

# *Honeyguide*

## **WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS**

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## **THE WESTERN RHODOPE MOUNTAINS OF BULGARIA**

**13<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> June 2012**

### Participants

Sue & Peter Burge  
Helen & Malcolm Crowder  
Kate Dalziel      Angela Steed  
Ken Leggett      Colin Taylor

### Leaders

Chris Gibson from Honeyguide and Vladimir Trifonov from Neophron Tours, the tourist company and commercial arm of the [Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds \(BSPB\)](http://www.bspb.org)/ [BirdLife Bulgaria](http://www.birdlife.org) [www.neophron.com](http://www.neophron.com).

Our hosts at the Hotel Yagodina: Mariya and Asen Kukundjiev – [www.yagodina-bg.com](http://www.yagodina-bg.com).  
On the return journey to Sofia we stayed one night in the conservation village of Koprivshtitsa at Bashtina Kashta (Father's House) – [www.fhhotel.info](http://www.fhhotel.info).

Photos edged green by Chris Gibson and edged blue by Helen Crowder.

Front cover – Yagodina from St. Ilya.

Below – *Lilium rhodopaeum*.



As with all Honeyguide holidays, part of the price was put towards a local conservation project. The conservation contributions from this holiday raised £400 and we have doubled this to £800 using some unallocated funds in the Charitable Trust's account, raised by the Wildlife Outreach Network, to support the protection of *Lilium rhodopaeum* (pictured above), a scarce endemic flower of the Western Rhodopes, found on just a handful of sites in Bulgaria and just over the border in Greece, about half of which have no protection.

£500 has been sent to the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds, the BirdLife partner in Bulgaria, which also has a wider biodiversity remit. This sum will support BSPB in finalising the designation of Protected Area Tzigansko Gradishte, a *Lilium rhodopaeum* site, as part of the Natura 2000 network of internationally important wildlife sites, and will cover travel and communication costs for meeting and getting support from local people and authorities and for the final public hearing. £300 goes to Vladimir Trifonov in his role as 'Chief Expert, Biodiversity and Protected Areas', for the Ministry of Environment and Waters, based at the Ministry's regional inspectorate in Haskovo. Vlado will be monitoring the privately-owned site – at a secret location that we won't name – where the 2012 group saw *Lilium rhodopaeum*. That will include clarifying ownership and, if possible, arranging management of the meadow.

The total amount of all conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 was £81,772 as at September 2012.



## Daily Diary

### Wednesday 13 June: the way there...

After a horribly early start, the group gathered at Gatwick for our 6.05am flight to Sofia. As the flight progressed, so the clouds thinned, allowing views of the meandering Danube and as we approached our destination a glorious patchwork of small strip fields embracing tight agricultural settlements. On disembarking from the plane, the first impression was of overwhelming heat, a serious contrast to the cool, damp summer most of us had been experiencing back home. Indeed, when we met Vlado after completing formalities, he said that 'yellow warnings' had been issued for the whole of the country because of the forecast extreme temperatures.

At the coach we were introduced to our driver Vasco, and then settled in for the drive across the flatlands of central Bulgaria, towards the distant mountains beckoning in the hazy distance. As is often the case, the first birds were commonplace – swallows, house martins and magpies, but as we progressed we started to see a few buzzards and white storks, the latter often on nests in the towns and villages. The multitude of agricultural greens was periodically splashed with the vibrant shades of purple larkspurs and blue viper's-bugloss, as much an indicator of the unfamiliarity of our surroundings as the mosques and Orthodox churches in the towns.

A welcome break for lunch at a service station gave us a chance to stretch our legs and examine the birdlife in more detail. White wagtails and crested larks fed around the car park, while in the distance a large bird of prey drifted into view. Droop-tipped wings, and dark appearance with pale secondary bases identified it as a lesser spotted eagle, and it was soon joined in the air by a honey buzzard and a long-legged buzzard, all three species sharing the same thermal for easy comparison.

Heading onwards, we arrived at the Bessapari range of rounded hills clad in steppe-like grassland and large cropped fields, for a short walk. The sound of singing larks came not from skylarks, but calandras, their bulk and blackish underwings being especially apparent in flight. Not that everyone was looking: almost immediately Helen spied a mulberry tree covered in luscious ripe fruit, and that proved an irresistible draw to her and Angela. The rest of us wandered up a track looking at the many flowers – white-flowered clumps of felted germander, bold yellow splashes of *Haplophyllum suaveolens* and shell-pink *Convolvulus cantabricus* – all being visited by numerous butterflies, including a swallowtail and two species of clouded yellow. Back at the bus, peering through the intense heat-haze down the valley, Colin spotted a raptor, which at rest showed itself to be an immature Bonelli's eagle, with rich chestnut underparts. We later learned this was an exceptional record for this part of Bulgaria at this time of year. Attempts to get closer proved fruitless, but did provide us with good views of black-headed bunting, isabelline wheatear and lesser grey shrike.

Reaching the mountains, and entering via the gorge at Krichim, we paused briefly to peer at a rock face, with stands of *Juniperus excelsa*, a Red data Book species, protected under the Bulgarian Biodiversity Act. Alpine swifts and crag martins wheeled around, while a male rock thrush posed prominently, if distantly, at the very top. But the real treasure was at our feet, when Sue spotted an obliging pennant-winged ant-lion feeding on the yellow yarrow. Continuing on, yellow-legged gull and cormorant on a reservoir were added to the bird list, and a roe deer crossing the road made a near-miraculous disappearing act up a near-vertical scree slope by the road.



Pennant-winged ant-lion.

Eventually we arrived at Yagodina, to be greeted by Maria, our host, and an almost deafening chorus of field crickets. After a few minutes to unpack and settle in, it was time for a welcome drink and the first of many wonderful meals (the fresh salads a real feature), taken *al fresco* given that the air was still very pleasantly warm, even at our altitude of some 1200m. Suitably restored, most of us then went for a wander around the village, to experience its pastoral ambience, to look up at the beckoning mountain tops, rocks and forests, and take in the last few birds such as black redstarts and tree sparrows (here more abundant than house sparrows), as dusk fell.

#### Thursday 14 June: Trigrad Gorge and the valley above

A calm, sunny dawn promised another hot day, and saw a few of the team out and about before breakfast. After just a couple of minutes' walk we were among the meadows, still uncut, with yellow rattle, bug orchid, dropwort and a whole host of others in a dazzling array of colours. Red-backed shrikes perched strategically on the scattered bushes, once outside the built areas, and both blackcap and garden warbler were in full song, while numerous chimney-sweeper moths fluttered from our feet.

Breakfast, again taken outside, was a sumptuous spread of home-made yoghurts, including a rich, wickedly delightful full cream version, local jams and honeys, and fresh flat doughnuts. Cream teas for breakfast – Kate was in heaven! Even the sight of pallid swifts overhead was not enough to drag most pairs of eyes away from the feast before us...

A short drive, albeit spectacular within the rocky gorges, of some 8km brought us to our first destination, Trigrad Gorge, where Vlado pointed out a crevice in the rock face just a few metres above the road. And right on cue, after only a few seconds, its occupants appeared, a pair of wallcreepers which went on to give us a grandstand view for several minutes: creeping, feeding, flying, and even the male feeding his mate with the spoils from his last foraging trip. Magnificent jewels of birds, seen well by everyone, and amazingly – given that this is reputedly the best and easiest site to see this much-wanted bird in Europe – one that Honeyguide had to itself.



Left: *Haberlea rhodopensis*, a relict species which can long periods of dessication. This 'resurrection' ability enabled its survival during harsh conditions and has aroused scientific interest in its potential as a source of bioactive compounds. Right: female wallcreeper.

And of course that was not all. Growing on the cliffs were patches of the local endemic African violet *Haberlea rhodopensis*, its large, mauve, tubular flowers hanging gracefully. One of just five members of its family in Europe, each one a pre-glacial relict of a much wider distribution, this was to become a regular feature of our next few days, thriving especially on shady north-facing rocks. Other plants included *Valeriana montana*, a Bulgarian Red List species, and beautiful pink patches of rock crane's-bill. Above, three honey buzzards came over the gorge; a blue rock thrush was singing from some unseen vantage point; and a pair of peregrines scythed through the air around the top of the gorge walls.

