

# *Honeyguide*

**WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS**

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## **BULGARIA**

**THE WESTERN RHODOPES AND BLACK SEA COAST  
10<sup>TH</sup> – 19<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009**

## Holiday participants

Malcolm and Helen Crowder  
Margaret Dixey  
Ian and Jenn Milne

John Rumpus and Rosemary MacDonald  
Mildred Willner  
Helen Young

Leaders from the Neophron team: Assen Ignatov and Vladimir Trifonov, [www.neophron.com](http://www.neophron.com)

Honeyguide leader from the UK: Tim Strudwick, who also wrote the report.

Our hosts at the Hotel Yagodina: Assen and Mariya Kukundjievi, [www.yagodina-bg.com](http://www.yagodina-bg.com)

Our hotel in Sozopol: Kalithea Hotel, [www.hotelkalithea.com/en/](http://www.hotelkalithea.com/en/)

On the return journey to Sofia we stayed one night at Bashtina Kashta (Father's House)

Hotel in the conservation village of Koprivshtitsa, [www.fhhotel.info](http://www.fhhotel.info)

All photos in this report were taken during the holiday, those edged green by Tim Strudwick and edged blue by Helen Crowder.

Front cover photo by Assen Ignatov.

More wallcreeper photos at [www.honeyguide.co.uk/wallcreeper.htm](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk/wallcreeper.htm) and a gallery of photos at <http://www.honeyguide.co.uk/wildlife-holidays/bulgaria-gallery.html>



As with all Honeyguide holidays, part of the price of this one was put towards a local conservation project. Our contribution of £35 per person went to the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds, the BirdLife partner in Bulgaria, to assist the management of the Poda Nature Protected Site which we visited during the week, when a symbolic presentation was made to the manager, the actual transaction having been by bank transfer. The conservation contribution was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust and boosted by a £250 donation from the Wildlife Outreach Network, resulting in a donation to BSPB of £655.

As at the end of 2009, the overall total for conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 is £61,363, of which £7,783 is from 2009.

## Bulgaria, 10<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> September 2009

### Day 1: Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September, Sofia to Western Rhodopes

Arriving a little bleary-eyed on the early flight from Gatwick, the group were immediately greeted at Sofia airport by our smiling Bulgarian guides Assen Ignatov and Vlado Trifonof, minibus driver Dencho, and Mildred, who had travelled from Manchester the previous evening. Our minibus was parked conveniently outside the airport door and we were soon on board and off on our way towards the Western Rhodopes.

On the outskirts of Sofia, Assen pointed out some deserted white stork nests on top of lamp posts in the central reservation of the dual carriageway! To the south of the city, the Vitosha Mountain loomed up into the clouds, reminding us that Bulgaria is largely a country of mountains. A little further on, Helen C spotted bee-eater passing by. Once on the motorway the traffic was surprisingly light for the main route between Sofia and Plovdiv (Bulgaria's second city) and our route took us through pleasant but unremarkable rolling hills. After a couple of hours, our lunch stop at a service station provided the first opportunity to see some wildlife. A few migrating buzzards passed overhead and a crested lark pecked about in the car park. Adjacent vineyards looked promising for small birds but it was mid-afternoon and we could only muster a red-backed shrike and a lesser whitethroat. Balkan wall lizard and praying mantis were photographed.

Back on the road we soon left the motorway and turned south, passing through the town of Pazardzik, and followed increasingly narrow and rough roads towards the mountains. Just beyond Krichim the road entered an attractive gorge and we all agreed this looked a good place for a break. Scanning the cliff face, Assen quickly picked up a blue rock thrush, and a variety of birds overhead were called out - red-rumped swallow, crag martins, several buzzards, goshawk and peregrine. Vlado pointed out some rare Grecian juniper on the limestone slope, and some flowering ivy at the roadside was attracting a holly blue butterfly and several hornets. We could easily have spent the next hour at this spot but time was pressing so we rejoined our journey. We were now in the Western Rhodope mountains and the road hugged steep slopes clothed in forest of pine, oak and ash. We passed two dams and reservoirs (apparently birdless except for a lone cormorant) and a third still under construction. We passed through the town of Devin, a major source and brand-name of mineral water in Bulgaria.

The long and winding road and early start were catching up with us and many eyes were closing, but some remained sharp enough to spot a number of dippers on the stream beside the road. We eventually took a left turn, climbing steeply up a road seemingly carved into overhanging cliffs, and came to a large village (below) surrounded by grassy slopes and pine forest and in the centre our destination, the Hotel Yagodina.



Before our luggage was out of the bus we were standing in the evening sunshine watching a bevy of passerines on a fence in the meadow opposite the hotel - common and black redstarts, whinchat and spotted flycatcher - and felt we had really arrived. After checking in and freshening up, our day ended with a filling meal of salad, soup, chicken and dessert. This was accompanied by some delicious Bulgarian wines, of which, we were told, as ever, only the rubbish stuff gets exported to the UK.

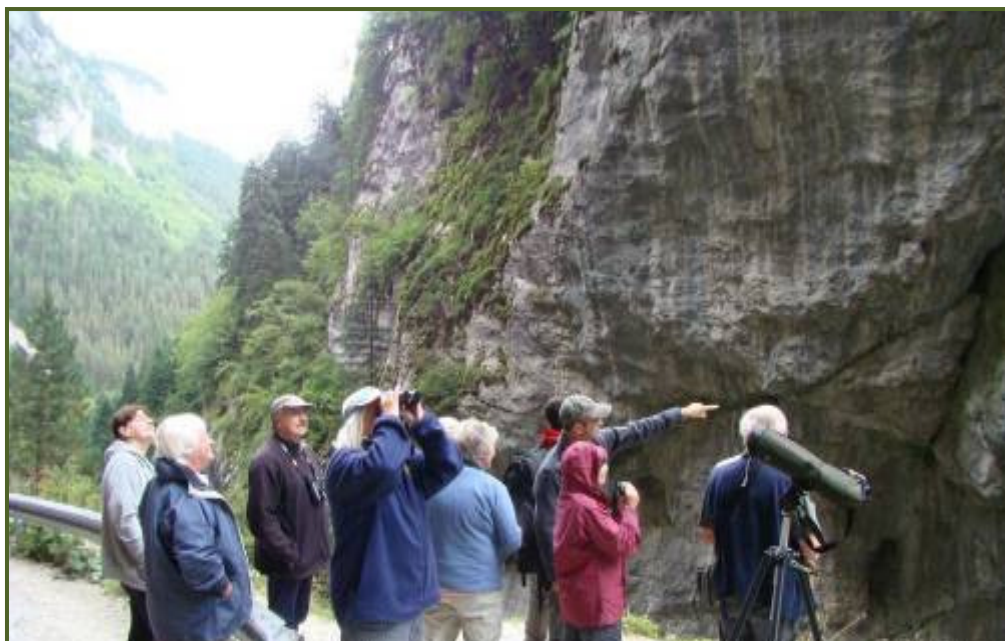
## Day 2: Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September, Trigrad Gorge

At first light, as some of the group assembled for a pre-breakfast walk around the village, it was cool and overcast. We watched the village wake up, women leading their family cow down for milking, the village cafés filling up and barely a motor vehicle to be seen. Birds were slow to get active in the cool mountain air and the highlight was a nutcracker atop a pine at the edge of the village.



