

## BULGARIA - AUTUMN MIGRATION SEPTEMBER 2008

### Day 1 Friday 19<sup>th</sup> September

After a short 3 hour flight we landed ahead of schedule at Burgas in Eastern Bulgaria a little after 10pm this evening and proceeded through Immigration and a tedious Baggage Reclaim before meeting Dobromir our guide for the week. It was just a short 5 minute drive to our hotel which would be our base for the next 4 nights and upon arrival we checked into our rooms before meeting in the restaurant for some much needed refreshments and to talk over the arrangements for the following day. We were surprised to find out from Dobromir that the hotel was just a few metres from the shores of the Black Sea, so hastily rearranged our 8am meeting time for breakfast to a 6.30am sojourn down to the beach!

### Day 2 Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September

After a good night's sleep we met up just as the sun began peeking over the roofs of the surrounding houses at 6.30am and decided to drive for a few minutes along the highway to **Lake Atanasovsko**. From our vantage point looking across the lagoons we could see lots of activity involving many species



familiar to us from birding in the UK. Most notably a large congregation of over 250 **Pied Avocets** were watched feeding in their usual active fashion, with several smaller groups breaking away and flying to various corners of the lagoon complex. It seemed quite odd to watch them with a backdrop of high-rise apartments from the city of Burgas dominating the distant horizon, and this picture was even more compounded when an **Arctic Skua** flew over and we were giving directions to each other via the various buildings! But closer to hand were 4 **Great Egrets**, several **Little Egrets**, 7 **Eurasian Spoonbills**, and a familiar bunch of wildfowl

such as 200+ **Common Shelduck**, **Common Teal**, **Mallard** and some **Northern Shovelers**. Over to our right an area of what looked like salt marsh with scattered bushes hid lots of waders but we picked out some **Little Stints**, **Wood Sandpiper**, several **Ruffs**, a single **Ruddy Turnstone** and a **Black-tailed Godwit**. As we scoped the lagoons we became aware of a constant stream of birds overhead undertaking what we call 'visible migration' with 5+ **Western Marsh Harriers**, a **Common Buzzard**, 500+ **Barn Swallows**, 200+ **House Martins** and frequent small parties of **Spanish Sparrows**. However, the highlight of our hour long pre-breakfast vigil was the 3 **Dalmatian Pelicans** that flew across the glassy calm water right in front of us. But all too soon we had to leave and the only **Eurasian Hoopoe** of the day obliged us with an appearance before reaching the minibus.

After breakfast at the hotel it didn't take us long to drive to Lake Burgas, where there were 150+ **White Pelicans** present on this huge lake, including many with a pinkish suffusion on the underparts, along with just a few **Dalmatian Pelicans**. We really got into the terns here with over a 1000 present, many being in juvenile plumage and thus more of an identification challenge but managed to sort out **Whiskered**, **Black**, **White-winged**, **Common** and **Sandwich Terns**, all of which gave repeated views as they fed in front of us. We completed our observations here with a juvenile **Black-crowned Night-heron** flying by and a distant **Marsh Sandpiper** amongst a bunch of previously mentioned waders.

We left here after an hour and headed to Lake Mandra and scanned the muddy corner below the road where a breeding plumaged **Dunlin** was seen amongst a small group of **Curlew Sandpipers**. Quite a few other birds were apparently roosting at the water's edge and we managed to see a few **Little Stints**,



**Ruff**, **Spotted Redshank**, **Common Greenshank** and a juvenile **Whiskered Tern** amongst a flock of **Black-headed Gulls**. As the area seemed quite promising we took a dirt track in order to try and get a different angle to view the muddy corner, but became sidetracked when a **Common Nightingale** flew in and landed on the roof of a tin hut in a small patch of allotments! So we stopped to take a look and also found several **Common Whitethroats**, along with a possible **Marsh Warbler** that simply didn't cooperate! However, in a large tree close by a **Syrian Woodpecker** flew in giving really good views, and whilst watching it a **Lesser Spotted** and a pair of **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** were discovered. This was a terrific little site and amongst

the reeds and allotments we also saw at least 4 juvenile **Red-backed Shrikes**, a **Great Reed Warbler**, more **Common Whitethroats**, **Common Swift**, **Long-tailed Tits** and a couple more **Western Marsh**

