Romanian breakfast, we boarded the minibus and drove the short distance to Lacul Amara. Exploring the various waterbodies on foot, we found each chock-full of wildfowl, with small numbers of Gadwall, Pochard, and Wigeon scattered amongst the massed ranks of Coot and Mallard.

Two Lesser Spotted Eagles passed southward overhead, looking almost petite as they continued the journey to their African wintering grounds. Wandering further into the lake complex, Alan and Lyn started work on the flowering plant list, with bright blue Chicory and subtle Black Horehound both spotted. Following the path along a narrow bund we soon spied a (sadly injured) White Stork feeding in the shallows. Although still able to fly, the tardy individual was a long way behind his migrant congeners. Out on the lake behind, we spotted at least one Black-necked Grebe and a handful of Little Grebes amongst the throng of Coot and Pochard, as a Cetti's Warbler half-heartedly called from amongst the reeds. Heading back to the bus, Judith noted a Kingfisher flying across the path ahead of us. It was then time to continue our journey eastwards.

A short while later, we made a brief stop at a handy petrol station just outside Hârsova for a welcome coffee and bathroom break. Our time here was surprisingly productive wildlife-wise, with the station perimeter hosting several butterfly species in the increasingly sunny weather. A smart Mallow Skipper was enjoyed as it basked on a sunny wall, alongside several Small Copper and flybys from Painted Lady, Clouded Yellow species, and Eastern Bath White.

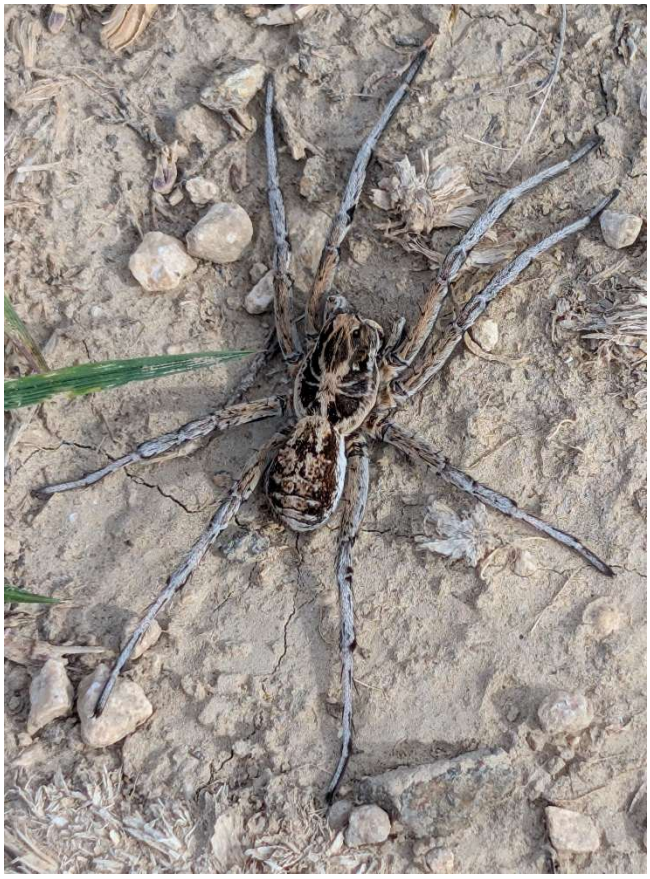
Back on the road we continued our journey across expanses of rolling farmland, before making our next stop at the roadside wetland of Lacul Hazarlâc. Our first chunky White Pelican loafed at the water's edge, whilst a large mixed wader flock fed in the shallows. We were pleased to pick out single Spotted Redshank, and two apiece of Wood Sandpiper and Little Ringed Plover amongst the throng of Dunlin and Snipe. Two Pygmy Cormorants loitered in the reeds at the water’s edge and a young Whiskered Tern briefly alighted on a nearby spit. Several streaky Red-throated Pipits called stridently from the muddy margins and a vocal flock of "pit-pitting" Corn Bunting fossicked nearby.

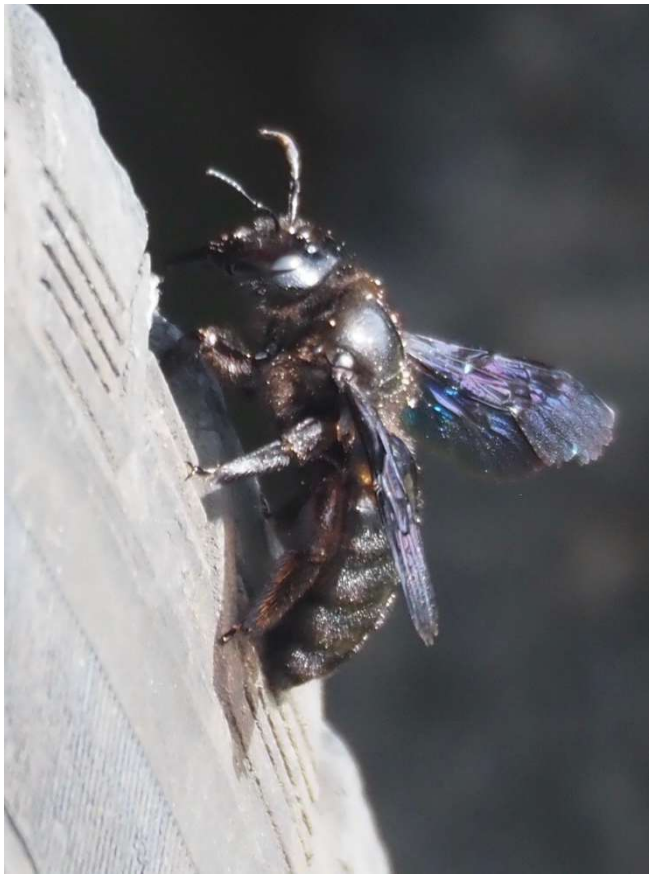
Out next stop was in Babadag Forest, were we enjoyed our packed lunches and the increasing warmth. Butterflies were again out in force here, and we noted several huge Cardinals, an errant Camberwell Beauty, and a handful of Oberthür's Grizzled Skipper amongst the more common fare. Several large Praying Mantis and impressive Cone-headed Grasshoppers were also much admired, with Jackie spotting a darkly robust Violet Carpenter Bee basking on the exterior of the minibus too. Masses of Migrant Hawker dragonflies zoomed overhead, and several bee-flies (*Villa* sp.) were watched collecting dust from the open ground.

