

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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white pelican by Mika Selin www.birdnet.fi

Bulgaria recce
8 – 15 September 2008

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“Will I meet Dimitar Berbatov?” asks 8-year old Alex Durdin when he hears I’m off to Bulgaria. I explain that after his transfer from Spurs I’m more likely to see him in Manchester. Actually his picture was everywhere, promoting MasterCard, and he popped on in a Unicef advertisement on local TV too. But I digress. This is an account, warts and all, of my recce trip to Bulgaria to help plan for next September’s Honeyguide holiday. If you’d like to know more, feel free to phone on 01603 300552.

Chris Durdin, October 2008

Pictures:

Nutcracker, red squirrel and wallcreeper by Assen Ignatov – all taken during the recce.

Front page picture of white pelican by Mika Selin from Finland. To see more of Mika’s pictures, visit www.birdnet.fi

Other pictures by Chris Durdin

Monday 8 September – Sofia to Yagodina

Up at 4 am for the 06.35 flight. I think I’m an experienced traveller, but I’m still shocked by how packed Gatwick’s South Terminal is at this unearthly hour. A smooth easyJet flight, arriving 20 minutes early in Sofia. Set off with Assen, my guide from Neophron, in his car. First stop is to buy some currency, Leva: he tells me euros aren’t as widely accepted as my guide book suggests, and Bulgaria may be adopting the euro in 2010 but not sooner.

It’s my first time in Sofia, so he kindly takes me on a quick tour of the city centre. There are many fine municipal, religious and academic buildings, but the overall impression is of a less than glamorous city centre dominated by the motor car, save for the odd tram and trolleybus. Away from the centre there are many concrete blocks dating from the communist era, but also shiny new buildings and a plethora of cranes from a post-communist building boom.

Saint Sophia or Sofia means wisdom, as does Athena, and here she is holding a little owl Athene noctua. So neighbouring Bulgaria and Greece have capital cities – Sofia and Athens – with names on the same theme of wisdom.



We head east on the motorway, and soon eat up the miles through the dry September countryside. It’s hot: I should have travelled in shorts. Stop for some lunch at an OMV motorway service station. There are some red-rumped swallows buzzing around; quite pale, perhaps juveniles. Had an excellent *shopska* salad: like a Greek salad only with grated cows’ cheese rather than feta and minus olives. There are two hummingbird hawk-moths inside the service station and some customers blatantly disregarding the no smoking signs on their table. A chance also to buy a map, which is cheap (about £1) and some bottled water.

Next turn right towards Pazardzhik, an interesting-looking small town: Assen points out a restaurant that sometimes makes a good lunch stop, he says. Beyond here the soil is fertile and vegetables are both growing everywhere and on sale at roadside stalls. We're heading south, getting higher as we move towards the Rhodope Mountains and in the general direction of Greece. Two signs take us off the most direct route, so progress south via Batak – infamous for a massacre of Bulgarians by Ottoman troops in 1876 at the beginning of the April Uprising – is steady rather than fast. Horses and carts are increasing in numbers, though there are many more trucks and cars. We stop for a Pepsi at a café overlooking a reservoir where there are several floating houses. Along the next bit I snooze, waking as we enter a good-looking gorge, then it's not far to the village of Yagodina, named after the Bulgarian for strawberry. We arrive at 6.30 pm, about four hours after leaving our lunch stop, so a long haul. The Sofia tour was probably a diversion too far.

The Hotel Yagodina has an attractive setting at the edge of the village. Immediately there is bird life: black redstarts singing, white wagtails, a spotted flycatcher and chiffchaffs in the birches from the room's veranda. I wander through the village: it's full of life, with people picking beans, chopping wood, moving vehicles, carrying hay and small boys looking at trading cards and shooting round on bikes. Back near the hotel three cows have gone walkabout and there's a tree sparrow.

Excellent supper with bean soup (with predictable after-effects) followed by chicken and vegetable *sach* – a stir-fry served on a hotplate.

Hotel Yagodina notes

Rooms have attractive and new pine furniture. Bed comfortable and very firm; pillow too fat – found slimmer pillow in cupboard with spare blankets.

Rooms not done daily – made own bed.

Bathroom: shower excellent, but without curtain, seems to dry off fine. No shaving point. Bar soap, shampoo and towels provided.

Music down the road contributed to keeping me awake: shut window, which helped a lot.