Walking through the tunnel and up the gorge, we soon came to the Devil's Throat cave, where again there was a pair of wallcreepers, possibly different from those at the breeding site. The rocks around the car park were adorned with *Dianthus petraea* and *Arenaria rhodopaea*, a local endemic with strikingly large white flowers, while bright-eyed ringlets became active in the strengthening sunlight. A couple of local men at a picnic table had captured a common wall lizard, and were attempting to feed it with a Colorado beetle. The lizard was having none of it, so the leader took it upon himself to do his bit to rid the country of this destructive pest. Although, judging from infestations we saw later on, it was a matter of too little, too late.



Continuing up the road towards the village of Trigrad, we were surrounded by butterfly delights, with Glanville fritillary, Escher's and small blues, green hairstreak and black-veined whites to name but a few, and a myriad of visitors to a small, presumably salt-rich pool: silver-studded blue, wood white, sandy grizzled skipper and scarce swallowtail. The verges were ablaze with flowers, including swallow-wort, *Anchusa barrelieri* and fragrant orchids, and a bear sculpture at the mouth of a cave gave us some indication of the hidden denizens of the surrounding forests.



A gaggle of blues.

And so to lunch in a restaurant by the river, where robins and speckled yellow moths played around, as clouds started to gather overhead. Notwithstanding, we headed by coach further up the valley, before walking back down the road taking in the botanical and entomological riches on the way. Among the many plants were marsh orchids (*Dactyloriza baumanniana* and *D. cordigera*) in the wet flushes, mixing with bright orange-flowered *Geum coccineum* and pink sticky catchfly; *Genista januensis*, *Hypericum cerastoides* and *Linum capitatum* adding a blaze of yellow; the beautiful, if understated, muddy-pink *Ajuga laxmannii* mingling with purple *A. pyramidalis*; and the picnicker's nightmare – unexpectedly spiny cushions of *Astragalus angustifolius*.



*Ajuga laxmannii* (left) and *Geum coccineum*.

Birds were few and far between – just coal tits and a couple of bullfinches in the trees, and a golden oriole which called briefly – and an agile frog hopped out of a roadside rivulet while several Roman snails impressed us all with their size. But again it was the Lepidoptera which stole the show: both common and latticed heath moths; pearl-bordered, small pearl-bordered and Queen-of-Spain fritillaries; small copper and Adonis blues, shining orange and electric-blue respectively; and several chequered skippers.

The clouds continued to build, and indeed produced a few spots of rain and rumbles of thunder as we sampled the wares of a roadside honey stall. The variation in taste was remarkable, and for many the sweet but slightly astringent honey from bees which had foraged on wild strawberry under pine woods was the favourite, and found its way into many a suitcase.

Once safely back at the hotel, the heavens opened and delivered that which had been threatening all afternoon. But after an hour or so, the clouds were swept away, and normal service restored. Amazingly, given that June is the rainy season in this part of the mountains, with on average rain every three days, this was the last rain we encountered, indeed almost the last cloud we saw. After a splendid dinner of moussaka, we were treated to a folk-song and dance evening, courtesy of the local ladies (affectionately dubbed the 'Yagodina Grannies', which soon turned into a highly participative event, especially for Helen, adorned in the local costume. But the ladies danced us into the ground – has there ever been a more riotous end to a Honeyguide day?!

### **Friday 15 June: walk to Yagodinska cave and the valley beyond**

Calm and clear for the pre-breakfast walkers, we had excellent views of blackcap, serin, red-rumped swallows and pallid swifts, together with black-veined and burnet companion moths, as well as a freshly dead fire salamander on the road.

After breakfast, we headed up the hill behind the hotel and walked through the pine, spruce, silver fir and beech forest to Yagodinska Cave. The forest was typically quiet so far as birds were concerned, with just a few chiffchaffs, blackcaps, garden warblers and goldcrests singing and calling in the dense tree cover. However, towards the end, most of the group managed to connect with a family of nutcrackers, the front of the group seeing them feeding at close quarters, and the rear of the group catching them moving away through the canopy. Impossible to miss though was the vast wood ants' nest, so big that a fence had been built around it. In the areas of deepest shade, plants were restricted to a few saprophytes such as bird's-nest orchid and coralroot orchid, but where sufficient light could penetrate the foliage, many other species were on show, including sanicle, common twayblade, white helleborine, fly orchid and three species of wintergreen.



Balkan zephyr blue, Glanville fritillaries and Balkan copper.

After our morning's walk, a drink at a hotel, with our packed lunch was in order, making use of the shade from the intense heat. Then we were ferried into the upper valley and once again butterflies proved a major attraction, from the brilliant Balkan copper to grizzled skipper and Queen-of-Spain fritillary. Dragonflies (keeled skimmer, broad-bodied chaser) and damselflies (blue-tailed, large red, and common blue) were much in evidence around a shallow pool. A long stretch through dense forest then followed, and proved very quiet, although we did find Balkan zephyr blues and saw a run through the woods down to a stream which looked good for the signs of brown bears.

Heading homewards, several of us got out below Yagodina to walk through more open, grassland habitats, covered in showy mulleins, St Bernard's lily, bloody crane's-bill and silver sage. Red-and-black 'Millwall' bugs *Graphosoma italicum* went about their business on many an umbel, a fearsome-looking *Anthrax* bee-fly basked in the sun, and alpine swifts chickered overhead. The humidity was rising, and cloud was developing in the distance, but it all blew over before coming to anything.



## Saturday 16 June: Trigrad to Yagodina

A cooler, though still sunny, dawn saw the early birds taking a round trip through the agricultural fields east of the village, but there was little to report apart from singing yellowhammer and wren. In contrast, Colin (the earliest bird of all) had struck out on his own and found cirl bunting, black woodpecker and a bullfinch feeding young, and got knocked to the ground by a large dog. Little wonder he was later discovered by Angela in one of the bars, discussing football and the weather with the locals!



Red-rumped swallow.

Heading back to Trigrad, we took another opportunity to stop at the wallcreepers' nest site. What a contrast to two days previously! The Euro-paparazzi were out in force, with enormous lenses trained upon the nest, in keeping with the celebrity status of these birds. However, although we did see both birds, they were much more circumspect than previously, so after a short while we continued on our way to the village. Starting on the trail back to Yagodina, a distance of some 6km, the Honeyguide pace soon became apparent. Indeed the walk eventually clocked in at 7 hours! In the village itself, a red-rumped swallow posed beautifully at eye-level on some wires, and as we entered the scrubby, rocky part of the walk we were serenaded by a male rock bunting, as a powdered brimstone fluttered past, with its less purposeful flight than our more familiar, smaller, brighter species. Approaching the forest edge, various high-pitched calls from the canopy resolved into willow and coal tits, together with a very showy male firecrest, and a red squirrel.



Cucumber spider *Araniella cucurbitina* with prey, and ladybird spider *Eresus cinnaberinus*.

A flowery meadow produced plenty of butterflies, including scarce swallowtail, but alas not the Apollo which was reported to by another group, so we pressed on, up the steepest part of the track to the highest point of the walk, taking in a ladybird spider which was wandering down our path, where a clearing with shady edges seemed a good spot to take lunch. A hobby flew over, followed by several flypasts by three peregrines, two of which were noisy, recently-fledged youngsters. Despite being novices, their mastery of flight was already apparent. And Helen after disappearing into the woods came back breathless with the tale of a black woodpecker feeding on a rotten trunk. Clearly it had found a rich source of food as it remained there while the rest of us scrambled to benefit from this lucky encounter.

Once Kate's 4WD chariot had arrived to transport her home, we set off downhill through the dense forest, with little bird activity, apart from coal tits, until round a blind bend, a pair of nutcrackers were seen feeding and drinking in and around a pool in the rutted track. Wonderful views all round! Then the last leg of the walk, through the agricultural surroundings of Yagodina, gave us another chance to savour the diverse flora, including the odd-looking species (or subspecies according to which book you believe) *subintegra* of ragged-robin, clouds of butterflies, especially blues (many of which proved to be Idas blues) drinking at puddles; and red-backed shrikes and lesser whitethroat.

After dinner, we were treated to a flavour of some of the hidden delights of the local forests by Maria and Asen's son, who showed us images from a nocturnal camera trap sited some 5km away, including badgers, boars ... and bears!

