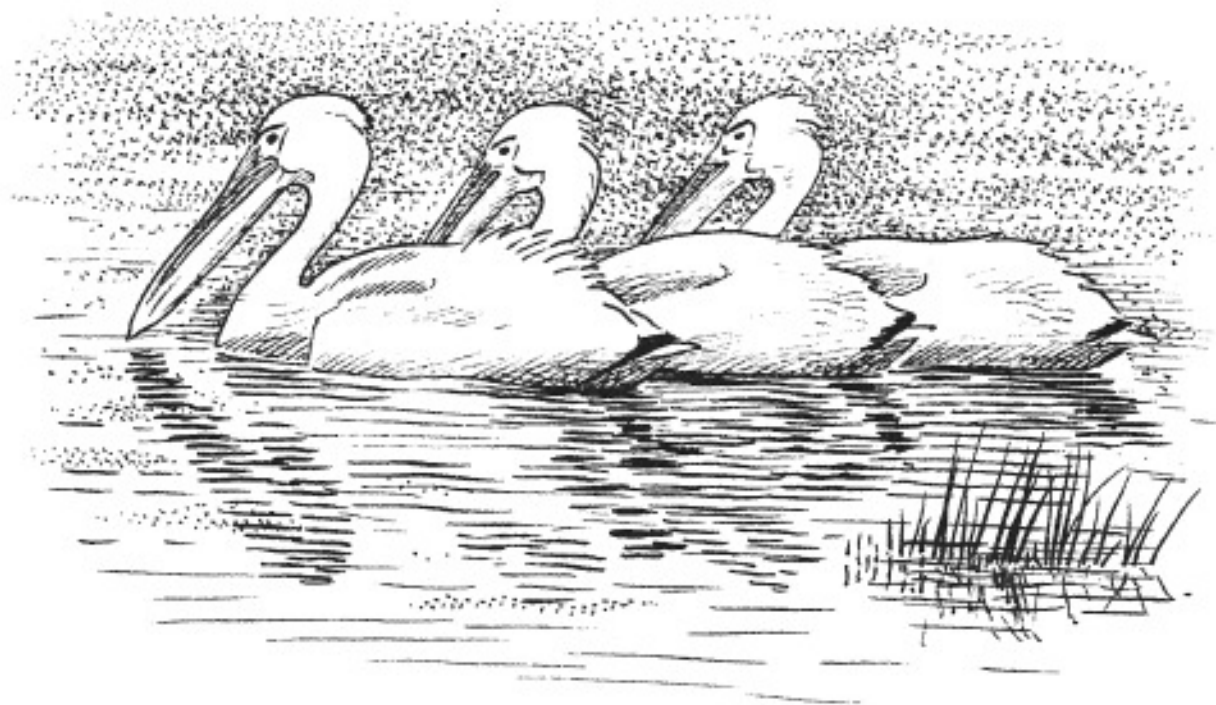


# *Honeyguide*

**WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS**

36 Thunder Lane Thorpe St Andrew Norwich NR7 0PX  
Telephone and Fax 01603 300552 Evenings and weekends



**Danube Delta**  
**2 – 9 June 2001**

The last time I had flown from Gatwick, I left in heavy snow: this time, at any rate, was a little better, as we all gathered ourselves together and boarded our British Airways flight for Bucharest on Saturday, 2 June, scheduled to leave at 10.15 am—a most civilised hour. Jenny (coming from Newcastle) and Graeme (Isle of Skye, via Inverness) might have had different ideas about the timing . . .

The flight was on time and, with John and Rosemary comfortably upgraded to Business Class (John apparently fluttered his eyelashes at a stewardess) we travelled smoothly to Bucharest Otopeni airport in Romania, which we reached at 2.40 pm UK time, 4.40 local time.

Sonia was met by friends at the airport while the rest of us were greeted by Mihai Petrescu, one of our leaders for the week, together with our driver and the Ibis Tours bus. Simplicity itself: we were quickly through the formalities (very swift, really) and out on the road for our first proper look at the country, which had had already looked intriguing from the air with its miles of strip cultivation and patches of forest.

These forests reach right up to the airport and we were soon travelling through a mix of built-up areas, big, open, hedge-less fields and patches of dense green broadleaved woods. The area around the airport is a fairly developed one with plenty of American-itis in the form of McDonalds and Coca Cola signs, something that was really to hit home far more on the return trip: leaving it all behind is one thing, coming back to it quite another.

The drive to Tulcea is a long one, more or less in two halves, thoroughly described and accounted for by Mihai: it is all a matter of geology. The first section is wide open, with vast fields divided into strips but, as each abuts the next with no gap or division, the effect is essentially the same as 'prairie farming' back home, but with a bit more interest. There are people everywhere—not overcrowded or anything like that, but people in the landscape,

working the fields, typically a small group standing side by side with a cart, horse, and mother and baby parked up at the roadside. It looked like something from a Van Gogh painting. In some fields, though, there might be 20 or 30 or even more people at work, hoeing or digging, while here and there a big tractor took over. Some massive and expensive combine harvesters showed the way things are going.

Birds on this first section were frequent but with little variety: essentially loads of hooded crows, jackdaws, rooks and collared doves, with a few starlings and magpies, house sparrows and the occasional swallow.

The second half, across the mighty Danube into Dobrogea, was more interesting scenically, less plain and flat, with distant hills and rolling uplands, often topped by several conical burial mounds—this is an area with an ancient history and it is archaeologically interesting. We were soon to see the typical roads of the area, miles and miles dead straight, through areas with no trees, but lined by avenues of walnuts or poplars, all neatly white-painted at the base of the trunk: very 'regular' but creating a highly distinctive and attractive character.

These trees form migration routes for birds such as lesser grey shrikes, which were noted here and there along the road, while rollers were quite frequent on nearby wires. A few storks were seen, but the fields are notably rather empty of birds and, for anyone familiar with Spain, for example, surprisingly not populated by Montagu's harriers or kites.

We reached the small town of Tulcea, our 'base', at 8.45 pm, whisked past the Restaurant Select and pulled up beside the Hotel Europolis: our home for just one night. There was hardly time to investigate before we were walking down the road to the Select for our meal, which proved very good and very well served by the attentive staff: it is obviously a popular place and there was constant coming and going of mostly the younger people of Tulcea.

## SUNDAY 3 JUNE

### *A shrike day*

It was a warm, sunny morning, remaining bright most of the day until a duller, cloudier late afternoon. This seemed promising . . .

We met Mihai and also Daniel Petrescu, our other leader for the week, and were away quite early and drove westwards out of Tulcea, a rather stark place although with some interesting bits in the centre of town. The very first bit of wetland that we passed by had several black dots around one side—glossy ibises—and whiskered terns over its blue pools.

We came to the Lake Somova area, which had a remarkable flock of mute swans, probably well over 100. We are accustomed to passing these off as semi-tame (if beautiful) birds at home and it is odd to see big flocks like this in a wilder state. The odd bee-eater, lesser grey shrike and even a fly-over golden oriole were noted. These were regulars on the trip, bee-eaters scattered, lesser grey shrikes more frequent, as we drove along (a bit frustrating really but we saw them so well at other times) and golden orioles now and then giving a glimpse, more frustrating as they never did give a good view at any other time.

