

BULGARIA in spring

“Seeing great birds is always pleasing but sometimes the views are so good that the whole experience is simply unbeatable! From start to finish we enjoyed spectacular views of not only highly desired species such as Eastern Imperial Eagle, Pygmy Cormorant, Masked Shrike, Red-footed Falcon, Black Vulture, Olive-tree Warbler, Semi-collared Flycatcher, Isabelline Wheatear, Ferruginous Duck, Levant Sparrowhawk (that slow winged display type flight was certainly the best view ever on a spring tour), Pied Wheatear, Paddyfield Warbler and Black Woodpecker but we also had stunning views of sometimes secretive and elusive species, and our experiences with Scops Owl, Lesser Spotted Eagle and Honey Buzzards, Savi’s, Sardinian, Barred, Eastern Bonelli’s and Icterine Warbler, Red-rumped Swallow, Middle and Lesser spotted Woodpeckers, Penduline Tit (with nest), Alpine and Pallid Swifts, Oortolan and Black-headed Buntings, and Hawfinch were also outstanding. On top of this we had marshes and wetlands filled with herons and egrets from displaying Little Bitterns to feeding Squacco Herons. In addition to the raptors mentioned already (we saw 21 species in total) few will forget the Golden Eagle dropping its prey (probably a tortoise) to the ground, or the sight of Griffon and Egyptian Vultures in the air together, perched Peregrines, soaring Long-legged Buzzards and both Marsh and Montagu’s Harriers. We were lucky a few times, not least with our 11th hour Yelkouan Shearwater from Cape Kaliakra where we had earlier enjoyed nearby cliff top fields full of Calandra Larks and wild flowers. Even before we reached our hotel we found several Stone-Curlews, a Tawny Pipit and quite a few Short-toed Larks. The woodlands were always great and we eventually managed looks at all the expected woodpeckers with Syrian and Grey-headed particularly pleasing.

We even had time to ‘twitch’ a couple of Great Spotted Cuckoos, caught up with some late White Stork migration (in addition to those huge nests with Spanish Sparrows for lodgers!), breeding Black Storks, the hedgerows lined with Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrikes, the sound of Nightingales and Golden Orioles filling every scrubby area and other highlights ranging from Western Rock Nuthatch, Garganey, Eagle Owl with two chicks, Sombre and Crested Tits, Little Owls, Collared Pratincoles, Purple Herons, Bee-eater colonies, Blue Rock Thrush Hoopoes and Rollers adding colour to an already dazzling bird list not least with the good numbers of Rose-coloured Starlings hurtling somewhere at great speed (one day we saw over 600 before breakfast!) Last but not least special mention should be made of the Wryneck, it took some searching, and the pressure built each day, and finally we got one!

Of course birds are only part of the Bulgaria experience and we amassed a great list of mammals and reptiles topped by an incredible encounter with a Wild Cat (simply breathtaking!) but including close ups with Badger, Fallow Deer and a snake species as well as some distant Harbour Porpoise, Balkan Green Lizards and Eastern Festoon butterflies.

Thankfully the birds and wildlife all behaved themselves but for the smooth running of the trip Nikolay Dilchev must be thanked endlessly, never was a request too much, always good humoured, keen for us to sample the local foods and wines (never in short supply) and really on the ball with the organisation of hotels, meals and local picnics.” James Lidster.

BULGARIA in spring: Bird List...2

Bird List:

Column A = Number of tours on which this species has been recorded.

Column B = Number of days this species was seen on the last tour.

Column C = Maximum daily count for this species on the last tour.