As we assembled for breakfast at 8am, Ian revealed that he'd had rather better views of a nutcracker from his balcony. Breakfast was substantial and almost entirely of food produced in the village – yoghurt, honey, cheeses, bread, butter, *Mekitsa* (fried dough) and jam made from wild strawberries (*yagoda* - hence Yagodina) and bilberries, all washed down with the local herbal tea, or coffee for the more conventional.

Our destination today was Trigrad gorge, just a few kilometers away. While gathering at the bus we sorted out some warblers in the birch trees - chiffchaff, willow and wood warblers - and heard a black woodpecker calling in the distance. After a short drive Dencho dropped us off by the entrance to a road tunnel. Here we stood deep in the shade of towering limestone cliffs with the Trigrad river roaring below us. Our main target at this site was wallcreeper which, Assen explained, had nested earlier in the year just a few feet above where we stood.



As we scanned the towering cliff faces a black woodpecker called, then flew across the gorge before landing out of sight. Peregrine, crag martin and swifts were all seen flying above. Before long a wallcreeper was spotted on a distant rock face. A short walk through the road tunnel brought us much closer, and over the next hour we enjoyed very close views of this juvenile bird as it flitted around the rock face above us (photo on front cover). A second wallcreeper was eventually spotted on the opposite cliff face, and then a third, and possibly fourth, nearby. Superb views of this elusive species provided an excellent start to the day.

Walking up the gorge, Vlado pointed out some plants growing from the limestone cliff, including the Rhodopes endemic *Haberlea rhodopensis* and Balkan endemic *Saxifraga strobilifera* which were not in flower, and the delicate and highly aromatic labiate *Micromeria dalmatica* which was. We came to the Devil's Throat where the river plunges underground for a few hundred metres - as legend has it, Orpheus emerged from the underworld here. We spent a little time at this minor tourist spot, taking advantage of the toilets, perusing stalls selling honey, jam and souvenirs, while a bagpipe player entertained us with traditional music which impressed Jenn so much she bought his CD. Raven, goshawk, sparrowhawk and firecrest put in appearances here. From here we climbed farther up the road and out of the gorge, finding more honey and souvenirs for sale, and a wealth of small birds in the roadside woods and fields, including crested tit, serin, marsh tit and wood warbler. Red-rumped swallows greeted us as we entered the village of Trigrad, where we were expected for lunch.



The Kaminata café was dominated by a huge fireplace where, over a wood fire, a whole sheep was being roasted on a spit being methodically turned by two little girls. We settled down for a welcome lunch of salad and bean soup and were joined briefly by a hummingbird hawkmoth.

After lunch the bus took us back to the gorge where we spent the afternoon leisurely walking downstream. This late in the season only a few roadside plants were still in flower, including sticky sage *Salvia glutinosa* and a tricky umbellifer *Seseli sp.*, the latter home to a very large swallowtail caterpillar. Downstream of the gorge the river was alive with dippers (photo on p.7), providing excellent views and a lifer for two members of the group. Various members of the group also saw a nutcracker, nuthatches, red squirrel and a Miller's water shrew watched from above foraging in the river bed. This was a delightful walk but it was getting late, so we reluctantly climbed aboard the bus and headed back to Yagodina. Back at the hotel, alpine swifts were seen from a balcony, before we met up to review the sightings of the past two days. As we settled down to dinner (today it was salad, soup, locally farmed trout and a substantial apple strudel) it started to rain quite heavily.

### **Day 3: Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September, Trigrad - Yagodina**

By daybreak the rain had stopped, and it felt a little warmer though still overcast, with cloud shrouding the peaks. The highlights for those on the pre-breakfast walk were hobby, ravens and nutcracker, though walking off the previous night's dinner was possibly their true motivation.

After breakfast - today's variation was *banitsa* (cheese bread) - we packed our lunches from the selection of bread, cheese, egg, fruit and salad provided by the hotel, and took the short bus trip to Trigrad, from where we were to spend the day walking back to Yagodina through high coniferous forest and meadows.

It was still overcast as we set off, following a cart track that took us high above Trigrad village. Assen pointed out the Roman road which zigzagged up the opposite side of the valley - clearly not all Roman roads are straight. Vlado tracked our altitude on his GPS and took delight in informing us as we exceeded the highest point in the UK. As grassy meadows gave way to a forest of spruce and pine there were a few spots of rain, which, thankfully, soon cleared. Passerines flitted through the conifer foliage, and those that showed themselves included a smart group of crossbills. A black woodpecker called tantalisingly close but failed to show itself, but a red squirrel was more cooperative, watching us as we watched it (photo below). Soon after our picnic lunch in a woodland clearing the path began to descend and we encountered a loose, mixed group of tits and other passerines moving through the trees. Amongst the commoner tits, willow tit, crested tits, firecrest and goldcrest showed themselves. In the shady woods few plants grabbed our attention but in a clearing there was a fine display of fringed gentian in flower (photo on next page).

As we came to a grassy glade near the edge of the forest, the sun briefly broke through and a few butterflies took to the wing - small heath, red admirals and painted lady. A variety of grasshoppers and bush crickets were observed and photographed, including *Psophus stridulus*, a blackish grasshopper with striking red wings.



As Yagodina came into view we descended a steep slope, with care, to some alpine meadows where troops of autumn crocus *Colchicum autumnale* were in flower (above). Raven and peregrine were overhead, and a little farther down red-backed shrikes perched seemingly on every other bush (juvenile, above). A surprise here was a pair of sombre tits - not normally found at such high altitude according to Assen - moving from bush to bush. A small snake crossing the track was identified, later from a photo, as a smooth snake. At the edge of the village we encountered bullfinch, tree pipit, common whitethroat, dunnock and another pair, or possibly the same, of sombre tits.

Walking into the village we passed an enormous communal barn (one of the few obvious legacies from the communist era) and a timber processing yard which filled the air with the resinous tang of sawn timber. As we reached the hotel a group of tree sparrows fed on weed seeds on the road nearby.

Dinner was the now familiar four-course affair, with main course of Rhodopean moussaka (with potato rather than aubergine), and a pancake with bilberry sauce for dessert.

#### **Day 4: Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September**

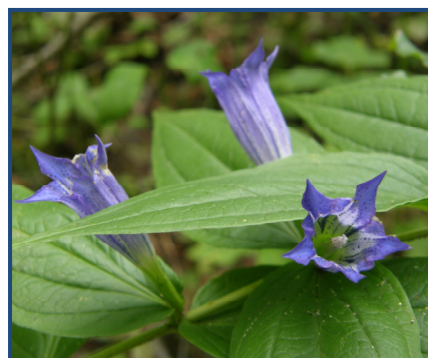
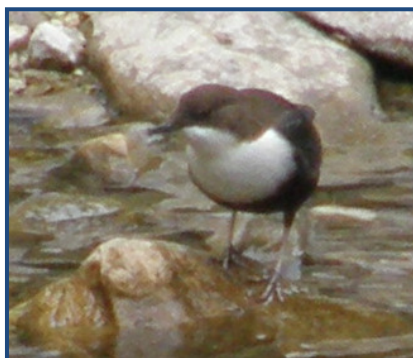
Today our plan was to follow a footpath from the village, through the forest, towards the Yagodina river, then explore upstream. After fuelling up with breakfast (today including a pancake) and assembling our lunches, we set off from the hotel. Following a track leading north from the village square, a tapping heard from a sycamore tree drew our attention above our heads - it was a

nutcracker, doing what it says on the tin! Spooked by our attention it dropped its hazel nut and flew off into a nearby hazel bush.