We stopped near Parches, overlooking a vast area of wetland in the 'green corridor' upstream of the delta proper, from a high ridge with rough grassland and vineyards. The view across the Danube into the Ukraine was the real attraction, and the wetland birds all somewhat distant, but as it was our first stop we were looking hard at little dots, making out pygmy cormorants, purple, grey, night and squacco herons, great white and little egrets, glossy ibises and whiskered terns.

Close by were better things, such as a couple of rollers—stunning birds—and several bee-eaters. Most interesting for most of us, though, were groups of rose-coloured starlings flying by in tight little bunches, never stopping—50 or 60 all told, which is about 45 or 55 more than I'd seen in my life before!

A Syrian woodpecker and a tree sparrow were indications of what was to come, both being frequent during our week.

We drove on via Issacea and Luncavita, seeing a few storks and other birds, including seven lesser grey and two red-backed shrikes from the bus. Through Garvan and Măcin, we reached the Măcin quarries. This is an area on the edge of the 'mountain' range, an important wildlife area and scenically interesting, too.

We soon saw (but did not see again) a lesser spotted eagle and a booted eagle: a shame we didn't have better views, especially as this was the only booted of the trip! A black stork flew over later, as did a group of what looked like white storks and a white pelican. Bee-eaters sat on rusting machinery by the quarry, ortolan buntings sang from the same bits of iron and several rocks, while woodlark, golden oriole, tawny pipit and isabelline wheatear gave brief views.

Stars of the stop, though, were pied wheatears (about four, with one particularly good view of a male for most of us), here at the extreme edge of their range where it just becomes European; long-legged buzzards (about four), and lesser grey shrikes (stunning views). A barred warbler was attracted by Daniel with his playback equipment but gave only brief views in song-flight flurries above some trees. The wing hindered our efforts with the smaller birds in the trees.

Here, too, was our first suslik (to become familiar later) and a big Greek tortoise, as well as a good mixture of wild flowers and butterflies. Mihai was soon busy with the botanists of the party, finding 'red list' and localised plants as well as many more familiar and colourful ones.

Red list plants included a salvia, *Salvia aethiopsis*, a cornflower *Centaurea kanitziana*, a pink, *Dianthus nardiformis*, an endemic bellflower *Campanula romanica* and a campion, *Silene compacta*.

From here we drove on to the Grechi area and into a lovely area at the foot of the hills with wide open grassland and woodland with grassy glades. We parked the bus beneath the trees and had lunch:

unfortunately, so did scores of other people, in assorted vehicles, from minibuses and cars to horse-drawn carts and, worst, on noisy motorbikes. Trying to spot a woodpecker or icterine warbler while some curious young man rides up beside you, to sit there revving his motorbike while wondering what strange behaviour these foreigners might be up to, is not easy.

Nevertheless, we tried and Daniel used his CDs to good effect (although there were times when the sound of calling woodpeckers, recordings, music from cars and motorbikes all got a touch confusing). We thought we saw Syrian woodpeckers but perhaps most were middle spotted: views were generally brief and inconclusive. But no such trouble with grey-headed woodpeckers, which gave superb views.

Icterine warblers in the woods were frustrating but did give good views with patience, but the shrikes were again star birds. Here were two woodchat shrikes, very local indeed in this part of Europe, and several red-backed shrikes, all giving brilliant views and tempting Ray to get going with his impressive video gear.

The area was interesting, too, for its peculiar little houses, with only a roof and a doorway above ground, the rest embedded underneath to give protection from winter cold.

After lunch we moved on a bit, to a 'saker cliff', but despite a long wait we didn't find the falcons at home. Long-legged buzzards were very much at home here, though, giving excellent comparisons with superb honey buzzards.

It was by now quite late and the rest of the day's programme was slightly curtailed as we made the long journey 'home': in fact, to our 'new' home for the rest of the trip, our floating hotel moored up against another boat on the river in Tulcea.

This was great: tiny but comfortable cabins and spotless bathrooms 'downstairs', while the upper deck had a small bar, a lovely dining area and an open deck, under a canopy, from which we would surely enjoy the sunshine as we

drifted along the glass-like Danube Delta waterways . . .

After a Tuborg beer, and accompanied by good Romanian red wine, we eagerly attacked our first evening meal on board, served meticulously as was always to be the case and much enjoyed.

## MONDAY 4 JUNE

### *A gull, pelican and flood day*

Whoops: a dull start. The morning remained determinedly dull and grey, hazy and lacking the crystal clear visibility that would have done more justice to the views we enjoyed. Early in the afternoon it brightened up, but we finished in really dark conditions, with the onset of rain and some lightning about.

This, though, was evidently nothing compared with what was happening elsewhere as we drove back through Babadag in torrents of brown water flowing through the streets and reached Tulcea to find the town awash. It was an amazing sight, with thick muddy water sweeping through the streets, sometimes over the door sills of parked cars, stopping a number of cars in the streets as they flooded. The whole inundation headed downhill towards the river, swirling into shop doorways before finding its way out again and heading inexorably for a massive grille in the street nearest the Danube, where the water whirled round and down in a great maelstrom.

That, however, was still to come as we set out to an area east of Tulcea, stopping at an earth cliff by the roadside (which was ablaze with flowers).

There were some 50 bee-eaters, at a splendid colony, giving excellent close-up views on wires, the bank above the cliff, at the nest holes and in flight around our heads. The dull light, in a way, enhanced their colours especially against the sky. There were also two or three rollers here, tree sparrows and a little owl. This was a real highlight of the trip: marvellous stuff.

Next stop was at Bestepe. We walked up a long hill path to a telegraph station, set above limestone grassland, which gave



extensive views across the Delta. The dull light and mist did little to enhance the view, but it was clear enough to get a good idea of the 'layout' of the region and to give us an idea of what lay ahead, all being well. It was very useful as I, for one, was completely disoriented and needed to sort out what was what and where.

Here we had a good idea of what we were to appreciate later, a sort of duality about the delta (which is, indeed, full of such split personalities). It was, obviously, vast: as wetlands go, it is *enormous*, gigantic. Yet here we were, able to see most of it in one sweep. Far away on the horizon were two giant cranes: Daniel pointed out that these were our goal on one of the 'delta' days and were beside one of the villages that we would visit right in the middle of the delta itself. And the hills that we were on would also be visible as obvious landmarks from almost everywhere that we went.

The delta is, in that way, really small. It is immensely important, yet its mere 30-odd miles length has been damaged and constantly threatened by drainage schemes: it seems so very small, so easy to leave alone in the overall scheme of things, but the authorities

somehow seem unable to do it. Its vastness is not enough to give protection and its wilderness quality, while undoubtedly strong, is overlain by lines of pylons and such eyesores as these cranes and their associated factory.

White storks were nesting on a pole in the village, while stone-curlews were on the grassy slopes and gave some excellent views. Rollers and bee-eaters vied for attention, the rollers especially vivid. A group of about 38 rose-coloured starlings flew east; some time later, back down by

the coach, a group of the same size swept into a treetop nearby, presumably the same flock that had doubled back, but, as seems to be the way with these migrants, they were quickly off again.

The storks were typical of all those we were to see, nesting on top of a quite ordinary street-side telegraph pole, not choosing any particular building or pole of special eminence—just one of the run-of-the-mill ones on which they built a substantial stick nest, hatched out a few chicks, and stood to watch the world go by.

