

UKRAINE – birding the Crimea

“This year’s tour to Crimea differed from previous ones in that it started and ended in Kiev, and we used overnight sleeper trains for travel to and from southern Ukraine. This meant that we had the opportunity to experience something of the northern boreal forest, and the wetlands and meadows beside the Dnipro River, where we saw a good range of birds including displaying Barred Warblers, booming Bitterns and calling Corncrakes. In addition, on the return journey, we had just enough time in Kiev to see the remarkable St Sophia cathedral (a World Heritage Site) and gorgeous St Michael’s monastery.

The unusual spring weather of a warm start followed by a long cold wet period clearly confused the migratory species: on the one hand the numerous Red-footed Falcon colonies were in full swing, and swifts congregated overhead; on the other, the numbers of orioles, warblers and flycatchers were well down. Nevertheless, a fall of literally thousands of Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrikes around Opug mountain on the morning of 19th May (along with a few Red-breasted Flycatchers, Rose-coloured Starlings and Black-headed Buntings) was a once-in-a-lifetime event: almost every shrub and pole had a shrike atop it, and those without a perch were hopping along the road verges. Other memorable highlights included White-tailed Eagles and nesting Whiskered Terns at Gola Pristan; displaying Great Bustards at Bagerove; a flock of 15 Demoiselle Cranes soaring over us at Krasnoperekopsk; thousands of waders (stints, Curlew Sandpipers and Broad-billed Sandpipers) on the Sivash; and Griffons, Short-toed Eagle and Peregrines hunting at Zeleny Gora.

The brief but impressive visits to Livadia Palace (former summer home of Tsars and venue for the 1945 Yalta Conference) and the Khan’s Palace in Bakhchyserei reminded us of the role Crimea has long played in European history, and the views from Opug, Bagerove and Ai Petri were simply stunning.

While the train journeys received mixed reviews from enthusiasm to some unhappiness, everyone enjoyed the hospitality, professionalism and friendliness of the local guides, the comfort and well-chosen situations of the hotels, the splendid dinners, and not least the sumptuous picnics featuring a range of tasty local specialities – a real treat!” – *Paul Goriup*

Bird List:

- Column A = Number of tours 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.
 (H) = Mostly heard but some seen.
 N = Nesting
 Disp = Displaying

A		B	C	
2	Black-throated Diver	1	1	<i>Gavia arctica</i>
1	Little Grebe	1	4	<i>Podiceps ruficollis</i>
2	Black-necked Grebe	2	10	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
2	Red-necked Grebe	1	3	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>
2	Great Crested Grebe	5	8	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
1	White Pelican			<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>
2	Continental Cormorant	4	70	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis</i>
2	Mediterranean Shag	2	6	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii</i>
1	Continental Pygmy Cormorant	1	4	<i>Phalacrocorax pygmaeus</i>

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2	Bittern	2	1	(H)	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>
2	Night Heron	2	4		<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
2	Squacco Heron	3	5		<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
2	Great White Egret	5	20		<i>Egretta alba</i>
2	Little Egret	4	12		<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
2	Grey Heron	6	20	N	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
2	Purple Heron	3	3		<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
2	Spoonbill	2	2		<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
2	Glossy Ibis	2	10		<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
2	White Stork	4	6	N	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
2	Greylag Goose	2	15	N	<i>Anser anser</i>
2	Mute Swan	5	150	N	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
2	Ruddy Shelduck	2	14		<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
2	Shelduck	6	200	N	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
2	Mallard	4	10		<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
1	Wigeon				<i>Anas penelope</i>
2	Garganey	2	4		<i>Anas querquedula</i>
2	Shoveler	1	3		<i>Anas clypeata</i>
2	Red-crested Pochard	2	6		<i>Netta rufina</i>
2	Pochard	4	18		<i>Aythya ferina</i>
2	Ferruginous Duck	1	2		<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
2	Tufted Duck				<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
1	Honey Buzzard	1	1		<i>Pernis apivorus</i>
1	Pallid Harrier				<i>Circus macrourus</i>
2	Montagu`s Harrier	1	3		<i>Circus pygargus</i>
2	Marsh Harrier	6	20	Disp	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
1	Sparrowhawk				<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
1	Long-legged Buzzard	4	1		<i>Buteo rufinus</i>
2	Buzzard	5	2		<i>Buteo buteo</i>
1	Short-toed Eagle	2	1		<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
1	Imperial Eagle				<i>Aquila heliaca</i>
1	White-tailed Eagle	1	2	Pair	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
2	Griffon Vulture	1	4		<i>Gyps fulvus</i>
1	Saker				<i>Falco cherrug</i>
2	Peregrine	2	3	N	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
1	Hobby				<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
2	Red-footed Falcon	6	50	N	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>
2	Kestrel	7	10	N	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
2	Chukar	1	1		<i>Alectoris chukar</i>
2	Partridge	3	3		<i>Perdix perdix</i>
2	Quail	3	2		<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
2	Pheasant	5	2		<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
2	Common Crane	1	100		<i>Grus grus</i>
2	Demoiselle Crane	3	15		<i>Anthropoides virgo</i>
1	Water Rail				<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>
1	Corncrake	1	1		<i>Crex crex</i>
1	Moorhen				<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
2	Coot	4	30		<i>Fulica atra</i>
2	Great Bustard	2	9	Disp	<i>Otis tarda</i>