The track took us past typical village houses, each with its entire 'garden' devoted to growing fruit and veg, with freshly stacked firewood ready for the coming winter. There was little sign of the 20<sup>th</sup> century except for a few satellite dishes. Heading uphill and out of the village we walked through sheep-grazed meadows, then into the forest of spruce and pine where a few crossbills called from the treetops. We reached a viewpoint where we stopped for a rest and were joined briefly by another nutcracker which perched in a pine tree. From here the path descended steeply to the Yagodina river and Margaret, Jenn and Ian opted to return to the village and take the bus down. The rest of us walked down through dark beech forest, with abundant *Haberlea rhodopensis* on the shady rocks.



After reaching the river we walked along the road past a Roman bridge (above), beautifully constructed and still fit for purpose after two millennia, and arrived at Yagodina Cave. It was busy with day trippers who come here to walk 1 km through limestone caves where the air is 6°C. We chose a less adventurous but more comfortable option: coffee at the riverside café opposite. A dipper passed by while we drank. Refreshed, we walked a little farther upstream and sat down for lunch by the river, the thundering water drowning out the sound of tree felling close by. Here the trees were deciduous and diverse and included oriental plane, sycamore, field maple, Norwegian maple, alder and lime.



The distinctive willow gentian *Gentiana asclepiadea* (above right) was in flower here, its leaves arranged along arching stems rather like Solomon's seal but in opposite pairs. (Fringed gentian *Gentianella ciliata*, above left.) The sun came out briefly and wall brown and map butterfly were seen before the cloud cover closed again.

After lunch, the bus arrived from Yagodina with Ian, Jenn and Margaret, who had watched sombre tit and icterine warbler while lunching in the meadow above the village, and found a rock bunting at the village edge.

The bus now took us a few miles farther up the valley, and we spent the rest of the afternoon walking back down, botanising and birding from the road. Still flowering were the endemic foxglove *Digitalis verdiflora*, *Heracleum sibiricum*, grass-of-parnassus and several difficult species of bellflower. The cloud cover discouraged insect activity but a few large white butterflies were seen and Tim showed the group a Tree bumble bee, a recent colonist in the UK. As often in mid afternoon there was a distinct lull in bird activity, though we found a group of tree pipits, a yellowhammer, and heard willow tit by a newly constructed hotel in an isolated meadow. Here we rejoined the bus and headed back towards Yagodina. Part of the group opted to walk the last 2km uphill to Yagodina. Their walk was blessed with another spell of sunshine and they recorded butterflies including great banded grayling, clouded yellow, common blue and wood white. The rest of the group went back to relax or wander round the village, where the tree sparrows were again near the hotel.

### **Day 5: Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September, Western Rhodopes to Black Sea Coast**

Our stay in the Rhodope Mountains was at an end, and after an early breakfast (including an interesting baked rice pudding with cheese) we loaded the bus and set off, in light rain, towards the Black Sea. The first two hours took us east through misty mountains, rising to 5000 feet near the ski resort of Pamporova, then we turned northwards and descended towards Bachovski where we stopped at the monastery. Here we made use of the facilities, explored the remarkable old buildings but didn't have time to explore the motley collection of souvenir stalls. Ravens and red-rumped swallows flew overhead and marsh and willow tits fed on the seeds of cypress trees around the car park.

We continued towards Asenovgrad where the road abruptly left the mountains and hit the Thracian Plain. We stopped for lunch at a service station near Plovdiv, in an uninspiring flat landscape of intensive agriculture and electricity pylons. While eating lunch we noticed dozens of bee-eaters perched on power lines and hawking insects over the fields. After passing through Plovdiv we joined the motorway and travelled through a rolling fertile plain planted with cereals, sunflowers, vines, fruit and tobacco. There was little wildlife to be seen from the bus though Ian's sharp eyes found a woodchat shrike perched by the roadside. During a comfort break at a service station, Bath white, small white, clouded yellow and meadow brown butterflies flitted around the adjacent scrub.



As we finally neared the coast, with the tower blocks of Bourgas shining white in the afternoon sunshine, an expanse of water to our left caught the eye. Large white birds - which could only be pelicans - were in the water and marsh harriers quartered the surrounding fields. Soon we were passing through the city and right alongside Lake Bourgas (above), providing tantalising and much closer glimpses of pelicans, little and great egrets and other waterbirds. But all this was for tomorrow and we pressed on, arriving at the Hotel Kalithea in Sozopol at 6pm to unaccustomed heat and humidity. A little later we met for drinks and dinner (more conventional fare and more waistline-friendly portions than in Yagodina, but tasty) as the sun set over the bay.



## Day 6: Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> September, Bourgas Lakes

Below the hotel balconies was a scrubby slope, and before breakfast various members of the group had given it some scrutiny, noting red-backed shrike, curl bunting, icterine and olivaceous warbler, whitethroat and spotted flycatcher. After breakfast, watching this area, some of the group saw a small woodpecker fly past - undoubtedly lesser spotted. Also on the morning's balcony list were black-necked grebe and little and Mediterranean gulls on the sea.

Setting off in the bus we travelled through Bourgas to the northern-most lake, Atanasovsko. The journey provided more tantalising glimpses of waterbirds - pelicans, egrets, Kentish plover, black-winged stilts. Reaching our destination, the bus dropped us off some distance from the lake. We set off through grassy scrub, towards the lake, and immediately flushed a wryneck from the path. We stalked it, eventually glimpsing it on the ground. Penduline tits were heard in the reeds but soon all eyes were to the sky as raptors started to appear. First a group of short-toed eagles drifted over, then small groups of marsh harriers, common buzzards, a honey buzzard, sparrowhawks and goshawks, three or four ospreys and more than 100 lesser spotted eagles. These raptors had roosted overnight in the hills just to the north, and had yet to gain much height as they continued their southward migration. A few black storks were moving south with the raptors.

As we came to a large pond, Assen spotted a juvenile purple heron, conveniently in the open. Then, perched on a dead branch, a pygmy cormorant. Also here were little grebes, garganey, a kingfisher, Cetti's and reed warblers, and the croaking call of a nightingale was heard. Two or three pond terrapins basked on dead branches in the pond. A Syrian woodpecker helpfully posed on a dead willow long enough to get a scope on it. Walking through more scrub, a great reed warbler was flushed, and still more raptors, mostly common buzzards and lesser spotted eagles, trickled over, though they were higher now. Overlooking the main lake we could see many waterbirds, though mostly rather distant: black, white-winged and little terns, great and little egrets, redshanks, and pelicans in the far distance. Vlado pointed out squirting cucumber and forked larkspur, which were both in flower.



It was getting hot now, and we were getting hungry, so we walked back to the bus for our sandwiches. Butterflies were active, including Lang's short-tailed blue, cardinal and fiery copper.

