



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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**Danube Delta
7 – 14 June 2014**

Participants

John and Margaret Long
Malcolm Crowder
David and Diana Melzack
Kate Dalziel
George and Sue Battle

Colin Taylor
Susie Turner
Dorothy Iveson
Marion Hession
John Durdin

Leaders

From Honeyguide: Chris Durdin
From Ibis: Florin Palade, plus Mihai Petrescu for two days in Dobrogea.
www.ibis-tours.ro

Report by Chris Durdin

Photos edged green by Chris Durdin, edged blue by John Long and elsewhere as indicated, all taken during the holiday week.

Cover: whiskered tern (John Long), and approaching Letea (Chris Durdin).
Below: a happy group on the day boat.



As with all Honeyguide holidays, part of the price was put towards a local conservation project, in this case for Falco Cherrug (the saker'), a young naturalists' group which is providing the delta's conservationists for the future. The group is run by Eugen Petrescu, who gave a presentation on the Thursday evening (see page 8).

The conservation contribution this year of £40 per person was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, resulting in a donation of £690 / €820. This brings the total given in Romania since the first Honeyguide holiday here in 1999 to £8,735. The total for conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays up to early June 2014 is £95,477.

Daily diary

Saturday 7 June – Bucharest to Tulcea

The mysterious wonders of Wizz Air meant that the package with our luggage allowance also gave us either reserved or extra leg room seats. So it was a comfortable as well as smooth flight from Luton to Bucharest. Emerging from baggage reclaim there was no immediate sight of Cristi from Ibis, but while some were getting Lei, the local currency, a quick call established that he was at upstairs arrivals and we were downstairs. In moments he was there to lead us to the bus and luggage trailer just around the corner. We left the airport at 2:45, with the outside temperature showing in our air-conditioned bus as 37°C.



European roller.

The first part of the drive was far from fast through the urban, industrial edge of Bucharest, often alongside a railway line, albeit with colourful splashes of ruderal wild flowers such as wild clary, tufted vetch and vipers bugloss. Once on the main road, we speeded up and the landscape changed to a sea of arable: cereals mostly, oilseed rape, sunflowers, and occasional patches of solar panels. Returning to Romania after a gap of 15 years, the intensification of farming was clear: big fields, few arable weeds, the disappearance of strip farming and people working in the fields. Consequently there weren't that many birds: a few white storks, sometimes groups sitting around, many hooded crows and the occasional roller.

Our first brief stop was for loos and an ice cream at a garage where the main weedy growth, through a wire fence, was cannabis plants. Cristi and Colin saw a Levant sparrowhawk. A second stop – by now it was 6 pm – was at a lake, much farther east. In the warm evening sun, we watched night herons and a glossy ibis fly over and heard a great reed warbler singing in the reeds. Little bitterns – it was tricky to know how many – kept dashing to and fro across a gap in the reedbed: we had about eight excellent, close, if brief sightings. Out on the lake was a single pelican, great white egret, pochard and purple heron, plus coot, moorhen and great crested grebe. Underfoot around the bus was an unfamiliar white yarrow, seen again later and then named as *Achillea setacea*, and there were five bee-eaters over a hillside.

On the final stretch through Dobrogea there were a few colour splashes of larkspur and poppies and the occasional horse and cart, and we enjoyed seeing villages where gardens were tended for vegetables and flowers. It was still hot as we dropped down to Tulcea's waterfront and the floating hotel, arriving at 7:45, a journey of five hours including two stops of 25 minutes. We were met by Roxanna with an aperitif and introduced to holiday leader Florin, who pointed out an eastern jackdaw with a pale collar and explained that we had arrived just after a long, wet spring and water levels were high. Some had heard of flooding over the Danube's embankments in upstream Serbia, but happily as usual there was no adverse impact in the expanses of the more natural delta.

After settling into our cabins, we enjoyed the first of many delicious meals, starting with a meat and vegetable soup, followed by catfish with vegetables, with special diets well catered for and a choice of red or white wine. After this, Florin took his pointer and briefed us in front of a map of the delta about tomorrow's plans.

Sunday 8 June – Danube Delta

Breakfast at 7:30 included fried eggs presented with smiley faces. At 8:30 – our morning routine – we left the floating hotel, which was to be towed to our lunchtime rendezvous, and boarded the day boat. We started downstream on the main channel, past some naval boats, prompting stories from Florin on draft-dodging, before turning left onto the narrower and wooded Mila 36. Here birdsong – mostly from hidden migrants – had us listening to the subtleties of why these were thrush nightingales, plus olivaceous warblers, squeaky icterine warblers and more readily recognised golden orioles. We heard the kestrel-like call of lesser spotted woodpecker and saw great spotted. There was a trickle of herons: night, great white and little egrets, and kingfishers flashed past. It was only me that saw the ripples of an otter, which soon dived out of sight.



Big, brown butterflies fluttered around the willows: Freyer's purple emperors, though it took skill or luck to catch a flash of purple. A male redstart on a high perch; fluttering banded agrions, hoopoe, our first squacco herons: the sightings kept coming.



White pelican.



Small red-eyed damselfly.

Branching off into a lake, we slowed and drifted past patches of water chestnut. Over these flew hundreds, perhaps thousands, of small red-eyed damselflies. One of these found John C (or his shirt) attractive and landed on him. Here, as everywhere, the common dragonfly was lesser emperor, often flying in tandem, with a bright patch of pale blue on males a distinctive feature. A large nest on a willow had a flapping young of white-tailed eagles. A single Dalmatian pelican showed the useful ID feature of a dark spot near the base of its bill, and there were white pelicans here and many in the days to follow, too many to note. On Fortuna Lake, some 20 whiskered terns were joined by two black terns.

We rendezvoused with the floating hotel for a generous lunch, then stayed aboard for a while as a tug boat moved us west. The afternoon's 'excursion', from 4-6 pm on the day boat, was south of the main channel. Here were our first Norfolk hawkers – or green-eyed hawkers as they are called outside the UK. A white-tailed eagle landed on a sandy river bank and was mobbed by a marsh harrier. Spoonbills included birds in breeding plumage with a patch of red skin at their bill's base. Ducks included garganey and any number of ferruginous ducks, and black-necked grebes kept the company and protection of whiskered terns on floating vegetation. There were so many rollers, glossy ibises and great white egrets that we had long stopped calling them or pointing to them.

We headed east on the floating hotel, which moored by a reedbed that stretched as far as the eye could see. A glorious sunset was accompanied by the throaty singing of great warblers and a frog chorus.

Monday 9 June – Danube Delta, including Letea

Early morning on the Danube Delta. The overnight frog chorus has faded to occasional croaks, but the booming bittern heard by some overnight carries on, somewhere deep in the reedbed. There are jousting cuckoos, males with a triple-note June call, and a bubbling female. The great reed warbler is still singing, joined by a reed warbler, which elsewhere are silent. Squacco herons, three black-winged stilts, ferruginous ducks, a singing Savi's warbler and purple heron add to the mix. A blue-tailed damselfly lands on the astroturf strip on the pontoon's edge. It's hot, and dragonflies are already patrolling.