Our penultimate stop was at the impressive Enisala Fortress, perched atop a hill overlooking two of the Delta's large lakes. Here we enjoyed a distant dogfight between a female Pallid and male Marsh Harrier, before exploring the grassy slopes surrounding the fortress. Despite ample evidence of their digging, we failed to spot any Souslik but we were still well rewarded with wonderful views of an exquisite, bright green, Eastern/European Tree Frog spotted by Helen, and a pair of box fresh Cardinals nectaring on some splendid Musk Thistle. Deeply purple-flowered Forking Larkspur was also new, and we all gawped at an impressive Wolf Spider found sheltering along the path edge.

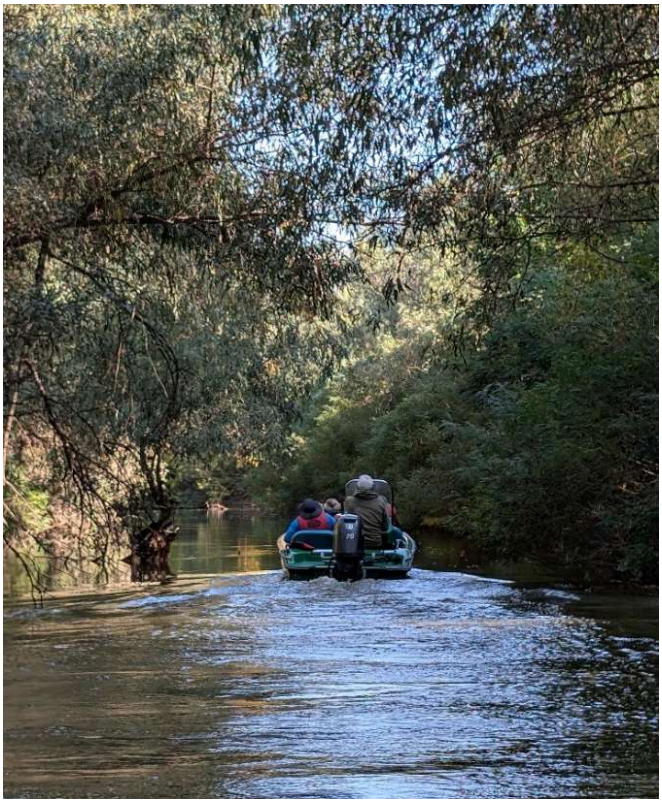
After a final hour's drive through villages and farmland we arrived out our riverside drop off. Waving goodbye to driver George, we boarded small boats and powered down channel for our rendezvous with the *Kingfisher* at Uzlina - our home for the next week. Upon arrival, George Panait welcomed us with a glass of local plum brandy. Then, following a delicious fish supper, we headed to bed, excited for our first full day on the Delta on the morrow.

Above: Cone-headed Grasshopper





Top to bottom: European or Eastern Tree Frog; Wolf spider *Geolycosa vultuosa*; Flower-of-an-Hour; Violet Carpenter Bee (Judith Robinson).



Top to bottom: White-tailed Eagle (Judith Robinson); exploring the Delta's channels in small boats; and Cardinal.

Day Three: 30th September. Lacul Uzlina, Lacul Isaac, and Lacul Gorgova.

The early birds amongst the group were treated to several close flybys from the local White-tailed Eagles, as we watched from the *Kingfisher's* sundeck at dawn. A tardy Night Heron was also seen heading off to its roost, whilst several Whiskered Terns fed acrobatically above the river channel. Autumn migration was also in full swing, with a variety of calling finches and wagtails providing "blink and you'll miss 'em" overhead views as they continued their journeys southwards. A tail-quivering female Redstart loitered in the bankside trees, whilst large flocks of Great Cormorants "V-ed" overhead as the sun (and temperature) rose, with several of their Pygmy brethren fishing in the waters surrounding the *Kingfisher*.

Following another delicious Romanian breakfast, we boarded two smaller boats and set off to explore some of the local side channels. Several chunky Caspian Terns fished alongside the much smaller and delicately built Whiskered and Common Terns as we headed down the main channel, and Phil was particularly thrilled to pick up two Pallas's Gulls (an adult and youngster) heading purposely downriver. White-tailed Eagles were in regular attendance, and we also had brief views of a Hobby soaring above us.

Broaching the narrower side channels, we entered a different world of tangled bankside vegetation. Herons and egrets regularly flushed ahead of us and we were fortunate to have brief glimpses of a few Night Herons, either roosting or flushed, amongst the neighbouring trees. Kingfishers were vocal, but proved tricky to spot along the narrow waterways, as were a variety of flyover woodpeckers. A large flock of commuting Dalmatian Pelican were particularly impressive, and more easily admired, with a pair of soaring White Pelican overhead completing the set for the day. After a short while the channel unexpectedly opened up to the expanded vista of Lake Uzlina, complete with huge flocks of Coot and duck, cormorants, and herons. One White-tailed Eagle proved eminently approachable here, as it perched on a low snag, and we also enjoyed close flybys from several Marsh Harriers.

Returning to the *Kingfisher* for a delicious three-course lunch, we then spent a few hours relaxing and scanning from the sundeck, enjoying further views of soaring White-tailed Eagles and a foraging Hobby. Eagle-eyed Jackie spotted a couple of attractively patterned "Water Frogs" basking on a bankside log below our viewpoint. Based on their size and colouration we provisionally identified them as Pool (or possibly Edible) Frogs, although the identification of this tricky family from afar is fraught with difficulty.

An afternoon jaunt in the small boats back to Lake Uzlina produced a large flock of chestnut and white Ferruginous Duck amongst the Coot and cormorants, and we were again treated to wonderful views of the eagles and harriers. An unexpected female ("redhead") Smew was also noted amongst the cormorant flocks by one of the boats. A frisson of excitement was added when the second boat's propellor became entangled in a metal and rope crayfish pot, necessitating some speedy handiwork on the part of our boatman to get us up and running again. Heading back to the Kingfisher, we again encountered several furtive Night Heron, becoming more active as dusk approached, and another Hobby showing beautifully as it perched on an emergent branch.

A furtive Red-breasted Flycatcher, lurking in the Kingfisher-side scrub as the sun set was a lovely way to end the day, prior to another delicious meal, including "Russian" Teal for the carnivores in the

group, washed down with a glass or two of wine as we discussed a wonderful first day in the Danube Delta.