A praying mantis joined us in the shade of the bus and posed for photos but soon a raptor caught our attention. It was a short-toed eagle (left) hovering nearby, drifting closer and closer, eventually dropping into the scrub less than 40 metres away. The eagle rose empty handed but soon dropped to the ground again, this time rising with a small snake in its bill, which it managed to eat in the air - rather like a strand of spaghetti. Not much later, alarm calls

amongst birds down at the lake drew our attention to a raptor rising up with prey. It was a female goshawk, hotly pursued by a kestrel and two marsh harriers which proceeded to hound it overhead for 15 minutes - a great opportunity to study this elusive raptor with the other species for size comparison.

We drove back into Bourgas, to the southern end of Lake Atanasovsko which is actively managed for salt production. The afternoon sun was hot but we found some welcome shade and scanned the salt pans. Shelduck and avocet numbered hundreds but just one pelican roosted on a bund, closer inspection revealing it to be a Dalmatian pelican. Later, three more Dalmatian pelicans flew in from behind us, showing off their three metre wingspan, the largest of any European bird. Other waterbirds here included spoonbills, teal, mallard, shoveler, curlew, ruff, wood sandpiper, black-winged stilt and little ringed plover. At the car park, a sign listing the fines for killing various bird species at this protected site was peppered with bullet holes.

We drove on to Lake Bourgas. A series of gravel islands alongside the dual carriageway provided excellent viewing spots over this vast water and here we watched about 300 white pelicans, with a few Dalmatians, fishing together. A similar number of cormorants helped with the cooperative

fishing, moving underwater to push fish to the surface. Large numbers of terns hawked over the lake, though the light was against us, making sorting out them out tricky. Whiskered, black, white-winged, sandwich, common and gull-billed were certainly present. Many squacco herons frequented the reedy edges and the floating mats of water weed - over 30 were counted at one spot. A few black-headed wagtails were watched along the shoreline. Discarded fishing nets littered the shore, so we were not surprised to find a little grebe wrapped in netting, promptly rescued by our leaders.

Then back to the hotel for much needed showers, a roll call of the day's sightings and dinner on the terrace.

### **Day 7: Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September, Poda Lagoon**

The day dawned warm and sunny, and early morning birding around the hotel produced a Syrian woodpecker, red-breasted flycatcher, marsh tits, and four night herons flying in from the sea. A small group of leaping dolphins was spotted near the long lines of fishing nets out at sea.

After breakfast the bus took us towards Bourgas, stopping at the bay of the Black Sea - part of the protected area Chengene Skele - where on the beach were little egret, Sandwich tern, and after some deliberation we concluded an arctic tern, quite a rarity here. On the sea were a few black-necked grebes. Kingfisher, marsh harrier and the only hen harrier of the trip, a ringtail, flew over. Walking back to the bus, a dead snake on the road was identified as a grass snake.



At a short distance along the road we came to Poda Lagoon, a reserve and visitor centre managed by the BSBP. The manager explained the mix of fresh, brackish and hypersaline habitats and location on the Via Pontica, named for a Roman road and cultural highway stretching along the west and south coasts of the Black Sea and a very important passage route between northern Europe and the middle East and Africa for migratory birds, resulting in the huge number of species that use the site. The roof terrace of the centre provided panoramic views over the reedbeds, pools and lagoon. From here we could see dozens of pygmy cormorants perched around the site, dwarfed by the (great) cormorants present. The old pylons were studded with cormorant nests, and we were told this is the only cormorant colony on disused electricity pylons in the world.

An osprey was quickly spotted over the lagoon and was soon joined by two more. One by one they caught fish and flew off to the west. In the reeds and bushes around the building red-backed shrike, reed and sedge warblers and penduline tit were seen, and Cetti's warbler and water rail were heard.

Perked up by a coffee from the visitor centre, we followed a trail through the reedbed to a hide overlooking freshwater pools. Nearby a lesser grey shrike posed on a bush and butterflies, including many Bath whites, abounded in the sunshine. Reaching the seashore we walked along the strand towards the lagoon where hundreds of birds congregated to fish (photo below). On a

rocky bar between the sea and the lagoon were many yellow-legged (Caspian) and black-headed gulls, common terns, and, first located by their abrasive calls, four Caspian terns. A scattering of waders along the lagoon edge included bar-tailed godwit, ringed and little ringed plover, dunlin, curlew sandpiper, wood sandpiper and ruff.



On the narrow strip of dunes Vlado showed us two nationally important plants in flower – the local race of sea rocket and Russian blue lettuce *Lactuca tatarica*. After returning to the centre, some pratincoles were spotted from the roof, hawking insects high to the south. After getting them in the scope, with some difficulty, the conclusion was black-winged pratincoles.

We left Poda mid-afternoon, returning to the hotel early today to allow time for exploration and shopping in the old town. Dinner, on the hotel terrace again, was enlivened when a nightjar flew past.

### **Day 8: Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September**

After breakfast the bus took us south, and our first stop was just beyond Sozopol at the sand dunes overlooking Alepu Marsh. Two or three curlew buntings fed amongst the dune vegetation, and sparrowhawk and bee-eaters passed overhead. Numerous lizards scuttled among the sparse vegetation, all apparently Balkan wall lizards. There was little to see over the marsh: penduline tits called from the depths of the reeds, and a lone wigeon sat on the pool with coots. The sea was like a mill pond, making it easy to count over 40 black-necked grebes.

We drove a little farther down the coast to Ropotamo. Parking in the shade of mature oak woodland we wandered to the river where we were to take a boat trip. While waiting, nuthatches and grey wagtail entertained us and a short-toed tree creeper called from the dark woods. We boarded our canopied boat and set off down the river, enjoying a relaxing way to watch herons, cormorants, several kingfishers, the ubiquitous red-backed shrikes, and had close views of a great egret - all in some nice scenery. Returning from the boat trip we enjoyed a fine lunch of salad and fish soup at the restaurant. While we ate, a black rat sat on a rafter above the kitchen! We were told it was poisoned and on its last legs, and whilst unsure whether to view this as a hygiene problem or a wildlife experience, most of us opted for the latter and grabbed our cameras. After lunch, looking at the river, we spotted hundreds of young cyprinid fish in the shade of the trees – possibly the source of our soup? Heading back to the car park we listened to tree frogs calling high in the surrounding Turkey and Hungarian oaks and managed fleeting views of an olivaceous warbler.

Back on the bus we headed inland through the Strandja Mountain region. We drove through the rolling hills, a mix of oak forest and cultivated areas, making a number of stops. The first was precipitated by a pair of large raptors overhead - we watched them circling above us - lesser spotted eagles, probably local breeders, Assen thought, rather than migrants. Hundreds of swallows passed overhead along with a few yellow wagtails and tree pipits. Investigation of the

butterflies in the roadside field produced cardinal and great-banded grayling. Farther on, an osprey was spotted perched on a pylon, and a short-toed eagle hunted close to the road.