The above was all before our 7:30 breakfast as many of us absorbed the wildlife action around us.

Our morning's excursion took us along a reedy channel, with many small bays of white and yellow water-lilies. Squacco herons on the lily pads were hunting frogs and, as we moved, we seemed to be gently herding often half a dozen of them along the channel. In an open area alongside 'squacco alley', Florin took the day boat into the reeds, and leapt off to explain the floating reedbed habitat. The buoyant reed rhizomes knit together to make a floating platform, called 'hover' in the Broads of East Anglia, but here on a far larger scale. These break off and make mobile islands. The hover's edge was fringed with marsh fern, which dislikes inundation, but on a floating island the water level remains constant. It's a deep platform, demonstrated as Florin pushed a long wooden pole from the boat into the reedbed under his feet, releasing a little of the methane we'd smelt along the way. Another interesting plant here was the umbellifer cowbane, flowering on reed edges. The floating platforms of reeds are favoured by nesting pelicans as the islands are free from ground predators.

Two white-winged black terns appeared as we turned left down a channel leading to a landing stage for the delta village of Letea. An open-sided vehicle was there to take us through the pretty Ukrainian village, through sand dunes and a fence, erected to keep the feral horse population out of Letea forest to help the woodland regenerate.



Epipactis danubialis

Florin had a particular spot in mind. Last week some Dutch botanists, travelling with Ibis, had discovered, or re-discovered, a group of the very scarce and local Danube Delta helleborine *Epipactis danubialis*. For us, they proved surprisingly easy to find, in the drier parts of moderately open areas in the woodland. We took many photographs, which was not as easy as it sounds for this green species in a woodland. Initially we were a little distracted by an attractive day-flying syntomid moth, but also by biting insects. The orchids were mostly in bud, but a few of the pale, downward-pointing flowers were out, so they either needed to be held at a sensible angle or photographed by lying on the damp ground and taking them against the sky. I counted 14 flowering spikes (and Dorothy counted 30). Florin picked a specimen to be sent to a botanist at Cluj-Napoca University in Romania, and parts were then forwarded to the University of Vienna for molecular analysis. The identification noted here should be regarded as preliminary, to be confirmed. The species is one of several rather similar *Epipactis* helleborines, recently (1989) split as a separate species, as with similar sister species elsewhere in eastern Europe. Delforge, the definitive orchid guide, has a description and a drawing, but no photo. We await the verdict of the experts.

The wood also had a violet birdsnest orchid, though this orchid was past its best rather than coming into flower, like the helleborines. In the meantime, on the wood's edge, Susie and Kate were separately photographing cardinal butterflies that were feeding on the many musk thistles. We walked on through the wood and into an area of stabilised sand dunes which was rich in wild flowers, notably sand catchfly, the goldendrop *Onosma arenaria* and the bellflower *Campanula sibirica*. A lucky few saw the scarce black pennant dragonfly perched on plants on the hillier sand dunes just beyond.



Golden jackal (Kate Dalziel).

Back in the vehicle, there was huge stroke of luck on the return drive when Florin spotted a golden jackal. This trotted through the jackal-high vegetation alongside us, then crossed the open track behind, affording us all very good views. We also saw turtle dove, black-winged stilts and bee-eaters before we were dropped for a very short walk through Letea village, giving us a chance to photograph the blue-painted houses or to sample black mulberries. The house colour is said to deter insects; several had a smaller 'summer kitchen' in the garden for cooking during the hottest months in this land of extremes of hot and cold. On the return boat trip there

were our first black-tailed godwits, and then it was back along 'squacco alley'. Almost at the point where we rejoined the floating hotel, a Pallas's gull (=great black-headed gull) flew along the main river channel. We re-boarded for lunch, reunited with David and Diana who had taken a morning off the main programme.

The first part of the afternoon was easy in the extreme, as the floating hotel was towed along the main river channel. Those on the open top deck saw our first terrapins and a group of four hoopoes, as well as many of the usual birds. The heat of the early afternoon gave way to cooler weather, clouds then thunder and lightning as we journeyed again on the day boat.

Grey-headed and black woodpeckers were new for the week, as was the rain that then hit us. Tarpaulins were unfurled and waterproofs donned as we sheltered fairly successfully from a fierce summer rainstorm. Somehow, in this reduced visibility, our boat driver, also Florin, kept going and found his way along the narrow channels.



Letea village (George Battle).

The rain, though dramatic, was short-lived. It had stopped by the time we came into a medium-sized lake. Here we drifted towards a mat of floating vegetation, turned off the engine, watched and listened: cast away in the middle of a whiskered tern colony. We'd seen many whiskered terns before, often picking up strings of water weed, sometimes visible on nests, but here we were surrounded by scores. The water weed was for building shallow nests of vegetation, added to the natural floating raft. The terns were sometimes in pairs by the nests, or standing singletons while partners were flying, fishing and calling. It was a magical, noisy, unforgettable experience.



Rainstorm; and whiskered terns nesting on a carpet of water hyacinth.

Tuesday 10 June – Danube Delta, and back to Tulcea

Our overnight mooring spot was probably the loveliest place so far. The vista was partly lily-filled open water, partly reedbed. The former had many of the usual suspects: red-necked grebes, ferruginous ducks, squacco herons and so on. Some found the Savi's warbler song easier than others to pinpoint in the reeds; the bird was on the reed edge sometimes, but it didn't show well. All the time there was a movement of cormorants: hundreds, to and from a mixed colony of both species, pygmy and great. Plus pelicans, which right through our three days on the delta had this knack of drifting into view, noiseless yet with a power and grace that always seemed surprising for such big birds.

The morning's day boat excursion was dry again, the weather still warm but a little less so, post-storm, than previous days. It took us through lily-fringed channels and into a small lake where red-footed falcons were in residence in a small rookery. We continued alongside a polder – drained, damaged former estuary – where there were storks on nests and even more rollers than we'd seen previously, plus Emperor Dragonflies.

Lunch was back on the floating hotel. Florin photographed a skimmer which, on checking pictures, turned out to be a white-tailed skimmer. Some of us staring at the water found a water stick-insect and a great diving beetle.

It was another leisurely afternoon aboard the floating hotel as it was towed back to Tulcea. There were some sightings, such as honey buzzard and white-tailed eagle, but little new. Not that it mattered: there was time to recap on familiar wildlife and just enjoy the ride, as did a white wagtail that seemed to be with us for much of the journey. Storm clouds and lightning reappeared as we approached Tulcea, and a little bump against a scrap metal barge as the boats were manoeuvred into position in the choppy water. Dinner was at the earlier time of 7 pm, after which cook Mariana was encouraged to come out of the kitchen so we could thank her for the excellent on-board meals.

Wednesday 11 June – Dobrogea

Music on a nearby craft meant a disturbed night for some but not all, we learnt as we chatted pre-breakfast while overlooking Tulcea waterfront, watching the river ferry cross. At breakfast there was a small dilemma: should eggs with smiley faces be photographed with the camera's food setting, or with face recognition? Suitcases were left to be transferred to the hotel, and we left with our haversacks for a day in and out of a small coach, driven by English-speaking George.

