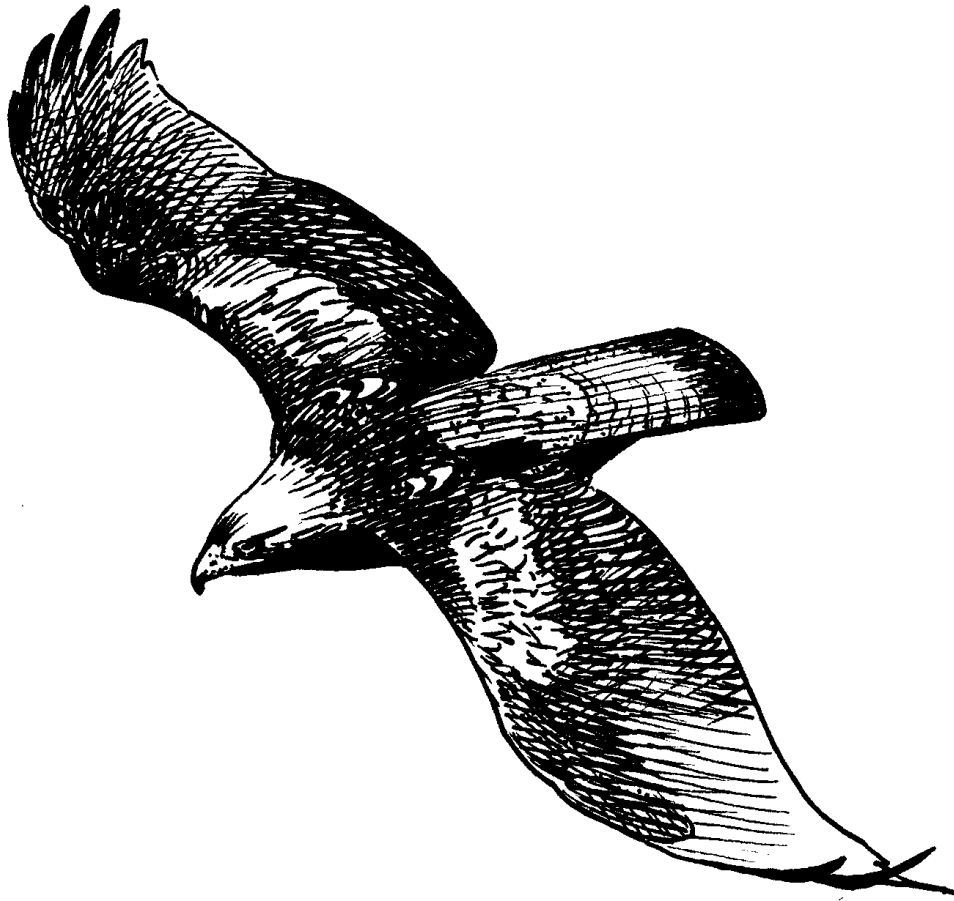


Honeyguide

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Discover Slovakia
17 – 24 May 2003

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John Rumpus
Rosemary MacDonald

Kent
Isle of Man

Derek Boughton

Kent

Bill Simmonds
Margaret Chilvers

Huntingdon

Irene Jackson
Bob Jackson

Beaconsfield, Bucks

Leader from Slovakia
Pavol Kanuch

Leader from UK
Steve Henson

Like all Honeyguide holidays, this one contributed to the protection of the wildlife we enjoyed so much during the holiday by way of a contribution of £25 per person. This has gone towards the provision of nestboxes for sakers and Ural owls in eastern Slovakia. The £175 sent to Pavol this year is part of over £30,000 raised by Honeyguide in this way since 1991.

Report written by Steve Henson

Cover illustration of imperial eagle by Rob Hume.
Other illustrations by Bill Kilby, a group member in 2002.

Itinerary

Day 1 Saturday, 17/5/03

Morning: flew from London Heathrow airport on 0740hrs Czech Airlines flight to Prague, arriving around 1030hrs local time.

Mid-day (1240hrs) onward flight to Košice, arriving 1355hrs. Met up with Pavol, Josef and our driver (also called Pavol).

Afternoon: transfer to arable farmland in the Košice basin, southeast of Košice, for imperial eagle and saker.

Later, stops for souslik and in beech forest near Kráľovná for Ural owl.

Early evening: transferred to Hotel Dargov. Dinner and overnight at Hotel Dargov.

Day 2 Sunday, 18/5/03

Location: Slanské Hills.

Morning: meadows, scrub and forest near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills followed by picnic lunch.

Afternoon: walk through tall beech forest for Ural owl, woodpeckers, flycatchers and forest flowers, plus stop at meadow for corncrake.

Dinner and overnight at Hotel Dargov.

Day 3 Monday, 19/5/03

Morning: lowland deciduous forest at Biela hora, east of Michalovce, plus brief stops for imperial eagle and eagle owl.