**Harriers**. But nothing new was seen on the muddy area so we drove further along the road to get to a different section of the same lake. A feeding group of **White Pelicans** were present here and amongst the numerous **Common Coots** (1000+) and other regular wildfowl we saw 3 **Ferruginous Ducks** and counted 200+ **Common Pochards**. Overhead a **Eurasian Hobby** headed strongly south, whilst a **Lesser Whitethroat** put in an appearance across the road. So we walked down to the 'causeway' which



cuts across the corner of the lake effectively creating a shallow lagoon on one side and which turned out to be a great spot. Lots of **Whiskered Terns** were feeding here, and our careful scanning paid dividends with the discovery of 2 **Water Rails** and single **Temminck's Stint** and **Red Knot** (a scarce bird here) amongst the 16 **Spotted Redshank**, numerous **Common** and **Little Ringed Plovers** and 8 **Wood Sandpipers** that fed at the water's edge. At least 30 **Pygmy Cormorants** and a few **Squacco Herons** were present, with a couple of huge **White-tailed Eagles** flying over. In the midday heat a distant flock of 200+ **White Pelicans** were



catching the thermals on the far hillside and made a spectacular sight.

So by now we were ready for our lunch and drove on to a viewpoint overlooking another section of the lake, seeing **Spotted Flycatcher** and a **Little Owl** roosting in a chimney along the way. We had almost made it to our intended picnic spot when Dobromir suddenly braked as we crossed one of the numerous creeks that feed into the lake and reversed quickly back onto the bridge. Some movement near the reeds below us had us all raising our binoculars and we were treated to first-class views of a very confident **Spotted Crake** picking its way along the muddy margin. We were just about to creep out of the minibus to get a better look when Glenys found us a young **Little Bittern** perched in an isolated stand of phragmites which promptly flew away once everyone had seen it! So we crept out of the minibus and set up our scopes but we needn't have been so quiet as the bird was totally oblivious to our presence and continued to feed right out in the open throughout the half an hour or so we watched it. The surrounding reedbed was also proving attractive to a huge flock of **Eurasian Tree Sparrows**, who in turn obviously appealed to one or two **Spanish Sparrows**, and as we caught up with these another **White-tailed Eagle** flew over and yet another big flock of **White Pelicans** soared across the sky.



Our picnic lunch was a leisurely affair in the sunshine, complete with chairs and a stunning bird-filled panorama below us that included a lone **Caspian Tern** roosting amongst a flock of wildfowl,



cormorants and **Yellow-legged Gulls**. Our first **Black-winged Stilts** also flew in and we had an **Osprey** perched on a telegraph wire on the hillside, several **Great White** and **Little Egrets**, another 2 **White-tailed Eagles** and a very close juvenile **Levant Sparrowhawk** that flew very close overhead. So from here we headed to Poda Reserve seeing a flock of **European Bee-eaters** and a **Whinchat** alongside the road. At the reserve there were 4 **Wood Sandpipers** in the first lagoon by the Visitor Centre, numerous **Great** and **Pygmy Cormorants** and a **Eurasian**

**Otter** but things were a bit quiet so we returned to the hotel for an early shower. At the end of the day we had seen 106 species.

### Day 3 Sunday 21st September

We awoke this morning to an overcast sky and a steady drizzle that persisted for much of the day, but that wouldn't stop us birding at all and the pre-breakfast excursion took us back down to Lake



Atanasovsko. We took shelter beside the closed hide and scanned the lagoons seeing 68 **Eurasian Spoonbills**, which was a big increase on yesterday's tally from the same site. A few **Northern Pintail** were new for the list and there was also lots of the same species present as yesterday, so after about 45 minutes we decided to head back to the hotel for breakfast. Afterwards, we drove south and began by checking a muddy corner of the Black Sea where we found an adult winter **Little Gull** amongst a flock of roosting **Sandwich Terns**, and there was also a flyby group of **Mediterranean Gulls**, 4 **Black-**



**necked Grebes** out to sea and a couple **Spotted Flycatchers**. At the next site along the coast we drove beside a large reedbed with several lagoons on one side and a sandy beach on the other where we saw 2 **Northern Wheatears** and 5 **Crested Larks**. At the far end we scanned the marsh seeing 5 **Little Stints**, both **Common** and **Little Ringed Plovers** and lots of **Common Snipe**. Walking along the road we saw an **Osprey**, adult **White-tailed Eagle**, **Purple Heron**, a brief **Great Reed Warbler**, a juvenile **Lesser Grey Shrike** perched on top of a bush and we also heard the distinctive call of a **Bearded Tit**. The weather brightened up for a short while, allowing us to scan the sea where we saw 2 **Red-necked Grebes** and 6 **Yelkouan Shearwaters** close to shore.