Day Four: 1st October. Lacul Uzlina and Lacul Isaac area.

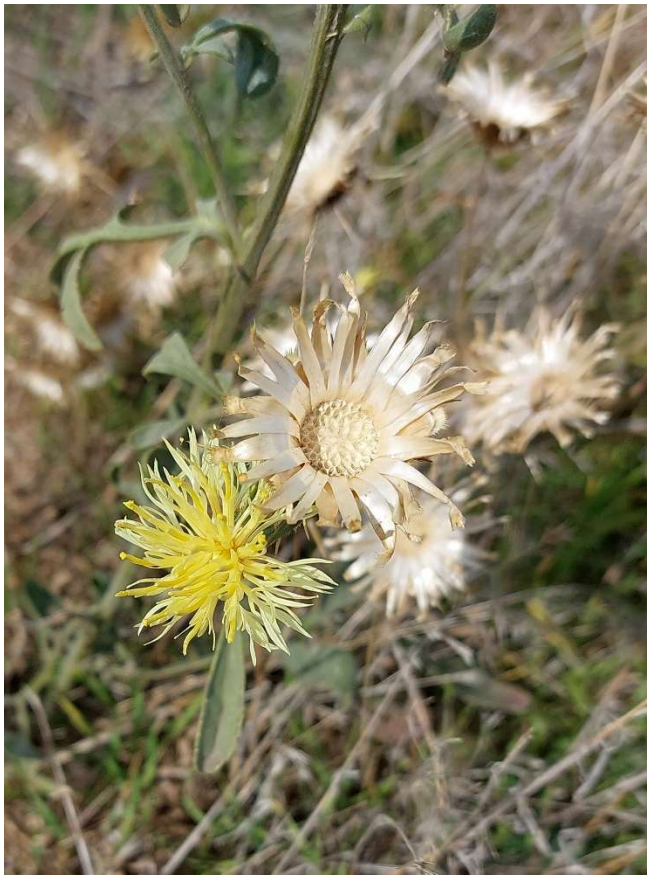
Large numbers of Greylag Geese and pelicans were on the move from the sundeck at dawn, alongside several finch and thrush flocks. Our first Blackbird burbled unseen beside the *Kingfisher*, and we were again treated to point blank flybys from White-tailed Eagle, Hobby, and Whiskered Tern. We also had excellent views of several errant Night Heron heading roost-wards.

After some slight technical issues on the *Kingfisher*, which necessitated a little juggling/amendment to our itinerary, we again headed out in the small boats midmorning, with some of the group spotting an Osprey soaring high above the main channel in the company of a Sparrowhawk. Masses of wildfowl were again noted on Lacul Uzlina, and we enjoyed excellent views of the pink-billed *rubrirostris* Greylag Geese - subtly different to the orange-billed nominate subspecies found in the UK. Several Ferruginous ("Fudge") Duck were seen amongst the wildfowl throng, whilst a dour female Red-crested Pochard proved tricky to spot as she skilfully hid amongst the hundreds of Coot. Kingfishers proved both vocal and showy, whilst White-tailed Eagles and Marsh Harriers were again a frequent sight, alongside multiple Grey Herons and Great White Egrets. We enjoyed watching a juvenile Purple Heron playing hide and seek amongst the lilypads, whilst a flock of eight redhead Smew wheeling about above the reedbeds were somewhat unexpected, even after yesterday's photographed individual.

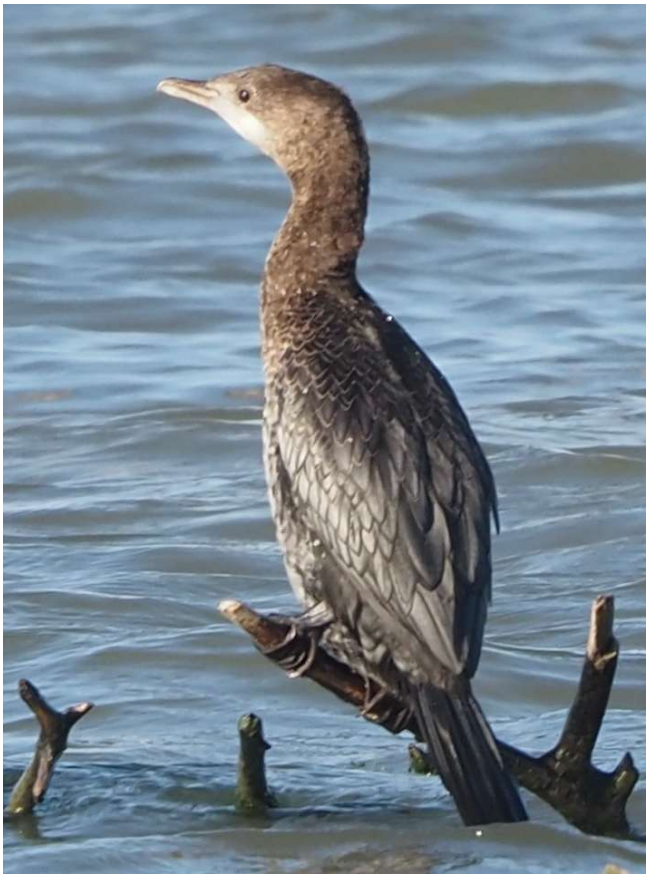
Back at the Kingfisher the frog count had risen to at least eight over lunch, after which we headed back out in the small boats to explore some of the Delta's quieter backwaters. Here, we again enjoyed the spectacle of multiple White-tailed Eagles, Marsh Harriers, and herons hunting amongst myriad Coot, cormorant, and wildfowl in the various lakes and channels. The flowering plant list increased too, with both White and Yellow Water Lillies encountered in bloom amongst the lilypad throng and the vibrant spikes of Purple Loosestrife noted along the lakeside margins. We managed to spot two more Purple Herons amongst their Grey cousins, and a Great Spotted Woodpecker was seen perched atop one of the many bare branches lining the interconnecting channels. Less easy to spot were the stubbornly hidden, but extremely vocal, Bearded Tits that "pinged" above the noise of the boat's motor as we meandered alongside the reeds.

It was soon time to head back to the *Kingfisher*, where another delicious fish-based meal awaited us (including a fabulous Carp egg dish, not unakin to taramasalata), alongside a customary glass or two of local wine.

