

Birds And Music April 2013

Birds And Music in Hungary and Slovakia 2013

Day 1 Tuesday April 16th

Arriving Budapest late afternoon, we drove to our first hotel in Kiskunsag N.P, a splendid former hunting lodge set in several acres of woodland at Bugyi.



During the drive we passed several **White Storks** nesting on chimneys, and a brief stop to stretch our legs was very productive with sightings of 5 **Great Bustards** as a marvellous beginning to the holiday.

A Great White Egret was also conspicuous, with Avocet, Black-tailed Godwit, Wood Sandpiper, and Ruff as supporting cast.

Day 2 Wednesday April 17th

A Black Redstart flitted about the hotel next morning as we walked to breakfast, with Nuthatch, **Short-toed Treecreeper**, and **Syrian Woodpecker** also calling nearby.

We watched a **Tree Pipit** as we waited to board the minibus, and just as Balazs was about to drive off, Mary shouted **Black Woodpecker**, and we all had amazing views on a tree only 30 metres away. After a short drive we pulled up beside a roadside pond and soon found a pair of **Ferruginous Ducks** with a Sedge Warbler and **Great Reed Warbler** singing in the reeds, while a male **Montagu's Harrier** drifted into sight. At our next stop we went for a walk and soon had another **Black Woodpecker** flying in front of us for several minutes, a Hoopoe flew across the field, then as we walked through a break in the plantation Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff and Pied Flycatcher were all seen, while a **Nightingale** sang.

At our lunch stop 3 lesser Whitethroats were flitting in a nearby bush, and Yellow Wagtails were common, with a bird of the race *supercilia* amongst them. After lunch a quick scan with the scope soon found several **Great Bustards** displaying, a pair of Garganey, Black-tailed Godwit in breeding plumage and a **Black-crowned Night Heron** perched in a bush. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** of the race *fuscus* had a nearly black mantle. A White-tailed Eagle flew overhead and a very early **Red-footed Falcon** appeared.

Finishing an excellent day with a visit to the fish ponds, where many Ruff, a pair of Stone Curlew, **Marsh** and Wood Sandpipers were seen, while several **Savi's Warblers** reeled in the reeds. An early finish was necessary, to allow us time to change and eat, to attend a concert in the Budapest Palace of Arts in a beautiful setting on the banks of the River Danube. The programme for that night included the Prokofiev Violin Concerto, Chausson Symphony in B flat and Ravels La Valse.

Day 3 Thursday April 18th

Before setting off in the minibus, we spent a very profitable hour, walking round the hotel grounds. Rosemary found a pair of **Lesser-spotted Woodpeckers** near the front door, which were well seen by everyone. We soon found **Syrian**, **Green**, and heard **Black Woodpecker** calling. Some caught glimpses of an elusive **Short-toed Treecreeper**, and everyone had good views of a **Hawfinch** in the scope.

A short drive to the gravel pits found **Black-headed** and **Mediterranean Gulls** with a few **Common Terns** nesting on the island. A pair of **Red Crested Pochard** swam by, and a **Little Ringed Plover** was seen on the nearby field. Our stop for morning coffee was immediately rewarded with the glorious song of **Nightingale**, and a **Purple Heron** perched in a nearby tree. Balazs heard **Penduline Tits** calling, and soon lured them into the bush we were sitting by. The excitement of the morning continued with a **Harrier** flying over, having all the appearance of a **Pallid**, later confirmed from the photos.

Returning to the Fishponds of the previous day, where about 300 **Dunlin** had arrived overnight; several **Savi's** and **Sedge Warblers** were singing, a **Bittern** boomed and **Cuckoo** called. We searched for an elusive **Moustached Warbler** eventually succeeding (a first for most) with a **Reed Warbler** competing in song, as a **Black Stork** drifted overhead. Meanwhile Ana had been taking photos, and captured a **Whiskered Tern** which no one else had noticed.

We finished in style at our last stop of the day, with a **Spotted Redshank** in full breeding plumage, 2 **Great Bustards** displayed while **Imperial** and **White-tailed Eagle** soared together. Another concert that night meant an early finish to the birding. The programme included the **Bach Brandenburg Concerto No.4**, **Brahms Symphony No. 4**, and a superb rendition of the **Beethoven Piano Concerto No.1** by **Radu Lupu**.