We then drove into the forested hills around Strandza Mountain and checked out a fine mature Oak forest without seeing much apart from a **Eurasian Nuthatch**, so drove just up the road and ate our picnic lunch inside a purpose-built shelter before walking along the road, this time through mature Beech forest. This was also quiet, although we managed to see **Marsh Tit**, more nuthatches, **Wood Warbler** and had a close encounter with a calling **White-backed Woodpecker** that remained unseen. Driving back up the coast we saw a male **Common Redstart**, before stopping to look at several **Sombre Tits** feeding in the fields and trees beside the road. The **view** here was very nice across the rolling hills and we spent quite some time watching the tits, along with several **Red-backed Shrikes**.



Next up was a **European Roller** perched on telegraph poles beside the road, and there was also a young **Green Woodpecker** perched on a concrete pylon pretending to be something different!

Our last stop of the day was at another wetland, where we took a walk along a dyke beside a reedbed seeing **Purple Heron**, **Lesser Spotted Eagle**, **Eurasian Hobby**, **Common Kingfisher**, 3 **Red-rumped Swallows** flew over uttering their distinctive flight call, **European Reed Warbler**,

**Common Raven** and a **Hooded Crow** that was found by Tom.

#### **Day 4 Monday 22nd September**

We awoke to a beautiful, clear blue sky this morning and headed south to Lake Atanasovsko for our prebreakfast visit, this time stopping at a different area in order to view a flock of **Slender-billed Gulls** out on the lagoon beside the road. All the usual waders were present here, but we also picked up a flock of 30+ **Kentish Plovers**, along with a dainty **Marsh Sandpiper** and our first **Common Sandpiper** of



the trip. We spent quite a bit of time scanning through the waders and watching the gulls, which also included a roosting flock of 150+ **Mediterranean Gulls** and saw a **Dalmatian Pelican** fly lazily by.

After breakfast we visited Pomorie Salt Pans and spent a very pleasant hour or so birding in the morning sunshine and located the major find of the day in the shape of 2 **Terek Sandpipers** feeding at the far end of the first lagoon, so we walked along the path to get a closer look and ended up

watching them for quite a long time. There were also several hundred **Barn Swallows** roosting on the telegraph wires beside the Salt Museum, lots of **Yellow Wagtails**, **Crested Lark** and a **Eurasian Hoopoe** perched in a lone tree. There were numerous other waders feeding along the muddy edge of the lagoon including a flock of **Pied Avocets**, 30+ **Dunlin**, 25+ **Little Stints** and 5 **Curlew Sandpipers**. On our return to the minibus we spent a while watching several **Mediterranean** and numerous **Little Gulls** flying around in company with a sizeable flock of **Sandwich** and **Common**



**Terns**, plus a single **Little Tern**. In the distance we scoped a distant flock of 60+ **Black Storks** which were obviously on their way south. So leaving here we paid a quick visit to a nearby beach where we found 4 **Red-necked** and a few **Black-necked Grebes**, 6+ **Black-throated Divers**, **Black Tern**, **Chiffchaff**, **Reed Warbler** and some distant **Harbour Porpoise**. A little further north on the edge of Pomorie an interesting-looking accipiter circled overhead, so we pulled off the road to check it out and

the pointed wings indicated the bird was probably a **Levant Sparrowhawk** but it quickly swooped down and fortunately landed in a nearby tree, so we drove along a dirt track to get closer and had excellent scope views of a juvenile bird, and also had a few **European Turtle Doves** as well.