We eventually arrived at Mandra Lake - a vast expanse of water surrounded by low, cultivated hills. We stopped at a secluded marshy area where the Izvorska river enters the lake, with pools, reeds, and gravel islands: this was a little oasis with snipe, wood sandpipers, little ringed plovers, black-tailed godwits, spotted redshanks, gadwall, garganey, little and great egrets and pygmy cormorants. In the surrounding bushes were circl buntings, Cetti's and reed warblers. Ruddy darter and southern hawker dragonflies were here too. From the road bridge we identified pond terrapin, marsh frog and a dice snake, the latter fully aquatic and hunting underwater. Out on the open lake were a few great crested and black necked grebes, pochards and tufted ducks. We travelled a little farther up the road and walked to some high ground overlooking a bay filled with waterbirds: white and Dalmatian pelicans, grey herons, 30 spoonbills and a few pygmy cormorants. In the fields we noted skylark, corn bunting, icterine warbler, red-backed shrike, turtle dove, common buzzard and marsh harrier.

Our final evening dinner at the Hotel Kalithea was enlivened by champagne and a cake in honour of Margaret's birthday.

### **Day 9: Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September, travel Sozopol - Koprivshitsa**

The day dawned overcast with the forecast of rain, and was largely filled with the journey west to Koprivshitsa, in the Sredna range east of Sofia, though a number of short stops provided relief from the monotony of the bus journey. During our first rest stop at a roadside service station east of Sliven we watched a distant eagle hunting, hanging high above the fields before it spotted prey and plunged vertically downwards. After some debate (and a phone call to the local eagle expert!) it was identified as an immature Imperial eagle. About 15 km beyond Sliven, near Seliminovo, we took a turn off into some grassy fields close to the edge of the Balkan range - a hunting area of Eastern Imperial eagles. Here we quickly spotted sousliks standing bolt upright on sentry duty, though the only raptors were common buzzard and kestrel.

Lunch was soup and *kebabche* and chips at a roadside café. The road was not busy but frequent roadworks (much-needed EU funded improvements) meant progress was slow. Spotting birds from the moving bus was frustrating, as interesting species were usually only seen by one or two people, but when Assen spotted a little owl on a chimney, Dencho was able to pull in, allowing everyone a good view of the bird. In the afternoon a stop overlooking a broad valley near Rozino produced a number of raptors, including goshawk, sparrowhawk, several common buzzards and a brief, distant glimpse for some of what was probably a long-legged buzzard. Soon after this we turned off the main road, climbing into wooded mountains, and soon arrived at our destination - the Bashtina Kashta hotel in Koprivshitsa.

We had some time before dinner, so most of the party took the opportunity to explore the historic buildings. Despite the inevitable touristic gift shops with tacky souvenirs, the beautifully preserved village had a powerful atmosphere. The early evening air was cool and fresh, black redstart and song thrush were in song, and the mature trees around the village were full of small birds: mostly blackcaps, willow warblers, chiffchaffs and some very confiding bullfinches feasting on elderberries in the centre of the village.

### **Day 10: Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September, Koprivshitsa – Sofia**

After a very early breakfast we departed at dawn for the last leg of our journey to the airport. The two hour drive was uneventful, though some saw a red-footed falcon on roadside wires. At Sofia airport we bade farewell to our hosts and made our way through to departures to Gatwick and Manchester.

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## Wildlife lists

### Birds

#### Species

*Gavia stellata* **Red-throated Diver**  
*Podiceps cristatus* **Great Crested Grebe**  
*Podiceps nigricollis* **Black-necked Grebe**  
  
*Podiceps ruficollis* **Little Grebe**  
*Pelecanus crispus* **Dalmatian Pelican**  
*Pelecanus onocrotalus* **White Pelican**  
*Phalacrocorax carbo* **Great Cormorant**  
*Phalacrocorax pygmeus* **Pygmy Cormorant**  
  
*Nycticorax nycticorax* **Night Heron**  
*Ardeola ralloides* **Squacco Heron**  
*Egretta garzetta* **Little Egret**  
*Egretta alba* **Great Egret**  
*Ardea cinerea* **Grey Heron**  
*Ardea purpurea* **Purple Heron**  
*Ciconia nigra* **Black Stork**  
  
*Platalea leucorodia* **Spoonbill**  
  
*Cygnus olor* **Mute Swan**  
*Tadorna tadorna* **Shelduck**  
*Anas platyrhynchos* **Mallard**  
*Anas strepera* **Gadwall**  
*Anas clypeata* **Shoveler**  
*Anas querquedula* **Garganey**  
*Anas crecca* **Teal**  
*Anas penelope* **Wigeon**  
*Aythya ferina* **Pochard**  
*Aythya fuligula* **Tufted Duck**  
*Milvus migrans* **Black Kite**  
*Circus aeruginosus* **Marsh Harrier**  
*Circus cyaneus* **Hen Harrier**  
*Accipiter gentilis* **Goshawk**  
  
*Accipiter nisus* **Sparrowhawk**  
  
*Accipiter brevipes* **Levant Sparrowhawk**  
*Pernis apivorus* **Honey Buzzard**  
*Buteo buteo* **Common Buzzard**  
  
*Buteo rufinus* **Long-legged Buzzard**  
*Aquila pomarina* **Lesser Spotted Eagle**  
  
*Aquila heliaca* **Eastern Imperial Eagle**  
*Circaetus gallicus* **Short-toed Eagle**  
  
*Pandion haliaetus* **Osprey**  
  
*Falco tinnunculus* **Kestrel**  
*Falco vespertinus* **Red-footed Falcon**

#### Notes

1 off Sozopol on 16<sup>th</sup>.  
10-20 daily at Bourgas Lakes.  
1-10 daily at Bourgas Lakes, and 30 on the Black Sea south of Sozopol.  
Seen daily at Bourgas Lakes.  
1-6 daily at Bourgas Lakes.  
Up to 300 daily at Bourgas Lakes.  
Hundreds daily at Bourgas Lakes.  
1 at Lake Atanasovsko on 15<sup>th</sup>, 50 at Poda on 16<sup>th</sup> and 20 at Mandra Lake on 17<sup>th</sup>.  
4 in off the sea at Sozopol on 16<sup>th</sup>.  
At least 30 at Lake Bourgas on 15<sup>th</sup>.  
Commonly seen at Bourgas Lakes.  
1-5 daily at Bourgas Lakes.  
Up to 30 daily at Bourgas Lakes.  
A juvenile at Lake Atanasovsko on 15<sup>th</sup>.  
About 15 over Lake Atanasovsko on 15<sup>th</sup> and 1 at Poda on 16<sup>th</sup>.  
7 at Lake Atanasovsko on 15<sup>th</sup> and 20 at Lake Mandra on 17<sup>th</sup>.  
Up to 90 daily at Bourgas Lakes.  
Seen daily at Bourgas Lakes; 300+ at Lake Atanasovsko.  
Up to 60 daily at Bourgas Lakes.  
Up to 40 daily at Bourgas Lakes.  
10 at Lake Atanasovsko on 15<sup>th</sup>.  
2-5 daily at Bourgas Lakes.  
Up to 100 daily at Bourgas Lakes.  
One on the lake at Alepu Marsh on 17<sup>th</sup>.  
2-4 at Lake Bourgas 15<sup>th</sup> and Mandra Lake on 17<sup>th</sup>.  
A few daily at Bourgas Lakes.  
A probable from the bus near Sophia on 10<sup>th</sup>.  
Up to 30 seen daily at Bourgas Lakes.  
A ringtail south of Poda on 16<sup>th</sup>.  
1-5 seen on 4 days, in the Rhodopes, Black Sea coast and central Bulgaria.  
1-8 seen on 6 days Rhodopes, Black Sea coast and central Bulgaria.  
Probable seen on 15<sup>th</sup> at Lake Atanasovsko.  
One on 15<sup>th</sup> at Lake Atanasovsko.  
Seen most days, with peak of about 60 over Lake Atanasovsko on 15<sup>th</sup>.  
A probable en route to Koprivshitsa on 18<sup>th</sup>.  
Over 100 passing south at Lake Atanasovsko on 15<sup>th</sup> and a pair south of Mandra Lake on 17<sup>th</sup>.  
An immature hunting near Sliven on 18<sup>th</sup>.  
5+ passing south at Lake Atanasovsko on 15<sup>th</sup>; 3 south of Mandra Lake on 17<sup>th</sup>.  
Up to 4 seen daily at Poda, Mandra Lake and Lake Atanasovsko.  
Seen daily.  
A possible over Lake Atanasovsko on 15<sup>th</sup>, and one en route to Sophia on 19<sup>th</sup>.