### Sunday 17 June: St. Iliya and Yagodina

Moths attracted to the hotel lights overnight included a showy cream-spot tiger, at least for those who got up and out before the cleaner started work! While still sunny, there was a different feel in the air today, with mist hanging both in the valley and around the mountain tops. But by the time breakfast was over, the mist had dispersed and we herded ourselves into and onto (H&S rules anybody?) Asen's 4WD and were ferried up to the top of the local mountain St. Iliya, a height of 1560m. Already busy with other groups, we waited and watched the alpine swifts wheeling around, above and below, and a clouded Apollo nectaring around the summit. Then out to the viewing platform (right), sticking out into the void from the cliff edge, with a heart-stopping sheer drop of some 600m below. For those who could tear their eyes from the drop, there were patches of large white-flowered *Achillea ageratifolia* in full bloom on the cliff edges.



Burnt orchid, cistus forester, and *Centaurea triumfettii*

Our adrenaline levels suitably raised, we then potteded slowly back along the crest of the mountain ridge, gradually losing altitude, through the sparse pine forest. A honey buzzard drifted low overhead, and several lesser whitethroats were in full song. The rocky limestone grassland flora included burnt and green-winged orchids, yellow patches of horseshoe vetch and *Fumana procumbens*, a single-flowered knapweed *Centaurea triumfettii*, and white *Cerastium decalvans*, while Angela discovered a beautiful metallic green, day-flying moth, the cistus forester.



Then a bumpy ride back to the hotel followed by a salad and soup lunch, in a leisurely fashion as befits a Sunday, before Maria showed us round the local museum/cultural exhibition. Local fabrics, crafts and tools spoke of a hard existence, almost self-sufficient, which persisted until only a generation ago. This fascinating break from wildlife led to a few minutes in the square (with raven, honey buzzard and powdered brimstone flying over), before we headed out once again into the pastures above the hotel. Being the hottest part of the day, birds were quiet and butterflies were whizzing past at top speed, but a large eastern hedgehog was a surprise to all as it trundled across the path ahead of us. And none were more surprised than the owner of the garden into which it wandered, although he was more than happy for us to follow it for a good view!

After dinner, we headed out in the gathering dusk to try and connect with a few bats. Given that Bulgaria is home to 32 of around 40 European species, and the Yagodina area is riddled with caves and other roosting sites, it was surprising that not a single bat was picked up, either by sight or on the detector.

### **Monday 18 June: Devin**

A longer than usual early morning walk brought us to the damp orchid meadow we had spotted yesterday from the 4WD safari. What a sight! A sheet of orchids, punctuated by the taller, purple spikes of purple loosestrife, the whole vista festooned with dew and gossamer, catching the rays of the rising sun. Red-backed shrikes provided the bird interest, and a lone cat wandering along the trackways, more than a kilometre from the outskirts of the village, bore all the hallmarks of a genuine wild cat. Meanwhile, Colin and Ken headed in the other direction, and came back with tales of black and great spotted woodpeckers and sombre tits, and Helen received some local hospitality in the form of a cup of stovebrewed 'chai' and a tour of the house of a local gentleman – all before breakfast.

Our drive today took us to the outskirts of Devin – home of the lovely local bottled water – and the start of a track which led us alongside the tumbling Devinska river, into a broad, heavily wooded, rocky gorge. Here we were among some unfamiliar trees, such as green alder, oriental hornbeam, tartar maple, *Quercus dalechampii*, and both small-leaved and large-leaved limes. A patch of the Balkan endemic *Digitalis viridiflora*, beckoned us in to the botanical delights, including yellow patches of *Genista carinalis*, the local endemic King Boris's cinquefoil, *Dianthus giganteus* and forking spleenwort.



Poplar admiral, and Apollo nectaring on a thistle.

But it was the insects which really fired our enthusiasm, with golden-ringed dragonfly and beautiful demoiselles respectively patrolling and displaying, and poplar admiral, white admiral, common glider and the brilliantly metallic scarce copper among the numerous butterflies. Several trees were festooned with the large larval webs of large tortoiseshell, but the undoubted highlight was a very fresh Apollo which flew with obvious power and nectared on thistles around a sedum-rich clearing, at times only a couple of metres from the assembled admirers.

A large aesculapian snake, perhaps 1.5m in length, showed itself well as it defied gravity and slithered its way straight across a near vertical rock face. Apart from wandering bands of tits, and a few red-rumped swallows and crag martins around their nests, the most numerous birds were noisy grey wagtails every few metres along the river. High above, three kestrels were mobbing a passing buzzard, when a splendid golden eagle drifted down the length of the gorge with barely a flap.



This male whinchat was not impressed by the improvised bird-scaring apparatus.

Into Devin for a welcome drink, a bank and the chance for some retail therapy, and ever-present pallid swifts over the rooftops, before we then headed back towards home, diverting to Borino and another area of hay meadows. Always hopeful, despite the heat and time of the day, we listened in vain for the corncrakes which frequent this area, but a pair of whinchats, a snatch of ortolan bunting song, and the usual suspects – corn bunting and red-backed shrike – were some compensation. As indeed was a white stork which flew over us and into the valley. At the time this seemed quite surprising – after all, the montane stork is usually black, but the mystery was solved the following day when we located a white storks' nest in Borino village.

Our return coach journey was interrupted after a few hundred metres, on a set of hairpins with ample space to pull off, by the sight of now two white storks in the air. On disembarking, we found the RDB *Spiraea salicifolia* growing in the hedge, and then, remarkably coming from the small area of grassland between the hairpins of a road much used by heavy timber lorries, the unmistakeable song of a corncrake. On our final leg, towards Yagodina, we finally encountered and had good views of several dippers, two adults and maybe 4-5 fledged young feeding and flying around the rocky river bed.

## Tuesday 19 June: Borino, Zmeitsa and Chala

Early morning produced its usual delights, as the local birds were warmed into action by the strengthening sun, but a couple of long-tailed tits were new for the trip, and a clouded buff moth was today's feature on the hotel steps.

The drive to Borino put us in touch again with yesterday's dipper family, and gave everyone a splendid view of a green woodpecker as it flew alongside the bus for a hundred metres or more.

Arriving at Borino, the presumed source of yesterday's storks was a nest on a pylon right by the road. Continuing beyond the village, we were taken on a side road to potter back through the woods and meadows. Butterflies were everywhere, here including many Balkan coppers and large skippers, with a few chestnut heaths, and floating down the river, we found a nearly-deceased pine hawk-moth, which even Angela's TLC failed to revive.



White stork and young in Borino. Spanish sparrows were in residence under the nest.



The damp grassland harboured several common frogs, while from a nearby fishing lake arose the unmistakable quacking chorus of marsh frogs. The grassland was incredibly diverse, and contained several plants we had not previously encountered, including *Armeria rumelica*, *Plantago subulata*, Spanish catchfly and false helleborine. In one small patch there was the wonderful sight of three very different *Geum* species together: orange-yellow *G. rhodopaeum*, scarlet *coccineum* and drooping pinkish-yellow *rivale*. As we approached a group of pines, the purring call of a crested tit was surprisingly our first encounter with this species, before it flew across a clearing, giving at least a brief glimpse, before plunging into the canopy never to be seen again. Several dragonflies patrolled along the road verges, including the metallic green, hairy-thoraxed brilliant emerald.

Then emerging into open habitats again, a quail started wetting its lips and a pair of whinchats stood sentinel on a wire fence. Back at the main road, a large, natural-looking pond beckoned us, and proved to be teeming with life. A water rail called from the reeds, and marsh frogs from the water, while dragonflies zipped around all over the pool, mostly four-spotted chasers, with several emperors and broad-bodied chasers.

Back to Borino for lunch (by popular demand, with chips!), accompanied by the call to prayer from the nearby mosque, and numerous pallid swifts, which were breeding under the tiles of the apartments across the road. Then a few minutes at the white stork's nest, containing three chicks, during which time one parent returned and fed them with some unspeakable regurgitate...



On the plateau at Chala. Mount St. Iliya is in the centre of the shot, and beyond that, Yagodina.