Staff smoking in eating room in the morning; we ate outside. Lady owner assures me this smoking won't be allowed when we have a group there.

Tuesday 9 September – Trigrad gorge

Breakfast outside, where it is cool at 8 am but soon becoming warm when the sun comes over the mountain. The hotel doesn't have black tea so I have a herbal tea instead – very nice. For breakfast today, choose yoghurt with wild strawberries and *mekitsa* – batter fried in oil, a bit like a squashed doughnut – served with jam or white cheese. A raven crows, a chiffchaff in the birches sings and a hummingbird hawk-moth feeds from the petunias in the pots. Shakin' Stevens and Abba on the radio.

Drive through Yagodina gorge to our first stopping point in Trigrad gorge – 40 minutes – just below a road tunnel. Cold in the gorge but getting steadily warmer. This was one of the most reliable spots for wallcreeper in spring & early summer, but not so in September, it seems: no luck during 75 minutes here. But crag martins are still nesting, and it's easy to see the rosettes of *Haberlea rhodopensis* (right, above) on the rock which, like a saxifrage (below) with it, are endemics. Two black woodpeckers fly across the gorge, one settling for several minutes on a black pine.





Drive to a point above Trigrad village to a walk through an attractive mix of pines and deciduous trees and open scrub, with woody species including hop hornbeam, spindle, juniper and Cornelian cherry in fruit. Getting steadily hotter and there are clouded yellows, southern speckled woods and unidentified blues on the wing. Two nutcrackers at first hide in the trees, then one reveals itself enough not just for excellent views but also to see it is eating hazelnuts. It then sits for an age in a fir tree: the first of several nutcrackers we are to see this morning.

The plants, frankly, are tricky: there are some in flower, easy enough to put in a family or genus, but with so many endemics, typically difficult to pin down many to species. *Crocus pulchellus* and fringed gentian (I think, for both) are two nice finds. A stand of yellow (or dried up) mulleins are near smothered in the black-and-red ground bug *Lygaeus saxitalis* (below/right). Easier to identify is a red squirrel, much redder than those I've seen on the continent before, but with a dark tail. We then walk through some conifer forest, over which fly three groups of migrating bee-eaters, but which otherwise offers little new, though does form part of a walk one can do from Trigrad back to lead to Yagodina village, potentially a nice full day walk in May/June.

Lunch in the excellent lamb soup little group of tree usual collection of redstart. The in the cup: looking local labiate



Kaminata (fireplace) café; I have some and Assen a mushroom omelette. There is a sparrows here and what is becoming the chiffchaff, spotted flycatcher and black *mursalski* herbal tea comes with a large herb at herbs later on roadside stalls this was the *Sideritis scardica*.

Assen drops me in stretch, where I coltsfoot and mint and thyme)

entrance to the Devil's Throat cave, which will be a good way to take a short walk off the road in the gorge. Plants here include the umbellifer *Sesili rhodopaeum* and the pale yellow *Scabiosa rhodopensis*.



the gorge to wander down the road for a short admire herb stalls (including St John's-wort, horsetail as well as the more likely marjoram, and I buy some honey. We meet up at the

After failing again with wallcreeper, drive to the Roman bridge that once linked to a road through here. About our fourth dipper of the day shoots under the new road bridge. There's a nice meadow on a slope with lots of squinancywort. Cloud had been gathering after our hot morning, and there is a shower of rain as we drove back to Yagodina.

Supper of tomato and olive salad, trout and chips, and fruit salad.

Wednesday 10 September - to the Eastern Rhodopes

Pancakes for breakfast, one with white cheese and one with wild strawberry jam. Cloud over the village, but lifts as the sun comes up. Thought we would try again for the wallcreeper. Good ways of seeing this bird are to know a nest site, or in winter find a smaller but regular cliff haunt. In September, you need patience or luck. We get the latter: in the lower reaches of the gorge there is a wallcreeper on the road of all places, struggling with a moth. It goes onto a low rock face, giving wonderful views, from where it drops a hummingbird hawk-moth that tumbles to the road. We also try Assen's favourite place in the gorge, but nothing here.



Rest of the day, from about 10.30, is spent travelling to the Eastern Rhodopes. Lunch at a café on the edge of Kardjali. We stop at the information centre for the iron age site of Chromleh as the man outside is a friend of Assen's. Wonderful close views of Little Tiger Blue on heliotrope (*below*).