<i>Falco subbuteo</i> <b>Hobby</b>	One at Yagodina on 12 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Falco peregrinus</i> <b>Peregrine Falcon</b>	2-5 daily in Rhodopes.
<i>Rallus aquaticus</i> <b>Water Rail</b>	1-3 heard daily around Bourgas Lakes.
<i>Fulica atra</i> <b>Coot</b>	Hundreds daily at Bourgas Lakes.
<i>Gallinula chloropus</i> <b>Moorhen</b>	Seen daily at Bourgas Lakes.
<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> <b>Oystercatcher</b>	Seen at Lake Atanasovsko on 15 <sup>th</sup> and Poda on 16 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Himantopus himantopus</i> <b>Black-winged Stilt</b>	A few seen at Lake Atanasovsko on 15 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> <b>Avocet</b>	100s at Lake Atanasovsko on 15 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Glareola nordmanni</i> <b>Black-winged Pratincole</b>	8 in the air at Poda on 15 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Vanellus vanellus</i> <b>Lapwing</b>	2 at Poda on 16 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Charadrius dubius</i> <b>Little Ringed Plover</b>	Small numbers daily at Bourgas Lakes.
<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> <b>Ringed Plover</b>	One at Poda on 16 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i> <b>Kentish Plover</b>	One at Lake Atanasovsko on 15 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Limosa limosa</i> <b>Black-tailed Godwit</b>	5 at Mandra Lake on 17 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Limosa lapponica</i> <b>Bar-tailed Godwit</b>	One at Poda on 16 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Numenius arquata</i> <b>Curlew</b>	About 15 at Lake Atanasovsko on 15 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Tringa erythropus</i> <b>Spotted Redshank</b>	4 at Poda on 16 <sup>th</sup> and 15 at Mandra Lake on 17 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Tringa totanus</i> <b>Redshank</b>	Small numbers daily at Bourgas Lakes.
<i>Tringa nebularia</i> <b>Greenshank</b>	One at Poda on 16 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Tringa ochropus</i> <b>Green Sandpiper</b>	One at Lake Atanasovko on 15 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Tringa glareola</i> <b>Wood Sandpiper</b>	Several at Poda and Mandra Lake.
<i>Gallinago gallinago</i> <b>Snipe</b>	12 at Mandra Lake on 17 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Calidris alpina</i> <b>Dunlin</b>	One at Poda on 16 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Calidris ferruginea</i> <b>Curlew Sandpiper</b>	One at Poda on 16 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Philomachus pugnax</i> <b>Ruff</b>	Small numbers daily at Bourgas Lakes.
<i>Larus cachinnans</i> <b>Yellow-legged (Caspian) Gull</b>	A few in fields near Plovdiv, and common on the Black Sea coast.
<i>Larus melanocephalus</i> <b>Mediterranean Gull</b>	Small numbers daily in Sozopol harbour and at Bourgas Lakes.
<i>Larus ridibundus</i> <b>Black-headed Gull</b>	Small numbers daily at Bourgas Lakes.
<i>Larus minutus</i> <b>Little Gull</b>	One in Sozopol harbour on 15 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i> <b>Whiskered Tern</b>	About 15 at Lakes Bourgas and Atanasovko on 15 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Chlidonias niger</i> <b>Black Tern</b>	5-10 at Lakes Bourgas and Atanasovko on 15 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Chlidonias leucoptera</i> <b>White-winged Tern</b>	2-3 at Lake Atanasovko and Lake Bourgas on 15 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i> <b>Gull-billed Tern</b>	One at Lake Bourgas on 15 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Sterna hirundo</i> <b>Common Tern</b>	A few daily along the Black Sea coast.
<i>Sterna paradisaea</i> <b>Arctic Tern</b>	One roosting on the beach south of Poda on 16 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Sterna albifrons</i> <b>Little Tern</b>	A few daily at Bourgas Lakes.
<i>Sterna caspia</i> <b>Caspian Tern</b>	4 at Poda on 16 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i> <b>Sandwich tern</b>	A few daily along the Black Sea coast, mainly offshore.
<i>Columba livia</i> <b>Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon</b>	Seen daily, a few in the Rhodopes looking wildish.
<i>Columba palumbus</i> <b>Wood Pigeon</b>	Just a few seen at roadside stops in central Bulgaria.
<i>Streptopelia turtur</i> <b>Turtle Dove</b>	A few daily along the Black Sea coast.
<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> <b>Collared Dove</b>	Common in towns along the coast and lowlands.
<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> <b>Nightjar</b>	One flew past the hotel balcony at Sozopol on 16 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Athene noctua</i> <b>Little Owl</b>	By the hotel at Sozopol and by the roadside en route to Koprivshitsa.
<i>Strix aluco</i> <b>Tawny Owl</b>	Heard at night in Koprivshitsa on 19 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Apus apus</i> <b>Swift</b>	Seen daily in the Rhodopes.
<i>Apus melba</i> <b>Alpine Swift</b>	3 seen over Yagodina on 11 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Alcedo atthis</i> <b>Kingfisher</b>	A few daily along the Black Sea coast.
<i>Merops apiaster</i> <b>Bee-eater</b>	Double figures daily except in the Rhodopes, with about 200 near Asenograd.
<i>Jynx torquilla</i> <b>Wryneck</b>	One or two at Lake Atanasovko on 15 <sup>th</sup> .