We then drove on to Lake Murighiol. Here we walked across a wide, grassy, flat area towards the lake, seeing a number of squacco herons, white storks, glossy ibises, some ferruginous ducks and so on, and perhaps 150 mute swans. These flew over in several squadrons, making a remarkably impressive sight and creating a wonderful sound with their wings, again giving a quite different view of this species from the

ones we are used to at home.

There were black-necked grebes here, too, and a few red-crested pochards, and a fine pair of black-headed wagtails. The chief interest, though, lay in the gulls and terns, with 1,000+ black-headed gulls nesting, maybe 1,500 common terns in close-packed

colonies, quite a few big 'yellow-legged' gulls (actually steppe or Caspian gulls, whichever you want to call them, *Larus cachinnans*) and 50 or so Mediterranean gulls at their major Romanian breeding site. Some were second-summer birds but many were immaculate summer adults.

After lunch here (incidentally the only encounter with mosquitoes in the first few days, and not bad at all), we went on via Plopu to Sarinasuf. Four enormous (or, ordinary-sized, but they *are* enormous) white pelicans sitting on the lake shore



brought us to a halt: there were 2-300 pochards, nine red-crested pochards, avocets, curlews, rollers, cuckoos (common throughout our trip), little egrets and squacco herons. Then we came across a group of 28 white storks, and a Syrian woodpecker, before reaching Enisala where we stopped on a small eminence overlooking a vast marsh. A purple heron fished quite close by while many others flew over the reeds; a little bittern perched in the open; red-crested pochards and ferruginous ducks flew about and our first view of Europe's great rarity, the Dalmatian pelican, was of one flying by at some distance. It is, actually, one of the world's great rarities, reduced to pitifully small numbers.

A bee-eater colony contained 30 or so birds; there were the usual tree sparrows, cuckoos and, for the first time, a few swifts. A fantastic chorus of great reed warblers echoed up from the reeds.

Not far away was the Enisala fortress, which we visited in increasingly dark, ominous conditions (but saw a distant Dalmatian pelican, purple herons, great white egrets, a marsh harrier, long-legged buzzards, avocets, hoopoe, roller, Calandra lark and some Spanish sparrows).

Here, though, after a short visit to some dank, dark lagoons, we called it a day and returned in the rain, to Tulcea.

**Tulcea** has been the 'threshold of the delta' since ancient Greek times, noted by the great traveller, and early Honeyguide, Herodotus (I believe he recommended it to Chris). It is on a great bend of one of the major Danube channels and our boat was moored just east of the southernmost point of the river, not far from the ancient (but dull-looking) Azizie mosque.

Our view encompassed a series of great cranes beyond the river (a shipbuilding or repair yard) and a long line of concrete-faced flats, which, with the sun on them, at a distance, looked fine but, through binoculars, seemed very run-down (and, surprisingly not fallen down, when you examined some of the structure).

Between us and the flats were many boats, including quite a number similar to

ours, or bigger and 'flashier' looking, tourist boats that may or may not be well-used. These, with the flats and the river, made a quite attractive and interesting scene in the sunshine, but under dark, heavy cloud and in driving rain, the atmosphere was rather different.

## TUESDAY 5 JUNE

### *A wet day*

'What's a little wet to a Water Rat? I'm more in the water than out of it most days.' Water Rat, *The Wind in the Willows*, by Kenneth Grahame

Overnight the wind grew in strength and the boat rocked gently at anchor, creaking and squeaking against the similar vessel alongside. Dawn—if there was such a thing—came dark, dull, very wet and very windy.

The morning went by slowly as we sat on the boat, firmly shut inside, watching the canopy of the boat next door slowly come adrift, tattered at the corners and finally become ripped to shreds and blown away. John Durdin extracted an admission from Daniel that he had never read *The Wind in the Willows* (hence a few extracts here) and we watched a video or two on the Danube, together with Daniel's father, Eugen Petrescu.

The afternoon went by in similar fashion. So did the evening. Indeed, the day finished as it began, with unchanged heavy rain and driving wind from the north-west.

A largish boat, what I would call a cabin cruiser at home, had been sunk by the wind and waves: we didn't see it happen, but watched as efforts (unsuccessful) were made to raise it all day.

Apart from some black-headed and steppe gulls (as the local 'yellow-legged' gulls increasingly looked like) we saw a cormorant or two, some common terns and an occasional jackdaw and starling. That, I'm afraid, was that.

WEDNESDAY 6 JUNE

*A better day: pelicans*

'It's the *only* thing . . . there is *nothing*—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.'  
Water Rat, *The Wind in the Willows*

To the uneducated eye, the weather did not look much better except that the rain had stopped. There was not really much sign of brightness and not much reduction in the wind and waves. But, having had no permission to move from the harbourmaster all the previous day, now we had that all-important agreement that we could set off and head for the delta. So, off we went.

First the small 'tug boat' had to be secured to the front of our vessel, and then we were towed slowly across the choppy, brown river. It was not, to us, a problem: indeed, the boat was remarkably solid and stable.

With the little tug chugging pleasantly away up front, we sailed smoothly and quietly along, past the long string of boats of all sorts up against the south bank, with the Romanian navy much in evidence after a mile or two with an assortment of gun boats or torpedo boat types.

We were all well-wrapped against the cold (did we really need to pack all of these sweaters and jackets?—yes!) but happy to be off: and, gradually, the day brightened and we stayed dry, although the evening was again windy and wet.

The boat headed east for Maliuc. Two pygmy cormorants! They seemed pretty good (add a few noughts later). We saw white pelicans, too, but decent numbers of these in big flocks up ahead, not very close, but impressive enough: 6–700 of them, then 40 or so really close and marvellous. There were little egrets everywhere (never abundant, but odd ones and twos all along the route), squacco herons, a distant cattle egret with some cows (remarkably rare here, but increasing, the egrets, that is), purple and grey herons, night herons, four spoonbills, a glossy ibis, some greylag geese and the usual scatter of rollers, lesser

grey shrikes, red-backed shrike, golden orioles, cuckoos and a hoopoe, and 11 rose-coloured starlings. Whiskered terns fished the channels. No great numbers, but typical of travelling along one of the major channels of the delta, with big shipping going by, already full of interesting birds.

At Maliuc we moored alongside the north shore and walked around the village, hoping for a black woodpecker (but failing to see it) and olivaceous warblers, which we did see, very well, very quickly in a kind of bushy 'park'. Then we hopped into our small boat, the plastic chairs lined up under a neat canopy, and went off along a narrow channel to Lake Furtuna. The Grajata channel narrowed considerably, overhung by willows and poplars (many of them big trees, but many showing extensive damage caused by the gale) and then opened into a wide, windy, bright and birdy lake, full of life.

There were many whiskered terns (as there had been at very close range on the channel), fantastic views of the egrets and herons (especially little egrets very closely), 50 odd pygmy cormorants, 10 glossy ibises, 100 mute swans, 100 gadwalls, 10 or so teal, 20 or more garganeys, 100 mallards, some shovelers and pochards, ferruginous ducks, greylag geese, hundreds of coots, rollers, hoopoes, tree sparrows, redstarts: good stuff, and we deserved it, too!