Our final afternoon in the Yagodina area was then spent exploring the plateau meadows around Chala. The views were simply stunning, across the valley to St. Iliya and Yagodina village, as indeed were the meadows, a patchwork of *Pastinaca hirsuta*, wild pansy, yellow rattle, Carthusian pink, thyme broomrape and thrift. Several spotted fritillaries put in their first appearance of the trip, and one of those was a particularly distinctive aberrant, with two large black blotches on the hindwing. As we gathered to depart, a hobby drifted just over our heads – excellent views for all – and we were reflecting on the possible reasons for the dearth of larger raptors and vultures when we met a local chap who told us, through Vlado, that they were all killed more than 30 years ago by poisoned baits left for wolves.

Heading back, another stop at dipper central produced fewer birds than we had seen previously – perhaps they were dispersing already? – but we did see one young bird which had already developed a very effective underwater feeding technique. A very noisy band of long-tailed tits moved through the hotel grounds, before it was time for our final, delicious evening meal at Yagodina, not (as some hoped) accompanied by the sight of England winning their game in Euro2012: the start was delayed by dreadful weather in north-east Europe, no doubt linked to the equally unexpected, but more welcome, settled heatwave we had experienced further south.

### **Wednesday 20 June: Shiroka Laka, Stoykite, Bachkovo Monastery and the journey to Koprivshtitsa**

Bulgarian cream tea for breakfast fortified us through the process of packing and loading the bus, as three alpine swifts wheeled around low overhead. Then farewell to Maria and Asen, and on the road by 9am.

With no fixed structure to the day, other than where we wanted to end up, we took full advantage of the flexibility. First of all, just a few kilometres down the road, Ken spotted a black stork feeding on the river bank. A hurried stop, all out, and good views were had by all, before it flew off, just as a second bird drifted down the valley.



Black stork.

Next was a brief stop in Shiroka Laka, a traditional village with stone-tiled roofs, and a remarkable icon-filled Orthodox church, built from scratch in 1834 in just 38 days. Sue spotted a slow-worm on the river bank, and we all marvelled at resourcefulness of the locals in recycling domestic radiators into garden fences!

Then, a real treat! It transpired that Vlado is a national authority on one of the most spectacular local endemic plants, the Rhodope lily *Lilium rhodopaeum*. He had written the Action Plan for its conservation, and been involved in monitoring the known sites – and knew they normally came into flower around the third week in June. And we were going to be going close to one of them! On reaching the remote valley near Stoykite, it soon became clear it was a special place. Flowery meadows extending into the distance were croaking with corncrakes – probably 5 or 6 birds in total – and a northern wheatear sang from a post. The pools on the track each had their attendant swarm of butterflies – as before, plenty of blues, but here with as many, if not more, fritillaries, marsh being the dominant species. And there, standing proud on the grassy slopes, the dramatic yellow flowers of Rhodope lily, the large drooping blooms with recurved tepals at their very best, probably having opened within the past two days. Maybe a hundred plants in total, this is one of just 10 known localities for this iconic plant, five each in Bulgaria and Greece, all within the Rhodope range. An unexpected delight and privilege for the whole group, and for those who got close enough, sufficiently dramatic to forgive its ‘interesting’ smell – what may be termed a ‘seminal moment’!



Vlado indicated though that the future of this population must be considered at some risk. Unlike certain other sites, this has no conservation protection, and it is clear that there is insufficient management, whether by grazing or mowing, to keep it in tip-top condition. Bracken and false helleborine were showing signs of increasing, and the general sward is getting rank and overgrown. But if management is going to be put in place, there are a number of prerequisites: to ascertain ownership, no mean feat apparently; to decide what is right for the site; and to secure funding. It occurred to us there and then that the Honeyguiders' holiday donations could help with the latter, and on our return this was quickly agreed between Chris Durdin, Vlado and BSPB.



Marsh fritillary, and *Lilium rhodopaeum* with a fragrant orchid.

Pressing on, we arrived at Bachkovo Monastery, clearly a tourist honeypot near the northern edge of the mountains, for lunch in the restaurant. While the sound of tumbling water from the waterfall in the eating area rather drowned out attempts at conversation, the open sides and dappled light were excellent for passing butterflies. And Sue showed her credentials as the butterfly whisperer by attracting a silver-washed fritillary to sit on her hand, and remain there for several minutes. We couldn't forego the opportunity then to visit the monastery itself, an oasis of calm, full of cultural treasures, the heady scent of lime flowers and interesting trees such as *Diospyros* species, and for those still peering skywards, flocks of hirundines which rose noisily into the blue as a marauding hobby came into view.

Our very last stop in the mountains, just south of Asenovgrad, was at their final rocky outpost. A splendid bush cricket *Poecilimon ornatus* picked its way through some bushes on the bridge, but the near rocks were devoid of birds, apart from a few crag martins. However, just as we were getting back on the bus, Kate spotted a bird on a very distant rock face, which through the scope resolved into our target species, a male blue rock thrush.

Then it was north across the plains, the intense heat a reminder of just how hot it would have been had we not spent the previous week in the mountains, above 1000m. A brief fuel stop was bejewelled with at least 40 bee-eaters either side of the road, wheeling around and making feeding forays from the electricity wires, together with black-headed and corn buntings singing from the tops of bushes. Two crested larks displayed on the forecourt, seemingly panting in the cauldron, and a couple of European sousliks which emerged from burrows on the grass verges showed off their best meerkat impressions!

The rest of the journey was relatively uneventful, apart from several yellow-legged gulls by the river Maritsa in Plovdiv, and we arrived at our destination, Father's House in Koprivshtitsa, around 6pm. A short walk around the village led us through traditional houses in abundance, with memorials to amongst other things a local poet and the location of the first shot being fired in the uprising which led to the overthrow of Ottoman rule in 1876. Serins were abundant in the trees and gardens, while greenfinches and common redstarts, the latter feeding young, made a last-ditch attempt to lift our bird list towards a hundred species. Several song thrushes also showed well, one in particular creating havoc as it got too close to a colony of house martins: clearly the martins saw it as a threat, and after much mobbing, the terrorised thrush was forced on its way. And finally, a male crossbill posed for all atop one of the many tall conifers which lined the streets.

### Thursday 21 June: the way home...

Taking a final opportunity for some sun (we had heard the forecast for back home!), many of the group wandered back through the streets of Koprivshtitsa before breakfast. Yesterday's birds were still in evidence, with groups of crossbills being especially noticeable as they moved through noisily, and a couple of sombre tits rewarded the persistence of the most patient observers. But then it was back into the bus, suitcases loaded, and a prompt start for the final slog back to Sofia. At least three freshly-dead pine martens told of their abundance in the region. A lesser spotted eagle close to the road proved the highlight of this journey, although rooks, jackdaws and a turtle dove made a welcome appearance onto our holiday list, before we were disgorged into the airport terminal around 10am. Then, as the plane taxied for take-off, five white storks following the haymaker along the runway edge bade us farewell, marking the end of a truly remarkable holiday.

### The best bits

On our final evening over dinner, as is a Honeyguide tradition, everyone was asked to recall their most memorable moments of the week, although many found it difficult to remain within the suggested restriction to two items!

**Ken** – the nutcrackers in a puddle, and the 'three w's' – wallcreepers, weather and wine!

**Colin** – our '2 hour' walk from Trigrad which took us 7; the nutcrackers again; and the Apollo butterfly, 'almost a bird' – praise indeed from an inveterate birder...

**Sue** – Balkan coppers, the brightest of the bright, and the wonderful Rhodope lilies.

**Peter** – the black woodpecker playing peek-a-boo in the forest, and another vote for the lilies.

**Kate** – Mr and Mrs wallcreeper (without the paparazzi!), and the sheer bountifulness of the flowery meadows, butterflies, and habitats.

**Angela** – field crickets, both in the hand, and filling the air with their song; rose chafers; and the gorge roads: extraordinary...terrifying...but beautiful!

**Helen** – sun-warmed mulberries (and purple lips, tongue and fingers!), and the 'butterfly confetti', with a special mention of the Apollo.

**Malcolm** – the birds, butterflies, flowers and company!

**Vlado** – our performing wallcreepers and Apollo; and (of course) the lilies.

**Chris** – a final vote for the stunning Rhodope lilies; Colin's description of Angela 'skipping through the flowery meadows like a teenager'; and (almost forgotten with all that followed it) our first, amazing insect, the pennant-winged ant-lion.