First stop was some small, sandy cliffs with any number of nesting holes. There were bee-eaters, the main excavator species, including one without a tail, but the most numerous birds were starlings. Four little owls, big fluffy chicks, sat in two separate but close alcoves, and a little way above these was a young kestrel. Driving on, overlooking St George's Channel, the southern arm of the delta, we passed the Ibis smallholding. Here they are growing fruit and veg and there are 20 sheep, 60 goats and one cow, we heard, for cheese and yoghurt, a valuable step towards locally produced food and low food miles. Soon we were at our second stop, a low hillside. Immediately there was a long-legged buzzard in flight, long-winged and pale-tailed.

An ortolan bunting was singing and was found for telescope views for a few, but it was somewhat distant. Red-backed shrike and bee-eaters added to the picture, as did pelicans over the low hills and fields of sunflowers. An attractive flower here was the everlasting daisy *Xeranthemum annuum*, and there were some foxgloves *Digitalis lanata* on the far hillside.

Bestepe was a gentle climb that was mostly a botanical ramble, showing what an all-round naturalist Florin is as he noted local specialities such as *Linaria genistifolia*, *Teucrium pollium*, *Potentilla bornmuelleri* and the yellow yarrow *Achillea clypeolata*. Flowers more familiar from elsewhere in southern Europe included the showy umbellier *Orlaya grandiflora*, pink *Convolvulus cantabricus* and St Lucie's cherry. Our first swallowtail dashed past but there was more time to study Queen-of-Spain fritillary and a grayling. The last could be one of three species based on appearance but on distribution and habitat was highly likely to have been eastern rock grayling. Moving on, we paused to search, from the minibus, some steppe-like grassland just before the start of Murighiol village. Our targets were there, though typically tricky to find in their cryptic coloration: two stone-curlews, one standing, one sitting. On the nearest point from our first view over Murighiol Lake was a single little gull, with shelducks and avocets farther away. Around the bend was a stopping place, and we walked near to the shore. Black-winged stilts had a chick and Mediterranean gulls flew past on several occasions, but the sights and sounds were dominated by the nesting colonies of Caspian gulls and common terns.

One of Colin's favourite stories from his previous Danube Delta holiday was being asked by guide Daniel Petrescu if there was anything he'd be keen to see, for which Colin requested red-footed falcons. "We'll have them shitting on your sandwiches," was the reply, and today's picnic was at that very place. A table and tasty spread was laid out in moments by Florin and George in an open area within a copse. Here red-footed falcons had moved into a rookery in a big way: some 80 pairs making this probably Romania's biggest red-foot colony. Actually the food stayed wholesome and clean while we enjoyed good views of the birds perched in dead poplars over head-high flowers of large blue alkanet. After walking a few metres to the edge of the wood we could also enjoy the falcons hunting over nearby fields, the crops sprinkled with cornflowers, with the bonus sighting of a white-tailed eagle.

We drove on, through Plopul and Sarinasuf, pausing to see Spanish sparrows sharing a white stork nest, before arriving at our final destination of the day, the dramatic setting of the Genoese castle of Enisala. Having changed hands a few times in its heyday (13th – 15th centuries) it was evidently not that successful as a fortress and is now little more than a shell – but some shell, with a fabulous setting atop a viewpoint over the Delta. Of the various plants, the star was probably the Red Data Book pink *Dianthus nardiformis*, and the best bird a pale phase booted eagle.



Dwarf pink *Dianthus nardiformis* at Enisala.

There was a brief, bonus stop in some very open wooded scrub below and in sight of the fortress. Within a few minutes there were lesser grey shrike, tawny pipit, turtle dove and steppe buzzards, but the best was a patient, perched ortolan bunting. This sang persistently, the song reminiscent in structure of the opening of Beethoven's fifth symphony, offering excellent views through our three telescopes.

By 6 pm we were back in Tulcea at our new base of the Mini Hotel Ibis, built for groups like ours travelling with Ibis. And very comfortable it was too – and spacious after the floating hotel's cabins.

Thursday 12 June – Dobrogea, Măcin Mountains National Park

Botanist Mihai Petrescu joined the group for the final two days in Dobrogea, bringing not only botanical expertise but commentaries that brought a valuable insight into local history and culture.

The morning was a gentle stroll – happily, as it was again very hot – through an area of wood pasture reminiscent of Spanish *dehesa* at Parches. A woodlark was singing and corn buntings and lesser grey shrike were easy to see in the open landscape, though that wasn't true for the wryneck that responded to playback but kept out of sight. We had better luck with a sombre tit that sat in a tree well in view. The group became fairly spread out; some of the birders with Florin saw middle spotted woodpecker. The trailing botanists added various plants to the list, albeit often of more ruderal species in this habitat. These included the mullein *Verbascum chaixii*, the deciduous mistletoe *Loranthus europeus* and proliferous pink.

All noted the colourful bugs on musk thistles: rose and pollen chafers, and orange-and-black bee-eating soldier beetles. Again there were cardinal butterflies, some remarkably tame as they concentrated on their favourite thistle, and great banded graylings, one of which sat quietly enough to be approached, which is unusual for this fast-flying species. We moved on to the Măcin Mountains, where we had lunch. Nearby, a cluster of butterflies taking minerals on a muddy patch were admired and photographed, with the majority revealed as green-underside blue.

We were grateful for patches of shade as we walked a short distance into a valley. High on rocks over the hill we followed a pied wheatear and found a fine rock thrush. A second wheatear was more of a puzzle: Florin was aware of local field studies that had revealed hybrids between pied and black-eared wheatears here. Distant though the bird was, you could see it looked like a male pied wheatear but there was a pale collar showing that the black on the face and wings were not connected, as it should be on a pied wheatear. There were also fine views of woodchat shrike here.

Our final call was again in the Măcin Mountains National Park, at Greci. George parked in the shade and we walked a short distance towards some more trees, but an angry-sounding group of buzzing bees, and many bee-hives farther on, prompted a change of direction through a souslik field. Sousliks and Isabelline wheatears often go together, as the wheatears nest in the souslik burrows, as they did in this area.



Green-underside blue.



Isabelline weatear.

Sousliks are also a favoured prey of long-legged buzzard and this prompted a remarkable natural history drama. A long-legged buzzard in the sky was carrying a souslik when an adult white-tailed eagle flew into view. The eagle chased the buzzard, twisting and turning with great agility despite its great size. Hooded crows joined the aerial tussle, first two, then a great gang. Suddenly the souslik was in the eagle's talons, then it dropped it. Moments later it was all over and the birds had dispersed.

We walked a short distance further to an outcrop of rocks, around which were many steppe plants, the commonest of which was perennial knawel. The rocks had more *Dianthis nardiformis* and the very local bellflower *Campanula romanica*, in places coming into flower, though it was too windy for good photos.

Back in Tulcea, Colin popped into town for a vodka and lemonade and told us later of the communication challenges overcome. After another excellent meal, we were joined by Eugen Petrescu, who is an Ibis guide and was the first Danube Delta officer for the Romanian Ornithological Society (SOR), then funded by the RSPB. He showed us many pictures of the annual summer camp organised by Falco Cherrug, his junior SOR group, a huge enterprise with many scores of young people and adults involved and a host of activities – many not natural history – to keep those involved occupied and enthused. Eugen stressed how grateful he was for Honeyguide support, every year since 1999, a 16 year period, and I was able to present him with this year's cheque for 820 euros.