Top to bottom: Lacul Potcoava; Marsh Harrier (Alan Goodkin).



Top to bottom: White-tailed Eagle (Judith Robinson); Croation Star-thistle (Alan Goodkin); Lang's Short-tailed Blue (Judith Robinson).



Top to bottom: Rush Skeletonweed (Alan Goodkin); Pygmy Cormorant (Judith Robinson); exploring the Delta.

Day Five: 2nd October. Lacul Uzlina, Lacul Potcoava, and Lacul Gorgova.

A chilly start to the day on the sundeck for some produced flyover views of both Pallas's Gull and Tawny Pipit, alongside the usual overhead flocks of cormorant, Greylag Goose, and Woodpigeon. After breakfast, we again boarded the small boats and initially headed down the main channel for a fair distance - a very different experience to exploring the smaller side channels and lakes. Here we were treated to amazing views of White-tailed Eagles overhead and again noted large numbers of Woodpigeon on the move.

Leaving the main channel, the narrow, lilypad-filled, waterways were brimming with Grey Herons, Great White Egrets, and wildfowl, whilst Marsh Harriers regularly quartered the reeds alongside us. We were also treated to great views of several flocks of soaring White Pelican, in addition to a handful of soaring Dalmatian Pelican, allowing the differing underwing colouration of these two similar species to be fully appreciated. The morning's unexpected highlight greeted us, however, as we rounded a corner in one of Lacul Potcoava's sinuous channels and surprised a Raccoon Dog foraging on the water lilies. This infrequently encountered canid, with its stumpy legs, shaggy coat, and "Racoon" mask, pelted off into the reeds, Badger-like, almost as soon as we spotted it, although most of the group still managed to spy the animal. George later explained that it was unusual to see Racoon Dogs in the autumn, and that the population had declined in recent years alongside the increase in that of the predatory Golden Jackal - another mammal very much on the wish list for the group!

Back at the *Kingfisher* later, a few lucky people watched a flock of Night Herons leave their bankside roost and give a prolonged fly by, with others watching a female Redstart feeding on the adjacent muddy bank alongside a White Wagtail and the usual confusing assortment of frogs. Heading back out in the small boats later in the afternoon, we continued our exploration of some of the more remote areas of the Delta. Greenshank and Spotted Redshank were spotted amongst the feeding flocks of Teal, Gadwall, and Mallard that lurked along the reedy lake borders, and we enjoyed the spectacle of the huge Coot flocks manoeuvring away from the boats on their stubby black wings. White-tailed Eagles again provided superlative views as they perched in lakeside snags, and some of the group were treated to the sight of a flock of six Cranes soaring overhead as they returned towards the Kingfisher from Lake Uzlina.

Back on the mothership another fabulous dinner awaited us (including Wild Boar sausage for the carnivores) and we enjoyed a beautiful sunset as we reflected on another wonderful day exploring the Delta.

Day Six: 3rd October. Lacul Sărăturii, Sabangia, Lacul Babadag, Enisala, Cape Dolosman, and Lacul Sărăturii.

A flock of nine Night Herons heading to roost was the highlight for the dawn sundeckers, prior to another hearty breakfast and a change of scenery, as we headed back to the quay on the small boats before boarding the minibus. Driving only a short distance, our first stop was at Lacul Sărăturii, a salt lake just outside Murighol. A short walk across a grassy field found us at a suitable viewpoint, although the lake proved to be practically bone dry following the extreme summer temperatures (with George explaining that he'd never seen the site like this before).

We nevertheless managed to spot several Lapwing and a few Ruff foraging amongst the marginal vegetation, plus an absolute beast of a Pallas's Gull roosting amongst several, smaller, Caspian Gulls. A couple of Skylark and Red-throated Pipit called overhead amongst the many White Wagtail on the move, and a female Stonechat obligingly perched up on some of the taller vegetation. Our highlight here was saved until the end however, as we spotted a juvenile Red-backed Shrike hopping along the fenceline as we walked back towards the minibus.

Our second stop of the day was alongside Lacul Razim at Sabangia, where we spent some time exploring the margins of the agricultural fields as we tried to negotiate our way through the dense marginal reedbeds to the lakeside. The fields were alive with dragonflies, with each we checked closely proving to be Common Darters, and we also noted an abundance of butterflies on the wing. The latter included several Clouded Yellow types, including one male Pale Clouded Yellow species that we watched nectaring alongside the track. The botanists in the group were also very much on form, finding interesting niceties such as Flower-of-an-Hour, Red Nightshade, Thorn Apple, and Dodder amongst the weedy margins.

A short drive further on and we pulled off onto a hilltop country lane near Enisala village that provided extensive views across Lake Babadag and its fringing reedbeds and pools. Both Marsh Harrier and Hobby performed wonderfully for us, with one of the latter foraging close overhead and providing everyone with wonderful views of this energetic raptor. A flock of Siskin flittered amongst the hillside trees, keeping company with at least one or two Goldfinch, and another White-tailed Eagle soared distantly above the lake. The flowery hillside grassland was also worthy of attention, as we encountered several amazingly showy Cardinals nectaring together on the few flowering thistles, whilst a brace of Queen of Spain Fritillary and a couple of Eastern Bath White proved harder to locate as they flitted effortlessly across the slope. Large numbers of darter dragonflies were also on the move here; maybe evidence of migration or just dispersal from nearby waterbodies?

With memory cards full of Cardinals, we next visited the nearby Enisala Fortress (of Day 2 fame) for a quick bathroom break. There was sadly still no sign of any Souslik, with George suggesting that the animals were possibly already hibernating, but another showy Hobby and a distantly circling Long-legged Buzzard certainly made up for their continued absence.

Then it was onwards to our picnic lunch spot near Cape Dolosman, taken at a quirky holiday chalet/village museum set amongst lakeside scrub and grassland, with extensive views over Lacul Golovita. Large numbers of Mediterranean Gull were fly-catching overhead here, and some huge flocks of Starling flew through, while a variety of butterflies and day-flying moths enjoyed the sunshine. Having eaten, we drove the short distance down to the Cape, where a large flock of Mediterranean Gulls loafing on the water attracted at least three bulky Pallas's Gulls too. A Lang's Short-tailed Blue showed superbly as it nectared on flowering mint, and it was strange to see multiple migrating/dispersing flocks of Blue Tits heading high north overhead up the lake shore.