Taking all of these highlights along with a few other facts and figures (100 bird species, 72 butterflies, and many other animals and plants, including numerous local endemics and rarities), it is not difficult to understand why we all headed home to our 'summer that never was' with smiles on our faces!



A flowery meadow above Yagodina.



## LISTS

In general, localities are not given for groups other than birds, as we stayed most of the time in a tight area around Yagodina, and almost anything we saw could reasonably be expected to be seen almost anywhere around there in the right habitat.

### BIRDS – 100 species

<b>Cormorant</b>	Two, on one of the reservoirs in the Rhodopes on the journey there
<b>White Stork</b>	A pair with chicks in Borino, the adults seen away from the nest. Also several breeding pairs seen on the journeys, and 5 feeding at the airport
<b>Black Stork</b>	Two, one feeding and one flying, by the river below Yagodina
<b>Honey Buzzard</b>	Ones and twos several times during the week, including on the journey there
<b>Sparrowhawk</b>	Single birds seen in the mountains
<b>Common Buzzard</b>	The commonest raptor, seen every day
<b>Long-legged Buzzard</b>	One, with honey buzzard and lesser spotted eagle, on the way there
<b>Bonelli's Eagle</b>	Immature by the Bessapari Hills
<b>Golden Eagle</b>	One flew down the Devin Gorge
<b>Lesser Spotted Eagle</b>	Single birds on both journeys
<b>Kestrel</b>	Small numbers every day
<b>Hobby</b>	Single birds at Yagodina, Trigrad, Chala and Bachkovo
<b>Peregrine</b>	Trigrad Gorge, three seen together on the walk back to Yagodina
<b>Corncrake</b>	Heard near Borino (1) and Stoykite (at least 5)
<b>Water Rail</b>	Heard around the pond near Zmeitsa
<b>Quail</b>	Heard near Zmeitsa
<b>Yellow-legged Gull</b>	Seen on the journeys, including around reservoirs in the Rhodopes
<b>Feral Pigeon</b>	Common, especially in towns and villages; some true Rock Dove types in the gorges
<b>Woodpigeon</b>	Small numbers in and around the mountain forests
<b>Collared Dove</b>	Common around the lowland settlements, not in the mountains
<b>Turtle Dove</b>	Just one seen, on the journey to Koprivshitsa
<b>Cuckoo</b>	Heard, occasionally seen, daily in the mountains
<b>Tawny Owl</b>	Heard around Yagodina
<b>Common Swift</b>	Common
<b>Pallid Swift</b>	Frequently seen with Common Swifts; 3-4 regularly over Yagodina, and breeding in Borino
<b>Alpine Swift</b>	Small numbers in most of the mountain gorges; up to 3 seen over Yagodina
<b>Bee-eater</b>	Heard once over Yagodina; large numbers near the petrol station on the lowlands as we headed to Koprivshitsa
<b>Green Woodpecker</b>	Occasionally seen or heard around the forests
<b>Great Spotted Woodpecker</b>	Seen or heard most days
<b>Black Woodpecker</b>	Seen well between Trifard and Yagodina; also seen or heard several early mornings behind Yagodina
<b>Woodlark</b>	Heard on St Iliya
<b>Calandra Lark</b>	Common on the Bessapari Hills
<b>Crested Lark</b>	Seen well while stopped on both journeys through the lowlands
<b>Sand Martin</b>	Seen over rivers on the journey there
<b>Crag Martin</b>	Common in suitable rocky habitats
<b>Barn Swallow</b>	Common everywhere
<b>Red-rumped Swallow</b>	Seen every day in the mountains, but in small numbers; pairs breeding at Yagodina and the Devin Gorge; observed very well in Trigrad village
<b>House Martin</b>	Common; breeding in villages and on cliff faces
<b>Tree Pipit</b>	Single birds at Yagodina and near Zmeitsa
<b>Grey Wagtail</b>	Common in all upland rivers
<b>White Wagtail</b>	Common around water and in villages
<b>Dipper</b>	Present in all upland rivers, but surprisingly sparse
<b>Wren</b>	One of the most obvious birds, by song, in all mountain forests and gorges
<b>Duncock</b>	Frequent in mountain forest clearings and scrub
<b>Robin</b>	A forest bird, but quite sparse
<b>Nightingale</b>	Heard on the journey there

<b>Black Redstart</b>	A constant feature of all towns and villages
<b>Common Redstart</b>	A pair with fledged young at Koprivshtitsa
<b>Whinchat</b>	Territorial pairs near Borino and Zmeitsa; singing male near Stoykite
<b>Northern Wheatear</b>	Single birds near Yagodina and Zmeitsa
<b>Isabelline Wheatear</b>	Several birds in the valley at the foot of Bessapari Hills
<b>Rock Thrush</b>	One above the gorge near Krichim
<b>Blue Rock Thrush</b>	Surprisingly scarce: single males at Trigrad and Asenovgrad
<b>Blackbird</b>	Fairly common
<b>Song Thrush</b>	Common in Koprivshtitsa
<b>Mistle Thrush</b>	Seen most days in upland forest habitats
<b>Blackcap</b>	Common in forest areas, especially near streams
<b>Garden Warbler</b>	In similar places to Blackcap, but much less frequent
<b>Whitethroat</b>	Seen on the journey there
<b>Lesser Whitethroat</b>	Seen or heard most days – one of the more obvious birds in sparse woodland
<b>Chiffchaff</b>	Abundant in the mountain forests; still singing freely
<b>Wood Warbler</b>	One at Yagodina
<b>Goldcrest</b>	Common
<b>Firecrest</b>	Small numbers at Trigrad, Yagodina and Devin
<b>Spotted Flycatcher</b>	One at Yagodina; common and breeding at Koprivshtitsa
<b>Long-tailed Tit</b>	Family parties around Yagodina, but seen only on one day
<b>Marsh Tit</b>	Seen almost daily in small numbers at Yagodina and elsewhere
<b>Willow Tit</b>	Two, between Trigrad and Yagodina
<b>Crested Tit</b>	Surprisingly scarce; only seen near Zmeitsa
<b>Sombre Tit</b>	Small numbers on several days around Yagodina
<b>Coal Tit</b>	Common, and noisy
<b>Blue Tit</b>	Fairly common
<b>Great Tit</b>	Common
<b>Wallcreeper</b>	Trigrad; possibly two pairs, one downhill of the tunnel, the other around the car park for the Devil's Throat cave
<b>Golden Oriole</b>	One heard briefly above Trigrad
<b>Red-backed Shrike</b>	Common in upland agricultural habitats and scrub
<b>Lesser Grey Shrike</b>	One in the valley below Bessapari Hills
<b>Jay</b>	Frequent in the forests
<b>Magpie</b>	Common
<b>Nutcracker</b>	A pair with one juvenile between Yagodina and Yagodinska Cave; a pair between Trigrad and Yagodina
<b>Jackdaw</b>	Seen on the journey back
<b>Rook</b>	Seen on the journey back
<b>Hooded Crow</b>	Common
<b>Raven</b>	Seen in small numbers every day
<b>Starling</b>	Moderately common
<b>House Sparrow</b>	Common in some towns and villages
<b>Tree Sparrow</b>	Largely replaces House Sparrows in some villages, such as Yagodina
<b>Spanish Sparrow</b>	On the journeys, often associated with storks' nests
<b>Chaffinch</b>	Common
<b>Serín</b>	Common, especially around villages
<b>Greenfinch</b>	Only in Koprivshtitsa
<b>Goldfinch</b>	Common
<b>Bullfinch</b>	Pairs occasionally seen during the week, around villages and forest clearings
<b>Crossbill</b>	One over Yagodina; numerous around Koprivshtitsa
<b>Yellowhammer</b>	Present, though not numerous, in agricultural uplands
<b>Girl Bunting</b>	One above Yagodina
<b>Black-headed Bunting</b>	Seen on both journeys in the lowlands
<b>Ortolan Bunting</b>	One near Borino
<b>Corn Bunting</b>	Common in agricultural areas
<b>Rock Bunting</b>	A singing male between Trigrad and Yagodina



