

Hungary May 2011



Trip Participants

Simon Warford, Alan Warford, Melanie Beckford, Paul Wilson, Sue Fargher, Ken Nash & Sharon Nash.

Introduction

Hungary is well-established as one of the prime birding destinations in Europe and with a population of around 10 million there is plenty of open space to explore. Relatively few British birders seem to travel independently to this area, though many tour companies include Hungary in their itineraries. However with relatively cheap flights to Budapest and a plentiful supply of good quality accommodation there is no reason not to travel independently and tailor your own trip depending on what you want to see. Spring seem to arrive rather late in Hungary this year so in retrospect we perhaps visited abit early for some of the summer visitors.

Travel

Jet2.com operates reasonable direct flights from the main UK airports including Manchester and can be available for less than £150 if booked well in advance. We hired a 9 seated vehicle through Europcar at a very reasonable £500 for 7 days.

Guides/tours

There is no shortage of guides and tour companies available to help find some of the scarcer Hungarian specialties whether it is for just for a day or a full week's tour. A guide or park ranger is essential to find some species within certain parts of the Hortobagy that are not generally accessible to the public.

We pre-arranged a day with Gabor Orban from Ecotours on our first full day with the main focus on finding Ural Owl and we also arranged to meet a Hortobagy ranger to gain access to some of the inaccessible areas.

Literature used

Grant, P J, Mullarney, K, Svensson, L, Zetterström, D (2009). Collins Bird Guide.

Crossbill Guide Foundation (2008). The Nature Guide to the Hortobagy and Tisza river floodplain.

Tolman, T & Lewington, R (1997). Collins Butterfly Guide.

Gorman, G (2006). Birding in Eastern Europe.

Accommodation

We pre-booked our accommodation and we stayed at the following –

Nomad Hotel at Noszvaj. www.nomadhotel.hu. We spent 4 nights at this very comfortable hotel in very beautiful surroundings and it is ideally situated for birding in the Bukk Hills national park. The hotel is family owned with excellent home cooked food and they fully understand the requirements of birders. The wonderful location ensured some good birds in and around the hotel grounds which included Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Wryneck, Collared Flycatcher, Black Redstart and Hawfinch.

Nadas Panzio in Tiszafured. www.nadaspanzio.hu. We spent 3 nights at this pleasant bed & breakfast, situated close to the River Tisza and only 15km from the Hortobagy. Although the owners spoke very little English the rooms were clean and well presented. Birds in and around the garden included Wryneck, Icterine Warbler, Hoopoe, Syrian Woodpecker and Golden Oriole.

Itinerary

7 May - Budapest Airport to Noszvaj.

8 May - Birded the Bükk Hills around Noszvaj then the area south of Mezőkovesd and then spent all afternoon and early evening exploring the Hor Valley within the Bükk Hills.

9 May - Birded the area around Noszvaj then some valleys to the south finishing the day at Mezőkovesd fish ponds.

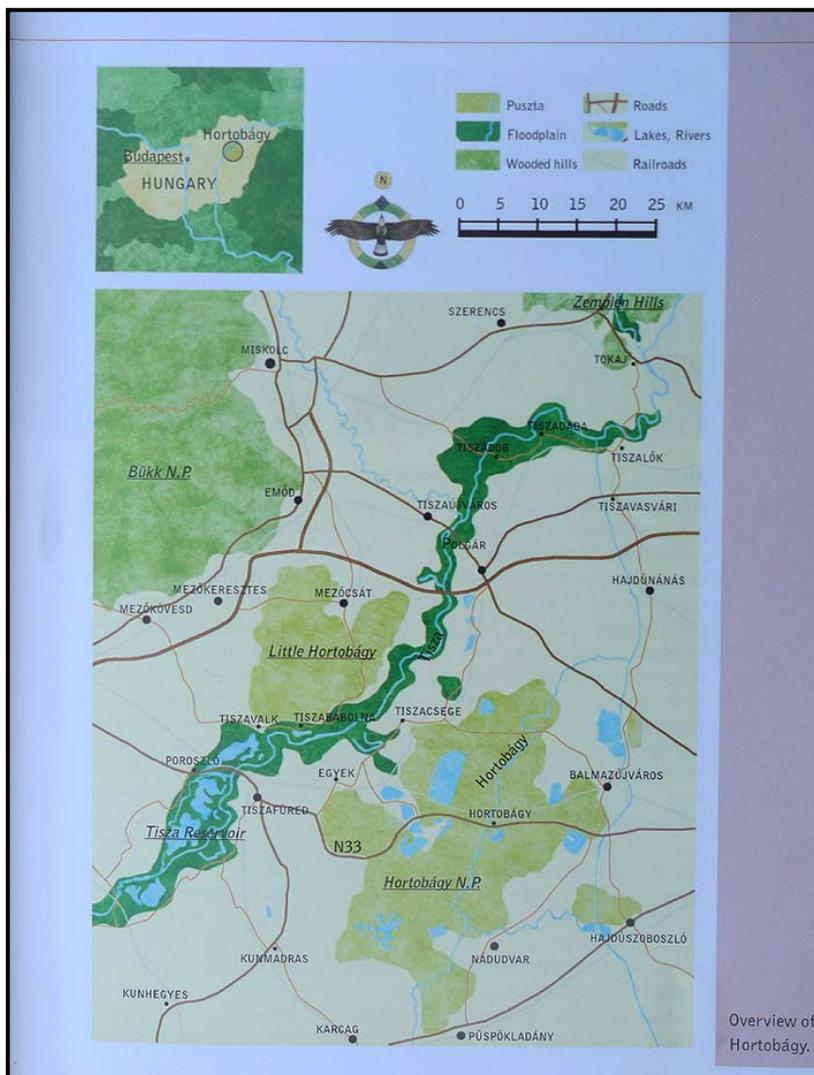
10 May - Morning spent birding around the Russian airfield near Mezőkovesd and afternoon spent around Lake Tisza and the Negyes areas.

11 May - Travelled to the Hortobágy birding on route at Tard, then crossing the river Tisza and the afternoon was spent exploring the northern Hortobágy area before reaching Tiszafüred early evening.