On the return we tried hard for woodpeckers, Daniel using his CD equipment to the full. Two grey-headed woodpeckers appeared, loping along by the boat and coming very close when 'summoned' by recordings of their calls. Black woodpeckers (despite extensive evidence of their 'work' on the branches) were not so easy, but finally, a little behind the boat and slowly drifting away, there was a male, perched in full view on a big branch, watching us go . . . Never mind, it was enough for a 'first' for several of us (well, me anyway, after years of effort) and surely there would be more to come (there were not).

On eastwards, to Crisan: brilliant views of pygmy cormorants (100+), 50+ little egrets, squaccos, night herons, a little gull:



and 100–150 white pelicans. These were stunning, close and low down: but as we pulled in to the bank we saw a single pelican on the water and this was a Dalmatian.

Our little boat was brought into action again and we crossed the main stream to enter a smaller channel, heading for Lake Jacob and Caraorman (the place with the giant cranes that were such a landmark and eyesore yet, oddly, not always so noticeable from a distance). This was, despite the dull and cold weather (which deteriorated to rain as we returned), a fantastic trip. It was what we had come for.

Our Dalmatian pelican gave a good view, to begin with. There were white pelicans about most of the time, close or distant, few or scores at a time: at one point several were on the left bank, really close-up before they opted to fly, a dramatic moment in itself. Pygmy cormorants were numerous, as were cormorants, little egrets (50 or more), grey herons (30+), night herons (15, superb views too) and squacco herons, while purple herons were fewer and a great white egret was the only one of its kind. Great crested grebes were seen at times, but for all of us red-necked grebes were much more unusual. There were several groups of spoonbills, mostly excellent adults with really bright bill-tips, vivid yellow bare skin beneath the bill and orange throat pouches: about 38 in all. Gadwalls were mostly in pairs (40 or so), mallards in bigger groups, garganeys in small parties (20), as were red-crested pochards (25) and ferruginous ducks (60+); pochards in larger flocks and mute swans numbered around 300. Fifty or so glossy ibises were watched closely, while we counted seven different marsh harriers, a hobby, a few kestrels, two



kingfishers, several rollers, the usual magpies, hooded crows and jackdaws and a grey-headed woodpecker.

Other interesting species included black-tailed godwit: many groups added up to around 275 on the channel banks, and we followed a green sandpiper and passed 10 or a dozen black-winged stilts. As we returned mostly along the same channel, most of these birds were seen a second time, giving excellent close-ups all over again.

Penduline tits proved very elusive: we heard a few and saw a couple of family groups, briefly, but really didn't get to grips with them, any more than we would with bearded tits, although we did see a nearly-complete nest.

A highlight, too, was the sudden sight of an otter on a rocky embankment: it took off in a series of undulating bounds, into the water, and disappeared. We all thought it

was a 'really big' otter, but having little experience of them wondered if we might be exaggerating things a bit (even Daniel had seen otters in the open in daylight only a couple of times before) but Graeme, an Isle of Skye man, who sees otters frequently, confirmed that it was 'a big dog otter'. It looked *enormous!*

Caraorman was an interesting place. It is overshadowed by the half-finished sand extraction plant built in the Ceausescu era, and the block of flats for the workers alongside, still unoccupied and falling apart, but the main village itself was fascinating, with its little church and colourful houses with well kept gardens. Sadly, for us, it was grey and damp, wet underfoot, and not really showing us either the delta or Caraorman at their best.

Sonia returned to the boat with a handful of big white lilies, handed to her



by a lady of the village, which were to scent the boat for the rest of our trip. Some storks were nesting here, hobbies swept by (one three times, or three?), stilts fed on the sandy lagoons.

Mihai, whose commentary on the people and houses of the area as well as the plants was as interesting as ever, informed us about the history and lifestyles of the villagers and the building styles of their predominantly Ukrainian village.

## THURSDAY 7 JUNE

### *A better day still: more pelicans*

The river . . . 'It's brother and sister to me, and aunts, and company, and food and drink, and (naturally) washing. It's my world, and I don't want any other. What it hasn't got is not worth having, and what it doesn't know is not worth knowing.'

Water Rat

'But isn't it a bit dull at times?'

Mole

*The Wind in the Willows*

We had not seen where we were sleeping overnight, having arrived, after a spectacular sunset, late the night before.

Now, for the early risers, it was absolute bliss. The boat was by a bank of huge reeds, with a big willow nearby. The water beneath was blue and brown, flat calm. On the other side was a broad pool, rimmed by equally gigantic reeds which went away into the distance. The pool was wide and blue, its centre choked with enormous water lilies, in which a boat with two fishermen laying nets was floating. There was a great chorus of great reed warblers.

It was cool, the sun only just shining on a few patches of the scene before us, not yet bright and clear. Beyond the reeds was a belt of tall willows and it was evidently from these that a constant stream of birds was flowing. The air was full of hundreds of cormorants and pygmy cormorants: night herons in twos and threes, squaccos moving about their business, purple herons floating gently above the reeds. Whiskered terns, and the occasional black tern, flitted

around above the lake, a marsh harrier drifted over the marsh. Then the pelicans started: lines and spirals of white pelicans, 250 or more altogether. This was not at all dull, Mole.

In the hour and a half after breakfast we travelled in the small boat to the cormorant and heron colony. A Dalmatian pelican flew by, red-necked grebes dived ahead of the boat and the 'usual fare' (already) included the typical list of egrets, herons, ibises, greylag geese, garganeys, ferruginous ducks and the like. We heard, but did not see, a Savi's warbler and penduline tits.

At one point we turned off the engine and floated into the edge of the reeds, positioning ourselves close to some night herons and an exquisite glossy ibis in a nearby tree. Pygmy cormorants must have numbered 1,000 or more, night herons 100. It was a great privilege to see them, and to see them so well.

A visit to a black tern colony was less rewarding: whether because of the storm, or fishermen (as Daniel suspected) the nesting black terns and black-headed gull; had all lost their eggs and few of either were around where, only a week before, all had been noise and activity.

We chugged on, in our main vessel behind the tug, to Mila 23, where we anchored mid-channel and went ashore by boat. This was a lovely walk through a big village next to a substantial main channel; the newish church was interesting, alongside the spot where the old one has fallen to the winds.

Pelicans were always in view, distant, close-up, alongside or right overhead: often scores of them, sometimes hundreds. It was impossible to keep any 'count' of how many we saw, as we were presumably seeing the same ones over and over again, but 2,000+ seems a fair estimate. The images of lines of pelicans, or spirals changing colour as they spun around against blue sky and white cloud, were extraordinary.

Great spotted woodpeckers had a family here and the young ones persisted in perching on a wooden fence even as we

approached within a few feet of them. A grey-headed woodpecker, responding to Daniel's CD, also came remarkably close, the best view yet (indeed, the best view imaginable). And wonderfully, a flock of 46 rose-coloured starlings descended into a mulberry tree and, for a few glorious minutes, fed amongst the rippling green foliage before flying off south.

Cut short by our day lost to the weather, we were now heading back west, along the Soutea channel. Around 1,000 pelicans again may have included birds we had already seen, but doubtless also some extra ones: many good views. Two honey buzzards added variety, while whiskered terns were suddenly remarkably abundant, probably into the hundreds.