H = Heard only

A		B	C	
4	Black-throated Diver	1	2	<i>Gavia arctica</i>
6	Little Grebe	2	3	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
6	Great Crested Grebe	4	20	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
2	Black-necked Grebe			<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
3	Red-necked Grebe			<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>
3	Yelkouan Shearwater	1	1	<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>
6	Great Cormorant	6	300	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis</i>
6	Pygmy Cormorant	4	10	<i>Phalacrocorax pygmaeus</i>
6	Shag	1	8	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>
6	White Pelican	2	200	<i>Pelecanus onocratalus</i>
6	Dalmatian Pelican	3	31	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>
6	Little Bittern	4	5	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>
6	Night Heron	3	15	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
6	Squacco Heron	4	18	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
6	Little Egret	5	20	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
5	Great Egret	2	2	<i>Egretta alba</i>
6	Grey Heron	6	20	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
6	Purple Heron	3	5	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
6	Black Stork	6	15	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>
6	White Stork	9	1500	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
6	Glossy Ibis	1	96	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
6	Spoonbill	4	12	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
6	Mute Swan	4	68	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
3	Greylag Goose	1	4	<i>Anser anser</i>
1	White-fronted Goose			<i>Anser albifrons</i>
6	Ruddy Shelduck	2	12	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
6	Shelduck	3	15	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
6	Gadwall	3	10	<i>Anas strepera</i>
6	Mallard	6	10	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
5	Garganey	3	8	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
2	Red-crested Pochard			<i>Netta rufina</i>
6	Pochard	4	20	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
6	Ferruginous Duck	4	30	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
2	Tufted Duck			<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
6	Honey Buzzard	6	15	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>
4	Short-toed Eagle	3	2	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
6	Black Kite	3	2	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
4	White-tailed Eagle	1	1	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
6	Egyptian Vulture	2	4	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
6	Griffon Vulture	2	30	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>
4	Black Vulture	2	2	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>

BULGARIA in spring: Bird List...3

1	Osprey				<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
6	Western Marsh Harrier	5	15		<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
5	Montagu's Harrier	1	3		<i>Circus pygargus</i>
5	Goshawk	3	2		<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
5	Sparrowhawk	1	4		<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
3	Levant Sparrowhawk	4	2		<i>Accipiter brevipes</i>
6	Common Buzzard	8	10		<i>Buteo buteo</i>
6	Long-legged Buzzard	5	4		<i>Buteo rufinus</i>
2	Golden Eagle	1	1		<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
6	Eastern Imperial Eagle	1	2		<i>Aquila heliaca</i>
6	Lesser Spotted Eagle	2	8		<i>Aquila pomarina</i>
6	Booted Eagle	1	1		<i>Hieraeetus pennatus</i>
6	Common Kestrel	10	6		<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
4	Red-footed Falcon	2	4		<i>Falco vespertinus</i>
6	Hobby	5	4		<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
3	Eleonora's Falcon				<i>Falco eleonorae</i>
6	Peregrine	2	2		<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
4	Quail				<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
2	Pheasant	3	1		<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
5	Chukar	1	1		<i>Alectoris chukar</i>
4	Water Rail	2	1	H	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>
1	Corncrake	3	4	H	<i>Crex crex</i>
6	Moorhen	5	5		<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
6	Coot	3	20		<i>Fulica atra</i>
1	Common Crane				<i>Grus grus</i>
4	Eurasian Oystercatcher				<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
6	Black-winged Stilt	5	34		<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
6	Avocet	4	50		<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
6	Collared Pratincole	1	4		<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
3	Stone-curlew	1	3		<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>
6	Little Ringed Plover	4	6		<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
5	Common Ringed Plover	2	4		<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
6	Kentish Plover	3	5		<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
3	Grey Plover	1	1		<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
6	Lapwing	6	5		<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
1	Spur-winged Plover				<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>
1	Ruddy Turnstone				<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
3	Ruff	1	1		<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
2	Dunlin				<i>Calidris alpina</i>
5	Little Stint	3	55		<i>Calidris minuta</i>
6	Curlew Sandpiper	3	10		<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
1	Broad-billed Sandpiper				<i>Limicola falcinellus</i>
4	Black-tailed Godwit				<i>Limosa limosa</i>
1	Bar-tailed Godwit				<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
1	Curlew				<i>Numenius arquata</i>
2	Redshank				<i>Tringa totanus</i>
2	Marsh Sandpiper				<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
3	Greenshank				<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
1	Green Sandpiper				<i>Tringa ochropus</i>