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2	Oystercatcher	2	4		<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
2	Black-winged Stilt	5	60	N	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
2	Avocet	4	60	N	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
2	Stone Curlew	1	2	N	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>
2	Collared Pratincole	2	3		<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
2	Little Ringed Plover	1	4	N	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
2	Ringed Plover	3	2		<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
2	Kentish Plover	2	10	N	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
2	Grey Plover	2	500		<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
2	Lapwing	6	10		<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
2	Little Stint	3	200		<i>Calidris minuta</i>
2	Temminck`s Stint	1	1		<i>Calidris temminckii</i>
2	Curlew Sandpiper	2	300		<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
2	Dunlin	1	1000		<i>Calidris alpina</i>
1	Broad-billed Sandpiper	1	1		<i>Limicola falcinellus</i>
2	Ruff	2	15		<i>Phylomachus pugnax</i>
1	Black-tailed Godwit				<i>Limosa limosa</i>
1	Bar-tailed Godwit	1	1		<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
1	Whimbrel				<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
2	Curlew	1	1		<i>Numenius arquata</i>
1	Spotted Redshank				<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
2	Redshank	2	2		<i>Tringa totanus</i>
1	Greenshank				<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
2	Wood Sandpiper	3	15		<i>Tringa glareola</i>
1	Common Sandpiper				<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
2	Turnstone	2	10		<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
2	Arctic Skua	1	1		<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
2	Great Black-headed Gull	1	2		<i>Larus ichtyaetus</i>
2	Mediterranean Gull	2	4		<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>
1	Little Gull				<i>Larus minutus</i>
2	Black-headed Gull	5	30		<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
2	Slender-billed Gull	2	75		<i>Larus genei</i>
1	Lesser Black-backed Gull				<i>Larus fuscus</i>
1	Yellow-legged Gull	1	1		<i>Larus michahellis</i>
2	Caspian Gull	7	200		<i>Larus cachinnans</i>
2	Gull-billed Tern	4	10		<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
2	Caspian Tern	1	10		<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
2	Sandwich Tern	3	200		<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
2	Common Tern	4	50	N	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
2	Little Tern	3	16	N	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
2	Whiskered Tern	4	50	N	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
2	Black Tern	5	100		<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
2	White-winged Black Tern	1	5		<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
2	Woodpigeon	6	15		<i>Columba palumbus</i>
2	Rock (Feral) Dove	8	100		<i>Columba livia</i>
2	Collared Dove	7	20		<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
2	Turtle Dove	7	4		<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
2	Cuckoo	8	6		<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
1	Scops Owl	3	6		<i>Otus scops</i>