Glossy ibises often look 'black', at close range 'brown', in good light showing their coppery colours well: the dark green on the wing, shining in the sun, is more elusive. Here we saw not only that, but flashes of magenta, too, as the light caught them 'just right'.

We stopped just at the entrance to Lake Furtuna: we had been here before, if via another route. A distant Caspian tern dived in with a splash. Black woodpecker 'damage' was everywhere, but of them there was no sign. Daniel tried tirelessly to find more for us, but it was not to be. A migrant black kite high overhead was a local rarity.

Our little boat took us along a really narrow channel, sweeping through heavy overhanging foliage which deposited remarkable numbers of insects, including some fine hairy and very colourful caterpillars, over us and into our shirts. We found Lake Rotund, a little lake rapidly silting up and covered in green. There were around 350 whiskered terns over it, shimmering in the sunlight and wind, and many herons and egrets about. A lesser spotted eagle appeared, very distant, and 13 honey buzzards.

From Lake Furtuna, we circled north and then west again, along the Channel Soutea and past Lake Nebunu (200 mute swans) and onwards to rejoin channel to Tulcea, which we reached by about 9 pm.

This was a fascinating journey: for some reason, the channels here were perfect for red-necked grebes and I counted around 125, including many large young, knowing that I missed several that others saw. Around 100 great crested grebes, hundreds of white pelicans (some dramatic fly-by views), a Dalmatian pelican, hundreds of cormorants and scores of pygmy cormorants, 100+ grey herons (many in flooded trees each side of the channel, with little egrets also fishing beneath the willows), little bitterns, purple herons, squacco herons, great white egrets, spoonbills, 15-200 glossy ibises, garganeys, 2,000 or more coots, a black stork, hobbies and a red-footed falcon, two honey buzzards, a long-legged buzzard and five marsh harriers, grey-headed and great spotted woodpeckers, golden orioles, cuckoos and rollers made up the list in the notebook. And here we hit gold with a magnificent adult white-tailed eagle: followed, several miles later and clearly different, by another, being chased by a hobby which looked barely the size of its tail. We were fortunate to see these, which I had been hoping for all along: the weather had made it difficult before, but now it was fine and sunny, warm, before a dull evening.

The dullness was fitting because we were, sadly, already back at Tulcea, our delta foray all too short. We found our berth at Tulcea and saw the cabin cruiser that had now been pulled back to the surface being emptied of water. Another excellent meal and plenty of good red Romanian wine sent us to bed content, after a great day, but sorely regretting the loss of a full day's cruising, completely out of our hands, because of the weather.

## FRIDAY 8 JUNE

### *Sunshine and sun-tans: and rare plovers*

'You surely don't mean to stick to your dull fusty old river all your life, and just live in a hole in the bank, and *boat*? I want to show you the world!'

Mr Toad, *The Wind in the Willows*

Off to see the world, then: back into the

bus. After breakfast, as always very good (with plenty of Lipton's Yellow Label tea for Jenny) we plodded ashore, confident in the improving weather. A long day lay ahead, but all of us were determined to make the most of it.

First stop was Babadag Forest: a short walk, with some good flowers, but not many birds. Quite a few ortolans sang, and hawfinches flew over now and then, but persistent cloud 'kept the raptors down'. We were later to quiz Daniel on his Book of Excuses, important for every tour leader—'Too early in the day', 'Too late in the morning', 'Not quite warm enough', 'You should have been here in May', 'You really need to come in July'. All very well, so long as you have a good memory.

'But didn't you say we were too early last time, and now we're too late?'

It was pleasant to hear a constant chorus of skylark song: the view across the low-lying areas was one of extensive, almost unbroken cereal cultivation.

So, we went on via Cogea, Rampico de Jos and Gradina to Cheia, a little village at the edge of the rolling cereal fields, where limestone rose almost imperceptibly into a long series of ridges, between which was a broad-bottomed, steep-sided 'gorge'.

Two lesser spotted eagles caused us to stop the bus for a good view; we saw a Montagu's harrier, several lesser grey shrikes, corn buntings, a calandra and a few crested larks.

The gorge itself was quiet and beautiful: on its grassy floor a hundred tiny heads appeared above two hundred tiny front feet as a hundred susliks sat up on their hindquarters, alerted to the presence of a long-legged buzzard. Susliks were everywhere here, in the gorge and outside, beside the road. Long-legged buzzards gave good views and pied wheatears were

here, at least two males and three females, but a bit elusive.

Leaving the gorge, mildly disappointed at the lack of raptors, we went via Tirusor and Gura Dobregei, through seemingly endless miles of cereals, not on plains but on impressively rolling landscape: what this must have been like as original steppe!

We stopped for lunch in a poplar plantation near Vadu, where Syrian woodpeckers and red-footed falcons put on a show. This overlooked a marsh and some lagoons, overshadowed by a vast factory, half-finished but with a possibility that it might be completed soon. Lunch was the familiar 'coach day' fare, fresh tomatoes and cucumbers, lovely cheeses, ham and bread, cakes and coffee.

The area has a mixture of reedbeds, lagoons, muddy and grassy areas and high embankments built around nearly-empty lagoons, with mud-fringed, overgrown islands. This complex proved a paradise for birds, and mostly 'good ones' at that.

First to occupy us were black-winged stilts, avocets, a few pratincoles and Kentish plovers; there were black-headed wagtails, bearded tits (hard to see as ever), bee-eaters,

hoopoes, marsh harriers, vociferous great reed warblers and crested larks.

Then we reached the top of a bank to look over a lagoon and, surprisingly, among a group of little gulls, there was a superb male red-necked phalarope.

It was a great bird, good to see, but Daniel strolled up and said 'Have you seen the white-tailed plover at the end of the island?' which rather put it in the shade.

Now, white-tailed plovers have nested in Europe for just two years, at one site from which we retreated early in the holiday in the face of a gathering storm, and here, where we now saw two birds, male and female, engaged in chasing black-winged





stilts. Once or twice another flew up from the island's grassy centre: I saw four altogether, I think. But it was the pair that stole the show, allowing splendid views through the telescope, while Ray took some magnificent video sequences which we later enjoyed on the television on the boat.

The male was a little brighter than the female, a little darker, but chiefly distinct by virtue of his extraordinarily vivid lemon yellow legs. At one point the two flew over to us and circled overhead, calling. This was a fantastic encounter with a rare and lovely bird.

On the adjacent lagoon was a big tern colony, including many common and some little terns, as well as scores of pratincoles. A Dalmatian pelican flew over and, later, as we walked to the Black Sea beach and paddled in the sea, there were four on the sea nearby. A pygmy cormorant tried to make up for the lack of some of the 'delta' birds, but there were also white pelicans, purple herons, glossy ibises and so on, as well as avocets with chicks (swimming together), 50 or so black-winged stilts, little ringed plovers, wood sandpiper, marsh sandpiper, redshanks, Mediterranean gulls, five slender-billed gulls over the sea, a Baltic gull (that is, a fine adult Scandinavian lesser black-backed), and 50 or so little gulls (all first summers).

Next up was a stop at Corbu, to look at a rookery in a group of tall poplars: some rookery, as it had a colony of red-footed falcons in it, and we had marvellous views of several of them perched and in flight, both males (mostly 'immature' but some fully adult) and very rufous females. The noise they made was amazing.

