

BULGARIA IN AUTUMN

“While Western Europe endured more days of strong winds and heavy rain in Eastern Bulgaria we could have been forgiven for thinking it was mid summer! Each day saw warm temperatures of up to 30 degrees with a sea breeze to keep the climate comfortable. Unfortunately this settled weather means we weren’t in for huge falls of passerines, nor did it encourage raptors and storks to migrate in large numbers but the variety was still there. Our raptor list was long and varied and included seeing 5 species of eagle in one day, incredible views of Levant Sparrowhawks, numerous Marsh and Montagu’s Harriers and a Red-footed Falcon. Our largest count of White Storks was just 500, while White Pelicans numbered in their thousands.

The passerine highlights were mainly those species that are rare and scarce in the west, namely scores of Red-backed Shrikes with smaller numbers of Woodchat and Lesser Greys, Ortolan Buntings, Red-breasted Flycatchers, Great Reed and Wood Warblers, Tawny Pipits, flocks of Calandra and Short-toed Larks. Pied and Isabelline Wheatears and best of all a very showy Citrine Wagtail.

For the time of year we did very well for woodpeckers with Black, Syrian, Green, Great Spotted, Lesser Spotted and Middle Spotted all being seen (never guaranteed in the autumn when they are mainly silent). Our regular Eagle Owl site didn’t let us down and the good views one day were matched by great views of Little Owl a few days later.

Splashes of colour were always around and European Bee-eaters were a daily occurrence, with regular parties drifting south. Added to this were roadside Rollers, Eurasian Hoopoes, Golden Orioles and several fleeting Kingfishers.

The wetlands are always productive and the warm weather only enhanced that feeling. We had close up encounters with Purple and Squacco Herons, Eurasian Spoonbills, the endangered Dalmatian Pelicans, not to mention the mixture of terns including Caspian, Black, Whiskered and Gull-billed. Gulls aren’t everyone’s thing but few can fail to be impressed by flocks of Little and Mediterranean Gulls.

Time spent around the salt pans and marshes also gave us a brilliant list of waders with specialities such as Marsh Sandpiper and Red-necked Phalaropes among the more numerous Little Stints, Wood and Curlew Sandpipers, Kentish and Little Ringed Plovers and Black-winged Stilts. Pride of place though must go to the flock of juvenile Broad-billed Sandpipers at Pomorie. Looking exquisite in their fresh plumage this flock was also very approachable, a real treat!

Other excitement came in the form of a juvenile Goshawk scaring everything in site, Pygmy Cormorants, several Common Quail, Short-toed Treecreeper, Garganey and Ferruginous Ducks, Red-rumped Swallows, Turtle Doves and Sombre Tit. What made this week so enjoyable wasn’t only the great company and the relaxed atmosphere but also the hard work and care provided by Nikolay. We were treated to picnics of delicious local produce every day, our evening meals were tasty, varied and best of all traditional, we got to sample the local beer and wine and were expertly driven and guided around a simply beautiful part of Eastern Europe.” – James Lidster

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.

BULGARIA in autumn: Bird List...2

H = Heard only

A	B	C	
1			<i>Gavia arctica</i>
2	2	2	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
2	3	10	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
2	1	2	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>
1			<i>Podiceps auritus</i>
2	3	14	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
2	7	100	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
2	3	20	<i>Phalacrocorax pygmaeus</i>
2	2	15	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>
2	1	2000	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>
2	1	50	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>
1			<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>
1			<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
2	1	1	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
2	4	30	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
2	1	9	<i>Egretta alba</i>
2	4	50	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
2	3	3	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
2	1	6	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>
2	2	500	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
1	1	2	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
2	2	20	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
2	3	50	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
2	2	50	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
2	2	20	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
2	2	4	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
2	3	20	<i>Anas crecca</i>
1			<i>Anas clypeata</i>
2	1	500	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
2	4	50	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
2	4	2	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
2	2	2	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>
2	2	3	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
2	1	2	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
2	6	20	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
2	2	5	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
1			<i>Circus macrourus</i>
2	1	1	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
2	1	1	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
2	5	5	<i>Accipiter brevipes</i>
2	6	5	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
2	1	2	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>
2	3	6	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>
1	1	1	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
2	1	2	<i>Aquila pennatus</i>

BULGARIA in autumn: Bird List...3

2	Common Kestrel	7	10	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
1	Red-footed Falcon	1	1	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>
2	Hobby	1	1	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
2	Saker Falcon			<i>Falco cherrug</i>
2	Quail	3	2	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
1	Pheasant	1	1	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
1	Water Rail			<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>
2	Moorhen	1	3	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
2	Coot	2	100	<i>Fulica atra</i>
2	Stone-curlew	1	7	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>
2	Eurasian Oystercatcher	1	2	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
2	Black-winged Stilt	2	6	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
2	Avocet	4	100	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
1	Collared Pratincole			<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
1	Grey Plover	1	1	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
2	Little Ringed Plover	3	8	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
2	Ringed Plover	2	6	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
2	Kentish Plover	1	4	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
1	Lapwing	3	3	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
2	Ruff	2	6	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
2	Broad-billed Sandpiper	2	16	<i>Limicola falcinellus</i>
2	Dunlin	2	5	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
2	Sanderling	1	20	<i>Calidris alba</i>
1	Red Knot	1	4	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
2	Little Stint	2	10	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
1	Temminck's Stint			<i>Calidris temminckii</i>
2	Curlew Sandpiper	2	30	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
2	Black-tailed Godwit	1	8	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
1	Curlew			<i>Numenius arquata</i>
1	Eurasian Whimbrel	1	1	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
2	Redshank	3	6	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
1	Spotted Redshank			<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
2	Marsh Sandpiper	1	1	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
2	Wood Sandpiper	4	10	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
2	Greenshank	1	2	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
1	Green Sandpiper			<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
2	Common Sandpiper	4	2	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
1	Common Snipe	1	1	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
2	Turnstone	2	6	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
1	Red-necked Phalarope	2	2	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
2	Mediterranean Gull	4	100	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>
2	Little Gull	2	100	<i>Larus minutus</i>
2	Black-headed Gull	5	20	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
2	Slender-billed Gull	1	1	<i>Larus genei</i>
2	Yellow-legged Gull	7	50	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
2	Caspian Tern	1	4	<i>Sterna caspia</i>
2	Sandwich Tern	6	50	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
2	Common Tern	5	20	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
2	Little Tern	1	3	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>