### MAMMALS

<b>Red Squirrel</b>	Occasional sightings in the forests; one seen particularly well between Trigrad and Yagodina
<b>Common Souslik</b>	Two seen well in the grass verge of a petrol station on the journey back
<b>Brown Hare</b>	Regularly seen above Yagodina
<b>Eastern Hedgehog</b>	One seen well mid-afternoon in Yagodina; otherwise road-kills
<b>Mole</b>	Hills very obvious in the mountain pastures
<b>Pine Marten</b>	Several road casualties
<b>Brown Bear</b>	A run from the forest to the river above Yagodinska Cave may well have been a bear track
<b>Red Fox</b>	One seen close to Yagodina
<b>Wild Cat</b>	One cat seen between Trigrad and Yagodina bore all the external characteristics of a true Wild Cat
<b>Wild Boar</b>	Abundant rootings on the edge of the forests
<b>Roe Deer</b>	One seen crossing the road below Yagodina
<b>Red Deer</b>	Prints which were large enough for Red Deer seen above Trigrad

### REPTILES

<b>Balkan Wall Lizard</b>	<b>Occasional</b>
<b>Common Wall Lizard</b>	<b>Common</b>
<b>Green Lizard</b>	<b>One at Devinska Gorge</b>
<b>Slow Worm</b>	<b>A road casualty above Trigrad; one alive at Shiroka Laka</b>
<b>Aesculapian Snake</b>	<b>A large specimen seen very well in the Devinska Gorge</b>

### AMPHIBIANS

<b>Common Frog</b>	<b>Near Zmeitsa, by the river</b>
<b>Agile Frog</b>	<b>Seen above Trigrad and Yagodinska Cave</b>
<b>Marsh Frog</b>	<b>Near Zmeitsa, in the ponds and still waters</b>
<b>Common Toad</b>	<b>Road casualty above Yagodinska Cave</b>
<b>Fire Salamander</b>	<b>One road casualty at Yagodina</b>

### BUTTERFLIES – 72 species

<b>Swallowtail</b>	Scarce Swallowtail	Clouded Apollo
<b>Apollo</b>	Large White	Small White
<b>Green-veined White</b>	Bath White	Orange Tip
<b>Wood White</b>	Black-veined White	Clouded Yellow
<b>Berger's Clouded Yellow</b>	Brimstone	Powdered Brimstone
<b>Red Admiral</b>	Painted Lady	Peacock
<b>Comma</b>	Large Tortoiseshell (caterpillars)	Poplar Admiral
<b>Common Glider</b>	White Admiral	Queen-of-Spain Fritillary
<b>Pearl-bordered Fritillary</b>	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	Silver-washed Fritillary
<b>Glanville Fritillary</b>	Marsh Fritillary	Marbled Fritillary
<b>Spotted Fritillary</b>	Lesser Spotted Fritillary (caterpillars)	Heath Fritillary
<b>Nickerl's Fritillary</b>	Speckled Wood	Large Wall Brown
<b>Northern Wall Brown</b>	Wall Brown	Almond-eyed Ringlet
<b>Woodland Ringlet</b>	Bright-eyed Ringlet	Pearly Heath
<b>Chestnut Heath</b>	Eastern Large Heath	Small Heath
<b>Marbled White</b>	Adonis Blue	Common Blue
<b>Idas Blue</b>	Silver-studded Blue	Chapman's Blue
<b>Chequered Blue</b>	Escher's Blue	Balkan Zephyr Blue
<b>Mazarine Blue</b>	Small Blue	Holly Blue
<b>Osiris Blue</b>	Blue Argus	Brown Argus
<b>Balkan Copper</b>	Scarce Copper	Small Copper
<b>Green Hairstreak</b>	Duke-of-Burgundy	Grizzled Skipper
<b>Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper</b>	Sandy Grizzled Skipper	Dingy Skipper
<b>Large Skipper</b>	Small Skipper	Chequered Skipper

MOTHS	
Hummingbird Hawk-moth	Pine Hawk-moth
Chimney Sweeper	<i>Rhodostrophia vibicaria</i>
Common Heath	Latticed Heath
Speckled Yellow	Lead Belle
Mottled Beauty	Willow Beauty
Black-veined Moth	Garden Tiger
Cream-spot Tiger	Clouded Buff
Water Ermine	Fox Moth
Lackey (caterpillar)	Poplar Grey
Mother Shipton	Burnet Companion
Shoulder-striped Wainscot	Silver Y
Fan-foot	Narrow-bordered Five-spotted Burnet
Cistus Forester	<i>Syntomis</i> sp.

DRAGONFLIES & DAMSELFLIES	
<i>Anax imperator</i>	Emperor Dragonfly
<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>	Beautiful Demoiselle
<i>Cordulegaster bidentata</i>	Sombre Goldenring
<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	Common Blue Damselfly
<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	Blue-tailed Damselfly
<i>Libellula depressa</i>	Broad-bodied Chaser
<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>	Four-spotted Chaser
<i>Orthetrum brunneum</i>	Southern Skimmer
<i>Orthetrum coerulescans</i>	Keeled Skimmer
<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>	Large Red Damselfly
<i>Somatochlora metallica</i>	Brilliant Emerald

OTHER INVERTEBRATES	
<i>Helix pomatia</i>	Roman Snail
<i>Araniella cucurbitina</i>	Cucumber Spider
<i>Eresus cinnaberinus</i>	Ladybird Spider
<i>Pholidoptera aptera</i>	a bush-cricket
<i>Poecilimon ornatus</i>	a bush-cricket
<i>Decticus verrucivorus</i>	Wart-biter
<i>Oedipoda germanica</i>	Red-winged Grasshopper
<i>Gryllus campestris</i>	Field Cricket
	Praying Mantis sp. (egg case)
<i>Chrysopa perla</i>	a lacewing
<i>Nemoptera sinuata</i>	Pennant-winged Ant-lion
<i>Libelloides macaronius</i>	an ascalaphid
<i>Panorpa meridionalis</i>	a scorpion-fly
<i>Lygaeus saxatilis</i>	a red-and-black ground bug
<i>Pyrrhocoris apterus</i>	Fire Bug
<i>Graphosoma italicum</i>	'Millwall' Bug
<i>Coreus marginatus</i>	Squash Bug
<i>Cercopis vulnerata</i>	a large black-and-red frog hopper
<i>Xylocopa violacea</i>	Violet Carpenter-bee
<i>Osmia</i> sp.	a mason bee
<i>Vespa crabro</i>	Hornet
<i>Polistes</i> sp.	a paper wasp
<i>Formica rufa</i>	Wood Ant
<i>Anthrax anthrax</i>	a bee-fly
<i>Cetonia aurata</i>	Rose Chafer
<i>Leptinotarsa decemlineata</i>	Colorado Beetle
<i>Strangalia maculata</i>	a longhorn beetle
<i>Phytoecia nigripes</i>	a longhorn beetle
<i>Agapanthea villosa viridescens</i>	a longhorn beetle
<i>Coccinella septempunctata</i>	Seven-spot Ladybird
<i>Mylabris polymorpha</i>	a red-and-black beetle
<i>Trichodes apicatus</i>	Bee-eating Beetle

FUNGI	
<i>Triphragmium filipendulae</i>	a rust on dropwort



## PLANTS

For the plants, a separate list has been made for those species found at Bessapari, as they constituted a distinctly different, steppic element from those in the Western Rhodopes.