<i>Dryocopus martius</i> <b>Black Woodpecker</b>	Heard daily around Trigrad/ Yagodina, 1 seen on 11 <sup>th</sup> at Trigrad gorge.
<i>Picus viridis</i> <b>Green Woodpecker</b>	Common in the Rhodopes; also seen at Ropotamo.
<i>Dendrocopos minor</i> <b>Lesser Spotted Woodpecker</b>	One by the hotel at Sozopol on 15 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Dendrocopos major</i> <b>Great Spotted Woodpecker</b>	Seen almost daily, but scarce on the coast.
<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i> <b>Syrian Woodpecker</b>	Seen at Lake Atanasovko and Sozopol.
<i>Galerida cristata</i> <b>Crested Lark</b>	Seen en route to the Rhodopes, and daily on the coast.
<i>Alauda arvensis</i> <b>Skylark</b>	A few in fields near Mandra Lake.
<i>Riparia riparia</i> <b>Sand Martin</b>	Small numbers seen most days with other hirundines.
<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i> <b>Crag Martin</b>	Common in the Rhodope gorges.
<i>Hirundo rustica</i> <b>Barn Swallow</b>	Seen daily, with hundreds passing south along the coast.
<i>Hirundo daurica</i> <b>Red-rumped Swallow</b>	Small numbers seen daily around Trigrad and Yagodina.
<i>Delichon urbica</i> <b>House Martin</b>	Seen daily, with hundreds passing south along the coast.
<i>Motacilla flava feldegg</i> <b>Black-headed Wagtail</b>	A few daily along the Black Sea coast.
<i>Motacilla alba</i> <b>White Wagtail</b>	Seen daily.
<i>Motacilla cinerea</i> <b>Grey Wagtail</b>	Common in the Rhodopes, and also Ropotamo and Koprivshitsa.
<i>Anthus pratensis</i> <b>Meadow Pipit</b>	One near Yagodina.
<i>Anthus trivialis</i> <b>Tree Pipit</b>	A few daily at Yagodina and on the coast.
<i>Anthus cervinus</i> <b>Red-throated Pipit</b>	One at Yagodina near the hotel on 10 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Lanius collurio</i> <b>Red-backed Shrike</b>	Common in the Rhodopes and on the coast.
<i>Lanius minor</i> <b>Lesser Grey Shrike</b>	One at Poda on 16 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Lanius senator</i> <b>Woodchat Shrike</b>	One en route to the coast.
<i>Cinclus cinclus</i> <b>Dipper</b>	Common in the Rhodopes, abundant downstream of Trigrad.
<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i> <b>Wren</b>	Occasional, mostly heard, at Trigrad, Yagodina and Ropotamo.
<i>Prunella modularis</i> <b>Dunnock</b>	2-3 at Yagodina.
<i>Erithacus rubecula</i> <b>Robin</b>	Seen daily in the Rhodopes; a few along the coast.
<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i> <b>Nightingale</b>	Heard at Lake Atanasovko on 15 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i> <b>Black Redstart</b>	Common in the Rhodopes and at Koprivshitsa; also seen at Sozopol.
<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i> <b>Redstart</b>	Common in the Rhodopes; a few migrants on the coast.
<i>Saxicola rubetra</i> <b>Whinchat</b>	A few seen most days in the Rhodopes and on the coast.
<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i> <b>Wheatear</b>	One seen near Lake Mandra on 17 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Monticola solitarius</i> <b>Blue Rock Thrush</b>	One in a limestone gorge near Krichim on 10 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Turdus merula</i> <b>Blackbird</b>	Common in the Rhodopes and on the coast.
<i>Turdus philomelos</i> <b>Song Thrush</b>	A few near Yagodina and in song at Koprivshitsa.
<i>Turdus viscivorus</i> <b>Mistle Thrush</b>	2 at Koprivshitsa on 18 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Cettia cetti</i> <b>Cetti's Warbler</b>	Heard at Lake Atanasovko, Poda and Mandra Lake.
<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i> <b>Sedge Warbler</b>	1-2 at Poda and at Mandra Lake.
<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i> <b>Reed Warbler</b>	A few daily at Bourgas Lakes.
<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i> <b>Great Reed Warbler</b>	One or two at Lake Atanasovko on 15 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Hippolais icterina</i> <b>Icterine Warbler</b>	1-2 at Yagodina, Sozopol and Mandra Lake.
<i>Hippolais pallida</i> <b>Olivaceous Warbler</b>	One at Ropotamo on 17 <sup>th</sup> .
<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i> <b>Blackcap</b>	A few at Trigrad, and several along the coast.
<i>Sylvia communis</i> <b>Whitethroat</b>	A few in the Rhodopes and on the coast.
<i>Sylvia curruca</i> <b>Lesser Whitethroat</b>	Several seen on the coast, mostly by the hotel in Sozopol.
<i>Regulus regulus</i> <b>Goldcrest</b>	A few in woods between Trigrad and Yagodina.
<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i> <b>Firecrest</b>	1-2 Seen near Trigrad and Yagodina.
<i>Phylloscopus collybitus</i> <b>Chiffchaff</b>	Small numbers daily in the Rhodopes and on the coast.
<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i> <b>Willow Warbler</b>	Small numbers daily in the Rhodopes and on the coast.
<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i> <b>Wood Warbler</b>	1-2 daily at Yagodina; also near Trigrad.
<i>Ficedula parva</i> <b>Red-breasted Flycatcher</b>	2 by the hotel at Sozopol.
<i>Muscicapa striata</i> <b>Spotted Flycatcher</b>	Small numbers daily in the Rhodopes and on the coast.

*Aegithalos caudatus* **Long-tailed Tit**

*Remiz pendulinus* **Penduline Tit**

*Parus palustris* **Marsh Tit**

*Parus lugubris* **Sombre Tit**

*Parus cristatus* **Crested Tit**

*Parus montanus* **Willow Tit**

*Parus ater* **Coal Tit**

*Parus major* **Great Tit**

*Parus caeruleus* **Blue Tit**

*Sitta europaea* **Nuthatch**

*Tichodroma muraria* **Wallcreeper**

*Certhia familiaris* **Treecreeper**

*Certhia brachydactyla* **Short-toed Treecreeper**

*Emberiza citrinella* **Yellowhammer**

*Emberiza cirlus* **Cirl Bunting**

*Emberiza calandra* **Corn Bunting**

*Emberiza cia* **Rock Bunting**

*Fringilla coelebs* **Chaffinch**

*Serinus serinus* **European Serin**

*Carduelis chloris* **Greenfinch**

*Carduelis carduelis* **Goldfinch**

*Acanthis cannabina* **Linnet**

*Loxia curvirostra* **Common Crossbill**

*Pyrrhula pyrrhula* **Bullfinch**

*Coccothraustes coccothraustes* **Hawfinch**

*Sturnus vulgaris* **Starling**

*Passer domesticus* **House Sparrow**

*Passer montanus* **Tree Sparrow**

*Garrulus glandarius* **Jay**

*Pica pica* **Magpie**

*Nucifraga caryocatactes* **Nutcracker**

*Corvus monedula* **Jackdaw**

*Corvus corone cornix* **Hooded Crow**

*Corvus corax* **Raven**

A few in the Rhodopes and at Ropotamo.

A few heard daily at Bourgas Lakes, and seen once at Poda.

Small numbers most days in the Rhodopes and on the coast.

2 near Yagodina on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>.

1-3 daily in the Rhodopes.

1-2 heard daily, and once seen around Trigrad/Yagodina.

A few daily in the Rhodopes.

Common in the Rhodopes and on the coast.

Common in the Rhodopes and on the coast.

A few at Trigrad, Ropotamo and Koprivshtitsa.

A family party of at least 4 at Trigrad gorge on 11<sup>th</sup>.

A few daily in the Rhodopes.

One at Ropotamo.

One near Yagodina on 13<sup>th</sup>.