Friday 13 June – Dobrogea, Babadag and the Black Sea

We pulled up in a layby in the large, deciduous Babadag forest, and walked a short distance along then across the road to a track leading through the woodland. Mihai had already explained about the various ecotones within the forest, and the tree species in this area. You could see how silver lime *Tilia tomentosa* turns the pale underside of its leaves to the sun reflect the heat; we saw the narrower leaves of eastern hornbeam, compared with the UK species; and opened the strange fruit of bladdernut. Alert ears were needed here, as well as eyes. A red-breasted flycatcher was singing, and there it was on a branch, looking remarkably robin-like in the shady forest. Oddly, a robin sang, too, and we also heard the accelerating trill of wood warblers. A puddle on the forest track attracted a nuthatch and two spotted flycatchers. Sunny parts of the track had butterflies, notably large tortoiseshells, and as we returned to the road there was a map butterfly on a patch of flowering ground elder, the butterfly in its second generation appearance that is so very different from those first to emerge each year.

We moved to a more open, sub-Mediterranean part of Babadag forest. The flowers again had a mix of the familiar – such as pyramidal orchid and yellow woundwort – and unusual species from recognisable groups, including *Globularia punctata*, the tansy *Tanacetum corymbosum* and a mauve milkvetch *Astragalus onobrychis*. Florin picked up a male specimen of Europe's largest cricket, *Bradyporus dasyptus*; a female, with ovipositor, scrambled through some grass. Around a corner was a red helleborine, but then some orchids to knock the rest into a cocked hat: the local lizard orchid species, *Himatoglossum jankae*¹. There were several waist- or chest-high flowers, in a mix of sun and shade, and all at their spanking best. As we walked back, George picked up a tiny spur-thighed tortoise and took it away from the road.



Himatoglossum jankae.

We drove on to coastal Histria for lunch, with the bus parked to give us and the picnic shelter from the growing wind. At our feet was the pink *Dianthus capitus* and over us flew Dalmatian pelican, spotted redshanks and a pratincole. Two marsh harriers seemed to be a pair and so it proved – we were lucky enough to witness a food pass from male to female. A shower of rain came, luckily, just as the clearing up was finishing. The drive south towards the Black Sea coast at Vadu included pauses to see Montagu's harrier and calandra lark. One historical snippet from Mihai that stands out was that some grassy tumuli that you probably wouldn't even notice were necropolises from Roman times.

Dominating the scene at Vadu on the Black Sea was a plant built in the time of Ceausescu to extract minerals from the dunes. It wasn't actioned and damage was averted. We walked along an embankment where painted ladies and silver-Y moths were feeding in droves on cotton thistles. To our left was a salt pan, on which there were Kentish plovers and the star bird here, collared pratincoles. To our right was a lagoon with a large island on which there was a large and noisy common tern colony and dozens of little gulls, one of which had the full black hood of a breeding adult bird. Later a curlew sandpiper appeared among the little gulls. Florin and I separately dropped to the water's edge to photograph a damselfly, which turned out to be dark spreadwing *Lestes macrostigma*. We heard a bittern, there was time for a paddle in the sea for some and to note a flypast of Mediterranean gulls for a lucky few or a little tern for others.

There was a brief pause to try to see paddyfield warbler, which worked for those who quickly located the right bit of reed. It was close enough to see the pale eye-stripe that extends from the beak to well beyond the eye. By then it was 5:30 and time to leave the sunshine behind for the long drive back to Tulcea.



"Zank heaven for little gulls" – look carefully and you can also see common terns, black-headed gulls and a curlew sandpiper.

¹ "*Himantoglossum jankae* (Orchidaceae: Orchideae), a new name for a long-misnamed lizard orchid" is a paper in *Phytotaxa* 73: 8–12 (2012) that re-names this species. It is known as *Himantoglossum caprinum* in Delforge (2006) and elsewhere, a name retained for the lizard orchids in Crimea, now regarded as different species. *Himantoglossum jankae* is found in south-east Europe, from Slovakia to north-west Turkey.

Our final evening meal was followed by a folkloric show, as our hosts call it, namely two local musicians. The toothless guy was a virtuoso on the piano accordion. The other man, in the home-embroidered jacket, had a succession (five, I think) of home-made wind instruments of which the bamboo panpipes made the most attractive sound. A penny whistle was made from reed with an aluminium and reed mouthpiece, Florin explained, and our artist's final instrument was a small set of bagpipes made from walnut and pigskin with a decorated cover made by his wife. Love it or hate it, you had to admire their skill, finishing with a remarkable version of the Blue Danube and a song where the panpipes included a cuckoo's call.

Saturday 14 June – Cheile Dobrogea gorge, and return to Bucharest

Breakfast was at the later time of 8 o'clock, allowing time to pack or look for the local black redstart. Florin was awaiting the next group so we were instead joined by Raluca, though with chatty driver George with us again, she had little to do. We left at 9:15 and it was just over two hours heading southwest before we arrived at Cheile Dobrogea gorge, the journey a little delayed to wait for the picnic table we'd left without and



Pied wheatear approaching its nest in a rock cleft at Cheile Dobrogea gorge.

a navigation glitch as we neared the gorge. It's an attractive, though not particularly dramatic limestone gorge and we had a good hour to potter and lunch. A tricky bird of prey appeared soon after we arrived, the puzzle solved when it banked and revealed the typical upper-wing pattern of a booted eagle – a dark phase bird. There was more *Campanula romanica* to be found if you looked in the right places on the rocks, ortolan buntings sang, Colin found a red-backed shrike on a nest deep in a thorn bush, and northern wheatears. But the star birds were certainly pied wheatears, here at the extreme west of their range. There were several pairs in the gorge – certainly three pairs, probably more – and they were easy to see, on small rocks on the open roadside, bushes and the low gorge cliffs. But it got better as Marion noticed birds going into a rock cleft and from a modest distance there were brilliant views.

The minibus screen showed it was 37°C as we departed, and we soon joined the main east-west highway. There was a stop for ice cream and loos and we saw combine harvesters at work in the arable expanses as we headed for Bucharest. We arrived at the airport at 5 pm, exactly as planned. The return flight was delayed by an hour, so there was a little too much time to have our Ibis picnic and overpriced airport drinks, and to wonder why there was no black tea for sale. We were first on board with our reserved/extra legroom seats, and were safely flown back to Luton.