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1	Little Owl				<i>Athene noctua</i>
2	Long-eared Owl	2	5		<i>Asio otus</i>
2	Short-eared Owl	1	1		<i>Asio flammeus</i>
2	Alpine Swift	2	50		<i>Apus melba</i>
2	Swift	8	300		<i>Apus apus</i>
2	Roller	2	15		<i>Coracias garrulus</i>
1	Kingfisher	1	2		<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
2	Bee-eater	5	30	N	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
2	Hoopoe	6	6	N	<i>Upupa epops</i>
2	Wryneck	2	2		<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
1	Grey-faced Woodpecker	1	2		<i>Picus canus</i>
2	Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	2		<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
2	Syrian Woodpecker	2	2		<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>
2	Calandra Lark	5	500	N	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>
2	Crested Lark	5	30	N	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
2	Short-toed Lark	1	2	N	<i>Calandrella cinerea</i>
2	Skylark	4	100	N	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
2	Sand Martin	4	20		<i>Riparia riparia</i>
2	Swallow	8	100	N	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
2	House Martin	7	100	N	<i>Delichon urbica</i>
2	Tawny Pipit	3	6		<i>Anthus campestris</i>
2	Tree Pipit	2	6		<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
2	Yellow Wagtail	1	6		<i>Motacilla flava</i>
2	Black-headed Wagtail	5	6		<i>Motacilla feldegg</i>
2	Grey Wagtail	1	1		<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
2	White Wagtail	8	10		<i>Motacilla alba</i>
2	Robin	1	3		<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
2	Thrush Nightingale	2	10		<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>
2	Nightingale	3	10		<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
2	Black Redstart	2	2	N	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
2	Redstart	4	2		<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
2	Whinchat	1	2		<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
1	Stonechat	1	1		<i>Saxicola torquata</i>
1	Siberian Stonechat				<i>S.maura variegata</i>
2	Wheatear	6	6	N	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
1	Isabelline Wheatear	2	1		<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>
2	Pied Wheatear	2	6	N	<i>Oenanthe pleschanca</i>
1	Rock Thrush				<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>
2	Blackbird	7	20		<i>Turdus merula</i>
2	Song Thrush	1	2		<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
1	Mistle Thrush				<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
2	Savi`s Warbler	1	1		<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>
1	Sedge Warbler	2	6		<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>
2	Paddyfield Warbler	3	2		<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>
2	Reed Warbler	1	1		<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
2	Great Reed Warbler	5	6		<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
1	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler				<i>Hippolais ida</i>
2	Barred Warbler	2	4		<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>
1	Eastern Orphean Warbler				<i>Sylvia crassirostris</i>

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1	Lesser Whitethroat				<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
2	Whitethroat	3	3		<i>Sylvia communis</i>
2	Garden Warbler	2	2		<i>Sylvia borin</i>
2	Blackcap	3	10		<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
2	Wood Warbler	1	3		<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
2	Chiffchaff	4	4		<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
2	Willow Warbler	3	3		<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
2	Red-breasted Flycatcher	2	1		<i>Ficedula parva</i>
2	Collared Flycatcher	1	1		<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>
1	Pied Flycatcher				<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
2	Spotted Flycatcher	3	4		<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
2	Firecrest	1	1		<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>
1	Bearded Tit				<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>
2	Coal Tit	1	1		<i>Parus ater</i>
2	Blue Tit	1	6		<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
2	Great Tit	5	10		<i>Parus major</i>
1	Treecreeper				<i>Certhia familiaris</i>
2	Penduline Tit	1	4	N	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>
2	Golden Oriole	3	10		<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
2	Red-backed Shrike	7	1000		<i>Lanius collurio</i>
1	Woodchat Shrike				<i>Lanius senator</i>
2	Lesser Grey Shrike	6	600		<i>Lanius minor</i>
2	Jay	1	1		<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
2	Magpie	7	40	N	<i>Pica pica</i>
2	Jackdaw	5	100	N	<i>Corvus monedula soemmerringii</i>
2	Rook	6	200	N	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
2	Hooded Crow	8	20	N	<i>Corvus cornix</i>
2	Raven	4	10	N	<i>Corvus corax</i>
2	Starling	8	100	N	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
1	Rose-coloured Starling	2	2		<i>Sturnus roseus</i>
2	House Sparrow	8	50	N	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
2	Tree Sparrow	2	10	N	<i>Passer montanus</i>
2	Chaffinch	6	100		<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
2	Greenfinch	5	20		<i>Chloris chloris</i>
2	Goldfinch	7	10		<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
2	Linnet	4	10		<i>Acanthis cannabina</i>
1	Redpoll	1	2		<i>Acanthis flammea</i>
1	Crossbill				<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>
2	Hawfinch	1	2		<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>
2	Yellowhammer	1	1		<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>
2	Ortolan Bunting	2	3		<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>
2	Reed Bunting	2	2		<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>
2	Black-headed Bunting	2	20		<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>
2	Corn Bunting	6	300		<i>Emberiza calandra</i>