12 May - Birded the main fishponds at Hortobágy Halasto all day.

13 May - Morning spent birding the grasslands of the southern Hortobágy partly with a park ranger. Afternoon spent birding some other smaller fish pond complexes within the national park and an area of scrubland near Egyek. Evening spent birding areas in the eastern Hortobágy.

14 May - Birded the fish ponds at Hortobágy Halasto before travelling to Budapest for our late afternoon flight.



Left: Overview of the Hortobágy area.

Daily diary:

7th May

Our afternoon flight from Manchester arrived on time at Budapest and we collected our hire vehicle without any problems and made good progress arriving at the Nomad Hotel in Noszvaj around 9pm. As the light faded we saw a Long-eared Owl fly across the road in front of the vehicle.

8th May

We woke early to explore the area before breakfast and we were surprised to be greeted by heavy rain. Despite the rain 3 Black Redstarts were immediately visible in the hotel car park. A short walk into the forest by an area of holiday chalets produced our first Middle Spotted Woodpecker and Collared Flycatchers of the trip without too much difficulty along with Serin, Hawfinch and several northern race Long-tailed Tits.

After breakfast we met our guide Gabor Orban who had travelled up from Budapest to try and help us find a very difficult woodland bird - Ural Owl. With no let up in the rain we set off to search a section of woodland not far from our hotel.



Although birds were extremely difficult to find in the rain we were lucky enough to see two Fire Salamanders. According to Gabor the rain had encouraged these stunning amphibians to become active and move about.

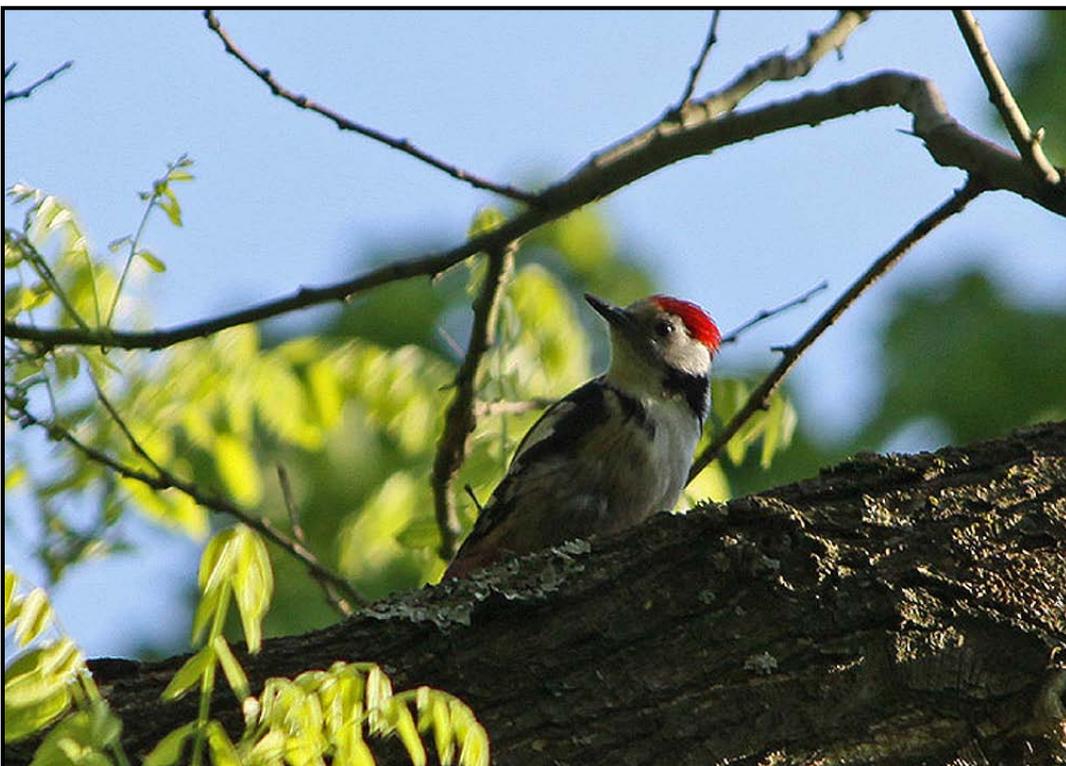
We then drove south from the Bukk Hills to an area of arable land near Mezokovesd. We stopped by a line of pylons and immediately found a pair of Saker Falcon resting on the pylon by their nest box. A little further down the same road we stopped again and the rain had now been replaced by sunshine. A short walk down a muddy track and we soon picked up two soaring Eastern Imperial Eagles giving great views. Also here were soaring Black Stork (5), Nightingale (2) and our first of many Cuckoo's, White Storks and Great White Egrets. As the weather improved it was time to head back into the forest. We spent all afternoon searching different areas of the Hor Valley looking for woodpeckers and Ural Owl.

*Left: Fire Salamander, Noszvaj, Bukk Hills.
(Paul Wilson)*

Woodland birding in this area in May can be difficult given the size of the Beech trees and the amount of foliage present and indeed we only manage to locate Wood Warbler (5), Willow Tit, Collared Flycatcher (10+) and Hawfinch (7+). Then all of a sudden we could hear the very distinctive flight call of a Black Woodpecker. It had clearly landed in a huge tree just ahead of us so we sneaked up quietly to the tree and managed some brief views of it before it flew off into the forest.