Heading back towards our drop off for the *Kingfisher*, we again stopped at the salt lakes to see if we could spot any additional species viewing from a different angle. A couple of Marsh Harriers put on a show as they flew about together above the reeds, although another (or the same?) juvenile Red-

backed Shrike was the star again, as it hunted from a variety of perches along the fenceline. It was then time to head back to the *Kingfisher*, where another tasty dinner awaited us.

After dinner, as the sun set, we were treated to the wonderfully musical chorus of howling Golden Jackals from either side of the main channel, with Jackie and Phil also briefly hearing a distantly calling Little Owl. A lovely ending to a fascinating day.

Day Seven: 4th October. Lacul Uzlina, Lacul Isaac, Perivolovca, Lacul Gorgostel, and Lacul Cabloata.

Sunrise on the sundeck produced the usual lovely suspects, with White-tailed Eagles, migrating Greylag Geese, and a single Night Heron all putting on a show. At least five Whiskered Tern were also feeding around the *Kingfisher's* mooring, allowing close comparison of the moulting adults (with their dusky bellies and white cheeks) and the altogether paler juveniles.

We spent the morning out in the small boats exploring some of the quieter side channels and lakes, with one boat spotting a flyby Cuckoo and a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, the latter briefly perching on a leafless branch. Entering one of the smaller lakes we were treated to our first, excellent, "on the deck" views of a trio of Dalmatian Pelican. These hulking waterbirds looked greyer and less clean-cut than their White Pelican cousins, with the pale eye and shaggy crest also noted. Several Ferruginous Duck were again noted amongst the commoner wildfowl, whilst a flyover female Red-crested Pochard proved somewhat harder to spot.

Marsh Harriers and White-tailed Eagles were ever present as they hunted or perched amongst the reeds and emergent trees, and it was great to see several large and vocal flocks of Bearded Tit "pinging" across the reed tops. An Osprey was briefly seen flying along one of the channels, whilst an ephemeral Otter (seen by a few of the group prior to diving out of view) was followed almost immediately by an even more ephemeral Muskrat - two nice additions to the holiday mammal list, nevertheless. Heading back to the *Kingfisher*, a Purple Heron showed superbly as it flew alongside the boats and repeatedly alighted on the reed edge, whilst another (or the same) Osprey was enjoyed by one of the boats as it flew down channel with a large fish in its talons.

Back at the *Kingfisher* for lunch and a few hours free time, a large flock of at least eighty White Pelicans was watched circling slowly northwards above the shoreline opposite. A cute flock of Long-tailed Tits (comprising one of the white-headed, Continental, subspecies) and the continuing female Redstart were enjoyed by some of the group as they foraged along the riverbank, and we also enjoyed watching two Blue Tits industriously foraging in the *Kingfisher*-side reeds. The latter were seen to tap each segment of reed with their bills until they identified a cavity, before furiously extracting the pith (and presumably invertebrate prey). A Willow Emerald Spreadwing (Damselfly), or potentially its tricky to identify Eastern sister species, was also noted perching briefly on one of the *Kingfisher's* mooring lines.

Back out in the small boats later in the warm afternoon sunshine, with Alan briefly spotted a Dice Snake swimming in one of the channels, with George then pointing out a small Grass Snake doing the same only a short while later. We again enjoyed amazing views of Marsh Harriers and White-tailed Eagles, and one of the boats noted the lone female Smew still present amongst the cormorants and wildfowl on Lake Uzlina. Exiting a minor channel, we encountered an approachable flock of six

Dalmatian and a single White Pelican loitering amongst emergent snags on Lacul Cabloata, although the shallow water here soon forced us back out into the deeper water of Lake Isaac. Here we were treated to the lovely sight of a large mixed flock of marsh terns foraging above the lake's surface, with at least three gorgeous black and white-coloured White-winged Black Terns gleaming in the sunshine amongst the greyer Whiskered Terns. A juvenile Little Gull was also spotted amongst the flock, foraging in a similar fashion and showing off the black "W" mark on its upperwings. A lovely way to end another beautiful day on the Delta, prior to a slap-up dinner of locally caught Carp and home-made tiramisu back on the *Kingfisher* and the welcome company of driver George rejoining us.

Top to bottom: Dalmatian Pelicans and Cormorants; Russian Orthodox Church tower at Sarichioi; Red-backed Shrike.

Top to bottom: Out in the small boats; Thorn Apple (Alan Goodkin); the group at Cape Dolosman (Jackie Robinson).

Day Eight: 5th October. Sarichioi, Lacul Babadag, Enisala, and Lacul Salcioara.

Several of the group again heard the Golden Jackals calling in the early hours, whilst the dawn "sundeckers" enjoyed the sight of thick mist evocatively rising above the waters of the main channel and a flock of nine flyby Night Heron. Common birds back home, we also finally added both Wren and Robin to trip list, with one or two of each furtively calling from the riverside scrub.

Post-breakfast, we motored the short distance to the quayside before jumping into George's trusty blue minibus and heading inland. Our first stop of the day was at the beautiful Russian Orthodox church in Sarichioi, where George Panait gave us an interesting potted history of the local communities prior to organising access inside the church. The church was fronted by extensive flowerbeds, which were alive with butterflies and hoverflies, as well as several Hummingbird Hawkmoths. Small Copper were abundant here, and we also spotted at least one Adonis Blue amongst the many Common Blues present. Wandering down the street slightly, we enjoyed the view overlooking Lacul Razim, with some of the group also helping themselves to some of the roadside Quinces and Walnuts.

Back at the church, the group was allowed to enter the beautifully decorated vestibule, although the women in our party were only permitted to enter the nave if they donned one of the colourful skirts provided by the church authorities. Lyn took up the offer and accompanied Alan in an exploration of the sumptuously ornamented main body of the church, as several local women industriously cleaned its floors and metalware - a humbling experience of the local culture.

Boarding the minibus, we then spent some time attempting to access the shoreline of Lacul Razim at spots used by George in the past, although we were ultimately unsuccessful due to the low water levels and thick reed growth after this year's record-breaking summer temperatures. We nevertheless enjoyed multiple Marsh Harrier sightings from the minibus and a stridently calling Kingfisher at one of the lakeside stops.