More salt pans a few kilometres north produced another flock of 80+ **Black Storks** heading south with a single **White Stork** tagging along, and there was also **Eurasian Hobby**, **Black-winged Stilt**, **Green Sandpiper** and



several very distant raptors which defied identification. From here we continued on towards our intended picnic spot, stopping along the way to watch a soaring **Northern Goshawk**, before parking in the shade of a large Oak tree and enjoying a nice picnic. In the area we had **Linnet**, **Greenfinch**, a brief **Syrian Woodpecker**, **Mistle Thrush**, **Queen of Spain Fritillary**, **Grayling**, **Great Banded Grayling** and **Brown Argus**.

The next wetland was in fact a partially dried-up lake in a shallow sided valley which we approached via a picturesque village and then a dirt track across the hillside to a point from which we walked about 500 metres to view the water. Along the approach track there were a few **Corn Buntings** perched on the tall weeds, as well as a few **Whinchats**, flocks of **Tree Sparrows**, **Cardinal** and **Queen of Spain Fritillary**. Waders were numerous around the edge of the lake and all the usual suspects were present but it was still good fun scanning through the flocks of **Dunlin** and **Curlew Sandpipers**, along with both **Black-tailed** and **Bar-tailed Godwits**, **Wood Sandpiper** and **Ruff**. An interesting small, dark snipe flew off before we could really grill it, but was more than likely just a slightly abnormal **Common Snipe**. We did pick out a female **Garganey** amongst a group of **Common Teal**, whilst our only really good view of **Cirl Bunting** was of a female perched in a small sapling behind us. On the drive out a **Tawny Pipit** flew up from beside the track and perched briefly in a ploughed field.

Our last stop of the day was at some huge salt pans where we were amazed at the huge number of **Little Gulls** loafing on the lagoons which we estimated at 650+, but which is probably a serious underestimate. Also present were smaller numbers of **Mediterranean** and **Yellow-legged Gulls** and loads of commoner waders including a single **Marsh Sandpiper**, 4 **Sanderling** and 20+ **Kentish Plovers**. A single **Caspian Tern** also flew by and a final scan before leaving resulted in a count of 50+ **Black-necked Grebes**. What a great day!

### Day 5 Tuesday 23rd September

After breakfast we loaded our luggage onto the minibus and drove a short distance to another **wetland** where we spent a good couple of hours searching for migrants and some resident species. We parked amidst some fields and scrubland where **Willow Warbler**, **Red-backed Shrike** and 6 **Corn Buntings**



a **Great Reed Warbler**.

greeted our arrival before the first signs of visible migration began with a flyover **Siskin** and the first of 10 **Hawfinches** to be seen today. At the small reed fringed pond a **Little Crane** was discovered feeding beneath the roots of a waterside Willow tree and we watched this little beauty for a good 15 minutes. Other goodies present included **Little Bittern**, **Squacco Heron**, 5 **Common Kingfishers** and

We followed a trail around the other side of the pond, passing through tall grasses and scrub which was home to an obvious fall of **Willow Warblers**, **Chiffchaffs** and **Lesser Whitethroats**, all of which were very numerous this morning and ended up on a small mound from where we could scan a mosaic of

reedbeds, lakes and lagoons below us. It was a superb area with lots of birds present with numerous common wildfowl and waders, as well as **Eurasian Spoonbill**, **Great White Egret**, **Purple Heron** and 8+ **Marsh Harriers**. However, we witnessed a heavy passage of raptors all heading south this morning with non-stop activity for a couple of hours and made the following count;

229 **Lesser Spotted Eagles**

6 **Short-toed Eagles**

1 **Booted Eagle**

2 **Red-footed Falcons**

1 **Levant Sparrowhawk**

1 **Northern Goshawk**

15 **Black Storks**



As we walked back to the vehicle a **Small Heath** butterfly was new for the trip, and once at the minibus we had even better views of the eagles with several low flying birds allowing us to pick out much more plumage detail than before.

Leaving here we drove to a nearby heath where 9 **Eurasian Stone Curlews** were found before driving on north towards Varna, stopping for lunch at a restaurant alongside the road. Afterwards we took a walk in the surrounding forest where a couple of **Middle Spotted Woodpeckers** and a **Short-toed Treecreeper** were found, and a **Black Woodpecker** was heard and briefly seen flying through the trees. Leaving here we drove to the coast and tried again for more woodpeckers, seeing **Wood Lark**, 3 **Spotted**, a single **Red-breasted Flycatcher** and a **Long-tailed Blue**. The walk back to the minibus alongside the coastal heath produced many **Willow Warblers** and **Chiffchaffs**, several **Lesser Whitethroats**, **Wood Warbler** and a **Eurasian Treecreeper**.