And finally we stopped at Histria. Daniel was busy with his CD and soon we had glimpses of paddyfield warblers: but it was a matter of 'keep watching until you get a good view' and some did, some didn't, as the warblers moved around in the reeds, sometimes perching in the open for a matter of seconds. It was a good bird to finish up with, it seemed.

'On the bus—we've got to see if the Demoiselle crane is still there' said Daniel. I smiled: he said 'I have to say something to

get them back on the bus' and off we drove.

'There it is, stop, the Demoiselle crane!' said Daniel after a mile or two.

It *was* a Demoiselle crane: I hadn't realised he was serious, and there had been one about. And here it was, in a sea of Euphorbia, with a group of white storks. All out, all look through the telescope: here was a bird that is only a vagrant even in Romania! Splendid it was, too, a lovely, elegant, delicate crane, and a new bird for all of us.

So that *was* a good bird to finish with and we left, late, to enjoy the drive back to Tulcea through some delightful countryside, with miles and miles of avenues of walnut and poplar, golden fields and flowery verges, and some picturesque villages.

It was a late evening meal, but we had a duty to perform, first: a very pleasant one, too, as John Durdin handed over a bundle of cash from Honeyguide to the teacher of a local school and a group of keen young birdwatchers in the *Falco cherrug* bird and wildlife club.

Honeyguide always makes a donation to a local organisation and here, where there seems to be no birdwatchers at all, other than a handful of 'professionals', it seemed especially important to help nurture a realisation that birds are brilliant and the Danube and Dobrogea is especially so.

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## SATURDAY 9 JUNE

### *Time to go home . . .*

'In due time we shall be homesick once more for quiet water-lilies swaying on the surface of an English stream. But today all that seems pale and thin and very far away. Just now our blood dances to other music.'  
*The Wind in the Willows*

Yes, it was time to go, and all too soon: we were not eager to leave, just yet.

It was, though, once again a civilised hour at which to depart, after a good breakfast and goodbyes all round, followed by a long (five hours) coach trip to



Bucharest, via Lake Hazarlâk, where we stopped and had great views of great reed warblers and little bitterns and heard another magnificent chorus of frogs.

Our flight was at 4.30 pm, so we were well within time when we reached the airport with Mihai and not so very late (for those of us in the south, anyway) when we got to Gatwick and found our way home.

**HOLIDAY PARTICIPANTS** to whom the leaders give their warm appreciation for being such a great group:

Sonia Anderson  
John Durdin  
Ray Gould  
Marcella Hume  
Michael Jeeves  
Jenny Loring  
Rosemary MacDonald  
Graeme Robertson  
John Rumpus

Rob Hume  
Daniel Petrescu  
Mihai Petrescu



## Bird List

White Pelican  
Dalmatian Pelican  
Little Grebe  
Great Crested Grebe  
Red-necked Grebe  
Black-necked Grebe  
Cormorant  
Pygmy Cormorant  
Little Bittern  
Squacco Heron  
Night Heron  
Great White Egret  
Little Egret  
Grey Heron  
Purple Heron  
Black Stork  
White Stork  
Spoonbill  
Glossy Ibis  
Mute Swan  
Whooper Swan  
Greylag Goose  
Shelduck  
Gadwall  
Teal  
Mallard  
Garganey  
Shoveler  
Pochard  
Tufted Duck  
Ferruginous Duck  
Red-crested Pochard  
Honey Buzzard  
Black Kite  
White-tailed Eagle  
Marsh Harrier  
Montagu's Harrier  
Buzzard  
Long-legged Buzzard  
Lesser Spotted Eagle  
Booted Eagle  
Kestrel  
Red-footed Falcon  
Hobby  
Pheasant  
Moorhen  
Coot  
Demoiselle Crane  
Black-winged Stilt  
Avocet  
Stone-curlew  
Collared Pratincole  
Little Ringed Plover  
Kentish Plover  
Lapwing  
White-tailed Plover  
Little Stint  
Dunlin  
Black-tailed Godwit  
Curlew  
Redshank  
Green Sandpiper  
Wood Sandpiper  
Red-necked Phalarope  
Mediterranean Gull  
Little Gull  
Black-headed Gull  
Lesser Black-backed (Baltic) Gull  
Steppe Gull  
Yellow-legged Gull  
Caspian Tern  
Common Tern  
Little Tern  
Black Tern  
Whiskered Tern  
Woodpigeon  
Collared Dove

Turtle Dove  
Cuckoo  
Little Owl  
Swift  
Kingfisher  
Bee-eater  
Roller  
Hoopoe  
Wryneck  
Grey-headed Woodpecker  
Black Woodpecker  
Great Spotted Woodpecker  
Middle Spotted Woodpecker  
Syrian Woodpecker  
Calandra Lark  
Short-toed Lark  
Crested Lark  
Woodlark  
Skylark  
Sand Martin  
Swallow  
House Martin  
Tawny Pipit  
Black-headed Wagtail  
White Wagtail  
Robin heard  
Nightingale heard  
Redstart  
Black Redstart  
Stonechat  
Wheatear  
Pied Wheatear  
Isabelline Wheatear  
Rock Thrush  
Blackbird  
Savi's Warbler heard  
Sedge Warbler  
Reed Warbler  
Paddyfield Warbler  
Great Reed Warbler  
Icterine Warbler  
Barred Warbler  
Lesser Whitethroat  
Blackcap  
Wood Warbler heard  
Chiffchaff heard  
Bearded Tit  
Marsh Tit  
Blue Tit  
Penduline Tit  
Golden Oriole  
Red-backed Shrike  
Lesser Grey Shrike  
Woodchat Shrike  
Jay  
Maggie  
Jackdaw  
Rook  
Hooded Crow  
Raven  
Starling  
Rose-coloured Starling  
House Sparrow  
Spanish Sparrow  
Tree Sparrow  
Chaffinch  
Goldfinch  
Linnet  
Yellowhammer  
Ortolan Bunting  
Little Bunting  
Reed Bunting  
Corn Bunting

## Mammals

European Suslik  
Otter  
Hedgehog  
Muskrat

Greek Tortoise  
Grass Snake

## Plant List

Kindly provided by

Mihai Petrescu

English names largely from *Flowers of Europe* by Polunin – apologies if they are out of date!