2 daily by the hotel at Sozopol; a few elsewhere on the coast.

A few daily on the coast.

One at Yagodina on 13<sup>th</sup>.

Common in the Rhodopes and on the coast.

A few daily at Yagodina, also at Poda and Sozopol.

A few in the Rhodopes and on the coast.

Common in the Rhodopes and on the coast.

One seen near Trigrad.

A few seen near Trigrad and Yagodina.

A few daily near Trigrad and Yagodina, and in Koprivshtitsa.

One near Lake Mandra.

Absent from the Rhodopes, but common elsewhere.

Seen daily.

Small numbers seen daily.

Common in the Rhodopes and on the coast.

Common in the Rhodopes and on the coast.

Several seen or heard daily around Trigrad and Yagodina.

Common along the coast; a few in the Rhodopes.

Common in the Rhodopes and on the coast.

A few seen daily in the Rhodopes; also en route to Koprivshtitsa.

## Mammals

English name	Scientific name	Notes
Red squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	Seen on two days around Trigrad/Yagodina.
Eastern hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus concolor</i>	Dead, near Trigrad.
Miller's water shrew	<i>Neomys anomalus</i>	One watched feeding in the river downstream of Trigrad.
Mole	<i>Talpa europea</i>	Dead, near Trigrad.
Pine marten	<i>Martes martes</i>	Droppings seen daily near Trigrad/Yagodina; 1 dead on nearby road
Stoat	<i>Mustela erminea</i>	One dead on road in Rhodopes.
Black rat	<i>Rattus rattus</i>	One at the restaurant (!) at Ropotamo.
Bottle nosed dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	2 or more seen from the hotel at Sozopol.
Souslik	<i>Spermophilus citellus</i>	3-4 seen near Sliven.



## Reptiles and Amphibians

English name	Scientific name	Notes
Balkan wall lizard	<i>Podarcis taurica</i>	Near Pazardzik; dunes south of Sozopol.
Dice snake	<i>Natrix tessellata</i>	One at Mandra Lake.
Grass snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>	One dead near Poda.
Smooth snake	<i>Coronella austriaca</i>	One near Yagodina.
Tree frog	<i>Hyla arborea</i>	Several heard at Ropotamo.
Marsh frog	<i>Rana ridibunda</i>	Common near water.
Pond terrapin	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>	Several places at Bourgas Lakes.

## Butterflies

English name	Scientific name	Notes
Map	<i>Araschnia levana</i>	Near Yagodina.
Cardinal	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>	Black Sea coast.
Great Banded grayling	<i>Brintesia cerci</i>	Near Yagodina, and Strandja.
Holly blue	<i>Celastrina argeolus</i>	Near Krichim.
Small heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Widespread.
Clouded yellow	<i>Colias croceus</i>	Widespread.
Long-tailed blue	<i>Lampides baeticus</i>	At Lake Atanasovko.
Wall brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	Near Yagodina.
Wood white	<i>Leptidea sinapis</i>	Near Yagodina.
Lang's short-tailed blue	<i>Leptotes pirithous</i>	At Lake Atanasovko.
Small copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	At Lake Atanasovko.
Lesser fiery copper	<i>Lycaena thersamon</i>	At Lake Atanasovko.
Meadow brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	Widespread.
Swallowtail (larva)	<i>Papilio machaon</i>	On <i>Sesili sp.</i> , Trigrad gorge.
Small white	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	Widespread.
Large white	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	Widespread.
Common blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	Near Yagodina.
Bath white	<i>Pontia daplidice</i>	Near Sliven.
Red admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	Widespread.
Painted lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>	Widespread.

## Other Insects

English name	Scientific name	Notes
Hummingbird hawkmoth	<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>	Widespread.
Silver Y moth	<i>Autographa gamma</i>	Widespread.
Hornet	<i>Vespa crabro</i>	Near Krichim; Bachovski.
Praying mantis	<i>Mantis religiosa</i>	Near Pazardzik; Lake Atanasovko.
Nosed grasshopper	<i>Acrida ungarica</i>	At Lake Atanasovko.
Red-winged grasshopper	<i>Psophus stridulus</i>	Near Yagodina.
Scarlet darter	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>	Poda.
Southern hawk	<i>Aeshna caeruleum</i>	Widespread.
Ruddy darter	<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>	Mandra Lake.
Mole cricket	<i>Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa</i>	Poda.
Tree bumble bee	<i>Bombus hypnorum</i>	Near Yagodina.

## Flora

A selection of species seen in flower (\*) and other notable species (BG RDB = Bulgarian Red Data Book).

English name	Scientific name	Notes
Sea aster*	<i>Aster tripolium</i>	Poda.
European searocket *	<i>Cakile maritima ssp. euxina</i>	Poda.
Autumn crocus*	<i>Colchicum autumnale</i>	Yagodina.
Sea samphire*	<i>Critmum maritimum</i>	BG RDB. Dunes south of Sozopol.
Forked larkspur *	<i>Delphinium consolida</i>	Lake Atanasovko.
Pale Pink*	<i>Dianthus palens</i>	Yagodina.
A foxglove*	<i>Digitalis viridiflora</i>	Yagodina.
Squirting cucumber*	<i>Ecbalium elaterium</i>	Lake Atanasovko.
Warty bark spindle tree	<i>Euonymus verucosus</i>	Trigrad.
Myrtle Spurge *	<i>Euphorbia myrsinites</i>	Dunes south of Sozopol.
Moesian Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica ssp. moesiaca</i>	Rhodopes.
Narrow leaf Ash	<i>Fraxinus oxycarpa (angustifolia)</i>	Ropotamo.
Willow Gentian*	<i>Gentiana asclepiadea</i>	Yagodina.
Cross Gentian* (photo p. 7)	<i>Gentiana cruciata</i>	Yagodina.
Fringed gentian* (photo p. 7)	<i>Gentianella ciliata</i>	Yagodina.
	<i>Haberlea rhodopensis</i>	Rhodopean Endemic. Trigrad/Yagodina.
A hogweed *	<i>Heracleum sibiricum</i>	Yagodina.
Grecian Juniper	<i>Juniperus excelsa</i>	BG RDB; near Krichim.
Russian blue (Tatarian) lettuce*	<i>Lactuca tatarica</i>	BG RDB. Poda.
Common Sea Lavender*	<i>Limonium vulgare ssp. serotinum</i>	BG RDB. Ropotamo.
A labiate*	<i>Micromeria dalmatica ssp. bulgarica</i>	A Balkan endemic. Trigrad.
Grass-of-parnassus *	<i>Parnassia palustris</i>	Yagodina.
Turkish oak	<i>Quercus cerris</i>	Ropotamo.
Hungarian Oak	<i>Quercus frainetto</i>	Ropotamo.
Sticky sage *	<i>Salvia glutinosa</i>	Trigrad.
A saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga sempervivum</i>	Balkan endemic. Trigrad/Yagodina.
A saxifrage	<i>Saxifraga strybrnyi</i>	BG RDB, Balkan endemic. Trigrad.

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According to ancient and heraldic traditions, much symbolism is associated with colours.

The colours on the Bulgarian flag represent the following:

White - peace and honesty.

Green - hope, joy and love.

Red - hardiness, bravery, strength and valour.