Our destination is the vulture centre of the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds. It's actually run by Neophron, which in effect is BSPB's commercial arm running two centres (here and at Poda on the Black Sea) and holidays. We stop by the cliffs beforehand, with good views of both Egyptian and griffon vultures. Marin Kurtev, the centre manager, arrives after us: he's been fixing the trailer used for moving carcasses put out at the feeding stations. They get about 7,000 visitors a year, including many school groups. The feeding has helped boost the griffon vulture population to 43 nests this year, and a second offshoot colony is now established. By contrast, Egyptian vultures are declining, for reasons unknown. It's quite an international gathering. There are two Finnish bird photographers – Mika Selin who take the picture on the front page is one. A party from the Dutch NGO Ark is there to show its project re-establishing sustainable grazing using a scarce local breed of Eastern Rhodopian cow to its funders from the Dutch postcode lottery.



The centre's rooms are comfortable enough but there are just three, plus some apartments in the village, ruling out this area for the Honeyguide itinerary. It's very distant anyway – the best part of a day to drive here, and the same onto the Black Sea coast tomorrow.

Thursday 11 September – travel to Black Sea coast

Dawn, and the photographers are already in a photographic hide overlooking the vulture feeding station. Back at the vulture centre, there is no-one there to do breakfast: Assen makes a call, the staff appear and we're eating eggy bread before too long – with white cheese and, curiously, chocolate spread.

Most of the day is spent driving. Coffee stop in Topolovgrad. A couple of attempts to see imperial eagle, which I manage to miss. Good views of two lesser spotted eagles, two long-legged buzzards and a Levant sparrowhawk. It is a very hot day. A stop at a lake edge and there are three curlew sandpipers, little gull and pygmy cormorants, but it's not a place you could take a group.

Arrive at Poda wetland centre (see www.bspb-poda.de/sites/english/home/home.htm for more information and pictures) on the Black Sea coast at about 4 pm. There is a coach party round the base of the centre, but the two observation platforms are free. The first floor platform has shade and Leander Khil, an Austrian working here for a few weeks, explains with enthusiasm and perfect English how the reserve has been established on the land between the old road and the wide and noisy new road. Quite an achievement: more reminiscent of Rainham Marshes than Minsmere, for those who know Eastern England.

The block of freshwater marsh has several abandoned pylons on which there are some 450 nests of cormorants – the only pylon-nesting cormorants in the world, he says. He explains that 100 per cent of the world's Dalmatian pelicans pass through the area, and some of these are visible from the second floor platform. The white stork passage is already over, but with luck, passage raptors pass through here in good numbers.



Along the coast 30 minutes or so to the rapidly expanding resort of Sozopol. Took a walk around the old town. The central area is busy with tourists and has many shops and stalls, mostly selling tat. Step away from here and there are elegant traditional wooden houses from the 18th and 19th centuries, outside which ladies have more modest table-top stalls offering a few figs, honey and souvenirs made from shells. A couple of jellyfish in the harbour and there are many gin palaces.

The Hotel Kalithea is modern and well-appointed, including a fridge. Meals are taken, weather permitting, on the balcony overlooking the Black Sea and old town of Sozopol. It's an urban setting compared with the Hotel Yagodina, but good of its type.

Dinner is shark from the Black Sea, during which a mantis appears: *Ameles decolor*.

Left: View over Sozopol from Hotel Kalithea

Right: Sozopol beach with yellow-legged gulls *Larus cachinnans*



Friday 12 September – Black Sea coast lakes

We leave at 6 am to rendez-vous with a man with a boat. On the way, Assen plays an Abba tape in the car. The communists banned western music, says Assen. It's funny to think of Abba as subversive. Joining us today is birdwatcher John Lawton Roberts from north Wales, a regular visitor having married into a Bulgarian family when teaching English many years ago, but his first visit to this 'hide'. The tiny motorboat chugs across a corner of Vaya lake. It's chilly and I'm wondering if shorts were a mistake. They weren't: it warms up and becomes another scorcher of a day.

A kingfisher dashes across, little gulls fly past and there are two spoonbills at the reed's edge. Into a very short channel in the reeds where there is a makeshift landing platform leading to an even more makeshift raised boardwalk to a photographers' hide. It's immediately obvious this is entirely unsuitable for a group: the boardwalk is unsafe and the hide tiny with no proper viewing for birdwatchers. However for Assen and John with long lenses, it's a great opportunity as cormorants and pelicans come close to the hide. On the return journey, there is a group of marsh terns and after we land a loose group of some 20 lesser spotted eagles drifts south. A drink in the boatman's hostel in the village – more an urbanisation - of Dolnozerovo.