End = endemic; RL = Red List; Pont = Pontic (Black Sea);

Med = Mediterranean;

Balk = Balkanic

### Macin Mountains

|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <i>Acinos arvensis</i>                    | Basil-thyme                 |
| <i>Anagallis arvensis</i>                 | Scarlet pimpernel           |
| <i>Trifolium arvense</i>                  | Hare's-foot clover          |
| <i>Coronilla varia</i>                    | C rown vetch                |
| <i>Vicia tenuifolia</i>                   | Slender-leaved Tufted vetch |
| <i>Convolvulus cantabrica (Med)</i>       | Pink convolvus              |
| <i>Centaurea kanitziana (RL)</i>          |                             |
| <i>Tragopogon dubius</i>                  | a goatsbeard                |
| <i>Alyssum murale</i>                     | an alyssum                  |
| <i>Alyssum hirsutum</i>                   | an alyssum                  |
| <i>Chrysopogon gryllus</i>                |                             |
| <i>Salvia nemorosa</i>                    | a clary                     |
| <i>Salvia aethiops (RL)</i>               | Woolly clary                |
| <i>Micropus erectus</i>                   |                             |
| <i>Stipa capillata</i>                    | a feather grass             |
| <i>Dianthus nardiformis (RL)</i>          | a pink                      |
| <i>Sedum sartorianum esp hillebrandii</i> | a stonecrop                 |
| <i>Teucrium polium</i>                    | a germander                 |
| <i>Teucrium chamaedris</i>                | Wall germander              |
| <i>Achillea coarctata</i>                 |                             |
| <i>Xeranthemum annuum</i>                 | Pink everlasting            |
| <i>Achillea setalea</i>                   |                             |
| <i>Potentilla argentea</i>                | Hoary cinquefoil            |
| <i>Cardus thoenmeri</i>                   |                             |
| <i>Heliotropium suaveolens</i>            |                             |
| <i>Portulaca oleracea</i>                 | Purslane                    |
| <i>Noehringia grisebachii</i>             |                             |
| <i>Campanula romanica (RL, End)</i>       |                             |
| <i>Scleranthus annuum</i>                 | Annual knawel               |
| <i>Scleranthus perennis</i>               | Perennial knawel            |
| <i>Potentilla repens</i>                  |                             |
| <i>Silene compacta (RL)</i>               |                             |

### Grechi

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| <i>Orobanche arenaria</i>                 | Sand broomrape      |
| <i>Linum austriacum</i>                   | a flax              |
| <i>Noehringia grisebachii (RL)</i>        | a sandwort          |
| <i>Lactuca viminea (RL)</i>               | Pliant Lettuce      |
| <i>Festuca calleri (RL)</i>               |                     |
| <i>Campanula rapunculoides</i>            | Creeping Bellflower |
| <i>Carpinus orientalis</i>                | Oriental hornbeam   |
| <i>Sedum maximum</i>                      |                     |
| <i>Melica ciliata (Med)</i>               | Hairy melick        |
| <i>Prunus mahaleb (Sub Med)</i>           | St Lucie's cherry   |
| <i>Quercus pubescens (Sub Med)</i>        | White oak           |
| <i>Quercus pedunculiflora (Pont-Balk)</i> | an oak              |
| <i>Quercus polycarpa</i>                  | an oak              |
| <i>Quercus petraea</i>                    | Sessile oak         |
| <i>Tilia tomentosa (Balk)</i>             | Silver lime         |

### Parches

|                              |                |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>Agropyron cristatum</i>   | a couch grass  |
| <i>Coronilla varia</i>       | Crown Vetch    |
| <i>Papaver hybridum</i>      | Rough Poppy    |
| <i>Thymus marschallianus</i> | a thyme        |
| <i>Salvia nemorosa</i>       | Meadow clary   |
| <i>Trifolium repens</i>      | White Clover   |
| <i>Artemesia absinthium</i>  | Wormwood       |
| <i>Onopordum acanthium</i>   | Cotton Thistle |

### Road to Bestepe

|                              |                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Hyosciamnus niger</i>     | Henbane                    |
| <i>Carduus nutans</i>        | Musk thistle               |
| <i>Vicia tenuifolia</i>      | Slender-f'ved tufted vetch |
| <i>Festuca valesiaca</i>     |                            |
| <i>Gypsophylla glomerata</i> |                            |

### Bestepe

|                              |                        |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Achillea coarctata</i>    | a sneezewort or yarrow |
| <i>Achillea depressa</i>     | a sneezewort or yarrow |
| <i>Dianthus nardiformis</i>  | an Asiatic pink        |
| <i>Alyssum alyssoides</i>    | Small alyssum          |
| <i>Alyssum hirsutum</i>      | an alyssum             |
| <i>Digitalis lanata</i>      | Grecian foxglove       |
| <i>Onobrychis gracilis</i>   | a sainfoin             |
| <i>Allanthus altissima</i>   | Tree of Heaven         |
| <i>Prunus mahaleb</i>        | St Lucie's cherry      |
| <i>Ulmus minor</i>           | Smooth-leaved elm      |
| <i>Euphorbia seguleriana</i> |                        |
| <i>Agropyron cristatum</i>   |                        |
| <i>Festuca valesiaca</i>     |                        |
| <i>Teucrium polium</i>       | Felty germander        |
| <i>Melica ciliata</i>        | Hairy melick           |
| <i>Linaria genistifolia</i>  | Common toadflax        |
| <i>Thymus zygoides</i>       |                        |

### Murighiol

|                             |                   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Bassia hirsuta</i>       | Hairy seablite    |
| <i>Suaeda maritima</i>      | Annual seablite   |
| <i>Salicornia herbacea</i>  | a glasswort       |
| <i>Achillea depressa</i>    |                   |
| <i>Obione pedunculata</i>   |                   |
| <i>Spergularia maritima</i> | a spurrey         |
| <i>Artemesia santonicum</i> | a steppe wormwood |
| <i>Orobanche cernua</i>     | a broomrape       |

### Enisala Fortress

|                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <i>Raronychia cephalotes (RL)</i>   |                  |
| <i>Allium saxatile (RL)</i>         |                  |
| <i>Campanula romanica (RL, End)</i> |                  |
| <i>Stachys recta</i>                | Yellow woundwort |
| <i>Sideritis montana</i>            |                  |
| <i>Tanacetum millefolium (RL)</i>   | a marigold       |
| <i>Paliurus spina-christii (RL)</i> | Christ's thorn   |
| <i>Euphorbia hysinifles (RL)</i>    |                  |
| <i>Asplenium ruta-muraria</i>       |                  |
| <i>Thymus zygoides (RL)</i>         |                  |
| <i>Minuartia adenotrica (RL)</i>    | a sandwort       |

### Enisala ponds

|                            |                  |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| <i>Onopordum tauricum</i>  | Scottish thistle |
| <i>Agropyron cristatum</i> | a couch grass    |
| <i>Gaïum humifesum</i>     |                  |

### Maliuc

|                              |                       |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Catalpa bignonioides</i>  | Catalpa (Indian bean) |
| <i>Deuteia scabra</i>        |                       |
| <i>Syringa vulgaris</i>      | Lilac                 |
| <i>Populus X canescens</i>   |                       |
| <i>Morus nigra</i>           | Mulberry              |
| <i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i> | Honey locust          |
| <i>Cydonia oblongos</i>      | Quince                |
| <i>Acer negundo</i>          | Montpellier maple     |
| <i>Taxodium distichum</i>    |                       |
| <i>Prunus cerasifera</i>     | Cherry plum           |
| <i>Platanus hybrida</i>      | London plane          |
| <i>Salix alba</i>            | White willow          |
| <i>Salix fragilis</i>        | Crack willow          |
| <i>Populus alba</i>          | White poplar          |