But by now it was getting late and we still had an hour's drive to reach our new hotel at Balchik where we arrived at 6.50pm and just in time as shortly after we were hit by a torrential downpour with thunder and lightning.

### **Day 6 Wednesday 24th September**

Last night's storm had long since moved away and as we drove along the coastal road the sun rose above the escarpment that dominates the coastal plain to reveal blue skies. Our main purpose was to check the cliff faces above the road for **Eurasian Eagle Owl**, but despite intensive searching we couldn't locate any, but did see 15 **Hawfinches** flying over, plus another 3 perched in a bare tree. There



were also a flock of 50 **European Bee-eaters** flying over, a few **Red-rumped Swallows** and **Tree Pipits** and a few **Yellow Wagtails** were also heard, with a distinctively black-looking **Red Squirrel** running across the road in front of us being the non-avian highlight of the day.

After breakfast at 8am a quick look in the hotel's garden produced a close **Red-breasted** and a few **Spotted Flycatchers**, as well as several **Blackcaps**, whilst amongst a flock of **Yellow-legged Gulls** loafing on the beach a **Hooded Crow** was

picked up by Margaret. A few **European Shags** of the *desmerti* race were also present just offshore. So we drove north to the famous migration watchpoint of **Cape Kaliakra** which juts out into the Black Sea and is a bottle-neck for tired migrants heading south. It is home to the last remnants of grassland steppe in Bulgaria and as we drove further onto the headland one could be forgiven for thinking we were on Portland Bill or Flamborough head or any number of headlands in the UK, the habitat was so similar. But as well as numerous **Northern Wheatears** and **Whinchats** along the cliff top, I



I guess you could say the **Calandra Lark** that flew over calling brought us immediately into the present with a bang! As we scanned the cliffs below us, seeing **Common Redstart**, more **Shags** and **Tree Pipits**, an immature **Pied Wheatear** was found by Dobromir with only Mike managing to glimpse it before the bird promptly disappeared. So we drove on a narrow track along the edge of the steppe, disturbing **Yellow Wagtails** and at least 2 **Isabelline Wheatears** and a **Eurasian Hoopoe** from in front of the minibus. We reached a small copse situated on top of the cliffs, surrounded by scrub and small Hawthorn bushes laden with berries. Amongst the low-lying flowers we also saw **Queen of Spain Fritillary** and **Cardinal**, but the sound of a calling **Red-breasted Flycatcher** had us walking briskly to



the first clump of trees. In fact the number of these flycatchers was quite staggering and a conservative estimate of over 100 individuals was made during our few hours on the Cape, with most being first-year birds, apart from at least 4 adults still with the orange/red throat and upper breast. Anyway, more bee-eaters flew over and a **European Roller** added a splash of colour to proceedings, and as we headed towards the copse a **Tawny Pipit** flew up from the grass uttering its sparrow-like call. Along the cliff top path an obviously exhausted juvenile **Red-backed Shrike** perched right beside the path refused to move and allowed us to scrutinize its intricately marked

plumage in depth. This species was the commonest bird observed today, and we estimated over 300 were present on the Cape! As we watched this tame individual a **Common Buzzard** flew low overhead in company with the more rufous-looking **Steppe Buzzard** and quickly headed on their way south. And eventually we located the previously mentioned calling **Red-breasted Flycatcher**, before circling around the back of the copse as the trail we were following was overgrown and impassable. This turned out to be a good move as we circled around the other side of the trees, finding a close **Ring Ouzel** perched in a bush, and also flushing loads of **Tree Pipits** from the short grass. Species such as



**Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap and Lesser Whitethroat** were moving through the bushes in wave upon wave and inevitably we also found something more unusual, this time in the shape of a very obliging **Icterine Warbler** which we watched feeding avidly close by. In fact Tom and I found a second bird a short while later, before returning to the minibus and headed over to the point. Along the way we saw another **Pied Wheatear** in a ploughed field and another **Eurasian Hoopoe**, before pulling in to the car park at the point.