Day 4 Friday April 19th

During their usual pre-breakfast stroll in the grounds, **George** and **Mary** found the pair of **Lesser-spotted Woodpeckers** again plus 7 **Hawfinches**. We were sorry to leave such idyllic surrounds. A stop in **Oksa** woods on the way to **Slovakia** soon gave us views of **Collared Flycatcher**, with several more calling during an hours walk. We also found **Spotted** and **Pied Flycatchers**, with several **Wood Warblers** singing. We all eventually had good views of **Short-toed Treecreeper**. More woodpeckers were drumming but we only saw **Great Spotted**. A **Sparrowhawk** and **Montagu's Harrier** soared overhead.

A detour to a mountain pass above the snow line gave us views of the south/ central European race of **Ring Ousel (*alpesstris*)** showing a beautiful scalloped breast, with several **Fieldfares**. We eventually reached our hotel in the **Tatras Mountain** region

Day 5 Saturday April 20th

Weather was dull for a change and quite a breeze developed, **Black Redstart** and **White Wagtail** flitted around the hotel as we set off to meet **Dusan** the director of **Nature conservation** for the area.



At the rendez-vous village, another hilltop fortress built several hundred years ago to prevent invasion of Tartars, appeared very imposing. Three pairs of Kestrels nested in close proximity in the lookout slits.

In a nearby forest, we started searching for Tengmalms Owls. It wasn't long before a **Lesser Spotted Eagle** soared overhead, **Crested Tits** and Goldcrests came very close but the owl hunt remained unsuccessful. Returning to the minibus for morning coffee. Dorothy spotted a **Pine Marten** running down a tree, which only two of us managed to see.

We drove to another area, where after a short walk **Three-toed Woodpecker** was heard, and with a bit of searching eventually everyone had excellent views in the scope, but the search for Tengmalm's Owl again proved fruitless. A pair of **Lesser Spotted Eagles** soared overhead.

After lunch we had a brief trip over the Polish border, seeing **Great Grey Shrike** from the minibus; Dusan led us to an area where he quickly pointed out some lovely **Citrine Wagtails**. Three **Great White Egrets** were in the distance and just as we were about to drive off, Balazs spotted an **Osprey** which everyone saw. Then along the track we had close views of a confiding Winchat which posed for the camera. Back in Slovakia we vainly searched another forest for Pygmy Owl.

Day 6 Sunday April 21st

Before setting out we walked in the hotel grounds and soon had fantastic views of the **Wryneck** which had been calling. Stopping by the shore of the lake we saw **Caspian Gull/Yellow Legged Gull?** and **Whiskered Terns**.

During a short walk in another forest, Firecrests called and a Camberwell Beauty gave very close views, but no Pygmy Owls were found. An inquisitive **Nutcracker** looked down on us as we ate our picnic lunch Further searching for Tengmalm's and Pygmy Owls were fruitless, but we did find 3 pairs of White-backed Woodpeckers and close views of the lovely white-headed form of the **Long Tailed Tit**.



After that Balazs performed his *pièce de résistance* by getting the back wheel stuck in a ditch, and we were towed out yet again.

Day 7 Monday April 22nd

We set out for our next hotel meeting up with our local guide Josef, late morning on the outskirts of Kosice. After a short drive we walked through some deciduous woods alive with the song of Wood Warbler and **Collared Flycatcher** and we looked down at a **Goshawk** on its nest.



A **Ural Owl** barked its displeasure as we approached its nest, then swooped down at Josef as he got closer. Josef has increased the population of this species of owl in the area by providing many nest boxes.

A Great Tit harrying a Nuthatch, too close to its nest hole, entertained us during a picnic lunch, while several species of Woodpecker called.

Excitement increased when we found a **Grey Headed Woodpecker** which was a first for most.

At the same spot another **Ural Owl** was nesting in a box with a mirror rigged so that an owlet could be seen inside. On our return to the minibus **Middle Spotted Woodpecker** gave very good views, and another **Hawfinch** came close.

We eventually arrived at our next hotel in the Slovak Karst region. After dinner, a trip to a local quarry with Balazs's friend Stefan, but the resident **Eagle Owl** was neither seen nor heard.

Day 8 Tuesday 23 rd April

Crested Lark flitted about the garden of the hotel, with Great Crested Grebe and Wigeon on the adjacent lake. On the journey to a forest with Stefan we saw **Lesser Spotted Eagle** and Buzzard from the minibus.