Left: male Black Woodpecker, Bukk Hills. (Simon Warford)



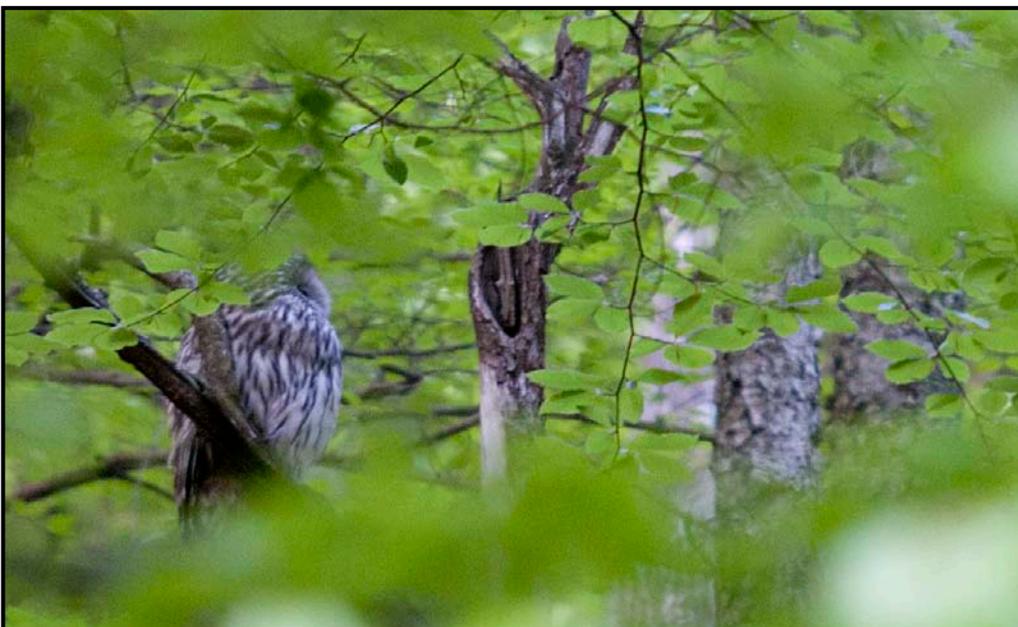
Left: Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Noszvaj, Bukk Hills. (Sharon Nash)

As early evening approached it was time to visit an area of forest that a pair of Ural Owls had been seen recently not far from Repashuta. After a fairly difficult walk up a steep narrow valley only Melanie was fortunate enough to see a Ural Owl briefly in flight. Gabor suggested we walk a little further to a White-backed Woodpecker nest site and come back towards dusk. After some more uphill walking and a half hour wait a male White-backed Woodpecker duly showed itself at the nest hole with a large grub, providing us with great views of the rarest and most difficult to see of all European woodpeckers.



Left: White-backed Woodpecker, Bukk Hills. (Paul Wilson)

With the light gradually fading we walked back down the track we were thrilled to hear the Ural Owls calling to each other and it wasn't long before the birds were seen flying across the valley side. We watched the birds for a while as they flew back and forth giving us an amazing experience. One of the birds even perched up for a while allowing the group to enjoy it in the scope through the leaves.



What an end to a brilliant first day!

Left: Ural Owl, Bukk Hills. (Paul Wilson)

During our walk from the hotel prior to breakfast we managed to locate 2 nest holes being used by Middle Spotted Woodpecker with a juvenile looking out of one of the holes. One of the nests was in a small apple tree in a village garden.



As we were watching the young woodpecker Paul found a Wryneck perched perfectly still in the adjacent apple tree, doing its best to blend in to the bark of the tree in typical Wryneck fashion.

After a great breakfast at the hotel we again went on a walk near Noszvaj village this time through a relatively open wooded area (see photo below) and clearing high above the village. Here we enjoyed some good birding with several displaying Barred Warblers, along with Lesser Whitethroat, Wood Warbler, Collared Flycatchers along with the distant songs of Cuckoo and Turtle Dove. Hawfinches were almost constantly flying over with the occasional bird perched in the open. A Wryneck was found singing high from a bare branch and over the clearing a Honey Buzzard appeared and slowly drifted over.

The best bird of the morning so far was found just as we were leaving when Melanie picked up a Lesser Spotted Eagle flying over the forest towards us and it eventually flew across the clearing and headed off down the valley.

Left: Wryneck, Noszvaj, Bukk Hills. (Paul Wilson)



Left: Bukk Hills above Noszvaj. (Simon Warford)



Above: male Collared Flycatcher, Noszvaj, Bukk Hills. (Paul Wilson)



Above: male Barred Warbler, Noszvaj, Bukk Hills. (Paul Wilson)

We spent a couple of hours over lunchtime searching various small valleys on the southern slopes of the Bukk particularly looking for River Warblers and Shrikes in the scrubland but unfortunately neither could be seen or heard.



Above: view across the southern slopes of the Bukk Hills. (Sharon Nash)

What time was left of the afternoon was spent at a small fishpond complex near Mezokovesd. Sadly it looked like the area had suffered from a bad winter storm as many of the trees had either fallen down or were badly damaged.

The expected Penduline Tits seemed to be absent however after some patience we were rewarded with two adult Red-necked Grebes on the reed fringed pools. Numerous Great Reed Warblers sang throughout our visit and were easily visible.

Also here were the ever present Cuckoo's, Golden Orioles and Nightingales. A Syrian Woodpecker landed on a distant tree briefly before flying off.

Highlight here though was at least two male Little Bitterns that kept us entertained for half an hour or so climbing up the reeds and flying from pool to pool. Marsh Harriers were present over the small reedbeds and a couple of Purple Herons flew over.



Above: Red-necked Grebe, Mezokovesd fish ponds. (Simon Warford)



Above: male Little Bittern, Mezokovesd fish ponds. (Paul Wilson)

After our early morning walk and usual great breakfast we headed off to a disused Russian airfield near Mezokovesd. This place has obviously been left wild for years proving to be a great place for wildlife in general. Why there is a guard on the entrance gate is a mystery but after having a word with him and explaining that we were bird watching he unlocked the gate and allowed us to go in.

After a short drive down an overgrown track you then find yourself on two huge disused runways the size of Manchester airport!

The whole area is fantastic for wildlife, endless grasslands supporting many species of flowers and butterflies. Several Hares and Roe deer were dotted around the area. Butterflies seen here included Large Copper and Scarce Swallowtail amongst many others.



Above: view across disused Russian airfield with Roe Deer. (Paul Wilson)

The grassland and runway edges were full of birds; Corn Buntings (20+) singing from almost every available small bush or suitable perch, blue headed Yellow wagtails (20+), Wheatear (20+), Whinchat (30+), Stonechat (15+) and several Crested Larks.