It is probably a 10 minute walk to the cafe which is located just about as far as you can go without falling off the end and which overlooked the clear blue sea, but on leaving the vehicle a **Pied Wheatear** flew in and gave outstanding views, and in the bushes were numerous common warblers as well as a fine male **Common Redstart**. Along the way to the cafe **Red-breasted Flycatchers** were in every bush, so delaying our lunch even further. From the dining table we saw 8 more flycatchers, as well as another **Hoopoe** and some **Jellyfish** below us. Finally, our ever grumbling stomachs were sated with some very welcome cold drinks and much needed food before we walked on down to the point just a couple of hundred yards away where another **Pied Wheatear** gave us in-your-face views. There were also quite a few butterflies present including several fine **Cardinals, Lang's Short-tailed Blue** and several other species left unidentified.

Our next port of call was a narrow valley just 5 minutes drive away and was another very attractive migrant hotspot, although a little quiet on our visit apart from..... yes more **Red-breasted Flycatchers** and **Red-backed Shrikes**, plus all the usual warblers. There was also 2 **Turtle Doves**, a few **Hawfinches**, a pair of **Hobbies**, another **Icterine Warbler, Alpine Swift**, another flock of **European Bee-eaters**, and 3 **Ferruginous Ducks** in a the reed fringed pond. Driving out we saw 5 **Woodlarks** and another **Hoopoe**, before revisiting the same cliffs as earlier on this morning where a pair of magnificent **Eurasian Eagle Owls** completed a stunning day's birding.



### **Day 7 Thursday 25th September**

We drove along the coast to the cliffs just a few kilometres from Balchik where we stood on a small hillock overlooking the sea and counted the numerous southbound migrants passing overhead. We began by scoping a singing **Corn Bunting** before the first signs of visible migration began with a flock of 25 **Yellow Wagtails**, but the main passage belonged to **White Wagtails**, for which we estimated at least 1000 passed over in our 45 minute watch! No less impressive were the numerous tight flocks of **Spanish Sparrows** numbering 500+, and there was also several **Tree Pipits, a Woodlark, Grey Heron, Eurasian Sparrowhawk** and 7 **Common Crossbills**.



After breakfast we visited the steppe on Kaliakra peninsula, flushing 4 **Common Quails** on our way to view the 250+ **Calandra Larks** congregating in a recently ploughed field. We had pretty good views of these huge larks flying across the fields, with their dark-looking underwing and contrasting white trailing edge easily seen, and through the scope we could make out every plumage feature. A few **Tawny Pipits** were also present but a **Red-throated Pipit** flew up in front of us from some tall grass and never settled again. Driving along we saw an **Osprey** eating a fish perched on a telegraph pole and also 2 **Eurasian Hobbies** and a **White Stork** beside the road.

We then called in to Shabla Lake which is mainly dry at the moment but saw 6 **Black-crowned Night Herons** high overhead, along with **Whimbrel**, **Eurasian Curlew**, **Pied Avocet**, a single **Ruddy Shelduck**, **Common Stonechat** and a juvenile **Whiskered Tern**, with a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** in the nearby willows. A short walk down to the beach gave us good views of a roosting flock of 160 **Mediterranean Gulls**, whilst out at sea 5 **Black-necked Grebes** were present and there were also lots of **Little Gulls** flying by. But by now the wind had picked up considerably and made viewing difficult,



but 400+ **Barn Swallows** congregating above the reedbed was an impressive sight. The lake was just about visible from the beach and a quick scan revealed 13 **Eurasian Spoonbills** flying south in a tight “V” formation, a **Great White Egret** and 3 **Ferruginous Ducks**. There were also 3 **Arctic Skuas** flying over the rough Black Sea, with one bird being particularly close.

Leaving here we headed to Durankulak Lake but the wind was quite ferocious by the time we had arrived, but unperturbed we ventured along a path towards the reedbed, hearing a **Bearded Tit** and watching 6 **Western Marsh Harriers** in the air together, as well as a flock of 30+ **Corn Buntings** in a ploughed field. So eventually we called it a day and returned to our hotel for a well earned meal!