Holiday highlights

In traditional Honeyguide style, we swapped our best bits on the final evening, and here they are:-

- Sue B** Practincoles, brilliant view of a little bittern. Plus a thank you for those who brought and shared telescopes.
- Colin** Golden orioles with a Levant sparrowhawk; white-tailed eagle tussle with the long-legged buzzard.
- Malcolm** Eagle and buzzard drama; little owls, Kentish plover with chicks.
- Marion** Being on the boat and the ever-unfolding spectacle. The harrier food pass.
- Diana** Two kingfishers in front of the boat; cardinal and Queen-of-Spain fritillaries; Florin holding the boat's canopy in the rain.
- David** The delta itself; so many new birds; dwarf pink *Dianthus nardiformis*.
- Kate** Looking down on rollers, five cuckoos in a 'cuckophany'; golden jackal.
- John D** Whiskered tern colony; Enisala, a romantic spot.
- George** Range of habitats, butterflies and other wildlife.
- Margaret** Quantity of wildlife and size of the Delta, so much to see; looking down on rollers; the raptor fight.
- John L** Curlew sandpiper; whiskered terns.
- Susie** Stories, so many from Florin and Mihai; the story to cap them all of the eagle, the buzzard and the souslik.
- Chris** The time in the whiskered tern colony; small red-eyed damselflies in great masses; golden jackal.
- Florin** The eagle and the buzzard; the Danube helleborine *Epipactis danubialis*.

WILDLIFE LISTS

Key to locations:
Do – Dobrogea DD – Danube Delta J – Journeys

MAMMALS

Musk rat DD European souslik Do Eastern hedgehog Do (dead) Golden jackal DD Otter DD

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Balkan wall lizard	Do	Grass snake	DD
European pond terrapin	DD	Spur-thighed tortoise	Do
Marsh frog	Do DD	Great crested newt	DD

BUTTERFLIES

Essex skipper	Do	Cardinal	DD Do
Large skipper	Do	Queen-of-Spain fritillary	Do
Swallowtail	DD Do	Niobe fritillary	Do
Large white	DD Do	Marbled white	Do
Small white	Do	Eastern rock grayling	Do
Clouded yellow sp.	DD Do	Great banded grayling	Do
Wood white	Do	Meadow brown	Do
Freyer's purple admiral	DD	Speckled wood	Do
Large tortoiseshell	Do	Sloe hairstreak	Do
Comma	Do	Short-tailed blue	DD
Map	Do	Holly blue	Do
Painted lady	DD Do	Green-underside blue	Do
Red admiral	Do	Idas blue (probably)	Do
Peacock	Do	Brown argus	Do

Notes

- (1) Clouded yellows: Florin cautioned that there are several species in this area and that we needed to catch or get good photos of them to confirm the ID. What we saw were consistent with clouded yellow and pale clouded yellow elsewhere, but here we couldn't rule out, for example, Danube clouded yellow.
- (2) Eastern rock grayling cannot reliably be separated from rock grayling and woodland grayling in the field, but on distribution it would have been this species at Enisala.
- (3) The list includes additional IDs from photographs.



Clockwise from top left: map, cardinal, great banded grayling, Queen of Spain fritillary.

MOTHS

Hummingbird hawk-moth Do Silver Y Do Nine-spotted (syntomid) moth *Syntomis phegea* DD



Nine-spotted (syntomid) moth *Syntomis phegea*.



Dark spreadwing *Lestes macrostigma*.

ODONATA

English names in brackets are the main names used in Dijkstra & Lewington's *Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Britain and Europe*.

Banded agrion (Banded demoiselle)	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>	DD
Dark spreadwing	<i>Lestes macrostigma</i>	Do
Blue-tailed damselfly (Common bluetail)	<i>Ischnura elegans</i> .	DD
Common blue damselfly (Common bluet)	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i> .	J
Variable damselfly (Variable bluet)	<i>Coenagrion pulchellum</i>	DD
Small red-eyed damselfly (Small redeye)	<i>Erythromma viridulum</i>	DD
Norfolk hawkler (Green-eyed hawkler)	<i>Aeshna isosceles</i>	DD
Emperor (Blue emperor)	<i>Anax imperator</i>	Do DD
Lesser emperor	<i>Anax parthenope</i>	Do DD
Black-tailed skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	DD Do
White-tailed skimmer	<i>Orthetrum albistylum</i>	DD
Scarlet darter (Broad scarlet)	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>	DD
Black Pennant	<i>Selysiothemis nigra</i>	DD

OTHER INSECTS

<i>Bradyporus dasypus</i>	'Darth Vader' cricket	Do
<i>Tettigonia viridissima</i>	great green bush-cricket	Do
<i>Oedipoda germanica</i>	red-underwing grasshopper	Do
<i>Oxythyrea funesta</i>	a speckled flower chafer	Do
<i>Pyrrhocoris apterus</i>	fire bug	Do
<i>Ranatra liearis</i>	water stick-insect	DD
<i>Phyllopertha horticola</i>	garden chafer	DD Do
<i>Cetonia aurata</i>	rose chafer	Do
<i>Trichodes apiarius</i>	bee beetle	Do
<i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i>	7-spot ladybird	Do
<i>Dytiscus</i> sp., prob <i>marinalis</i>	Great diving beetle	DD
<i>Polistes</i> sp	paper wasp	Do
<i>Vespa crabro</i>	hornet	DD
<i>Scolia/Megascolia</i> sp.	large wasp	Do
<i>Xylocopa violacea</i>	carpenter-bee	DD

Bradyporus dasypus

You can see why it's nicknamed the Darth Vader cricket.



PLANTS

These lists are split into sections, so that site by site information is recorded. Plants sometimes appear more than once, but often they are noted where they were best or first seen, to reduce duplication.

Danube Delta plants

This list has the species recorded in our three days in the delta 8-10 June.
It includes the island of Letea and a few from the journey.