Afternoon: Senný wetland including picnic lunch.

Late afternoon: a look around the park next to the regional Zemplínske museum, Michalovce, for grey-headed woodpecker and icterine warbler.

Dinner and overnight at Hotel Dargov.

Day 4 Tuesday, 20/5/03

Morning: travelled south towards the border with Hungary. Quarry near Hrádel' for eagle owl and brief stop at pond near Vojany, followed by walk in the Latorica River valley near Bežá. Wetland near Bažka village, before lunch.

Lunchtime: picnic lunch near Rad in the Latorica River valley.

Afternoon: brief roadside stop overlooking mixed heronry at Rad in the Latorica River valley and short walk at Strážne for bee-eater and souslik colonies.

Late afternoon: Slovak Tokaj wine *degustation* at the Tokaj wine cellars in Malá Tŕňa, north of Slovenský Nový Mesto plus nearby roadside stop for crested lark.

Dinner and overnight at Hotel Dargov.

Day 5 Wednesday, 21/5/03

Travelled westwards into the Slovak Karst National Park southwest of Košice and on to our second holiday base at Penzión Limba in the Lower Tatras mountains.

Morning: after travelling about 100km, arrived in Slovak Karst National Park. Walk through abandoned vineyards below Turniansky hrad (castle), north of Turá nad Bodvou, to the nature reserve for endemic Turá Goldendrop *Onosma tornensis*, rock bunting and green lizard.

Picnic lunch at Zadiel.

Afternoon: circular walk from Zadiel up onto plateau and through woodland, back down through Zádielska gorge.

Late afternoon: brief stop at Turá nad Bodvou for crested lark then continued transfer to Penzión Limba, with brief roadside stop for globeflowers at Stratená .

Evening: dinner at Polovnícká izba.

Day 6 Thursday, 22/5/03

Morning: Liptov village folk museum at Pribylina, cheese tasting at the salas at Ľiar and a visit to the Demänovská ice-caves, plus botanising on a patch of Demänovská valley mire at Demänovská. Picnic lunch.

Afternoon: visit to the magnificent wooden church of Svätý Kríž followed by great grey shrikes nearby.

Late afternoon: steep hillside forest near Hotel Limba for black woodpecker, crested tit and nutcracker.

Evening: dinner at Polovnická izba.

Day 7 Friday, 23/5/03

Morning: short drive south to Tri Domky for the climb by chairlift and on foot to Chopok, high in the Lower Tatras National Park, for alpine accentor, water pipit, chamois and alpine marmot.

Lunchtime: picnic near Jasna, north of the chairlift.

Afternoon: stop overlooking the reservoir northwest of Liptovská Mikuláš for scarlet rosefinch, followed by walk through Prosiecka ('Bear') Valley north onto the high meadows in the Chočské Hills.

Evening: traditional Slovak dinner at Chata Koliesko, next to the chair lift at Tri Domky.

Day 8 Saturday, 24/5/03

Morning: early departure from Penzión Limba after breakfast, bound for Košice.

Morning stop in the historic town of Levoča, with visits to the church and town hall.

Late morning: stroll around the centre of Košice. Shopping, ice-cream, coffee and beer, or more birding nearby in the park Petrovov sad.

Early afternoon: transferred to airport for 1440hrs flight to Prague.

Daily diary & highlights

Saturday 17/5/03 – east bound

Touching down at the airport on the outskirts of Košice after two pleasantly uneventful flights, Pavol, Josef, our guide for the afternoon and Pavol the minibus driver were waiting to welcome us as we collected our bags and stepped outside into the very bright, warm Slovakian sunshine. Around the airport a black redstart, house martins, white wagtail and a singing male serin were the first birds to show themselves as Pavol loaded up our bags and, in no time at all, we were heading off towards the arable farmland of the Košice basin.

It wasn't long before we were scanning the wide open farmland for raptors but, despite hot conditions and clear skies, our holiday got off to a slow start with little in the way of avian aerial activity. There were typical farmland birds to be seen with rooks from a nearby rookery, cuckoo, house and tree sparrows and a blue-headed wagtail overhead, as well as buzzard and kestrel. Suddenly though, there was a flurry of activity as a pair of sakers came into view, providing us with both stunning and prolonged views, the male even pursuing for a few moments a hapless budgerigar! Meanwhile, an imperial eagle appeared overhead, being joined by two honey buzzards and a Montagu's harrier, whilst a black stork soared over the hills some distance away.