A short walk in the Forest, while keeping absolutely quiet, paid off eventually with brief views of a **Hazel Grouse**, a very shy and elusive bird, then further on, we heard Marsh Tit and **Nutcracker**. Along another forest track after lunch gave us even longer views of a **Hazel Grouse**, and we also lured a **Firecrest** into view with a recording.

Another after-dinner a trip to the quarry, but **Eagle Owl** was only heard before darkness came. Driving back to hotel, we nearly ran into half a dozen **Wild Boar**, picked out in the headlights.

Day 9 Wednesday 24 th April

A short excursion into a very scenic nature reserve in a gorge at **Serins** were singing as we arrived and soon everyone had good views. The stream was in full spate and we were told several Dippers nests had been washed away this

spring. Some saw a Peregrine and everyone saw the obliging Grey Wagtail which posed for photos. Butterflies were plentiful with Brimstone, Orange Tip and a Swallowtail in evidence, then we set off for Budapest.



We finished the holiday in fine style at a restaurant in Budapest accompanied by entertainment with a small band playing Hungarian music, with singing and dancers in traditional dress.



Checklist

Little Grebe	Curlew	Nightingale
Great Crested Grebe	Spotted Redshank	Black Redstart
Bittern	Redshank	Whinchat
Night Heron	Marsh Sandpiper	Stonechat
Grey Heron	Green Sandpiper	Wheatear
Purple heron	Wood Sandpiper	Blackbird
Black Stork	Common Sandpiper	Ring Ouzel
White Stork	Little Stint	Song Thrush
Grey Lag Goose	Temminks Stint	Mistle Thrush
Mute Swan	LBB Gull (<i>fuscus ssp</i>)	Blackcap
Barnacle Goose	Dunlin	Lesser Whitethroat
Widgeon	Ruff	Whitethroat
Gadwall	BH Gull	Fieldfare
Mallard	Mediterranean Gull	Great Reed Warbler
Shoveller	Cormorant	Sedge Warbler
Goldeneye	Yellow Legged Gull	Moustached Warbler
Garganey	Common Tern	Reed Warbler
Teal	Whiskered tern	Willow warbler
Pochard	Stock Dove	Chiffchaff
Red Crested Pochard	Wood Pigeon	Wood Warbler
Ferruginous Duck	Collared Dove	Spotted flycatcher
White Tailed Eagle	Turtle Dove	Pied Flycatcher
Marsh Harrier	Cuckoo	Collared Flycatcher
Pallid Harrier	Ural Owl	Willow Tit
Montague's Harrier	Swift	Crested Tit
Sparrowhawk	Hoopoe	Coal Tit
Goshawk	Wryneck	Great Tit
Common Buzzard	LS Woodpecker	Blue Tit
Lesser Spotted Eagle	GS Woodpecker	Long tailed Tit (<i>W. Headed</i>)
Imperial Eagle	MS Woodpecker	Penduline Tit
Kestrel	White Backed Woodpecker	Nuthatch
Red-Footed falcon	Syrian Woodpecker	Short Toed Tree Creeper
Hobby	Black Woodpecker	Goldcrest
Saker falcon	Three Toed Woodpecker	Firecrest
Osprey	Green Woodpecker	Great Grey Shrike
Grey Partridge	Grey headed Woodpecker	Jay
Pheasant	Crested Lark	Magpie
Hazel Grouse	Skylark	Jackdaw
Great Bustard	Sand Martin	Rook
Coot	House Martin	Hooded Crow
Moorhen	Swallow	Carrion Crow
Black winged Stilt	Yellow Wagtail	Raven
Avocet	Yellow Wagtail (<i>supercilia ssp</i>)	Nutcracker
Stone Curlew	Grey wagtail	Starling
Lapwing	White wagtail	House Sparrow
Little Ringed Plover	Pied wagtail	Tree Sparrow
Ringed Plover	Citrine Wagtail	Chaffinch
Snipe	Tree Pipit	Serin
Black Tailed Godwit	Wren	Greenfinch
Hawfinch	Robin	Goldfinch
Yellowhammer	Rock Bunting	Linnet
Corn Bunting	Reed Bunting	Bullfinch
		Dunnock

Butterflies	Mammals	Reptiles
Camberwell Beauty	Pine Marten	Fire Bellied Toad
Orange Tip	Hare	Pond Terrapin
Brimstone	Red Deer	Lizard sp.
Swallowtail	Souslik	