After a little searching we found several Tawny Pipits on the runway. Missing though were the expected Montagu's Harriers.



Above: Tawny Pipit, disused Russian airfield, Mezokovesd. (Paul Wilson)

After the airfield we headed south to bird around the plains near Negyes and Poroszlo finishing up at the impressive Lake Tizsa.

Driving down the road near Borsodivanka we found a Roller perched on wires which gave us distant views (amazingly this was our only Roller of the trip!) Hungary supports an excellent population of Rollers and nest boxes can be seen throughout the plains put up for these birds. We can only assume the birds were late arriving this year as in the same week in 2010 we saw about a dozen birds.

Further down the road a Wood sandpiper was feeding on a roadside pool. As we got nearer to Lake Tizsa we saw both Great White Egrets and White Storks in increasing numbers.

At the lake itself a Hoopoe was feeding on the track in front of our vehicle but flew up to a nearby tree. Over the water we could see a good number of terns, consisting mainly of marsh terns; 30+ Black Tern and at least four White winged black terns.

Other birds of note here were Cuckoo (10+), Great White Egret (50+), Night Heron (20+), Purple Heron, White Stork (30+), Black Stork (20+) and far too many Marsh Harriers to even attempt to count! We also saw 3 distant Red-footed falcons but knew this was a bird we would see better later in the week.



Above: Roller, Borsodivanka. (Simon Warford)



*Left:
Night Heron,
Lake Tisza.
(Sharon
Nash)*

After checking out of the Nomad Hotel we left the Bukk Hills behind and headed towards one of the premier birding destinations in Europe, the famous Hortobagy reserve was to be explored for the remaining three and a half days of the trip. First stop en-route was an area of scrubland near Tard, a site in which we had several River warblers in 2010, but again to our frustration it looked like they had still not arrived. We did however see our first Red-backed Shrike of the trip, a male bird in a small roadside quarry quickly followed by a Bee-Eater found perched in a tree.



Above: Red-backed Shrike, Tard. (Simon Warford)

After a short ferry crossing we were soon across the river Tisza, seeing a Kingfisher fly past and an adult White tailed Eagle soaring over the adjacent woodland. After a few kilometres we were soon within the huge Hortobagy national park. It is the largest unbroken steppe habitat left in Europe, covering an area of over 82,000 hectares, and you really need to allow three or four days to give it the coverage it deserves.

Driving along the northern road through the reserve the number of birds dramatically increased with lots of small pools holding Black-necked Grebe (3), Ruff (30), Black Winged Stilt, Spoonbills, Ferruginous Duck (5), Night Herons, with Great White Egret (50+) and White storks (70+) everywhere. In the stubble fields on the northern side of the road a flock of about 80 Common Cranes could be seen feeding with lots of smaller family groups flying in to join them. It was great watching them extend their legs some distance before come into land, something none of us had really experienced before.

This area of Hungary is well known for its Autumn Crane migration where up to 100,000 birds can be present. In recent years there has been an increasing number of birds summering in the Hortobagy. Further along the road we observed good numbers of both Whiskered and White-winged Black Terns feeding over the marshy areas. Depending on the amount of rainfall and subsequent water levels of the marshes influences whether the terns stay to breed or whether they move further north. In the wet year of 2010 over 10,000 pairs of White-winged Black Terns bred in Hungary.



*Left:
Common
Cranes
(11 out of a
flock of 80
birds),
northern
Hortobagy.
(Paul
Wilson)*

The next stop, a little further down the road towards Balmazújvaros was at a place called Darassa, an area of “puszta” or alkaline grassland typical of the whole area where we scanned from an observation platform. Here we could hear Corncrake, Bittern and Quail calling from the vast area of grassland while Spoonbills, both White and Black Storks and Great White Egrets flew overhead. A Hoopoe flew across the grassland and landed in a tree opposite us and a male Red-backed Shrike was seen on some small bushes. This area though is one of the best areas for raptors in the Hortobagy and after a short while we were treated to some amazing views of a Long-legged Buzzard which at one point was hovering above the road next to the platform!

It was now time to head to Tiszafüred which was to be our base for the next three nights. As we drove along the N33 we had time to call in at a breeding colony of Red-footed Falcons in a small woodland next to the road. It didn't disappoint with at least 30 of these wonderful birds present. This is the largest colony in Europe with over 100 pairs and a place we would be visiting a couple more times during our visit.

We arrived at the Nadas Panzio around 6pm allowing us time to freshen up and enjoy the garden Wryneck before eating at a local restaurant. Walking back to the hotel after our meal we were rather fortunate to have an encounter with a Steppe Polecat in the hotel car park running and hiding under our parked vehicle. This was a new mammal for everyone in the group and a very unexpected sighting indeed to round off a fantastic first day in the Hortobagy National Park.



Above: Whiskered and White-winged Black Terns, Hortobagy. (Simon Warford)



Above: Long-legged Buzzard, Hortobagy. (Paul Wilson)

The plan for today was to visit the Halasto fishponds which are perhaps the best-known of the fishpond complexes in the Hortobagy with numerous lagoons of varying depths and sizes and simply huge areas of reedbeds.

The fishponds consist of ten large lakes with each one having its own designated viewing platform.

To walk around the circular track, taking in all the lakes, is about a 15km walk but there is a tourist train that goes down to the end and back so we had planned to take this to the end and walk the 7 or 8 km back. However it soon became apparent that the train was not running on the day of our visit and it was in fact only operating at weekends!

So we had no choice but to set off walking to the end of the fishponds, with scopes, cameras, rucksacks and temperatures in the late 20's it would be a challenge to say the least. However the birding more than made up for the long walk with some very memorable birding with highlights of the day being; close views of a Nightjar, wonderful views of several Squacco Herons, huge colonies of Spoonbills and Night Herons, many Whiskered Terns with also sighting of Grass Snake, Sand Lizards along with many species of dragonfly and butterfly.