We headed back to Enisala Fortress for lunch, enjoying the welcome shade and taking the opportunity for some groups photos against the backdrop of the fort. Two or three Hobbies again showed wonderfully as they hunted above the fortress access road, in the company of a pair of local Kestrels. The dry grasslands on the opposite side of the road were also productive, with a flock of four chunky Crested Lark watched foraging in amongst the short turf and a Northern Wheatear briefly seen perched atop one of the many small rocks that littered the site. The botanists in the group also again came up trumps, finding several new flowering plants for the list including the lovely, yellow-flowered, Croatian Star-thistle.

Our final stop of the day was at the water treatment works overlooking Lacul Salcioara. As we exited the minibus, we were greeted by a flying Asian Giant Mantis (an invasive species apparently now established in the Delta) that posed nicely for photographs. Walking the track towards the water works, we noted more new flowers (including Marshmallow) and were aware of Mediterranean Gulls hawking overhead. Reaching our raised viewpoint, we noted several White-tailed Eagles and Marsh Harriers above the lake side reeds and huge lines of Starlings heading purposefully north. A mixed flock of differently aged Black-headed and Mediterranean Gulls was seen loafing on the lake in front

of us, and we spent some time attempting to get our heads around the finer points of their respective identification.

Heading back to the minibus after a full day in the field, we were soon back aboard the *Kingfisher* and enjoying a lovely final meal, followed by some delicious Neapolitan ice cream. The group gave their heartful thanks to George and the crew for a wonderful holiday (and particularly the food!) and both of the George's were awarded a small thank you gift. It was then time for bed, prior to a day of travel on the morrow.

Day Nine: 6th October. Transfer to Bucharest and return to UK.

The distant howling of Jackals was again enjoyed by some in the early hours, whilst our final dawn on the sundeck produced a Hobby, a handful of Night Heron, and a distant Black Woodpecker in flight (with the latter heard raucously calling by several of us too). Following our last hearty breakfast, we all ascended to the sundeck for a final group photo before jumping in the small boats to rendezvous with the minibus at the quayside. Waving goodbye to George and his boatman, it was time to start our journey back west to the capital.

A half hour stop at Lake Hazarlac showed the White Pelican from Day 2 still in residence, alongside a nice selection of waders. The latter included a lone, tiny, Jack Snipe foraging amongst the many Common Snipe present, plus Ruff, Little Ringed Plover, and several Dunlin. Our last Pygmy Cormorants loafed at the back of the pool, whilst a handful of Teal and Shoveler looked on. The Corn Bunting flock was also still present, alongside several Red-Throated Pipits (including at least one rosy-throated adult), and we enjoyed the vocal stylings of a Crested Lark as it perched nearby.

Another stop for coffee at our favoured service station just outside Hârșova produced a Wall Butterfly and another Asian Giant Mantis perched on the fence alongside our table. We then sped along the last part of our route, arriving at the airport with ample time before our homeward bound flight, reflecting on what had been a highly enjoyable and successful holiday.

Phil Saunders, Wildlife Travel. October 2026.

Top to bottom: Sunset from the *Kingfisher*; Asian Giant Mantis.

DANUBE DELTA AUTUMN 2026: some highlights

H: heard only, S: field signs, D: dead individual

BIRDS

This checklist follows the taxonomy published in the **HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World,** as updated by *www.birdsoftheworld.org*

English names follow those used in the **Collins Bird Guide** (3rd edition).

ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	notes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Family Anatidae (Ducks, Geese & Waterfowl)											
Greylag Goose	*Anser anser*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Mute Swan	*Cygnus olor*		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Shoveler	*Spatula clypeata*			◆	◆	◆			◆		◆
Wigeon	*Mareca penelope*			◆							
Gadwall	*Mareca strepera*			◆	◆	◆	◆		◆		
Pintail	*Anas acuta*								◆		
Mallard	*Anas platyrhnchos*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Red-crested Pochard	*Netta rufina*					◆			◆		
Pochard	*Aythya ferina*			◆	◆	◆	◆		◆		
Ferruginous Duck	*Aythya nyroca*				◆	◆	◆		◆		
Smew	*Mergellus albellus*				◆	◆			◆		
Family Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse and allies)											
Pheasant	*Phasianus colchicus*			◆				◆		◆	◆
Family Podicipedidae (Grebes)											
Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*			◆	◆	◆	◆		◆		
Great Crested Grebe	*Podiceps cristatus*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Black-necked Grebe	*Podiceps nigricollis*			◆							
Family Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)											
Feral Pigeon	*Columba livia (domest.)*		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Woodpigeon	*Columba palumbus*		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*		◆	◆				◆		◆	◆
Family Cuculidae (Cuckoos)											
Cuckoo	*Cuculus canorus*								◆		
Family Gruidae (Cranes)											
Common Crane	*Grus grus*						◆				
Family Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules and Coots)											
Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*				◆		◆		◆		◆
Coot	*Fulica atra*			◆	◆	◆	◆		◆		◆
Family Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)											
Lapwing	*Vanellus vanellus*			◆		◆		◆	◆	◆	

ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	notes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Little Ringed Plover	*Charadrius dubius*			◆							◆
Family Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and allies)											
Ruff	*Calidris pugnax*							◆			◆
Dunlin	*Calidris alpina*			◆							◆
Snipe	*Gallinago gallinago*		◆	◆							◆
Jack Snipe	*Lymnocryptes minimus*										◆
Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*			◆							
Spotted Redshank	*Tringa erythropus*			◆			◆		◆		
Greenshank	*Tringa nebularia*				◆		◆		◆		H
Green Sandpiper	*Tringa ochropus*			◆	◆						
Family Laridae (Gulls, Terns and Skimmers)											
Black-headed Gull	*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Little Gull	*Hydrocoloeus minutus*								◆		
Mediterranean Gull	*Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*				◆			◆	◆	◆	
Pallas's Gull	*Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus*				◆		◆	◆			
Yellow-legged Gull	*Larus michahellis*			◆							
Caspian Gull	*Larus cachinnans*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Caspian Tern	*Hydroprogne caspia*				◆	◆		◆	◆		
White-winged Tern	*Childonias leucopterus*								◆		
Whiskered Tern	*Chlidonias hybridus*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Common Tern	*Sterna hirundo*				◆		◆				
Family Ciconiidae (Storks)											
White Stork	*Ciconia ciconia*			◆							
Black Stork	*Ciconia nigra*			◆							
Family Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)											
Pygmy Cormorant	*Microcarbo pygmaeus*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Family Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets and Bitterns)											
White Pelican	*Pelecanus onocrotalus*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆		◆
Dalmatian Pelican	*Pelecanus crispus*				◆		◆		◆		
Family Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets and Bitterns)											
Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*				◆	◆	◆		◆		
Great White Egret	*Ardea alba*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*				◆						
Night Heron	*Nycticorax nycticorax*				◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Family Pandionidae (Osprey)											
Osprey	*Pandion haliaetus*					◆			◆		
Family Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles and Kites)											
Lesser Spotted Eagle	*Clanga pomarina*			◆							

ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	notes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Marsh Harrier	*Circus aeruginosus*		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Pallid Harrier	*Circus macrourus*			◆							
Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter nisus*				◆	◆	◆	◆		◆	
White-tailed Eagle	*Haliaeetus albicilla*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
Common Buzzard	*Buteo buteo*		◆	◆						◆	◆
Long-legged Buzzard	*Buteo rufinus*							◆			
Family Strigidae (Owls)											
Little Owl	*Athene noctua*							H		H	
Family Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)											
Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Family Picidae (Woodpeckers)											
Great Spotted Woodpecker	*Dendrocopos major*				◆	◆	H		◆		
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	*Dendrocopos minor*								◆		
Grey-headed Woodpecker	*Picus canus*				◆						
Black Woodpecker	*Dryocopus martius*			◆	◆						◆
Family Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)											
Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*		◆	◆	◆	◆				◆	◆
Hobby	*Falco subbuteo*			◆	◆	◆		◆		◆	◆
Family Laniidae (Shrikes)											
Red-backed Shrike	*Lanius collurio*							◆			
Family Corvidae (Crows, Jays and Magpies)											
Jay	*Garrulus glandarius*							◆			
Magpie	*Pica pica*		◆	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Jackdaw	*Corvus monedula*		◆	◆				◆		◆	◆
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*		◆	◆			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Hooded Crow	*Corvus cornix*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Family Paridae (Tits)											
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Great Tit	*Parus major*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Family Alaudidae (Larks)											
Crested Lark	*Galerida cristata*									◆	◆
Skylark	*Alauda arvensis*							◆			
Family Panuridae (Bearded Reedling)											
Bearded Reedling	*Panurus biarmicus*					H			◆		
Family Acrocephalidae (Reed Warblers and allies)											
Reed Warbler	*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*								H		
Family Hirundinidae (Swallows)											
Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*				◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
Family Phylloscopidae (Leaf Warblers)											
Willow Warbler	*Phylloscopus trochilus*				◆						
Common Chiffchaff	*Phylloscopus collybita*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆

ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	notes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Family Scotoceridae (Bush Warblers and allies)											
Cetti's Warbler	*Cettia cetti*			H							
Family Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)											
Long-tailed Tit	*Aegithalos caudatus*			◆	◆	◆	H	H	◆		
Family Certhiidae (Treecreepers)											
Treecreeper	*Certhia familiaris*								H		
Family Troglodytidae (Wrens)											
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*									H	
Family Sturnidae (Starlings)											
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*			◆	◆	◆		◆	◆	◆	◆
Family Turdidae (Thrushes and allies)											
Mistle Thrush	*Turdus viscivorus*								◆		
Song Thrush	*Turdus philomelos*				◆	◆	◆	H	◆	◆	◆
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*					H		H			
Family Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)											
Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*									◆	
Red-breasted Flycatcher	*Ficedula parva*				◆						
Common Redstart	*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*				◆		◆	◆	◆		
Stonechat	*Saxicola torquatus*							◆			
Northern Wheatear	*Oenanthe oenanthe*									◆	
Family Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)											
House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*			◆	◆					◆	◆
Tree Sparrow	*Passer montanus*			◆		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Family Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)											
Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*				◆				◆	◆	
White Wagtail	*Motacilla alba alba*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Tawny Pipit	*Anthus campestris*						◆				
Red-throated Pipit	*Anthus cervinus*			◆				◆	◆	◆	◆
Family Fringillidae (Finches and allies)											
Chaffinch	*Fringilla coelebs*				◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Greenfinch	*Chloris chloris*				◆						
Siskin	*Spinus spinus*				◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*				◆			◆		◆	
Family Emberizidae (Buntings)											
Corn Bunting	*Emberiza calandra*			◆							◆
Reed Bunting	*Emberiza schoeniclus*			H							

MAMMALS											
Golden Jackal	*Canis aureus*						H	H	H	H	
Red Fox	*Vulpes vulpes*			D							
Raccoon Dog	*Nyctereutes procyonoides*						◆				

ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	notes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Otter	*Lutra lutra*								◆		
European Souslik	*Spermophilus citellus*			F				F		F	
Muskrat	*Ondatra zibethicus*								◆		
Small mammal species				◆							
European Mole	*Talpa europaea*							F			
Bat species									◆		

AMPHIBIANS											
Eastern/European Tree Frog	*Hyla orientalis/arborea*			◆							
Water Frog species	*Pelophylax sp.*				◆	◆	◆		◆	◆	

REPTILES											
Grass Snake	*Natrix natrix*								◆		
Dice Snake	*Natrix tessellata*								◆		
Snake species										◆	

ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	notes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
LEPIDOPTERA: butterflies and moths											
Small White	*Pieris rapae*			◆	◆			◆		◆	
Eastern Bath White	*Pontia edusa*			◆				◆		◆	
Clouded Yellow species	*Colias sp.*			◆		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
Pale Clouded Yellow Species	*Colias sp.*							◆		◆	
Small Copper	*Lycaena phlaeas*			◆						◆	
Lang's Short-tailed Blue	*Leptotes pirithous*							◆			
Adonis Blue	*Polyommatus bellargus*									◆	
Common Blue	*Polyommatus icarus*			◆				◆		◆	
Brown Argus	*Aricia agestis*							◆		◆	
Queen of Spain Fritillary	*Issoria lathonia*							◆			
Cardinal	*Argynnis pandora*			◆				◆		◆	
Red Admiral	*Vanessa atalanta*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Painted Lady	*Vanessa cardui*			◆				◆			
Camberwell Beauty	*Nymphalis antiopa*			◆							
Small Heath	*Coenonympha pamphilus*			◆				◆			
Wall	*Lasiommata megera*			◆						◆	◆
Grayling	*Hipparchia semele*									◆	
Mallow Skipper	*Carcharodus alceae*			◆							
Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper	*Pyrgus armoricanus*			◆							
Hummingbird Hawkmoth	*Macroglossum stellatarum*			◆						◆	
Yellow-tail Moth	*Euproctis similis*					◆					
Tiger Moth species	*Arctiinae*					◆				◆	
Spotted Clover	*Protoschinia scutosa*							◆			

