Danube Delta
3 – 10 June 2006
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Holiday participants
June Cutler
Michael Cutler
Julie Sherwood
Graham Harris
Peter Higgleton
Chris Ebden
Graham Wilkins
Margaret Marris
Marilyn Hodgson
Collin Hodgson
Derek Boughton

Leaders
Daniel Petrescu (birds)
Mihai Petrescu (botanist, in Dobrogea)

Bird list from Daniel Petrescu, plants from Mihai Petrescu. Other contributions from group members, plus information from the RSPB’s Mark Day about the Society’s work in Romania.

Illustrations by Rob Hume. Cover: white pelicans

This holiday, as for every Honeyguide holiday, also puts something into conservation in our host country by way of a contribution to the wildlife that we enjoyed. But, unusually, there are two thank-you letters at the end of this report.

The usual conservation contribution this year of £25 per person, £300 (11 from the group plus one who had to withdraw) was given to the young ornithologists group in Tulcea, *Falco cherrug* (the saker falcon). This was supplemented in two ways. Firstly, by gift aid through the new Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust. Secondly, by a donation of £250 from Roger Jordan and friends in the Wildlife Outreach Network based in Essex, leading to a total of £923 (£659). This brings the total given to the Romanian Ornithological Society (SOR) since 1999 to £4,938 (£3,527) and to various conservation projects to £42,235 (to summer 2006) since the start of Honeyguide in 1991.

For more information on Eco Pontica Foundation, a new conservation organisation based in Tulcea: www.eco-pontica.ro
Some highlights
Looking at a sombre tit, which was new to many people, and realising that there was a Levant sparrowhawk perched on the next tree.
*Derek Boughton*

The most impressive thing was the sheer numbers of birds, species that we normally only see two or three of in a week, we saw huge numbers e.g. rollers, squacco herons, egrets, pelicans etc.
*Chris Ebden*

Our overnight stop in Letea and the riverside walk in the evening listening for corncrakes; the late evening noise of frogs croaking whilst looking across at the pelicans at Lopatna and the sight of thousands of pelicans, forming skeins and circling before descending onto the river the next day.
*June Cutler*

Butterflies
- Swallowtail
- Red admiral
- Painted lady
- Lesser purple emperor
- Freyer’s purple emperor
- Large copper
- Common blue
- Adonis blue
- Tessellated skipper
- Cardinal
- Queen-of-Spain fritillary
- Bath white
- Small white
- Ilex hairstreak
- Southern grayling
- Meadow brown
- **Other notable invertebrates**
  - Hummingbird hawk-moth
  - Norfolk hawker
  - Banded demoiselle
  - Scarlet darter
  - Black-tailed skimmer
  - (and many more unidentified dragonflies)

Mammals
- Suslik
- Musk rat
- Brown hare
- Roe deer

Reptiles and amphibians
- Green lizard
- Balkan green lizard
- Balkan wall lizard
- Grass snake
- European pond terrapin
- Edible frog

Butterflies mostly contributed by Graham Harris with the rest by Dave Wilkins.

Notes about the RSPB’s involvement in Romania and the Danube Delta

Dear Chris,

Many thanks for your email and for passing on the comments of some of your visitors. Their observations are appropriate, and I am pleased to say that the RSPB is beginning to invest properly in what is arguably Europe’s most important wetland.

At the national level, the RSPB continues to invest in the capacity building (Country Programme) which represents £35,000 plus a proportion of my time to invest in SOR core support. As part of that we are supporting EU Accession for SOR-BirdLife Romania in many way. Firstly, we have been supporting the identification of Important Bird Areas in Romania, the greatest density of which are in the Danube Delta and Dobrodgea. Once the full dataset in submitted later this year, we will shift our emphasis to designation of these sites as part of the
EU's Natura 2000 network.

Related to this, we have been providing specialist support and training on EU Structural and Rural Development Funds to ensure that good provision is made for biodiversity related investments that would especially affect those two areas. We have also just appointed Crisanta Lunghu, a new Development Director for SOR, who will lead on the fundraising and awareness-raising for SOR.

At the international level, last July we hosted two back-to-back international workshops on
i) red-breasted geese conservation and
ii) the Lower Danube and Danube Delta
in conjunction with the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration (DDBRA), the Danube Delta Institute (DDI) and WWF Danube & Carpathian Programme, as well as a suite of BirdLife International partners.

As a result of that two staff have additionally been funded and appointed: Ciprian Fantana is about to join as the Danube Policy Officer is RSPB funded and Lavinia Raducescu is the Coordinator for the Red-breasted Goose International Working Group is part funded by us - both are based at SOR-BirdLife Romania in Bucharest.