Above: Bearded Tit, Hortobagy Halasto. (Paul Wilson)

A summary of the most interesting sightings from our visit is as follows-

Lesser Whitethroat – 3	Night Heron – 150+
Savi's Warbler – 4	Great White Egret – 100+
Nightingale – lots	Purple Heron – 10+
Wood Warbler – 3	Little Egret – 10+
Icterine Warbler – 2	Squacco Heron – 10+
Reed Warbler – lots	Whiskered Tern – 70
Sedge Warbler – lots	Bee-Eater – 9
Whitethroat – 1	Shoveler – 3 pairs
Cuckoo – 10+	Red-crested Pochard – 1 male
Golden Oriole – 6+	Ferruginous Duck – 25+
Tree Sparrow – everywhere	Wigeon – 1 pair
Nightjar – 1	Ruff – 40
Bluethroat – 5+ all singing males	Dunlin – 150
Bearded Tit – lots	Oystercatcher – 1 (scarce passage bird in Hungary)
Penduline Tit – lots	Curlew – 1
Marsh Harrier – 30+	Pygmy Cormorant – 30+
Montagu's Harrier – 1 female flew over	Blue-headed Wagtail – 20+
Long-legged Buzzard – 1 flew over	Yellow-legged Gull – small numbers flying over
Red-footed Falcon – 2	Caspian Gull – few birds flying over
Long-eared Owl – adult and chick in nest box	Turtle Dove – 10+
Spoonbill – 150+	Hooded Crow – few
Little Bittern – 1 male seen, 6 more heard	Spotted Flycatcher – 1
Bittern – heard only	



Left: Penduline Tit, Hortobagy Halasto. (Paul Wilson)



Above: white spotted Bluethroat, Hortobagy Halasto. (Simon Warford)



Above: Purple Heron, Hortobagy Halasto. (Paul Wilson)



Above: Squacco Heron, Hortobagy Halasto. (Paul Wilson)



Above: Whiskered Tern, Hortobagy Halasto. (Sharon Nash)



Above: Caspian Gull, Hortobagy Halasto. (Paul Wilson)



Above: Bee-Eater, Hortobagy Halasto. (Paul Wilson)



Above: Pygmy Cormorants, Hortobagy Halasto. (Paul Wilson)



Above: Hortobagy Halasto fishponds. (Simon Warford)

Today was spent exploring some of the more inaccessible parts of the Hortobagy and we arranged to meet a park ranger, whose name was Sandor, at 6am to help us find some of the more elusive specialities of the area.

Sandor works for the Great Bustard project and liaises with local farmers in order to prevent disturbance to the breeding bustards. He spends virtually every day of the breeding season out in the fields watching and locating bustard nests. He then informs the farmers who are encouraged to give them space to breed.



Right: Great Bustard, southern Hortobagy. (Paul Wilson)

It wasn't long before we located 10 Great Bustards which included a hen bird in close proximity to several male birds. We also soon located our first of the days seven Montagu's Harriers. Each one was checked carefully as there had been a few Pallid Harriers moving through on their migration north in the previous few days.



Left: male Montagu's Harrier, Hortobagy. (Paul Wilson)

A short distance from the Bustard area we saw 2 Stone Curlews and a Quail was flushed by our vehicle and flew alongside allowing good views! Small areas of reedbeds held blue headed wagtail, Bluethroats and Savi's warblers.

At about 9.30am we stopped in at a small wetland area where we noted Wood Sandpiper (2), Ruff (20), Spoonbill (15), Black-tailed Godwit (1), Whiskered Tern (20+), Black Tern (1), Pygmy Cormorant (5), Garganey (4) and the usual dozen or so White Storks and Great White Egrets!

We left Sandor at 10.30am to get some well earned breakfast in the Hortobagy village itself.



We then headed back towards the Halasto fishponds to spend some time at the Red-footed Falcon and Bee-eater colonies both easily viewable from the main road.

You can get up close and personal to both colonies which are more or less adjacent to each other. It's hard to imagine where in the world you could get better views of both these birds.

*Male (above)
and two
female (right)
Red-footed
Falcon,
Hortobagy.
(Paul Wilson)*





Bee-Eaters in the Hortobagy. (Above Paul Wilson, below Simon Warford)



The rest of the day was spent exploring some new areas seeing what we could find. Near Egyek we checked an area of scrubland where we found a singing Barred Warbler and a male Red-backed Shrike.

Suddenly a raptor appeared flying low over our heads and was easily identified as a male Honey Buzzard, providing us all with our best ever views of this species. We later searched some areas in the eastern Hortobagy for Rollers but unfortunately we couldn't find any but we were treated to some excellent views of up to four immature White-tailed Eagles. The day ended watching a Saker Falcon perched on a pylon by the N33 and two Hobbies sat on another pylon nearby.