Eventually dragging ourselves away, we headed back towards Košice, stopping by the roadside *en route* to watch bee-eaters and later, a lesser spotted eagle and five ravens near Kráľova. Viewing conditions on the 'souslik meadow' where we had seen them in 2002 were far from ideal as the site had not recently been grazed, so the grass was too long for us. We quickly moved on to nearby beech forest where a short walk brought us quickly into contact with a magnificent Ural owl which, like the sakers, provided both stunning and prolonged views. On the way back to the minibus we admired the many spikes of bird's-nest orchid, which were all around us, before bidding Josef farewell and heading eastwards to our first base at the Hotel Dargov near Sežovce.

Highlights of the afternoon were the sakers (pursuing a budgerigar!) and Ural owl.

Sunday 18/5/03 – the Slanské hills

Sleep was brought to an abrupt halt by a particularly vociferous cuckoo outside the hotel, participating in a dawn chorus that also included a golden oriole. This was followed for some by an early morning, pre-breakfast birding foray then, after breakfast, we loaded up the minibus and headed off to the Slanské Hills, west of Vranov nad Topľou.

The bright, warm morning was spent among the mosaic of grassland, scrub and forest near Bažkov, on the edge of the Slanské hills, watching a host of birds and other wildlife, particularly butterflies including scarce swallowtail, knapweed fritillary and wood white. A hoopoe was one of the first birds to be seen followed quickly by a number of hawfinches, which seemed to appear from all directions, whilst the scrub held numerous red-backed shrikes and barred warblers. An ephemeral pool held a yellow-bellied toad, whilst Rosemary was quick to spot a juvenile sand lizard. Three woodlarks sang melodically over an expansive area of scrub-free grassland, which held a small number of almost-over green-winged orchids and we had good views of a honey buzzard perched nearby. An excursion into the adjacent forest brought both male and female collared flycatchers and several wood warblers, as well as white helleborine, whilst on the edge of the forest in a large cleared area we had good views of a wryneck and heard another.



After a filling picnic lunch in the sun, we headed to an area of mature beech forest on the rolling hills near Pavol's home village of Juskova Vol'a, which gave some welcome relief from the hot conditions. Bird-wise, the forest was quiet in comparison with all the morning's activity, but we did enjoy good views of red-breasted flycatcher and a male collared flycatcher. Nearby we made one last

stop at a meadow where Pavol's CD recording enticed a calling male corncrake right out into the open as it reluctantly crossed the track in front of us.

Highlights of the day were corncrake, wryneck, the three woodlarks singing overhead, barred warbler and red-breasted flycatcher. For John, it was the 'front half' of the red-breasted flycatcher, having seen a 'rear half' of one some 16 years ago! Mention must also be made of the 'phantom' short-toed eagles (which turned out to be honey buzzards)!!

Monday 19/5/03 – Senní wetland

Monday was warm but cloudy as we made the short journey eastwards to an area of lowland deciduous forest, picking up Stefan in Michalovce *en route*. This is a good location for woodpeckers and before long we were enjoying very close, prolonged views of a middle-spotted woodpecker foraging in the tall mature oaks overhead and we saw a number of other woodland birds including marsh tit and nuthatch. We covered a large area fairly quickly but came across no more woodpeckers although we did hear a wryneck and soon it was time to move on.

We called at a quarry near Senderov next to the enormous Zemplinska reservoir to look for eagle owls but there was no sign of them, but we were successful with an imperial eagle a few kilometres away, as we headed southeast to Senní wetland. As in 2002, for 'political' reasons Pavol opted to stay away from this privately owned site making his way instead, back to Michalovce by bus. On site the fishponds proved once again to be a hive of avian activity with birds flying to and fro' in all directions. Herons were evident including around 30 great white egrets and one or two booming bitterns, although purple herons were hard to locate. Waders included avocet, grey plover, Temminck's stint, curlew sandpiper, ruff and black-tailed godwit. There were *c.*15 garganey with three red-necked and *c.*18 black-necked grebes on the more heavily vegetated ponds whilst *c.*30 little gulls and *c.*10 black terns hawked insects over more open water and to cap it all was a stunning white-winged black tern in breeding plumage. On the raptor 'front', an enormous immature white-tailed eagle soared in the distance and a saker hunting over the ponds was something of a surprise. Other noteworthy sightings included penduline tits visiting the nest, four circling cranes, two black storks and a superb male little bittern in breeding plumage right out in the open! A muskrat, spotted by Bob, swam across one of the fishponds giving close-up views.

Back in Michalovce we rendezvoused with Pavol at the regional Zemplinske museum where we stopped to have a look around the adjacent wooded park with its many mature trees. There were brief views of a singing nightingale, plus a number of other birds including nuthatch and spotted flycatcher. Excellent views of a Syrian woodpecker could hardly be bettered but soon were, as we rounded off a splendid day with incredibly good views of three icterine warblers.

Highlights of the day were the red-necked grebes, white-winged black tern and several of the waders, all in stunning breeding plumage, plus little bittern, the calling cranes and middle-spotted woodpecker.