BULGARIA in spring: Bird List...4

2	Common Sandpiper			<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
1	Arctic Skua			<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
6	Mediterranean Gull	4	60	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>
1	Laughing Gull			<i>Larus atricilla</i>
3	Little Gull	1	1	<i>Larus minutus</i>
6	Black-headed Gull	4	20	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
2	Slender-billed Gull			<i>Larus genei</i>
4	Lesser Black-backed Gull			<i>Larus fuscus fuscus</i>
6	Yellow-legged Gull	9	100	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
2	Caspian Gull			<i>Larus cachinnans</i>
1	Caspian Tern			<i>Sterna caspia</i>
6	Sandwich Tern	4	200	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
4	Gull-billed Tern	1	2	<i>Sterna nilotica</i>
6	Common Tern	4	300	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
6	Little Tern	3	30	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
6	Whiskered Tern	3	40	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
6	Black Tern	3	20	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
3	White-winged Black Tern			<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
6	Feral Pigeon	10	50	<i>Columba livia</i>
6	Wood Pigeon	4	3	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
6	Collared Dove	9	8	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
6	Turtle Dove	9	50	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
1	Great Spotted Cuckoo	1	2	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>
6	Cuckoo	8	10	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
5	Scops Owl	2	1	<i>Otus scops</i>
5	Eagle Owl	1	3	<i>Bubo bubo</i>
6	Little Owl	3	1	<i>Athene noctua</i>
3	Nightjar			<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>
6	Alpine Swift	4	200	<i>Apus melba</i>
6	Common Swift	6	50	<i>Apus apus</i>
6	Pallid Swift	4	10	<i>Apus pallidus</i>
6	Kingfisher	3	1	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
6	European Bee-eater	7	100	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
6	Roller	6	5	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>
6	Hoopoe	6	4	<i>Upupa epops</i>
4	Wryneck	1	1	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
6	Grey-headed Woodpecker	3	1	<i>Picus canus</i>
6	Green Woodpecker	3	1	<i>Picus viridis</i>
4	Black Woodpecker	2	1	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>
6	Great Spotted Woodpecker	3	3	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
6	Syrian Woodpecker	5	3	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>
6	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	1	2	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>
6	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	3	4	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>
6	Calandra Lark	3	70	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>
3	Short-toed Lark	1	10	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
6	Crested Lark	7	10	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
6	Woodlark	2	1	<i>Lullula arborea</i>
6	Skylark	6	5	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
6	Sand Martin	3	2	<i>Riparia riparia</i>

BULGARIA in spring: Bird List...5

6	Crag Martin	7	50		<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>
6	Barn Swallow	10	30		<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
6	Red-rumped Swallow	9	30		<i>Hirundo daurica</i>
6	House Martin	10	50		<i>Delichon urbica</i>
6	Tawny Pipit	1	1		<i>Anthus campestris</i>
3	Tree Pipit	1	1		<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
1	Citrine Wagtail				<i>Motacilla citreola</i>
6	Black-headed Wagtail	7	6		<i>Motacilla feldegg</i>
6	Grey Wagtail	5	5		<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
6	White Wagtail	10	50		<i>Motacilla alba</i>
6	Dipper	4	4		<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>
6	Wren	3	1		<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
4	Dunnock				<i>Prunella modularis</i>
6	Robin	8	5		<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
6	Nightingale	8	4		<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
1	Common Redstart	1	1		<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
6	Black Redstart	6	5		<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
5	Stonechat	1	1		<i>Saxicola torquata</i>
6	Isabelline Wheatear	3	5		<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>
6	Northern Wheatear	6	4		<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
6	Pied Wheatear	2	10		<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>
6	Eastern Black-eared Wheatear	1	2		<i>Oenanthe melanoleuca</i>
2	Rock Thrush				<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>
4	Blue Rock Thrush	2	2		<i>Monticola solitarius</i>
6	Blackbird	10	10		<i>Turdus merula</i>
1	Ring Ouzel				<i>Turdus torquatus</i>
6	Song Thrush	6	10		<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
6	Mistle Thrush	3	2		<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
6	Cetti's Warbler	1	1		<i>Cettia cetti</i>
6	Savi's Warbler	2	1		<i>Locustella lucinioides</i>
4	River Warbler	2	2	H	<i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>
6	Paddyfield Warbler	1	10		<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>
6	Marsh Warbler	3	2		<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>
5	Reed Warbler	1	3		<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
6	Great Reed Warbler	5	20		<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
6	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	6	6		<i>Hippolais pallida</i>
6	Olive-tree Warbler	1	2		<i>Hippolais olivetorum</i>
4	Icterine Warbler	2	1		<i>Hippolais icterina</i>
3	Subalpine Warbler				<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>
1	Sardinian Warbler	1	1		<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
2	Eastern Orphean Warbler				<i>Sylvia crassirostris</i>
6	Barred Warbler	4	2		<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>
6	Lesser Whitethroat	3	5		<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
6	Whitethroat	6	10		<i>Sylvia communis</i>
6	Blackcap	7	2		<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
6	Chiffchaff	5	2		<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
1	Wood Warbler	1	1		<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
2	Eastern Bonelli's Warbler	1	2		<i>Phylloscopus orientalis</i>
3	Goldcrest	1	1	H	<i>Regulus regulus</i>