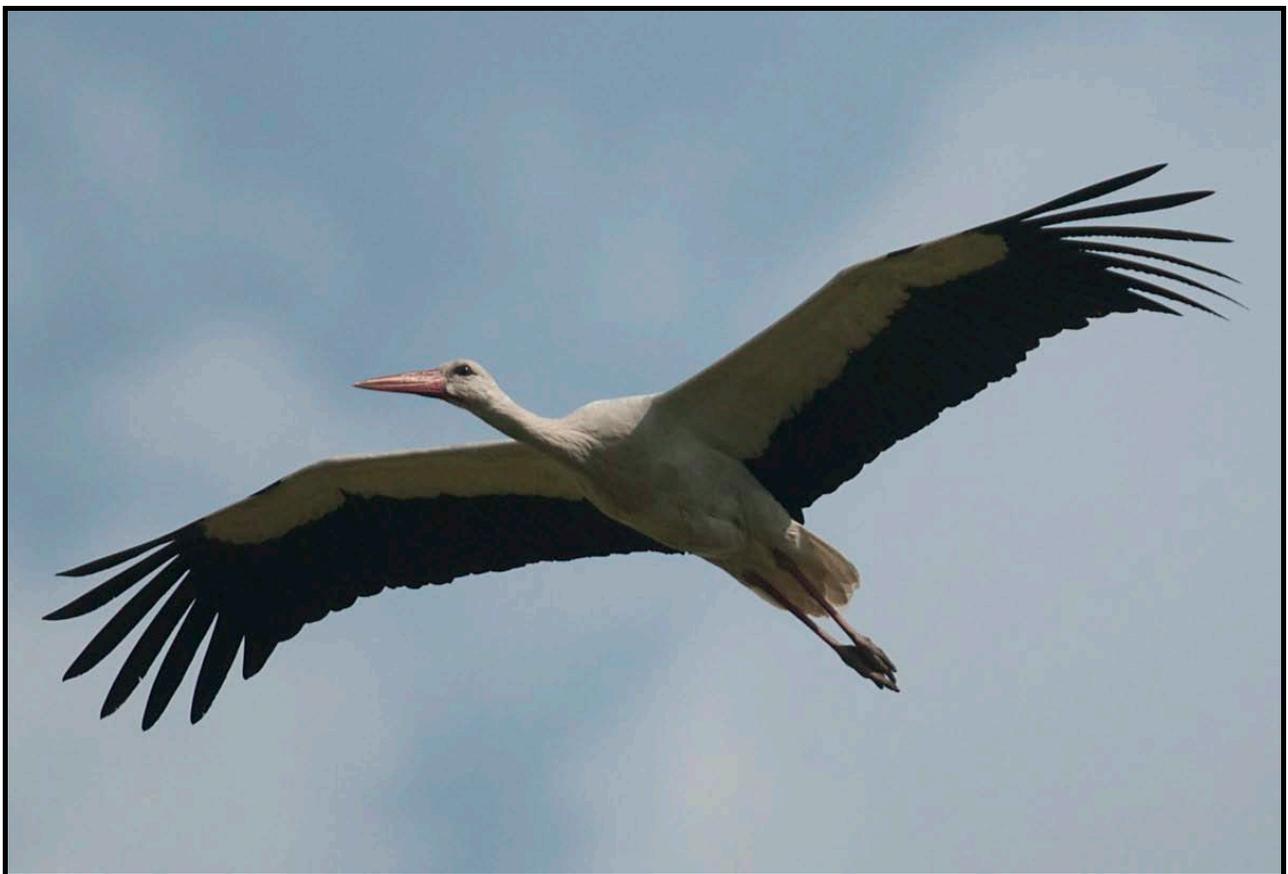
Above and left: male Honey Buzzard, Hortobagy. (Paul Wilson)

Sadly our last day had come around too quickly and again we woke to warm sunny weather. The Wryneck was still showing on and off in the hotel garden and a walk around the vicinity of the hotel before breakfast produced two singing Icterine Warblers, a single Hoopoe and brief views of a Syrian Woodpecker.

We headed to the Hortobagy fish ponds for our last few hours birding. On route we stopped along a minor road where we enjoyed three more immature White-tailed Eagles, a pair of Garganey on a roadside pool, a male Red-backed shrike and a Little Owl perched on one of the many large derelict barns.

At the fish ponds we only had time to walk to the first observation tower, but even in this short walk we enjoyed our final Squacco Herons of the trip and the Long-eared Owls were still sat in their nest boxes.

Any Hungarian trip report wouldn't be quite complete without mentioning their national bird.



Above: *White Stork, Tiszafured.* (Paul Wilson)

Butterflies

Hungary boasts some 180 species of butterfly as its national total. At the time of year we visited, over 100 species could conceivably be recorded although we only managed to positively identify 32 species. Below is a selection of stunning photos taken by Sharon Nash.



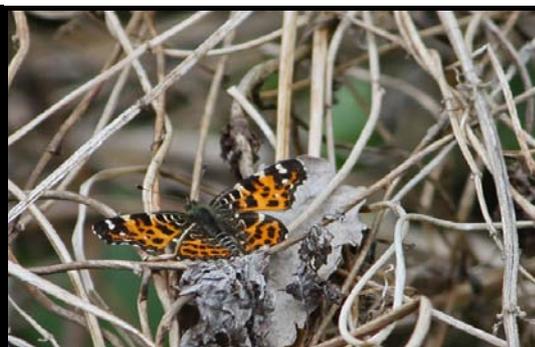
Marbled Fritillary



Southern Festoon



Scarce Swallowtail



Map Butterfly



Large Copper



Dingy Skipper



Reverdin's Blue



Green-underside Blue

Species List

We recorded a total of 158 species, listed below. The figures in brackets represent the number of days each species was recorded e.g. (4/7) means that a species was seen on four days during our seven day trip and gives a rough indication of how easy each species was to see. More details are given of the rarer or more interesting species.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (1/7)

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* (4/7)

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* (1/7) 2 birds present at Mezokovesd Fishponds.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* (1/7) 3 birds in breeding plumage at Hortobagy 11/5.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* (5/7)

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* (3/7) Fairly common and easy to see in the Hortobagy.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* (3/7) Heard booming at several sites on the Hortobagy.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (3/7) 2 males seen well at Mezokovesd Fishponds. Several heard at Hortobagy Halasto and one female seen in flight.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (4/7) Quite common in the Hortobagy and along the River Tisza.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (2/7) Up to 10 birds seen well on the Hortobagy Halasto.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (3/7) Present in small numbers at Hortobagy.

Great White Egret *Ardea alba* (7/7) Very common on the Hortobagy - it was difficult to scan anywhere and not see at least one.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* (7/7)

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (4/7) Seen in small numbers in the Hortobagy.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (5/7) All our sightings involved birds in flight, with the highest group being 10 birds over Lake Tisza 10/5.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* (7/7) Widespread and relatively common with birds nesting on platforms in most towns and villages. Some small villages had a nest on almost every telegraph pole.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* (4/7) Breeding colony at the Hortobagy Halasto contained well over 150 birds.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* (6/7)

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* (4/7)

Wigeon *Anas Penelope* (1/7)

Gadwall *Anas strepera* (1/7)

Teal *Anas crecca* (1/7)

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (7/7)

Garganey *Anas querquedula* (2/7)

Shoveler *Anas clypeata* (2/7)

Red Crested Pochard *Netta rufina* (1/7) drake bird present on the Hortobagy Halasto.