Lavinia will work with partners nationally and internationally to support their efforts in relation to red breasted geese, while Ciprian's role is to work with strategic partners DDBRA, DDI and WWF and the Government to improve the situation in relation to protecting the Lower Danube and Danube Delta by either encouraging protection and restoration, or by opposing potentially damaging developments (Primarily in Romania, but also Ukraine and Moldova).

At present we are also looking at the feasibility of undertaking habitat restoration projects within the Delta, to restore some of the estimated 30,000 hectares of land that has been drained. Equally, the initial wind farm development applications are starting to be submitted, and we are using our knowledge of site casework to oppose any proposed developments that would be within Important Bird Areas.

Also, SOR is running two EU LIFE projects in partnership with the DDBRA, focussed on red breasted geese and Dalmatian respectively. In the former we give advice and in the latter the RSPB are a full and active partner. These two projects have strengthened the relationship with the DDBRA, resulting in them offering SOR to establish a Danube Office inside the DDBRA headquarters. This links in very well with Eugen and Daniel’s Ibis Tours.

Finally, something that may be of direct interest to you and your visitors is that SOR will shortly start developing WorldBirds in Romania, the web based bird data gathering website similar to BTO BirdTrack. This will obvious enable the records that you and your visitors to directly contribute to data for conservation. (Note: Bulgaria will also launch its version - Bulgarian Bird Quest - in July)

Apologies for the length of the message, but all in all the RSPB has begun investing quite heavily in both technical and financial terms in the Danube and Dobrogea over the last two years. What we have been poor at doing is communicating these investments! Therefore another challenge that I am involved with at present is to upgrade RSPB’s international website information.

Mark Day
European Country Programmes Manager
RSPB
Plant list 2006

Listed by Mihai Petrescu, all in Dobrogea. \textit{RL – on the Romanian red list.}

\textbf{ACERACEAE – maples}  
\textit{Acer tataricum}  
Tartar maple

\textbf{ANACARDIACEAE – smoke bush}  
\textit{Cotinus coggyria}  
smoke bush

\textbf{BORAGINACEAE – borage family}  
\textit{Argusia (Tournefortia) sibirica}  
Siberian sea rosemary

\textbf{CAMPANULACEAE – bellflowers}  
\textit{Campanula rapunculus}  
rampion bellflower
\textit{Campanula romanica \textit{RL}}  
an endemic bellflower

\textbf{CANNABACEAE – hemp family}  
\textit{Cannabis sativa}  
hemp

\textbf{CARYOPHYLLACEAE – pinks}  
\textit{Dianthus nardiformis \textit{RL}}  
\textit{Dianthus polymorphus}  
\textit{Gypsophila perfoliata}  
\textit{Kohlrauschia (=Dianthus) prolifera}  
\textit{Paronychia cephalotes \textit{RL}}  
\textit{Scleranthus annuus}  
annual knawel
\textit{Silene conica}  
sand catchfly
\textit{Silene csereyi}  
\textit{Spergularia borystenica}  
\textit{Spergularia media}  
greater sea-spurrey

\textbf{CELASTRACEAE}  
\textit{Euonymus europaeus}  
spindle-tree
\textit{Euonymus verrucosus}  
warted spindle-tree

\textbf{CHENOPODIACEAE}  
\textit{Bassia hirsuta}  
hairy seablite
\textit{Halimione verrucifera}  
\textit{Salicornia herbacea}  
a glasswort
\textit{Suaeda maritima}  
annual seablite

\textbf{COMPOSITEAE (ASTERACEAE) – daisy family}  
\textit{Achillea elypeolata}  
a sneezewort or yarrow
\textit{Achillea ochroleuca}  
\textit{Achillea setacea}  
a sneezewort or yarrow
\textit{Artemisia loebelii}  
a steppe wormwood
\textit{Artemisia santonica}  
a steppe wormwood
\textit{Artemisia tchernievinna}  
a cudweed
\textit{Bombycilaena erecta}  
musk thistle
\textit{Carduus nutans}  
a yellow thistle
\textit{Crepis sancta}  
a hawksbeard
\textit{Echinops ruthenicus}  
a globe-thistle
\textit{Jurinea mollis}  
jurinea – a carline thistle
\textit{Onopordum acanthium}  
cotton or Scotch thistle
\textit{Scolymus hispanicus}  
Spanish oysterplant
\textit{Scorzonera hispanica}  
a viper’s grass
\textit{Senecio paludosus}  
\textit{Xanthium strumarium}  
rough cocklebur
CONVOLVULACEAE – bindweeds
Convolvulus cantabrica  pink bindweed
Convolvulus lineatus  a pink bindweed