BULGARIA in spring: Bird List...6

3	Firecrest	2	2	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>
6	Spotted Flycatcher	2	4	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
6	Semi-collared Flycatcher	1	4	<i>Ficedula semitorquata</i>
1	Red-breasted Flycatcher	1	1	<i>Ficedula parva</i>
4	Bearded Tit	1	2	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>
3	Long-tailed Tit	3	6	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
6	Marsh Tit	3	2	<i>Poecile palustris</i>
1	Willow Tit			<i>Poecile montanus</i>
4	Sombre Tit	1	2	<i>Parus lugubris</i>
3	Crested Tit	1	1	<i>Parus cristatus</i>
6	Coal Tit	2	5	<i>Parus ater</i>
6	Blue Tit	6	10	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
6	Great Tit	8	6	<i>Parus major</i>
6	Nuthatch	4	5	<i>Sitta europea</i>
5	Western Rock Nuthatch	1	2	<i>Sitta neumayer</i>
6	Wallcreeper	1	1	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>
3	Eurasian Treecreeper			<i>Certhia familiaris</i>
6	Short-toed Treecreeper	2	2	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
6	Penduline Tit	3	1	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>
6	Red-backed Shrike	9	30	<i>Lanius collurio</i>
6	Lesser Grey Shrike	5	15	<i>Lanius minor</i>
6	Woodchat Shrike	3	4	<i>Lanius senator</i>
6	Masked Shrike	2	2	<i>Lanius nubicus</i>
6	Golden Oriole	7	20	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
6	Jay	9	10	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
6	Magpie	10	15	<i>Pica pica</i>
4	Nutcracker	1	2	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>
6	Jackdaw	10	50	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
5	Rook	2	40	<i>Corvus frugeligus</i>
6	Hooded Crow	10	10	<i>Corvus cornix</i>
6	Raven	4	6	<i>Corvus corax</i>
6	Starling	10	50	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
6	Rose-coloured Starling	6	750	<i>Sturnus roseus</i>
6	House Sparrow	10	10	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
6	Spanish Sparrow	7	70	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
6	Tree Sparrow	9	6	<i>Passer montanus</i>
6	Chaffinch	9	20	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
6	Serin	1	6	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
6	Greenfinch	8	4	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
6	Goldfinch	10	20	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
6	Linnet	3	5	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
4	Crossbill	1	2	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>
6	Bullfinch	1	2	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>
6	Hawfinch	5	25	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>
6	Yellowhammer	2	1	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>
6	Cirl Bunting	2	2	<i>Emberiza cirrus</i>
3	Rock Bunting			<i>Emberiza cia</i>
5	Reed Bunting	2	1	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>
6	Ortolan Bunting	4	2	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>

BULGARIA in spring: Bird List...7

6	Black-headed Bunting	7	20	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>
6	Corn Bunting	9	20	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>