Pochard *Aythya farina* (3/7)

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (3/7) Quite common on the Hortobagy, with birds seen on most waters.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* (2/7)

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* (2/7) Disappointingly only 2 birds were seen during the week.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* (7/7) Very common especially around the Hortobagy.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* (2/7) 7 birds (1 male) seen in the southern grasslands of the Hortobagy 13/5.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* (2/7)

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* (7/7)

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* (2/7) 2 birds seen very well in the northern Hortobagy 11/5 and also a single bird flew over the Hortobagy Halasto 12/5.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* (1/7) Single bird seen over woodland near Noszvaj 9/5.

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* (1/7) 2 birds seen well south of Mezokovesd 8/5.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (3/7) adult bird seen over the Tisza River 11/5. 4 immature seen in the southern Hortobagy 13/5 and 3 more on 14/5 seen from the road to Szasztelek.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (6/7)

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (4/7) Common in the Hortobagy with the breeding colony by route 33 providing us with wonderful views of many birds.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo* (1/7) 2 birds perched on Pylons near the Hortobagy village.

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* (3/7) Easiest to see on pylons where nest boxes are provided with a pair seen near Mezokovesd on 8/5. Later in the week another bird was seen on a pylon near Balmazujvaros.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* (2/7)

Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (2/7) several heard in the Hortobagy with one bird seen well in flight from our moving vehicle 13/5.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchacus* (7/7)

Corncrake *Crex crex* (1/7) Heard only in the northern Hortobagy.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* (5/7)

Coot *Fulica atra* (5/7)

Common Crane *Grus grus* (3/7) A flock of approximately 80 birds seen well in stubble fields and puszta in the northern Hortobagy. There has been an increasing tendency for birds to summer in the area. Smaller family groups were also seen in the southern Hortobagy around Nagyivan.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda* (1/7) 9 male & 1 female seen in the southern Hortobagy on 13/5. Very unlikely to be seen without being accompanied by a National Park Ranger.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* (1/7) We found a single bird on Hortobagy Halasto 12/5. A scarce passage bird in the area apparently.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (2/7) Only a handful seen throughout the week.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* (1/7) A breeding pair with young observed in the Hortobagy.

Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedicanus* (1/7) 2 birds seen well in the southern Hortobagy on 13/5.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* (7/7)

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* (3/7)

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (4/7) Seen in small numbers. We were told of some flooded fields to the south of the Hortobagy that held up to 2000 birds but we didn't have time to visit.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (1/7) Low single figures at several sites on the Hortobagy including some display.

Curlew *Numenius arquata* (1/7)

Redshank *Tringa tetanus* (2/7)

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* (1/7)

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* (1/7)

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* (5/7)

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* (2/7) single adult bird at Lake Tisza, other birds in flight probably involved some of this species.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* (2/7) small numbers at the Hortobagy Halasto.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* (2/7)

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (4/7) Common throughout the Hortobagy.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* (2/7) Small numbers seen mainly in the Hortobagy and Lake Tisza areas.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (4/7) More common than Black Tern in the Hortobagy but not seen in large numbers this year.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* (7/7)

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* (7/7)

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (7/7)

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* (7/7)

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* (7/7)

Little Owl *Athene noctua* (1/7)

Ural Owl *Strix uralensis* (1/7) One of the undoubted highlights of the trip was a pair providing us with good views deep in the Bukk Hills near Repashuta on 8/5.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* (3/7) Easy to see in nest boxes in the Hortobagy Halasto.

Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* (1/7) Unexpected find of the trip perhaps was a single male bird seen well in willows at the Hortobagy Halasto 12/5.

Common Swift *Apus apus* (4/7)

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (1/7)

Bee-Eater *Merops apiaster* (4/7) Birds seem to be still arriving. Single bird at Tard early in the week followed by up to 15 birds at a breeding site in the Hortobagy NP.

Roller *Coracias garrulus* (1/7) Amazingly only one bird seen near Egerlovo.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops* (3/7) Seen in small numbers in the Hortobagy area.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* (3/7) Several seen well including birds seen by both our hotels.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* (5/7) Many heard throughout the week with only one bird seen in flight.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* (1/7) A single bird seen and heard in Bukk Hills near Repashuta. We were disappointed not to do better for this species.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major* (5/7)

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopus syriacus* (3/7) Birds seen at Mezokovesd Fishponds, in flight near Poroszlo and in one near our hotel in Tiszafured.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus medius* (3/7) Very common around our hotel at Noszvaj where we found two nest sites.

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopus leucotos* (1/7) Single male bird seen at a nest site in the Bukk Hills along the road between Repashuta and Bukkzserc.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus minor* (1/7) one seen near the river at Tiszafured.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* (5/7)

Skylark *Alauda arvensis* (5/7)

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* (3/7)

Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (7/7)

House Martin *Delichon urbicum* (7/7)

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* (2/7) Seen at a disused Russian airfield and in the southern Hortobagy.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (7/7) Widespread and quite common. All the birds that we positively identified were of the race *dombrowskii*.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* (3/7)

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba* (7/7)

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* (2/7)

Dunnock *Prunella modularis* (1/7)

Robin *Erithacus rubecula* (3/7)

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* (6/7) Abundant.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* (2/7) Singing birds were seen well at the Hortobagy Halasto and southern Hortobagy.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* (7/7) Widespread and very common, especially in hillier areas.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* (7/7)

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (6/7)

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (5/7)

Blackbird *Turdus merula* (7/7)

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* (7/7)

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* (2/7)

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* (2/7) Uncommon with just a couple heard in the Hortobagy.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (3/7) Fairly common in the Hortobagy area especially at the Hortobagy Halasto.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (4/7)

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (3/7)

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (4/7) Numerous wherever habitat was suitable.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* (2/7) Singing birds seen by our hotel in Tiszafured and at the Hortobagy Halasto.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* (4/7) Several birds seen well in Bukk Hills especially with there distinctive display flights.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* (4/7)

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* (4/7)

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* (2/7)

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (7/7)

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* (7/7) Very common in the Bukk Hills and even birds seen passing through the Hortobagy.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (7/7)

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa sriata* (5/7)

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (4/7) Very common in the Bukk Hills.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* (2/7)

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* (2/7) Very common in any areas of reedbed in the Hortobagy.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalus caudatus* (4/7) Fairly common in the Bukk Hills.