### **Day 8 Friday 26th September**

We left Balchik around 9am and drove south towards Burgas through the unseasonal heavy rain, pausing to admire a male and juvenile **Red-footed Falcon** perched on some roadside telegraph wires. We called in to Pomorie salt pans to check out the lagoons, seeing both **Little** and **Mediterranean Gulls**, **Eurasian Oystercatcher**, and other commoner waders before taking a quick look in the Salt Museum and watching a short video on the history of the place.

By the time we reached our previous hotel and finished our lunch the rain had eased and we staked out the watchpoint on Lake Atanasovsko and had a decent passage of raptors with 4 **European Honey Buzzards**, 3 **Lesser Spotted Eagles**, 3 **Booted Eagles**, 6 **Eurasian Hobbies**, 2 **Black Kites** and 5+ **Western Marsh Harriers**. A flock of 65 **Dalmatian Pelicans** were also present, and we had 50+ **Black Storks** passing overhead. Waders were present in good numbers with **Dunlin**, **Little Stint**, **Curlew Sandpipers**, **Ruff** and **Common Greenshank** all present.

From here we checked out Lake Burgas briefly, seeing 200+ **White Pelicans**, lots of **Whiskered** and a few **White-winged Terns**, before driving to Lake Mandra. Here we were lucky to see 2 adult **White-tailed Eagles** feeding on a fish beside the reedbed and there was also several **Pygmy Cormorants**, **Ferruginous Ducks** and 100's of **Barn Swallows** present. Finally we counted 51 **Little Egrets** and 2 **Eurasian Spoonbills** at a narrow, reed fringed river before it was finally time to pack our binoculars away and head back to the hotel in Burgas.

After a leisurely final meal we drove just 5 minutes away to the airport, where we said our goodbyes to Dobromir who had not only been a fantastic birder and guide, but also good company as well. And eventually, after a short delay, we returned to the UK where this wonderful tour concluded.



On behalf of Dobromir and myself I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the group for making it such a pleasure to lead. We had a most excellent week's birding, seeing many scarce and unusual European birds, as well as having the privilege to witness visible migration on a grand scale.

Nick Bray



**BIRDLIST FOR BULGARIA – BLACK SEA**  
**AUTUMN MIGRATION 19<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

SPECIES		Scientific Name	No of days out of 7 recorded	Highest daily count C.= Common LC = Locally Common H or h.= Heard only N/C.= No count
1.	Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>	1	6+
2.	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	6	C
3.	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	5	50+
4.	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	2	4
5.	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	6	C
6.	Yelkouan Shearwater	<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>	1	6
7.	White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	2	500+
8.	Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	3	92
9.	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	7	C
10.	Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pygmeus</i>	4	130+
11.	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii</i>	2	18+
12.	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	2	1
13.	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	3	6
14.	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	2	4
15.	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	6	90+
16.	Great White Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	6	10
17.	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	6	150+
18.	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	2	3
19.	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	4	1
20.	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	3	160+
21.	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	5	68
22.	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	6	C
23.	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	6	350+
24.	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	1	1
25.	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	6	60+
26.	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	2	35+
27.	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	3	30+
28.	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	6	60+
29.	Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	6	50+
30.	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	1	1
31.	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya farina</i>	2	100+
32.	Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	3	3
33.	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	2	150+
34.	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	3	5
35.	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	4	2
36.	Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>	3	220+
37.	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	1	6
38.	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	4	3
39.	Black Kite	<i>Mivus migrans</i>	1	2
40.	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	6	30+
41.	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	7	15+

	Steppe Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i>	1	1
42.	European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	1	5
43.	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	4	3
44.	Levant Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter brevipes</i>	3	1
45.	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	2	2
46.	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	7	C
47.	Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>	2	7
48.	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	7	8+
49.	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrines</i>	2	1
50.	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	1 + 1H	4
51.	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	2 + 2H	2
52.	Spotted Crake	<i>Porzana porzana</i>	1	1
53.	Little Crake	<i>Porzana parva</i>	1	1
54.	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	3	N/C
55.	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	5	2000+
56.	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	4	2
57.	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	2	4+
58.	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	6	400+
59.	Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>	1	9
60.	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	4	10+
61.	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	6	C
62.	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	1	30+
63.	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	2	30
64.	Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	2	1
65.	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	2	4
66.	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	2	1
67.	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	5	44+
68.	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	3	30+
69.	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	1	1
70.	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	6	100+
71.	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	3	16+
72.	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	1	1
73.	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	2	3
74.	Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>	1	2
75.	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	6	C
76.	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	4	30+
77.	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	3	4
78.	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	4	2
79.	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	4	N/C
80.	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	1	5
81.	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	5	3
82.	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	1	3
83.	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	4	12+
84.	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	6	50+
85.	Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	2	3
86.	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	7	C
87.	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>	2	25
88.	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	3	220+
89.	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	7	C