ACERACEAE – Maple family

Acer negundo ash-leaved maple

ALISMATACEAE – Water plantain family

Sagittaria sagittifolia arrowhead

APIACEAE – Carrot family

Cicuta virosa cowbane

Conium maculatum hemlock

Eryngium campestre field eryngo

ASCLEPIADACEAE – Milkweed family

Vincetoxicum hirundinaria swallow-wort

ASTERACEAE – Daisy family

Achillea clypeolata a yellow yarrow

Achillea setacea a white yarrow

Carduus nutans musk thistle

Centaurea cyanus cornflower

Centaurea solstitialis yellow star-thistle

Cichorium intybus chicory

Onopordum acanthium cotton thistle

BORAGINACEAE – Borage family

Anchusa azurea large blue alkanet

Echium italicum pale bugloss

Echium vulgare viper's bugloss

Myosotis scorpioides water forget-me-not

Myosotis sylvatica wood forget-me-not

Onosma arenaria a golden drop

Symphytum officinale comfrey

BUTOMACEAE – Flowering rush family

Butomis umbellatus flowering rush

CAMPANULACEAE – Bellflower family

Campanula sibirica

CANNABACEAE – Hemp family

Cannabis sativa hemp

CAPRIFOLIACEAE – Honeysuckle family

Sambucus ebulus dwarf elder

CARYOPHYLLACEAE – Pink family

Dianthus bessarabicus

Silene conica sand catchfly

CISTACEAE – Rockrose family

Helianthemum nummularium common rock-rose

CONVOLVULACEAE – Bindweed family

Calystegia sepium hedge bindweed

Convolvulus arvensis field bindweed

CRASSULACEAE – Stonecrop family

Sedum acre biting stonecrop

ELEAGNACEAE – Oleaster family

Eleagnus angustifolia oleaster

EUPHORBIACEAE – Spurge family

Euphorbia nicaeensis ssp. *stepposa*

Euphorbia palustris marsh spurge

Euphorbia seguieriana

FABACEAE – Pea family

Amorpha fruticosa false indigo

Astragalus glycyphyllos wild liquorice

Coronilla varia crown vetch

Melilotus officinalis ribbed melilot

Onobrychis gracilis

Robinia pseudacacia false acacia

Vicia cracca tufted vetch

FAGACEAE – Beech family

Quercus pedunculiflora

GERANIACEAE – Geranium family

Erodium cicutarium

Geranium pusillum

HYDROCHARITACEAE – Frogbit family

Hydrocharis morsus-ranae

Trapa natans

Stratiotes aloides

HYPERICACEAE – St. John's-wort family

Hypericum perforatum

IRIDACEAE – Iris family

Iris pseudochoiris

LAMIACEAE – Mint family

Mentha aquatica

Salvia nemorosa ssp. *tesquicola*

Stachys palustris

Stachys recta

Teucrium chamaedrys

LILIACEAE – Lily family

Allium rotundum

LINACEAE – Flax family

Linum austriacum

MALVACEAE – Mallow family

Malva pusilla

Malva sylvestris

MENYANTHACEAE – Bogbean family

Nymphoides peltata

MORACEAE – Mulberry family

Morus nigra

NYMPHAEACEAE – Water-lily family

Nuphar lutea

Nymphaea alba

white water-lily

OLEACEAE – Olive family

*Fraxinus pallisae*DD

ORCHIDACEAE – Orchid family

Epipactis danubialis

Limodorum abortivum

PAPAVERACEAE – Poppy family

Papaver rhoeus

PLANTAGINACEAE – Plantain family

Plantago lanceolata

Melica ciliata

Phragmites australis

POLYGONACEAE – Dock family

Polygonum amphibium

Rumex hydrolapathum

RANUNCULACEAE – Buttercup family

Consolida orientalis

Consolida regalis

Thalictrum flavum

ROSACEAE – Rose family

*Potentilla taurica*DD

Rubus saxatilis

SALICACEAE – Willow family

Populus alba

Salix alba

Salix fragilis

SCROPHULARIACEAE – Figwort family

Digitalis lanata

Linaria genistifolia

common storksbill

small-flowered cranesbill

frogbit

water chestnut

water soldier

perforate St. John's-wort

yellow flag

water mint

wild sage

marsh woundwort

yellow woundwort

wall germander

round-headed leek

small mallow

common mallow

fringed water-lily

Black mulberry

yellow water-lily

Danube helleborine

violet bird's-nest orchid

common poppy

ribwort plantain

hairy melick

common reed

amphibious bistort

great water dock

eastern larkspur

forking larkspur

common meadow-rue

stone bramble

white poplar

white willow

crack willow

SIMAROUBACEAE – Quassia family*Ailanthus altissima* tree-of-heaven**SOLANACEAE – Potato family***Solanum dulcamara* bittersweet**TAMARICACEAE – Tamarisk family***Tamarix ramosissima***TYPHACEAE – Bulrush family***Typha angustifolia* lesser reedmace**VITACEAE – Grape family***Vitis sylvestris* grape vine**ASPLENIACEAE – Ferns***Thelypteris palustris* marsh fern**11 June – Bestepe***Orlaya grandiflora**Xeranthemum annuum* an everlasting*Prunus mahaleb* St Lucie's cherry*Sedum acre* biting stonecrop*Potentilla argentea* hoary cinquefoil*Potentilla bornmuelleri* hoary cinquefoil*Convolvulus cantabricus* pink bindweed*Teucrium polium**Linaria genistifolia***Enisala***Phragmites australis* ssp. *humilis* a brackish water form of common reed*Sedum hillebrandtii* a stonecrop*Minuartia nardiformis**Dianthus nardiformis**Asperula tenella**Tanacetum millefolium**Euphorbia myrsinites**Melica ciliate**Potentilla taurica**Morus alba* White mulberry

The following two days have the lists prepared site-by-site by botanical leader Mihai Petrescu. I have added English names where they exist, or an approximation for the type of flower, plus some additional species, though they aren't complete lists.

12 June – Parches – the dehesa style wood pasture.*Quercus pubescens* downy oak*Quercus pedunculiflora**Quercus virgiliana**Tilia tomentosa* silver lime*Pyrus pyraeaster* wild pear*Thymus pannonicus* Hungarian thyme*Marrubium vulgare* white horehound*Potentilla argentea* hoary cinquefoil*Fillago arvensis* common cudweed*Lathyrus tuberosa* tuberous pea*Carthamus lanatus* saffron thistle*Eryngium campestre* field eryngo*Verbascum chaixii* a mullein*Berteroa incana* hoary alison*Loranthus europaeus* mistletoe, deciduous*Trifolium campestre* hop trefoil*Trifolium arvense* hare's-foot clover*Artemisia absinthium* wormwood*Onopordum tauricum* a cotton thistle, but not cottony*Achillea setacea* a white yarrow*Erodium cicutarium* common storksbill*Chrysopogon gryllus* a grass*Stipa capillata* a feather grass*Teucrium chamaedris* wall germander*Carduus thoermeri* a musk thistle

Măcin Mountains National Park

<i>Echium italicum</i>	pale bugloss
<i>Achillea coarctata</i>	a yellow yarrow
<i>Achillea leptophylla</i>	a yellow yarrow
<i>Aegylops cylindrica</i>	jointed goatgrass
<i>Campanula rapuncululus</i>	rampion bellflower
<i>Campanula romanica</i>	an endemic bellflower
<i>Alyssum saxatile</i>	golden alyssum
<i>Bifora radicans</i>	an umbellifer
<i>Teucrium polium</i>	felty germander
<i>Marrubium peregrinum</i>	a hoary white horehound
<i>Verbascum densiflorum</i>	a mullein
<i>Verbascum banaticum</i>	a mullein
<i>Scleranthus annuus</i>	annual knawel
<i>Scleranthus perennis</i>	perennial knawel
<i>Digitalis lanata</i>	a foxglove
<i>Allium rotundifolium</i>	round-headed leek
<i>Moehringia grisebachii</i>	a sandwort
<i>Dianthus nardiformis</i>	dwarf pink
<i>Festuca callieri</i>	a feather grass
<i>Eleagnus angustifolia</i>	oleaster
<i>Alyssum murale</i>	'wall' alison