Marsh Tit *Parus palustris* (1/7)

Willow Tit *Parus montanus* (1/7)

Coal Tit *Parus ater* (2/7)

Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* (5/7)

Great Tit *Parus major* (7/7)

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* (4/7)

Treecreeper *Sitta europaea* (1/7)

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (2/7) Very common in the Hortobagy Halasto.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* (7/7) Widespread and very common throughout all areas. Mostly heard but we had plenty of sightings.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius colluria* (3/7) Seen in small numbers throughout the week.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius* (4/7)

Magpie *Pica pica* (7/7)

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* (2/7)

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* (4/7)

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix* (7/7)

Raven *Corvus corax* (2/7)

Common Starling *Sternus vulgaris* (7/7)

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (7/7)

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* (7/7) Very common even in small towns.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (7/7)

Serin *Serinus serinus* (7/7)

Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* (7/7)

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* (7/7)

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* (2/7)

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* (5/7)

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* (7/7)

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoenicus* (3/7)

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* (5/7) Pleasingly abundant compared to back home.

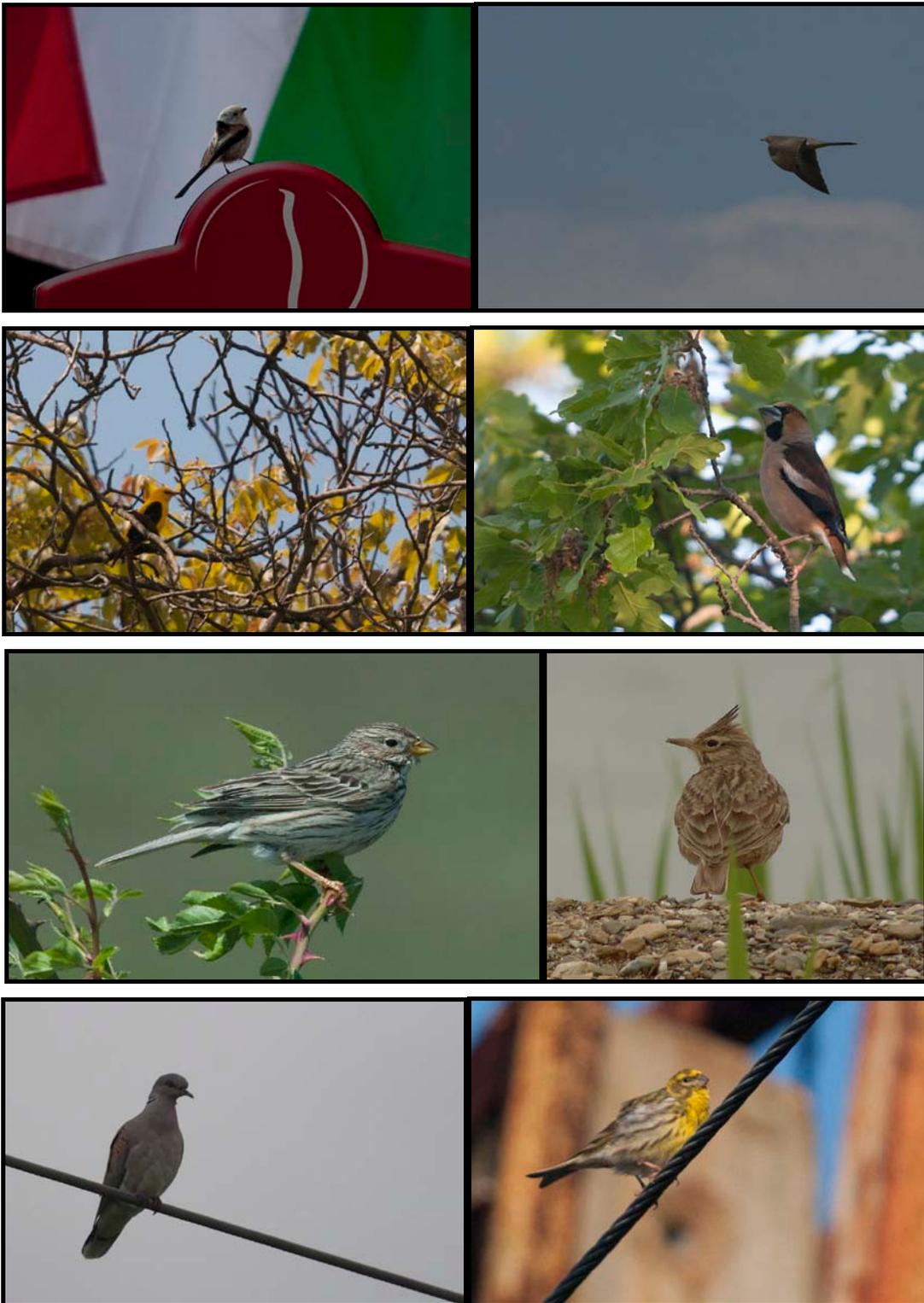
Other Wildlife

Steppe Polecat
Roe Deer
Brown Hare
Fox
Sand Lizard
Fire Salamander
Grass Snake
Marsh Frog
Moor Frog
Tree Frog
Fire-bellied Toad
Common Toad
Green Toad
Pond Terrapin

Butterflies

Southern Festoon	Hungarian Glider
Large White	Swallowtail
Black-veined White	Scarce Swallowtail
Green-veined White	Small Tortoiseshell
Small White	Gatekeeper
Wood White	Meadow Brown
Orange Tip	Peacock
Brimstone	Red Admiral
Small Copper	Map Butterfly
Large Copper	Dingy Skipper
Common Blue	Wall Brown
Holly Blue	Marbled Fritillary
Silver studied Blue	High Brown Fritillary
Reverdin's Blue	Silver-washed Fritillary
Green-underside Blue	Marbled White
Large Blue	Small Heath

Below is a selection of the more common birds we encountered.



Many thanks to Paul Wilson and Sharon Nash for some wonderful photographs for which this report wouldn't be anywhere near as good!

Simon Warford. 2011.

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