From there, round Vaya (Bourgas) lake, round the busy Bourgas ring road and various stops on Atanasovko lake. The first has a big hide – but more or less permanently shut. The good, the bad and the ugly: everywhere this morning is urban, industrial, post-industrial or just plain scruffy, ghastly, despite good birds like osprey, great white egrets and countless pelicans, plus scarlet darter and Queen-of-Spain fritillary (*below, right*) among the rubbish. Our stop for lunch illustrates the dilemma: just off a busy main road, under a pylon, fly-tipped rubble, a view of a refinery and loads of litter (*below, left*), yet a big flock of feeding pelicans, Dalmatian pelican near the shore and common, black, white-winged black and whiskered terns. Fascinating up to a point, but I start to wonder if this is suitable for a holiday.



After the ugly Vaya and Atanasovko lakes, we're back at the southern Mandra Lake where there are delightful areas with pygmy cormorants and more pelicans. Then back to the BSPB's centre at Poda for a cold drink and it's excellent: a dozen species of waders without a telescope, lots of pygmy cormorants and much more. This gives us a challenge: to design an itinerary to minimise the ugly side of the Bourgas lakes.

Saturday 13 September – Strandja nature park

The usual breakfast start time here is 8:30 (it will be eight o'clock for any group). The balcony overlooks scrub (much is Christ's thorn) on a slope, then a busy road, beyond which but pretty close are the harbour to the left and the old town of Sozopol just right of centre. A red-backed shrike prompts me to write a balcony bird list, and here it is, roughly in order of appearance:

Red-backed shrike	Magpie
House sparrow	Starling
Jackdaw	Sandwich tern
House martin	Hooded crow
Swallow	Black-headed gull
Collared dove	Great crested grebe
Yellow-legged gull	Hoopoe
Mediterranean gull	Swift
Spotted flycatcher	Marsh harrier (two over the sea)
Cormorant	

... so a fairly impressive total of 19 before breakfast.

We head south, away from Bourgas. First a couple of stops by the beach to see if I can find sea daffodil in flower: I can't. I do find beaches strewn with rubbish, plastic bottles especially.

A bit chunk of this area is the Ropotamo Ramsar site – an internationally important wetland. That includes the scruffy beaches and a lake opened up to show flowering water lilies. Today's it's shut, though we clamber through the fence to have a quick stroll down the boardwalk. A squacco heron flies off and there are some ferruginous ducks. But it's not practical to bring a group.

The next stop is far better. We take a boat trip along the river Ropotamo as far as where it joins the Black Sea. It's a gentle hour's journey there and back alongside riverine woodland, meadows and a crag that looks like a lion's head. On a warm, close but slightly overcast day, it's a cool and lazy way to watch herons, at least five kingfishers and lesser spotted eagle. Whinchat and pond terrapin are other highlights.

A dormouse dashes across the road. Next is a woodland stop. Superficially it looks like an English wood, though the oaks and beeches are different species. Remarkably there is rhododendron: not as a pernicious pest, as in the UK, but as a native species that they celebrate. There are many excellent signboards that explain the wildlife communities and many species of plant, mammal, bird, reptile and amphibian that there isn't a hope of seeing on a hot September day. There are woodland graylings (but see note in butterfly list) and cardinal butterflies. The track leads down to a 'green classroom', complete with blackboard and desks. Just brilliant – and such a contrast to the lack of care on the beaches and much of the Bourgas lakes area.



A very late lunch – and a welcome ice cream – in the former fire walking village of Kosti, according to the sign. A large truck lumbers into the village and stops in the centre of the square. That it doesn't park neatly is probably due to the lack of power steering on this heavy former Soviet army truck turned forestry vehicle.

Then back to the hotel, where I add great tit and lesser whitethroat to the balcony list; the red-backed shrike count is up to five. I take a wander in Sozopol, passing a man with an umbrella – at first sight strange on such a warm night. But he was right – I have to shelter as a strong but fairly brief rainstorm comes through. Rain over, back to the hotel where there is Kebabche for dinner, spicy minced meat in sausage shape.