ODONATA: damselflies and dragonflies											
Migrant Hawker	*Aeshna mixta*			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
Common Darter	*Sympetrum striolatum*			◆				◆		◆	
Common/Eastern Willow Emerald Damselfly	*Chalcolestes viridis/parvidens*								◆		

Miscellaneous invertebrates											
Firebug	*Pyrrhocoris apterus*			◆				◆			
Southern Green Shieldbug	*Nezara viridula*				◆	◆					
Brown Marmorated Shieldbug	*Halyomorpha halys*			◆		◆	◆		◆	◆	
Common Cone-headed Grasshopper	*Acrida ungarica*			◆				◆			
Red Band-winged Grasshopper	*Oedipoda germanica*			◆							
Field Cricket species	*Gryllus sp.*							H			
Praying Mantis	*Mantis religiosa*			◆							

Asian Giant Mantis	*Hierodula tenuidentata*								◆	◆
Violet Carpenter Bee	*Xylocopa violacea*		◆							
Hornet species	*Vespa sp.*		◆	◆						
Bee-fly species	*Villa sp.*		◆							
Weevil species	*Curculionidae*		◆							
Wolf Spider species	*Geolycosa vultuosa*		◆							
Turkish Snail	*Helix lucorum*		◆							
Banded Snail	*Cepea sp.*								◆	
River Nerite	*Theodoxus fluviatilis*						◆			
Freshwater Mussel species	*Unio/Anodonta sp.*				◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	

SELECTED PLANTS (with particular thanks to Lyn and Alan Goodkin)		
SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH NAME	First seen
FERNS		
Azollo sp.	Water Fern	Day 7
DICOTYLEDONS		
Amaranthaceae		
Atriplex micrantha	Russian Orache	Day 6
Atriplex oblongifolia	Oblong-leafed Orache	Day 6
Apiaceae		
Eryngium campestre	Field Eryngo	Day 2
Ferula communis	Giant Fennel	Day 9
Seseli tortuosum	Mediterranean Moon Carrot	Day 2
Torilis arvensis	Spreading Hedge-parsley	Day 2
Asteraceae		
Achillea tomentosa	Yellow Milfoil or Woolly Yarrow	Day 6
Artemisia austriaca	Austrian Wormwood	Day 6
Artemisia vulgaris	Mugwort	Day 6
Carduus acanthoides	Broad-winged Thistle or Spiny Plumeless Thistle	Day 2
Carduus nutans	Musk Thistle	Day 2
Centaurea diffusa	Diffuse Knapweed	Day 2
Centaurea salonitana	Yellow Knapweed or Croatian Star-thistle	Day 8
Chondrilla juncea	Rush Skeletonweed	Day 8
Cichorium intybus	Chicory	Day 2
Cirsium arvense	Creeping Thistle	Day 6
Crepis capillaris	Smooth Hawksbeard	Day 2
Pulicaria dysenterica	Common Fleabane	Day 8
Scabiosa ochroleuca	Cream Scabious	Day 2
Sonchus arvensis	Field Sow-thistle	Day 6
Tripleurospermum inodorum	Scentless Mayweed	Day 6
Tripolium pannonicum	Sea Aster	Day 6
Xanthium strumarium	Rough Cocklebur	Day 6
Brassicaceae		

Berteroa incana	Hoary Alyssum	Day 6
Sinapis arvensis	Charlock	Day 6
Sisymbrium loeselii	False London Rocket	Day 2
Convolvulaceae		
Convolvulus arvensis	Field Bindweed	Day 2
Cuscuta sp	a Dodder	Day 6
Cucurbitaceae		
Sicyos angulatus	Oneseed Bur Cucumber	Day 5
Fabaceae		
Amorpha fruticosa	False Indigo	Day 6
Lotus corniculatus agg.	Birdsfoot Trefoil	Day 2
Medicago sativa	Lucerne	Day 2
Melilotus albus	White Melilot	Day 6
Vicia tenuifolia	Fine-leaved Vetch	Day 6
Geraniaceae		
Erodium cicutarium	Common Storksbill	Day 2
Haloragaceae		
Myriophyllum spicatum	Spiked Water Milfoil	Day 8
Heliotropiaceae		
Heliotropium europaeum	Heliotrope	Day 2
Lamiaceae		
Ballota nigra	Black Horehound	Day 2
Mentha aquatica	Water Mint	Day 6
Linaceae		
Linum lewisii	Lewis Flax	Day 2
Lythraceae		
Lythrum salicaria	Purple Loosestrife	Day 4
Trapa natans	Water Chestnut	Day 7
Malvaceae		
Althaea officinalis	Marsh Mallow	Day 8
Hibiscus trionum	Bladder Hibiscus or Flower-of-an-Hour	Day 6
Malva sylvestris	Common Mallow	Not recorded
Nymphaeaceae		
Nuphar lutea	Yellow Water-lily	Day 4
Nymphaea alba	White Water-lily	Day 4
Plantaginaceae		
Linaria vulgaris agg.	Common Toadflax	Day 6
Plantago major agg.	Greater Plantain	Day 6
Polygonaceae		
Persicaria maculosa	Redshank	Day 5
Polygonum equisetiforme	Horsetail Knotgrass	Day 8
Ranunculaceae		
Consolida regalis	Forking Larkspur	Day 2

Rosaceae		
Agrimonia eupatoria	Agrimony	Day 2
Scrophulariaceae		
Verbascum densiflorum	Dense-flowered Mullein	Day 8
Solanaceae		
Datura stramonium	Thorn-apple	Day 6
Solanum villosum	Hairy or Red Nightshade	Day 6
Verbenaceae		
Verbena officinalis	Vervain	Day 6

MONOCOTYLEDONS Alismataceae		
Sagittaria sagittifolia	Arrowhead	Day 3
Poaceae		
Phragmites australis	Common Reed	Day 4
Arundo donax	Giant Reed	Day 4
Typhacaea		
Typha latifolia	Bulrush	Not recorded

FUNGI		
Laetiporus sulphureus	Chicken of the Woods	Day 3

thank you for travelling with us

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