### Species list from Bessapari Hills

<i>Acinos suaveloens</i>	<i>Alcea pallida</i>	<i>Asperula cynanchica</i>
<i>Convolvulus cantabricus</i>	<i>Coronilla varia</i>	<i>Haplopyllum suaveolens</i>
<i>Minuartia setacea</i>	<i>Morus alba</i>	<i>Ononis pusilla</i>
<i>Onobrychis arenaria</i>	<i>O. caput-gallii</i>	<i>Potentilla recta</i>
<i>Sambucus ebulus</i>	<i>Salvia nemorosa</i>	<i>Sedum acre</i>
<i>Sideritis montana</i>	<i>Teucrium polium</i>	

## MOSSES

<i>Fontinalis antipyretica</i>	Water Moss
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## FERNS

<i>Asplenium septemtrionale</i>	Forking Spleenwort
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken

## CONIFERS

<i>Abies alba</i>	Silver Fir
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Juniper
<i>J. excelsa</i>	Grecian Juniper
<i>Picea abies</i>	Norway Spruce
<i>Pinus nigra</i>	Black Pine
<i>P. sylvestris</i>	Scots Pine

## HIGHER PLANTS

### Aceraceae – Maple family

<i>Acer hyrcanum</i>	
<i>A. negundo</i>	Box Elder
<i>A. pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore
<i>A. tartaricum</i>	Tartar Maple

### Anacardiaceae – Pistachio family

<i>Cotinus coggygria</i>	Smoke-bush
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### Apiaceae – Carrot family

<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>	Ground-elder
<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>	Wild Angelica
<i>Chaerophyllum aureum</i>	
<i>Eryngium campestre</i>	Field Eryngo
<i>Heracleum sibiricum</i>	
<i>Laserpitium siler</i>	
<i>Orlaya grandiflora</i>	
<i>Pastinaca hirsuta</i>	
<i>Sanicula europaea</i>	Sanicle
<i>Seseli rhodopaeum</i>	
<i>Trinia glauca</i>	Honewort

### Aristolochiaceae – Birthwort family

<i>Aristolochia clematitis</i>	Birthwort
<i>Asarum europaeum</i>	Asarabacca

### Asclepiadaceae – Milkweed family

<i>Vincetoxicum hirundinaria</i>	Swallow-wort
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### Asteraceae – Daisy family

<i>Achillea ageratifolia</i>	
<i>A. clypeolata</i>	Yellow Yarrow
<i>A. nobilis</i>	
<i>Anthemis tinctoria</i>	Yellow Chamomile
<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	Mugwort
<i>Carlina acanthifolia</i>	
<i>C. corymbosa</i>	
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Black Knapweed
<i>C. triumfettii</i>	
<i>Cirsium appendiculatum</i>	Balkan Thistle
<i>Inula aschersoniana</i>	
<i>Jurinea consanguinea</i>	
<i>Leontodon hispidus</i>	Hairy Hawkbit
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Ox-eye Daisy
<i>Mycelis muralis</i>	Wall-lettuce

<i>Petasites hybridus</i>	Butterbur
<i>Tanacetum corymbosum</i>	
<i>Tragopogon pterodes</i>	
<i>Tragopogon pratensis</i>	Goat's-beard
<i>Tussilago farfara</i>	Colt's-foot
<b>Betulaceae – Birch family</b>	
<i>Alnus viridis</i>	Green Alder
<b>Boraginaceae – Borgae family</b>	
<i>Anchusa barrelieri</i>	
<i>Cynoglossum officinale</i>	Hound's-tongue
<i>Echium vulgare</i>	Viper's-bugloss
<i>Onosma arenaria</i>	Golden-drops
<i>Pulmonaria rubra</i>	Red Lungwort
<i>Symphytum ottomanum</i>	Turkish Comfrey
<b>Brassicaceae – Cabbage family</b>	
<i>Alyssum montanum</i>	
<i>Arabis turrita</i>	Towercress
<i>A. verna</i>	Spring rock-cress
<i>Erysimum</i> sp.	
<i>Cardamine impatiens</i>	Narrow-leaved Bittercress
<b>Campanulaceae– Bellflower family</b>	
<i>Asyneuma anthericoides</i>	
<i>Campanula glomerata</i>	Clustered Bellflower
<i>C. lingulata</i>	
<i>C. moesiaca</i>	
<i>C. orphanidea</i>	
<i>C. patula</i>	Spreading Bellflower
<i>Trachelium rumeliacum</i>	Throatwort
<b>Caprifoliaceae – Honeysuckle family</b>	
<i>Sambucus ebulus</i>	Dwarf Elder
<i>S. nigra</i>	Elder
<i>Viburnum lantana</i>	Wayfaring-tree
<b>Caryophyllaceae – Campion family</b>	
<i>Arenaria rhodopaea</i>	Rhodope Sandwort
<i>Cerastium decalvans</i>	
<i>Dianthus carthusianorum</i>	Carthusian Pink
<i>D. deltoides</i>	Maiden Pink
<i>D. giganteus</i>	
<i>D. integer</i>	
<i>D. petraeus</i>	Rock Pink
<i>Lychnis coronaria</i>	Rose Campion
<i>L. flos-cuculi</i>	Ragged-robin
<i>L. subintegra</i>	
<i>L. viscaria</i>	Sticky Catchfly
<i>Minuartia verna</i>	Spring Sandwort
<i>Scleranthus perennis</i>	Perennial Knawel
<i>Silene dichotoma</i>	
<i>S. fabarioides</i>	
<i>S. frivaldszkyana</i>	
<i>S. italica</i>	
<i>S. noctiflora</i>	Night-flowered Catchfly
<i>S. otites</i>	Spanish Catchfly
<i>S. vulgaris</i>	Bladder Campion
<b>Cistaceae – Rock-rose family</b>	
<i>Fumana procumbens</i>	
<i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>	Rock-rose
<b>Clusiaceae – St. John's-wort family</b>	
<i>Hypericum cerastoides</i>	
<b>Cornaceae – Dogwood family</b>	
<i>Cornus mas</i>	Cornelian-cherry
<i>C. sanguinea</i>	Dogwood
<b>Corylaceae – Hazel family</b>	
<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	Hornbeam
<i>C. orientalis</i>	Eastern Hornbeam
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel
<i>Ostrya carpinifolia</i>	Hop-hornbeam



<b>Crassulaceae – Stonecrop family</b>	
<i>Jovibarba heuffelii</i>	
<i>Sedum acre</i>	Biting Stonecrop
<i>S. hispanicum</i>	
<i>S. sartorianum</i>	
<b>Cyperaceae – Sedge family</b>	
<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>	Common Cotton-grass
<b>Cuscutaceae – Dodder family</b>	
<i>Cuscuta europaea</i>	Common Dodder
<b>Dipsacaceae – Teasel family</b>	
<i>Knautia arvensis</i>	Field Scabious
<i>K. drymeia</i>	
<i>Morina persica</i>	Prickly Whorlflower
<i>Scabiosa rhodopensis</i>	
<b>Euphorbiaceae – Spurge family</b>	
<i>Euphorbia amygdaloides</i>	Wood Spurge
<i>E. cyparissias</i>	Cypress Spurge
<i>E. myrsinites</i>	Rock Spurge
<i>E. villosa</i>	
<i>Mercurialis ovata</i>	
<b>Fabaceae – Pea family</b>	
<i>Amorpha fruticosa</i>	False Indigo
<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i> ssp. <i>bulgarica</i>	Kidney-vetch
<i>Astragalus angustifolius</i>	
<i>A. monspessulanus</i>	Montpelier Milk-vetch
<i>A. onobrychis</i>	
<i>A. spruneri</i>	
<i>Chamaecytisus hirsutus</i>	
<i>Coronilla emerus</i>	Scorpion-vetch
<i>C. varia</i>	Crown Vetch
<i>Dorycnium pentaphyllum</i>	
<i>Genista carinalis</i>	
<i>G. januensis</i>	
<i>Hippocrepis comosa</i>	Horseshoe Vetch
<i>Lathyrus niger</i>	Black Pea
<i>L. pratensis</i>	Meadow Vetchling
<i>L. vernus</i>	Spring Pea
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Bird's-foot-trefoil
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	Black Medick
<i>Melilotus albus</i>	White Melilot
<i>Onobrychis alba</i>	White Sainfoin
<i>O. viciifolia</i>	Sainfoin
<i>Robinia pseudacacia</i>	False Acacia
<i>Trifolium alpestre</i>	
<i>T. hybridum</i>	Alsike Clover
<i>T. medium</i>	Zig-zag Clover
<i>T. pratense</i>	Red Clover
<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Tufted Vetch
<b>Fagaceae – Beech family</b>	
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i> ssp. <i>moesiaca</i>	Beech
<i>Quercus dalechampii</i>	
<b>Geraniaceae – Crane's-bill family</b>	
<i>Geranium macrorrhizum</i>	Rock Crane's-bill
<i>G. pyrenaicum</i>	Pyrenean Crane's-bill
<i>G. robertianum</i>	Herb-Robert
<i>G. sanguineum</i>	Bloody Crane's-bill
<b>Gesneriaceae – African-violet family</b>	
<i>Haberlea rhodopensis</i>	
<b>Globulariaceae – Globularia family</b>	
<i>Globularia cordifolia</i>	Matted Globularia
<i>G. punctata</i>	
<b>Juglandaceae – Walnut family</b>	
<i>Juglans regia</i>	Walnut
<b>Lamiaceae – Mint family</b>	
<i>Acinos arvensis</i>	Basil-thyme
<i>A. alpinus</i>	Alpine Basil-thyme