Sunday 14 September – Sozopol to Koprivshitsa

The weather has broken with a storm overnight, including some dramatic lightning. It has turned cool this morning, with drizzle.

We head west towards Sofia. Assen points out Thracian tombs, which externally are just simple scrub-covered mounds. Otherwise, save for the strips of bright blue chicory by the roadside, it's a very unremarkable drive. But it's helpful that a motorway covers much of the Bourgas-Sofia journey, which means the former road that we take is now fairly fast and not too busy, and allows stops. The first of these is near Slivan: some rather dull-looking farmland that is known area for imperial eagle. No signs of the susliks on which the eagles prey, nor the eagles.

By 12.30 we've covered roughly two-thirds of the journey and we stop for lunch at a restaurant decorated in mock-Thracian style by the reservoir at Koprinka. From the usual long salad list decided to try the 'lovingly salad'; baked pepper, aubergine, fried courgette with onion, olives, tomatoes and dressing. The next stretch of the journey is through the 'valley of the roses' where roses are harvested in the early morning to make rose oil, said to be the best in the world, with a festival to celebrate this in June. There are lavender fields too, but on a drizzly day in September all this bit of local colour is over.

Rather than head off to Sofia, Neophron has sensibly found a hotel 75 kilometres east of Sofia in the historic village of Koprivshitsa. We drive above the village first where the countryside is pretty even on a dull day, finding more red-backed shrikes and a tree pipit. It gives a chance to work out what the common mullein is, namely great mullein, *Verbascum thapsus*, to ID an unfamiliar crucifer, the eastern species hoary alison *Berterea incana*, and to note wild pansies and patches of yellow toadflax.

Our hotel at Koprivshitsa is the Bashtina Kashta, which is well-placed opposite the small river in the centre of the village. Despite the rain, the village buildings are delightful: most are 19th century merchant houses (eg below, right) and some are open to the public. I visit one and gather there is a ticket you can buy which admits you to several. Effectively the village is a living museum, of huge cultural significance as Koprivshitsa held the spark for the April Rising of 1876 when Bulgarians tried, without success on this occasion, to break free from the Turkish Ottoman Empire. A common redstart is singing from a roof and a dipper is singing from a stone under the bridge opposite the hotel.



The hotel has two pages of salads to choose from. I'm intrigued by the name 'orderly salad': the explanation is simple, the ingredients come in rows! The Bulgarian appetite for football is apparent with QPR vs. Southampton from the UK Championship live on TV, something we wouldn't see at home. The weather forecast shows cool and rain across the country for the week to come.



Monday 15 September – Sofia and home

A 7:30 breakfast and we leave just after eight o'clock. Assen tells me there is a TV report into discarded plastic bottles. Often the problem is foreign trucks going through Bulgaria, they claim. The solution is unclear. On plastic bags, they are at much the same stage as in the UK: one supermarket has stopped giving away free bags and bags for life are widely available.

The autumn colours shine through the drizzle and it's a quick drive in Assen's car. There is time for a coffee at a petrol station, enjoy watching trams while stuck in traffic jams in Sofia and still arrive at the airport by 10:20.



I wonder, are the rules about taking liquids the same here as at UK airports? Yes, my bottle of water is thrown in a bin. I retrieve it when security isn't looking ...

Species lists

Butterflies (19 species)

Swallowtail
Small white
Large white
Bath white
Eastern dappled white
Clouded yellow
Red admiral
Queen-of-Spain fritillary
Cardinal
Great banded grayling
Meadow brown
Marbled white
Speckled wood (southern type)
Wall
Woodland grayling *
Small copper
Little tiger blue
Lang's short-tailed blue
Common blue

* this butterfly – see photograph – matches perfectly the picture of Woodland Grayling in the Mitchell Beazley butterfly book. However Eastern Rock Grayling *Hipparchia syriaca* also



occurs here, including in oak woods, and the Collins butterfly guide says that “reliable separation probably impossible without reference to male/female genitalia.”