90.	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	1	2
91.	Little Gull	<i>Larus minutes</i>	5	650+
92.	Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	1	1
93.	Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	6	100+
94.	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	3	5+
95.	Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>	4	4
96.	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	2	20+
97.	White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	3	100+
98.	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	5	500+
99.	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	7	C
100.	Common Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	1	7+
101.	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	7	C
102.	European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	5	10+
103.	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	1	1
104.	Eurasian Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>	1	2
105.	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	3	2
106.	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	6	C
107.	Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>	2	20
108.	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	4	3
109.	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	5	5
110.	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	3 + 2H	120+
111.	European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	2	1
112.	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	1	2
113.	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	1 + 1H	1
114.	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus major</i>	4 + 1H	3
115.	Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus syriacus</i>	3	1
116.	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus medius</i>	1	2
117.	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus minor</i>	1	1
	White-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus leucotos</i>	Heard Only	
118.	Common Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	4	N/C
119.	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	6	4
120.	Wood Lark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	4	6
121.	Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	2	250+
122.	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	5	200+
123.	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	7	1000+
124.	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	3	10+
125.	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	7	C
126.	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	3	4+
127.	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	3 + 2H	30+
128.	Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	1	1
129.	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	7	1000+
130.	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	4	30+
131.	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	3 + 1H	4
132.	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	1	1
133.	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	1	1
134.	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	4	5
135.	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	5	2
136.	Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	1	4
137.	Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>	1	6+



138.	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	5	20+
139.	Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	1	2
140.	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	2	3
141.	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	5	C
142.	Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus alpestris</i>	1	1
143.	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	2	2
144.	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	6	40+
145.	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	5	10+
146.	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	5	25+
147.	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	1	1
148.	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	1	1
149.	European Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	4	3+
	Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	1 unconfirmed sighting	
150.	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	4	1
151.	Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>	1	3
152.	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	3	50+
153.	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	6	C
154.	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	2	1
155.	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	6	30+
156.	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	4	100+
157.	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	6	C
158.	Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	7	C
159.	Marsh Tit	<i>Parus palustris</i>	2	3
160.	Sombre Tit	<i>Parus lugubris</i>	2	4
161.	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	1 + 1H	5
	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	Heard Only	
162.	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	2	10+
163.	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	1	1
164.	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	2	2
165.	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio cristatus</i>	6	300+
166.	Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	2	1
167.	Common Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	7	80+
168.	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	7	35+
169.	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	6	C
170.	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	1	1
171.	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	2	10
172.	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	1	2
173.	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	7	700+
174.	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	7	C
175.	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	2	200+
176.	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	4	N/C
177.	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	5	C
178.	Eurasian Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	2	N/C
179.	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	5	N/C
180.	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	4	20
181.	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	3	30
182.	Common Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	1	7
183.	Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	1	2
184.	Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	4	30+

## Other Sightings

1.	Harbour Porpoise
2.	Eurasian Otter
3.	Brown Hare
4.	Pipistrelle
5.	Red Squirrel
6.	Weasel
7.	Hummingbird Hawk Moth
8.	Stick Insect
9.	Preying Mantis
10.	Red Admiral
11.	Grayling
12.	Great Banded Grayling
13.	Small Copper
14.	Meadow Brown
15.	Dusky Meadow Brown
16.	Adonis Blue
17.	Small White
18.	Large White
19.	Cabbage White
20.	Gatekeeper
21.	Long-tailed Blue
22.	Lang's Short-tailed Blue
23.	Small Heath
24.	Bath White
25.	Mallow Skipper
26.	Snake sp
27.	Lizard sp



**Cardinal**



**Queen of Spain Fritillary**