BULGARIA in autumn: Bird List...4

2	Gull-billed Tern	1	2	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
2	Whiskered Tern	2	2	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
2	Black Tern	3	20	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
1	White-winged Black Tern			<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
2	Feral Pigeon	6	30	<i>Columba livia</i>
1	Wood Pigeon	1	1	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
2	Collared Dove	6	5	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
2	Turtle Dove	4	10	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
1	Cuckoo			<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
2	Eurasian Eagle Owl	2	1	<i>Bubo bubo</i>
1	Little Owl	1	1	<i>Athene noctua</i>
2	Alpine Swift	2	3	<i>Apus melba</i>
2	Common Swift	2	4	<i>Apus apus</i>
2	Kingfisher	3	2	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
2	European Bee-eater	7	50	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
2	Roller	4	5	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>
2	Hoopoe	3	2	<i>Upupa epops</i>
1	Wryneck			<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
1	Grey-headed Woodpecker			<i>Picus canus</i>
2	Green Woodpecker	2	1	<i>Picus viridis</i>
1	Black Woodpecker	1	1	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>
2	Great Spotted Woodpecker	3	2	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
2	Syrian Woodpecker	1	2	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>
2	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	1	1	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>
2	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	2	1	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>
2	Calandra Lark	3	30	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>
1	Short-toed Lark	2	70	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
2	Crested Lark	2	2	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
1	Woodlark			<i>Lullula arborea</i>
2	Skylark	2	1	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
2	Sand Martin	7	30	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
2	Barn Swallow	7	50	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
2	Red-rumped Swallow	2	4	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>
2	House Martin	7	20	<i>Delichon urbica</i>
2	Tawny Pipit	3	10	<i>Anthus campestris</i>
1	Tree Pipit			<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
2	Yellow Wagtail	4	50	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
2	White Wagtail	4	4	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
1	Citrine Wagtail	1	1	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>
2	Robin	1	1	H <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
1	Common Nightingale			<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
1	Thrush Nightingale			<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>
1	Black Redstart	1	2	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
1	Common Redstart			<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
2	Whinchat	4	4	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
2	Isabelline Wheatear	1	1	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>
2	Northern Wheatear	4	10	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
2	Pied Wheatear	2	8	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>
2	Blackbird	2	1	<i>Turdus merula</i>

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2	Song Thrush	3	2	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
1	Mistle Thrush	1	1	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
2	Savi's Warbler	1	1	<i>Locustella lucinioides</i>
2	Reed Warbler	2	1	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
1	Sedge Warbler			<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>
1	Moustached Warbler			<i>Acrocephalus melanopogon</i>
2	Great Reed Warbler	2	2	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
1	Icterine Warbler			<i>Hippolais icterina</i>
1	Barred Warbler			<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>
2	Lesser Whitethroat	3	6	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
2	Whitethroat	2	3	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
2	Blackcap	1	1	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
1	Garden Warbler			<i>Sylvia borin</i>
2	Willow Warbler	3	4	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
2	Wood Warbler	1	1	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
2	Spotted Flycatcher	3	10	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
2	Red-breasted Flycatcher	3	3	<i>Ficedula parva</i>
1	Bearded Tit	2	2	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>
1	Long-tailed Tit			<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
1	Marsh Tit			<i>Parus palustris</i>
2	Sombre Tit	1	2	<i>Parus lugubris</i>
2	Blue Tit	2	4	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
2	Great Tit	4	6	<i>Parus major</i>
2	Nuthatch	2	10	<i>Sitta europea</i>
2	Short-toed Treecreeper	1	2	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
1	Penduline Tit			<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>
2	Lesser Grey Shrike	3	2	<i>Lanius minor</i>
2	Red-backed Shrike	6	100	<i>Lanius collurio</i>
2	Woodchat Shrike	2	1	<i>Lanius senator</i>
2	Golden Oriole	5	3	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
2	Jay	4	2	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
2	Magpie	7	30	<i>Pica pica</i>
2	Jackdaw	2	20	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
2	Hooded Crow	1	3	<i>Corvus cornix</i>
2	Raven	1	1	<i>Corvus corax</i>
2	Starling	6	1200	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
2	House Sparrow	4	50	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
1	Spanish Sparrow			<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
2	Tree Sparrow	2	20	<i>Passer montanus</i>
2	Chaffinch	2	5	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
1	Greenfinch			<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
2	Goldfinch	3	3	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
1	Linnet			<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
1	Hawfinch			<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>
1	Ortolan Bunting	1	4	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>
2	Cirl Bunting	1	2	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>
1	Reed Bunting			<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>
2	Corn Bunting	2	100	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>