Other notable invertebrates

Hammingbird hawk-moth
Violet carpenter bee
Hornet (*below*)
Mantis *Ameles decolo*
Nosed grasshopper *Acrida ungarica*
Red-winged grasshopper
Cicada (heard)
Scarlet darter

Amphibians and reptiles

Tree frog (heard)
Many other frogs - not identified
Pond terrapin

Mammals

Red squirrel
Dormouse sp – possibly Forest dormouse
Eastern hedgehog (dead)



Birds

Little grebe: Bourgas lakes
Great crested grebe: at sea off Sozopol
White pelican: Bourgas lakes
Dalmatian pelican: Bourgas lakes
Pygmy cormorant: Bourgas lakes including at Poda
Cormorant: Bourgas lakes including at Poda
Squacco heron: Strandja nature park
Grey heron: Bourgas lakes
Little egret: Bourgas lakes
Great white egret: Bourgas lakes
Spoonbill: Bourgas lakes
White stork
Mute swan: Bourgas lakes
Teal: Bourgas lakes

Mallard: Bourgas lakes
Shoveler: Bourgas lakes
Ferruginous duck: Poda
Egyptian vulture: near vulture centre in Eastern Rhodopes
Griffon vulture: near vulture centre in Eastern Rhodopes
Marsh harrier: Bourgas lakes, common
Levant sparrowhawk: one on route between Eastern Rhodopes and Black Sea coast
Buzzard
Long-legged buzzard: one on route between Eastern Rhodopes and Black Sea coast
Lesser spotted eagle: after buzzard the commonest bird of prey; a steady trickle of migrants on the Black Sea coast
Eastern imperial eagle: on route between Eastern Rhodopes and Black Sea coast
Osprey
Kestrel
Peregrine
Hobby
Quail: disturbed from vegetation near one of the Bourgas Lakes
Coot
Moorhen
Water rail
Ringed plover: Poda
Little ringed plover: Poda
Kentish plover: Poda
Lapwing: Poda
Little stint: Poda
Dunlin: Poda
Ruff: Poda
Snipe: Poda
Black-tailed godwit: Poda
Spotted redshank: Poda
Redshank : Poda
Greenshank: Poda
Green sandpiper: Poda
Wood sandpiper : Poda
Curlew sandpiper : Poda
Avocet: Poda
Black-winged stilt: Poda
Black-headed gull: Bourgas lakes
Mediterranean gull: over the sea from the Hotel in Sozopol
Little gull: Bourgas lakes
Yellow-legged gull the eastern Mediterranean *Larus cachinnans*
Sandwich tern: Poda
Common tern: almost all coastal localities
Little tern: Poda
Whiskered tern: Bourgas lakes
Black tern: Bourgas lakes
White-winged black tern: Bourgas lakes
Feral pigeon
Woodpigeon: recorded only in the woods at Strandja nature park
Collared dove
Turtle dove
Little owl
Swift: Sofia and several other sightings
Kingfisher: river Ropotamo in Strandja nature park especially
Bee-eater: migrating flocks, especially above Trigrad gorge
Hoopoe: from the Hotel in Sozopol
Great spotted woodpecker
Black woodpecker: two in Trigrad gorge

Green woodpecker
Crested lark
Skylark
Sand martin
Crag martin: still nesting in Trigrad gorge
Swallow
Red-rumped swallow: quite common in the Western Rhodopes
House martin
Tree pipit: near Koprivshtitsa
White wagtail
Grey wagtail
Yellow wagtail
Dipper: Trigrad gorge and in Koprivshtitsa
Wren
Robin
Black redstart: Koprivshtitsa
Common redstart: Koprivshtitsa
Whinchat: by the river Ropotamo in Strandja nature park
Wheatear
Blackbird
Song thrush: Strandja nature park only
Mistle thrush: W Rhodopes
Lesser whitethroat: from the Hotel in Sozopol
Chiffchaff: one of the commonest migrants
Willow warbler
Goldcrest: above Trigrad
Spotted flycatcher: one of the commonest migrants
Bearded tit: Bourgas lakes
Marsh tit: by the river Ropotamo in Strandja nature park
Coal tit: Trigrad gorge
Great tit
Blue tit
Long-tailed tit
Penduline tit: Bourgas lakes
Nuthatch
Wallcreeper: Trigrad gorge
Treecreeper: above Trigrad gorge
Red-backed shrike: one of the commonest migrants
Woodchat shrike: on route between Eastern Rhodopes and Black Sea coast
Jay
Magpie
Nutcracker: above Trigrad gorge
Jackdaw
Hooded crow
Raven
Starling
House sparrow
Tree sparrow: in Yagodina and elsewhere near Trigrad gorge
Chaffinch
Goldfinch
Linnet
Corn bunting

Total: 123 species