## Caraorman

*Trapa natans*  
*Potamogeton pectinatus*  
*P. crispus*  
*P. perfoliatus*  
*Nuphar luteum*  
*Nymphaea alba*  
*Alisma plantago-aquatica*  
*Sagittaria sagittifolia*  
*Tamarix ramosissima*  
*Senecio paludosus*  
*Senecio vulgaris*  
*Orchis elegans*  
*Vicia tenuifolia*  
*Cynanchum acutum*  
*Potentilla reptans*  
*Malva pusilla*  
*Hippophae rhamnoides*  
*Salix cinerea*  
*Stratiotes aloides*  
*Solanum dulcamara*  
*Viscum album*  
*Symphytum officinale*  
*Thelypteris palustris*  
*Scirpus lacustris*  
*Euphorbia seguieriana*  
*Silene conica*  
*Ceratophyllum demersum*  
*Berula erecta*  
*Rorippa amphibia*  
*Lysimachia nummularia*  
*Verbena officinalis*  
*Ficus carica*  
*Phytolacca americana*

## Babadag Forest

*Centaurea orientalis*  
*Centaurea marshalliana*  
*Limodorum abortivum*  
*Anacamptis pyramidalis*  
*Neottia nidus-avis*  
*Potentilla taurica*  
*Polygala vulgaris*  
*Polygala major*  
*Cephalochothera*  
*Damasonium c. rubra*  
*Stipa ucrainica*  
*Salvia austriaca*  
*Salvia nutans*  
*Melampyrum cristatum*  
*Iris pumila*  
*Iris sintenisii*  
*Laser trilobium*  
*Asyneuma anthericoides*  
*Globularia aphyllantes*  
*Tanacetum corymbosum*  
*T. millefolium*  
*Sideritis montana*  
*Euphorbia stepposa*  
*E. agraria*  
*Ailanthus altissima*  
*Salvia nemorosa*  
*Prunus spinosa*  
*Viburnum lantana*  
*Cornus mas*  
*Overlus pubescens*  
*Euonymus europaea*  
*Thalictrum minus*  
*Achillea nobilis*  
*A. clypeolata*  
*Clematis vitalba*  
*Verbascum chaixii*

Water chestnut  
Fennel-l'd pondweed  
Curled pondweed  
Perfoliate pondweed  
Yellow water lily  
White water lily  
Water plantain  
Arrowhead  
a tamarisk  
Fen ragwort  
Groundsel  
Loose-flowered orchid  
Fine-leaved vetch  
Stranglewort  
Creeping cinquefoil  
Small mallow  
Sea buckthorn  
Grey willow  
Water soldier  
Bittersweet  
Mistletoe  
Comfrey  
  
Bulrush  
a spurge  
Sand catchfly  
Rigid hornwort  
Lesser water parsnip  
Great yellowcress  
Creeping jenny  
Vervain  
Fig  
Virginian poke

Limodore  
Pyramidal orchid  
Bird's-nest orchid

Common milkwort  
Large milkwort

a feather grass

Crested cow-wheat  
an iris  
an iris

Tree of Heaven  
a meadow clary

Wayfaring tree  
Cornelian cherry

Spindle tree  
Lesser meadow-rue  
a yarrow  
a yarrow  
Traveller's joy  
a mullein

*V. phlomisoides*  
*V. phoeniceum*  
*Fragaria viridis*  
*Adonis vernalis*  
*Paeonia peregrina*  
*Koeleria brevis*  
*Cotinus coggygria*  
*Astragalus glaucus*  
*A. cornutus*  
*A. onobrychis*

a mullein  
a mullein  
a strawberry  
Yellow adonis  
a peony  
a hair-grass  
Wig tree  
a milk-vetch  
  
Sainfoin milk-vetch

## Cheila Gorge

*Campanula romanica*  
*Ceterach officinarum*  
*Celtis glabrata*  
*Minuartia adenotricha*  
*Noearingia grisebachii*  
*Aristolochia clematidis*  
*Stachys recta*  
*Sempervivum ruthenicum*

a nettle-tree  
a sandwort  
  
Birthwort  
Perennial yellow woundwort  
a houseleek

## Vadu

*Cynanchum acutum*  
*Euphorbia villosa*  
*Astragalus varius*  
*Orchis elegans*  
*Holoschoenus vulgaris*  
*Polygonum arenarum*  
*Convolvulus lineatus*  
*Secale silvestre*  
*Salsola soda*  
*Elymus sabulosus*  
*Phragmites australis*  
*Crambe maritima*  
*Eryngium maritimum*  
*Salicornia herbacea*  
*Suaeda maritima*  
*Silene conica*  
*Obione pedunculata*  
*Bassia hirsuta*  
*Euphorbia seguieriana*  
*Centaurea arenaria*  
*Consolida orientalis*  
*Conium maculatum*  
*Scolymus hispanicus*  
*Argoosia sibirica*

Round-headed club-rush  
  
Silvery-leaved pink convolvulus  
a rye grass  
Saltwort  
a lyme grass  
Fleed  
Sea kale  
  
Marsh samphire  
Shrubby seablite  
Striated catchfly  
  
Larkspur  
Hemlock  
Spanish oyster plant

## Histria

*Ornithogalum oreoides*  
*Xeranthemum annuum*  
*Verbascum chaixii*  
*Suaeda maritima*  
*Salicornia herbacea*  
*Obione pedunculata*  
*O. verrucifera*  
*Euphorbia seguieriana*  
*Limonium bellidifolium*

Pink everlasting  
  
Marsh samphire  
  
Matted sea lavender

Thanks to Mihai for this splendid list: as they say, any incorrect spellings or English names are, however, entirely my responsibility, not his!

May you continue to experience much *Clematis vitalba* on many more Honeyguide tours

Rob Hume



**SOCIETATEA ORNITOLOGICA ROMANA (S.O.R.)**  
**The Romanian Ornithological Society (R.O.S.)**

**Societate pentru studiul si protectia pasarilor si a mediului inconjurator**  
**Society for the study and protection of birds and environment**

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Central office:3400 Cluj,  
Str Gh Dima 49/2  
Tel /fax:+4064438086

Danube Delta office: 8800 Tulcea,  
Str. Garii, Bl G5, Sc B, Ap 2  
Tel/fax: +4040515438

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Grupul "*Falco cherrug*" -Tulcea  
Str. Garii ,Bl G5, Sc B,Ap 2

"*Falco cherrug*" Group  
ROS Tulcea branch

28 July 2001

Dear Chris Durdin,

We would like to thank you personally and Honeyguide for this year's financial and material support, which helped us, extend our network of young ornithologists in Dobrogea. We received £225 and we already decided how to use them properly.

With your help we were able to extend our ecological education activities between youngsters, and so we raised the interest in environment protection, ornithology, which for Dobrogea is vital, knowing that our area is one of the most important bird places in Europe.

Thanks to you, now we are able to do what we always wanted: that is working with youngsters and teaching them how to protect the environment and how to do this with passion.

With the help of money and field guides that you generously gave us, we will try to initiate more and more youngsters in ornithological activities such as the late august "Youth Ornithological Camp" in Danube Delta for ecological education, bird ringing, keys for identifying birds, bird survey methods and not last, identifying the problems of the area and the possible solutions for those problems.

We will also try to use in our ringing activities and bird calling sessions, modern techniques, such as a portable CD player with bird songs.

We can only hope that our activities regarding youngsters will grow more and more, and that they will be able to help the environment and initiate more youngsters at their turn.

We would like to thank you again for all your support and promise that our activities will only increase.

Sincerely yours,  
Prof. Dorosencu Gabriela  
President "*Falco cherrug*"  
Tulcea, Romania