13 June – Babadag Forest

<i>Salvia verticillata</i>	whorled clary
<i>Altea canabina</i>	palm-leaf marshmallow or hemp-leaved hollyhock
<i>Elmus montana</i> (= <i>E. glabra</i>)	wych elm
<i>Tilia tomentosa</i>	silver lime
<i>Acer campestre</i>	field maple
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	herb bennett
<i>Nectardscordum siculum</i> ssp <i>bulgaricum</i>	
<i>Sambucus ebulus</i>	dwarf elder or danewort
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	elder
<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>	ground elder
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	herb Robert
<i>Beta trigyna</i>	a beet
<i>Saxia verticillata</i>	a lichen
<i>Smyrniium perfoliatum</i>	perfoliate alexanders
<i>Himantoglossum jankae</i>	an eastern lizard orchid
<i>Cephalanthera rubra</i>	red helleborine
<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>	pyramidal orchid
<i>Astragalus onobrychis</i>	a milkvetch
<i>Anthemis tinctoria</i>	yellow chamomile
<i>Stipa pulcherrima</i>	a feather grass
<i>Polygala major</i>	a milkwort
<i>Quercus pubescens</i>	downy oak
<i>Cotinus coggygria</i>	wig or smoke bush
<i>Linum austriaca</i>	a perennial flax
<i>Linum tenuifolium</i>	a flax
<i>Linum hirsutum</i>	a flax
<i>Chrysopogon gryllus</i>	a grass
<i>Inula ensifolia</i>	a fleabane
<i>Clematis vitalba</i>	old man's beard/traveller's joy
<i>Clematis integrifolia</i>	a non-climbing clematis, seedhead
<i>Globularia punctata</i>	a globularia (globe-daisy)
<i>Tanacetum corymbosum</i>	a tansy
<i>Galium glaucum</i>	a bedstraw or woodruff
<i>Euphorbia nicaeensis</i> subsp <i>dobrogeensis</i>	a spurge
<i>Sorbus torminalis</i>	wild service tree
<i>Staphylea pinnata</i>	bladdernut

Histria

<i>Agropyron elongatum</i>	a coastal grass
<i>Agropyron pectiniformae</i>	a crested-wheat grass
<i>Medicago minima</i>	bur medick
<i>Artemisia santonica</i>	a wormwood or wormseed
<i>Dianthus capitatus</i>	a pink, with a cluster of flowers

Vadu

<i>Carpinus orientalis</i>	eastern hornbeam
<i>Anthemis austriaca</i>	a mayweed (<i>austriaca</i> means southern, but its distribution is SE Europe/Asia Minor)
<i>Frankenia hirsuta</i>	sea heath
<i>Salicornia europaea</i>	glasswort
<i>Suaeda maritima</i>	annual seablite
<i>Halocnemum strobilaceum</i>	a shrubby glasswort type
<i>Crambe maritima</i>	sea kale
<i>Leymus racemosus</i> ssp <i>sabulosus</i>	
<i>Astrodaucus littoralis</i>	an umbellifer of the Black Sea coast
<i>Tragopogon dubium</i>	a goatsbeard
<i>Gypsophila scorzonerifolia</i>	a baby's breath
<i>Medicago falcata</i>	sickle medick
<i>Artemisia tcherniviana</i>	a wormwood

BIRDS

DD = Danube Delta Do = Dobrogea

Mute swan	Seen in many places in DD and Do
Greylag goose	Seen on one day DD (plus domestic geese).
Shelduck	Two days in Do.
Mallard	Common in DD and Do.
Gadwall	Numerous in DD and on the final day in Do.
Shoveler	Only seen on the final day in Do.
Teal	Once only in Do, near the pratincoles at Vadu.
Garganey	Seen on all three days in DD and once in Do.
Pochard	Daily in DD, also on the way there and one day in Do.
Red-crested pochard	Just one in DD.
Ferruginous duck	Numerous in many places in DD, and on two days in DO when on the edge of the delta.
Pheasant	Heard or seen on seven days.
Black-necked grebe	Many pairs were nesting alongside whiskered terns in DD. One day in Do.
Little grebe	One day in DD, including one occasion when it was one of four grebe species on one lake. One day in Do.
Great crested grebe	In DD every day, quite common on the open lakes of the delta. One on route to Tulcea and one day in Do.
Red-necked grebe	All three days in DD. Several pairs and individuals were seen in small lakes with surface vegetation such as white water-lilies.
White pelican	Very frequent in DD and daily in Do.
Dalmatian pelican	All three days in DD but usually singles or twos. Two days in Do.
Cormorant	Seen daily in DD and one day in Do. Less frequent than pygmy cormorant.
Pygmy cormorant	Common in DD, where colonies were seen in thickets of willow. Also on route to Tulcea and the first day in Do.
Bittern	Heard well on all three days – and overnight – in DD, and once in Do, despite being towards the end of the 'booming' period.
Little bittern	Seen infrequently though daily in DD, but eight excellent sightings in the short lakeside stop on the journey to Tulcea.
Night heron	Seen frequently on all three days in DD. Seemed to be with squaccos, pygmy cormorants and grey herons at nesting colonies. One day in Do.
Squacco heron	Very frequent in the DD, often seen hunting in shallow water at the sides of channels.
Little egret	Fairly common in DD and Do but fewer than squacco heron.
Great white egret	Seen daily in DD and Do.
Grey heron	Seen daily in DD and two days in Do.
Purple heron	Seen daily in DD and Do.

White stork	Scattered groups on route for DD. Many were seen in fields in Do, and several nests with young were seen in DD and Do. Spanish, tree and house sparrows seen within storks' nests.
Black stork	Singles flew on two days in Do.
Glossy ibis	One of the more frequent wetland species in DD, seen daily, and on two days in Do and on the way there.
Spoonbill	Seen on two days in both DD and Do, a mix of adults and immatures.
White-tailed eagle	On a distant nest and other occasions in DD and twice in DO, including a memorable tussle with a long-legged buzzard.
Osprey	One in flight seen from the bus on the return journey in Do.
Booted eagle	A light-phase bird at Enisala and a dark-phase bird in Cheile Dobrogea gorge.
Marsh harrier	Seen daily, usually as singles, over reeds in DD and a mix of habitats in Do.
Montagu's harrier	A female over crops in the final day in Do.
Long-legged buzzard	Singles in several places on all three days in Do.
Common buzzard	Seen in Do, some of which had plumage consistent with the steppe sub-species <i>vulpinus</i> .
Honey buzzard	Singles on two days in both DD and Do.
Levant sparrowhawk	At the lakeside stop on the outward journey, on the return journey and two days in Do.
Kestrel	Generally singles, seen daily throughout DD and Do.
Red-footed falcon	A few birds around a rookery in DD and in double figures (tricky to count) at a rookery in DD. Singles elsewhere – seen on five days.
Hobby	In DD and Do daily but not frequent.
Moorhen	In DD and Do but not numerous.
Coot	Fairly common on the lakes and channels of DD and also in wet areas of Do.
Avocet	Not seen in DD but on two days in lagoons in Do.
Black-winged stilt	On three days, once in DD twice in Do.
Stone-curlew	Two in steppe habitat near Murighiol village in Do.
Collared pratincole	Fairly numerous near a coastal lagoon by the coast of Do, and a flyover bird at Histria on the way there.
Kentish plover	Two with chicks on the lagoon near the Black Sea coast in Do.
Lapwing	Seen In DD and Do. Fairly common.
Curlew sandpiper	Seen among the little gulls near the Black Sea coast in Do.
Green sandpiper	Daily in DD, usually singles, one day in Do.
Common sandpiper	One on the Black Sea shore in Do.
Redshank	At the lagoon at Vadu in Do only.
Spotted redshank	Several flying around at Histria in Do.
Black-tailed godwit	First sighting was 4 at Letea in DD, sightings on one additional day in both DD and Do.
Curlew	Only seen the Murighiol lagoon in Do.
Black-headed gull	In DD daily and two days in Do.
Mediterranean gull	None in DD. At Murighiol lagoon and the Black Sea in Do.
Caspian gull	Seen commonly in DD and Do.
Pallas's (=great black-headed) gull	One flying along the main river as we rejoined the floating hotel in DD on 9 th June.
Little gull	A single immature At Murighiol lagoon and dozens at the lagoon at Vadu, including one in full breeding plumage.
Little tern	One at sea on the Black Sea coast of Do.
Common tern	Very frequent in DD and two colonies in Do at Murighiol lagoon and Vadu.
Black tern	In DD only on two days, about 10 or so with whiskered terns over lakes.
White-winged black tern	Two as we approached Letea on 9 th June.
Whiskered tern	The commonest tern in DD, even seen over the floating hotel in Tulcea. Several nesting colonies. Also seen in Do.