<i>Ajuga laxmannii</i>	
<i>A. pyramidalis</i>	Pyramidal Bugle
<i>Lamium amplexicaule</i>	Henbit Dead-nettle
<i>L. garganicum</i>	
<i>L. maculatum</i>	Spotted Dead-nettle
<i>Marrubium frivaldskyanum</i>	
<i>Mentha aquatica</i>	Water Mint
<i>M. spicata</i>	Spear Mint
<i>Micromeria dalmatica</i> ssp. <i>bulgarica</i>	
<i>Salvia argentea</i>	Silver Sage
<i>S. sclarea</i>	Clary
<i>S. verticillata</i>	Whorled Clary
<i>S. virgata</i>	
<i>Scutellaria altissima</i>	
<i>Sideritis scardica</i>	Mountain Tea
<i>S. montana</i>	
<i>Stachys alpina</i>	Alpine Woundwort
<i>S. germanica</i>	Limestone Woundwort
<i>S. palustris</i>	Marsh Woundwort
<i>S. recta</i>	Yellow Woundwort
<i>Teucrium chamaedrys</i>	Wall Germander
<i>Thymus</i> sp.	
<b>Liliaceae – Lily family</b>	
<i>Anthericum liliago</i>	St Bernard's Lily
<i>Lilium martagon</i>	Martagon Lily
<i>L. rhodopaeum</i>	Rhodope Lily
<i>Muscari comosum</i>	Tassel Hyacinth
<i>Ornithogalum montanum</i>	Mountain Star-of-Bethlehem
<i>Paris quadrifolia</i>	Herb-Paris
<i>Polygonatum odoratum</i>	Angular Solomon's-seal
<i>Veratrum lobelianum</i>	False-helleborine
<b>Linaceae – Flax family</b>	
<i>Linum bienne</i>	Pale Flax
<i>L. capitatum</i>	
<b>Lythraceae – Purple-loosestrife family</b>	
<i>Lythrum virgatum</i>	
<b>Moraceae – Fig family</b>	
<i>Ficus carica</i>	Wild Fig
<b>Oleaceae – Olive family</b>	
<i>Fraxinus ornus</i>	Manna Ash
<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>	Lilac
<b>Onagraceae – Willowherb family</b>	
<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Rose-bay Willowherb
<b>Orchidaceae – Orchid family</b>	
<i>Cephalanthera damasonium</i>	White Helleborine
<i>C. longifolia</i>	Narrow-leaved Helleborine
<i>Corallorhiza trifida</i>	Coral-root Orchid
<i>Dactylorhiza baumanniana</i>	
<i>D. cordigera</i>	
<i>Epipactis</i> sp.	
<i>Gymnadenia conopsea</i>	Fragrant Orchid
<i>Listera ovata</i>	Common Twayblade
<i>Neottia nidus-avis</i>	Bird's-nest Orchid
<i>Ophrys insectifera</i>	Fly Orchid
<i>Orchis coriophora</i>	Bug Orchid
<i>O. morio</i>	Green-winged Orchid
<i>O. ustulata</i>	Burnt Orchid
<b>Orobanchaceae – Broomrape family</b>	
<i>Orobanche alba</i>	Thyme Broomrape
<b>Papaveraceae – Poppy family</b>	
<i>Chelidonium majus</i>	Greater Celandine
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Common Poppy
<b>Plantaginaceae – Plantain family</b>	
<i>Plantago subulata</i>	
<b>Platanaceae – Plane family</b>	
<i>Platanus orientalis</i>	Oriental Plane



<b>Poaceae – Grass family</b>	
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False Oat-grass
<i>Briza media</i>	Quaking-grass
<i>Milium effusum</i>	Wood Millet
<i>Stipa pennata</i>	Feather-grass
<b>Polygalaceae – Milkwort family</b>	
<i>Polygala major</i>	
<b>Plumbaginaceae – Sea-lavender family</b>	
<i>Armeria rumelica</i>	
<b>Polygonaceae – Dock family</b>	
<i>Polygonum bistorta</i>	Bistort
<b>Primulaceae – Primrose family</b>	
<i>Cyclamen hederifolium</i>	Sowbread
<i>Lysimachia punctata</i>	Dotted Loosestrife
<i>L. vulgaris</i>	Yellow-loosestrife
<i>Primula vulgaris</i>	Primrose
<b>Pyrolaceae – Wintergreen family</b>	
<i>Orthilia secunda</i>	Toothed Wintergreen
<i>Pyrola chlorantha</i>	Yellow Wintergreen
<i>P. minor</i>	Common Wintergreen
<b>Ranunculaceae – Buttercup family</b>	
<i>Aquilegia vulgaris</i>	Columbine
<i>Hepatica nobilis</i>	Hepatica
<i>Ranunculus serbicus</i>	
<i>Thalictrum aquilegifolium</i>	Greater Meadow-rue
<i>T. minus</i>	Lesser Meadow-rue
<b>Rosaceae – Rose family</b>	
<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	Agrimony
<i>Alchemilla</i> sp.	Lady's Mantle
<i>Cotoneaster nebrodensis</i>	
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Meadowsweet
<i>F. vulgaris</i>	Dropwort
<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	Wild Strawberry
<i>Geum coccineum</i>	
<i>G. montanum</i>	Wood Avens
<i>G. rhodopaeum</i>	
<i>G. rivale</i>	Water Avens
<i>Potentilla argentea</i>	Hoary Cinquefoil
<i>P. borisii-regis</i>	King Boris's Cinquefoil
<i>P. erecta</i>	Tormentil
<i>Prunus padus</i>	Bird Cherry
<i>Rosa gallica</i>	
<i>Rubus idaeus</i>	Raspberry
<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>	Salad Burnet
<i>Sorbus aria</i>	Whitebeam
<i>S. aucuparia</i>	Rowan
<i>S. torminalis</i>	Wild Service-tree
<i>Spiraea salicifolia</i>	
<b>Rubiaceae – Bedstraw family</b>	
<i>Galium verum</i>	Lady's Bedstraw
<b>Salicaceae – Willow family</b>	
<i>Populus tremula</i>	Aspen
<i>Salix alba</i>	White Willow
<b>Santalaceae – Sandalwood family</b>	
<i>Thesium simplex</i>	Bastard-toadflax
<b>Saxifragaceae – Saxifrage family</b>	
<i>Saxifraga paniculata</i>	Livelong Saxifrage
<i>S. rotundifolia</i>	Round-leaved Saxifrage
<i>S. sempervivum</i>	Evergreen Saxifrage
<i>S. stribyrni</i>	
<b>Scrophulariaceae – Figwort family</b>	
<i>Digitalis lanata</i>	
<i>D. viridiflora</i>	
<i>Euphrasia</i> sp.	Eyebright
<i>Linaria arvensis</i>	Common Toadflax
<i>L. genistifolia</i>	
<i>Melampyrum sylvaticum</i>	Wood Cow-wheat

*Rhinanthus rumelicus*  
*R. wagneri*  
*Scrophularia scopolii*  
*Verbascum nobile*  
*V. phlomoides*  
*Veronica austriaca*  
*V. urticifolia*

Noble Mullein

**Solanaceae – Nightshade family**

*Hyoscyamus niger*

Henbane

**Tiliaceae – Lime family**

*Tilia cordata*

Small-leaved Lime

*T. platyphyllos*

Large-leaved Lime

*T. tomentosa*

Silver Lime

**Urticaceae – Nettle family**

*Urtica galaeopsifolia*

Stingless Nettle

**Valerianaceae – Valerian family**

*Valeriana montana*

*V. officinalis*

Common Valerian

**Violaceae – Violet family**

*Viola tricolor*

Wild Pansy



Yellow rattle.



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