CORYLACEAE – hornbeams
Carpinus orientalis  eastern hornbeam

CRASSULACEAE – stonecrops
Sedum hillebrandtii  a stonecrop

CRUCIFERAE (BRASSICACEAE) – crucifers
Crambe maritima  sea kale

CYPERACEAE – sedges
Schoenoplectus (=Scirpus) tabernaemontani  grey club-rush / bulrush

ELEAGNACEAE
Hippophae rhamnoides  sea buckthorn

EUPHORBIACEAE – spurge
Euphorbia agraria  
Euphorbia cadrilatier  
Euphorbia dobrogensis  
Euphorbia myrsinites  
Euphorbia seguieriana  
Euphorbia stepposa  

EUPHORBIACEAE – spurges

FAGACEAE – oaks
Quercus pedunculiflora  
Quercus pubescens  downy oak

GERANIACEAE – cranesbills & storksbills
Erodium cicutarium  common storksbill
Geranium sanguineum  bloody cranesbill

GLOBULARIACEAE – globularias
Globularia punctata

GRAMINEAE (POACEAE) – grasses
Agropyron brandzcae  a couch grass
Agropyron elongatrin  
Agropyron pectiniformae  
Apera spica-venti ssp maritima  loose silkybent
Bromus squarrosum  
Bromus sterilis  sterile brome
Bromus tactorum  
Chrysopogon gryllus  
Festuca callieri  
Festuca valesiaca  a fescue
Leymus (Elymus) sabulosus  
Koeleria brevis  a hairgrass
Melica ciliata  hairy melick
Phragmites australis ssp altissima  reed
Poa bulbosa  bulbous meadow-grass
Puccinellia limosa  saltmarsh grass
Secale sylvestre  
Stipa capiliata a feather-grass
Stipa lessingiana  a feather-grass
Stipa pulcherrium  a feather-grass
Stipa ucrainica  a feather-grass
IRIDACEAEA – irises
Iris sintenisii (Apogon) RL c 20 cm
Iris suaveolens
Iris variegata
taller, branched; variegated iris

LABIATAE (Lamiaceae) – labiates
Ajuga chamaepitys a bugle
Ajuga laxmannii ground-pine
Lycopus europaeus gipsywort
Salvia austriaca
Salvia aethiopis RL wild sage
Salvia nemorosa ssp tesquicola
Salvia nutans
Scutellaria orientalis
Thymus zygoides RL

LEGUMINOSAE (FABACEAE) – peas
Astragalus onobrychis ssp linearifolius inflated milk-vetch
Astragalus varius crown vetch
Astragalus vesicarius ssp pseudogalucus
Coronilla varia an everlasting pea
Lathyrus tuberosus bur medick
Medicago minima a lucerne with yellow flowers
Medicago (sativa) falcata
Ononis columnae a restharrow
Robinia pseudacacia false acacia
Trifolium campestre hop trefoil

LILIACEAEA – lilies
Allium saxatile RL

MALVACEAE – mallows
Althaea officinalis marsh mallow

OLEACEAE – ashes
Fraxinus ornus manna or flowering ash

ORCHIDACEAE – orchids
Anacampsis pyramidalis pyramidal orchid
Cephalanthera rubra red helleborine
Neottia nidus-avis birdsnest orchid
Orchis laxiflora ssp elegans loose-flowered orchid
Orchis purpurea lady orchid
Orchis tridentata toothed orchid
Platanthera chlorantha greater butterfly orchid

PLANTAGINACEAE
Plantago lanceolata ribwort plantain

POLYGALACEAE
Polygala major a milkwort

RANUNCULACEAE
Consolida orientalis eastern larkspur
Consolida regalis forking larkspur

RHAMNACEAE
Paliurus spina-christi RL Christ’s-thorn

ROSACEAE
Agrimonia eupatoria agrimony
Fragaria viridis  
a wild strawberry
Potentilla argentea  
hoary cinquefoil
Potentilla bommuelleri
Prunus spinosa ssp dasphylla  
blackthorn
Pyrus bulgarica  
a pear
Pyrus pyraster

RUBIACEAE
Asperula tenella
Galium dasypodum  
a bedstraw
Galium glaucum
Galium humifusum
Galium pedemontanum

SCROPHULARIACEAE
Linaria genistifolia  
a toadflax
Verbascum blattaria  
moth mullein
Verbascum chaixii
Verbascum pensiflorum
Verbascum phoeniceum  
purple mullein
Verbascum speciosus

SOLONACEAE
Hyoscyamus niger  
henbane

TAMARICACEAE
Tamarix ramosissima  
a tamarisk

TILIACEAE – limes
Tilia tomentosa  
silver lime

UMBELLIFERAE (APIACEAE) – umbellifers
Anthriscus caucalis
Ferulago medides
Laser trilobum  
a sermountain
Orlaya grandiflora  
a bur parsley

VISCACEA (LORANTHACEAE)
Loranthus europaeus