Feral pigeon	Daily – and no rock doves.
Woodpigeon	Noted on five days in DD and Do.
Stock dove	Noted in DD only.
Collared dove	Common in villages DD and Do.
Turtle dove	Seen at Letea in DD and seen or heard all three days in Do.
Cuckoo	Seen and heard commonly in DD, and seen or heard daily in Do.
Long-eared owl	A calling juvenile during our first day on DD.
Little owl	One was seen from the floating hotel in DD. Four juveniles together, in two groups of two, occupying the entrances to bee-eater burrows in Do.
Swift	Regularly over Tulcea and in DD and Do elsewhere in small numbers.
Hoopoe	Fairly frequent and daily in DD and Do. Usually singles, some carrying food, but four in a group from the floating hotel.
Kingfisher	Quite frequent along the channels in DD; only recorded one day in Do.
Bee-eater	Seen daily. Numerous at several colonies in Do.
Roller	Very frequently seen throughout DD and along the roadsides in Do. Several on the roadside from airport to DD.
Black woodpecker	One immature seen well in a wooded channel in DD.
Grey-headed woodpecker	Seen in DD, a single near mature willows.
Great spotted woodpecker	In DD only, fairly frequent.
Syrian woodpecker	Elusive: heard once by Florin in Do.
Middle spotted woodpecker	Recorded on two days in Do.
Lesser spotted woodpecker	Heard during our first day in DD.
Wryneck	Heard at the wood pasture area in Do.
Skylark	Seen in Do on the final full day.
Crested lark	A few seen in Do, often flying from roadsides.
Woodlark	Seen at two sites in Do.
Calandra lark	In Do, where the bus stopped so one in the road could be seen.
Sand martin	Only recorded on three days, two of which were the travel days, the other in Do. Not seen in DD.
Swallow	Common, seen daily.
Red-rumped swallow	Two days in Do, especially as we rejoined the bus at Parches.
House martin	Seen on all but one day.
Tawny pipit	On two days in steppe and open ground in Do.
White wagtail	Fairly common in DD and Do, including one bird that seemed to accompany the floating hotel.
Yellow wagtail	Seen on one day only in both DD and Do, with a high proportion of black-headed wagtail <i>M.f. feldegg</i> .
Robin	In Babadag forest in Do only.
Thrush nightingale	Heard in DD only and no nightingales heard for certain.
Redstart	Heard and seen in mature willows in DD.
Black redstart	Seen daily around the hotel in Tulcea.
Northern wheatear	Seen one day in DD and two in Do, and on the return journey in Cheile Dobrogea gorge.
Isabelline wheatear	Around souslik burrows in Măcin Mountains NP in Do.
Pied wheatear	Distant views in rocky limestone hills of Măcin Mountains NP plus a male showing mixed characteristics of pied and black-eared wheatears. At least 3 pairs in Cheile Dobrogea gorge, including a pair taking food to a nest in a rock-cleft.
Song thrush	One reported on the final day in Do.
Blackbird	Recorded on three days, scarce.
Rock thrush	Good if distant views in Măcin Mountains NP in Do.
Garden warbler	Heard on occasions in DD, in mature scrub. Not heard in Do.
Blackcap	Heard on all three days in DD; also heard in Babadag forest in Do.

Whitethroat	Heard during our first day in Do.
Lesser whitethroat	A few were heard in DD.
Sedge warbler	Heard one the third day in DD; presumably the song period had ended.
Savi's warbler	Heard well in DD on all three days, but no good views.
Reed warbler	Heard and seen once in DD but less frequently than great reed warbler, probably as the song period was nearer its end.
Great reed warbler	Frequently heard, and sometimes seen, in DD and reedbeds in Do.
Icterine warbler	Birds were singing well at one or two places in DD and Do.
Eastern olivaceous warbler	Was heard well at seen poorly in DD.
Chiffchaff	Fairly frequently singing in DD, also in Babadag forest.
Wood warbler	One was still singing well in Babadag forest in Do on 13 th June.
Spotted flycatcher	In Babadag forest on 13 th June in Do.
flycatcher sp.	An unidentified female <i>Ficedula</i> flycatcher in Babadag forest on 13 th June. (Pied, collared and semi-collared are all possible here.)
Red-breasted flycatcher	Singing and seen well in Babadag forest in Do on 13 th June in Do.
Great tit	Daily, fairly frequent in DD, one day in Do.
Blue tit	Noted in DD but one day in Do.
Sombre tit	One was seen well at Parches in Do.
Long-tailed tit	Seen on one day and heard on another in DD.
Bearded reedling	Surprisingly, only once heard in DD.
Penduline tit	Often heard and several fleeting glimpses in DD.
Nuthatch	Heard in Babadag forest, Do.
Short-toed treecreeper	A treecreeper, presumed short-toed, seen in Măcin Mountains NP.
Lesser grey shrike	Several in Do, with excellent views near Enisala castle. Not in DD.
Red-backed shrike	Seen on six days, mostly in Do, also nesting in Cheile Dobrogea gorge.
Woodchat shrike	Good views in Măcin Mountains NP in Do.
Magpie	Common, seen daily.
Jay	Twice seen in Do.
Jackdaw	Very common in DD and Do. A bird at Tulcea had a pale collar, a feature of eastern birds.
Rook	Some were still around the colonies in DD and Do.
Hooded crow	In DD and Do and quite common in both.
Starling	Common in DD and Do.
Golden oriole	Seen or heard all six days in DD and Do. Views were infrequent but for one group member included two chasing a Levant sparrowhawk.
House sparrow	Common and lived alongside Spanish sparrows in storks' nests.
Spanish sparrow	Seen at several places in Do; always near storks' nests.
Tree sparrow	Seen daily in DD, but not in Do.
Chaffinch	Heard daily in DD especially from channel-side willows. Also seen/heard in Do.
Goldfinch	Seen one day in DD and three days in Do, but uncommon.
Greenfinch	Very few and only on two days in Do.
Reed bunting	Heard and seen on two days in DD, but much less often than you might expect. Perhaps as the season was an early one they'd largely stopped singing.
Ortolan bunting	Heard in several places on two days in Do. Excellent views at Enisala. Also singing in Cheile Dobrogea gorge.
Corn bunting	None in DD but daily in Do.

TOTAL = 152