Tuesday 20/5/03 – south to the river valley lowlands and Hungarian border

A bright, hot day as we travelled south towards the border with Hungary, meeting up *en route* with Miloš. First in a series of several stops throughout the day was in an expansive, open area of arable farmland near the village of Hrádel' where we spotted a female imperial eagle nearby, on the ground, no doubt warming up in the morning sun. Kestrel and buzzard were also in the area, joined by another imperial eagle (this one an immature) and a Montagu's harrier circling high up. Nearby, we stopped at a quarry where an eagle owl was sheltering from the sun on the rock face opposite us. Generally, the area held lots of birds and although this was a brief stop we also saw lesser spotted eagle, bee-eater, hawfinch and nightingale among others, plus black hairstreak and grizzled skipper butterflies, in the blackthorn scrub and grassland respectively.

A stop at a roadside pond near Vojany produced great white egret, night heron, garganey, pochard and whiskered terns *en route* to an area of wet, floodplain woodland and scrub in the Latorica River valley near BeĽa, where we set off for a welcome walk along the raised floodbank. There was plenty of interesting avian activity with displaying male marsh harriers overhead and a hobby, as well as a penduline tit visiting the nest and two Savi's warblers which provided good if all too brief views. On the way back to the minibus we were rewarded with really good views of three golden orioles and there were two wheatears and a crested lark on open ground where we had parked. The final stop of the morning was at a small wetland near the village of BaĽka which produced red-necked grebes, little bittern, whiskered terns and two very co-operative great reed warblers that posed well in the open.

For lunch we travelled a short distance west to Rad in the Latorica River valley, where we saw black kite. After lunch we stopped briefly at the roadside overlooking a heronry in a scrubby patch of



wetland which held grey herons and little egrets among the many night herons at the nest. Very close to the Hungarian border, we stopped in farmland pasture near StrĽe where we quickly came upon colonies of sousliks, including a number of 'cute' youngsters and of bee-eaters, showing off their multicolored plumage to maximum effect in the bright afternoon sun.

We arrived at the Tokaj wine cellars in MalĽ TĽa

north of SlovenskĽ NovĽ Mesto late in the afternoon, only to find everything locked up and nobody in sight. It was some time before we realized that they had been expecting us the day before (the programmes for Monday and Tuesday having been switched around)! Nonetheless, they were happy to track down the key and so on we went with our tour of the cellars and Slovak Tokaj wine *degustation*, which was great fun enjoyed by all. One final stop produced another crested lark by the side of the main road near SlovenskĽ NovĽ Mesto, on the Hungarian border, before we headed north again for our evening meal at Hotel Dargov.

Highlights of the day were imperial eagle, bee-eaters and penduline tit, the sousliks with young and for Pavol, the quality and taste of the Tokaj wine at the cellars in MalĽ TĽa!

Wednesday 21/5/03 – on the move: west to the Slovak karst and Tatra mountains

Today marked the second part of our holiday as we left eastern Slovakia, travelling west to a new base in the mountains of the Low Tatras (Nizke Tatry) in central Slovakia. Our first destination was the Slovak Karst National Park southwest of KoĽce near the border with Hungary, where we stopped at the hillside below the Turniansky hrad (castle). Here we walked up through the old vineyards to the nature reserve consisting of steeply sloping, dry limestone grassland with patches of scrub, notable for the TurĽa goldendrop, a flowering plant endemic to the Slovak Karst region. In addition to the goldendrop, our guide Eva pointed out a whole range of interesting plants, all of which maintain a foothold in the dry, shallow, nutrient-poor soils. A pair of rock buntings was present in downy oak scrub, up the slope and Bob found an active green lizard, even though conditions were dull and overcast.

From the goldendrop site, we moved only a short distance to the spectacular, steep-sided ZĽdielka gorge where we ate lunch. Afterwards, we walked steadily up onto the plateau above and, as we reached the top, rain began to fall steadily; walking through the scrub there were spectacular views into the gorge and the minibus far below. Eva was very excited to find a stand of Austrian dragonhead, with its blue-violet flowers, growing on the slopes above the gorge, an area that also held alpine aster and the frilly-edged white-flowered *Dianthus praecox*. Continuing our walk brought us into woodland, where Steve and Rosemary found the curious toothwort and coralroot orchid, then out onto an open meadow with its anthills before descending through forest towards the stream in the gorge below. The rain by now was fairly heavy and few birds were evident, although we did hear wood warbler and red-breasted flycatcher in the plateau forest. As we walked down through the forest in the

rain, we came across no less than five brightly- coloured, yellow-and-black fire salamanders – an amazing sight! Down in the gorge, there were a number of Carpathian blue slugs and a dipper along the stream.

There was still time to locate a pair of crested larks in farmland near Tur-a nad Bodvou before saying farewell to Eva and continuing our transfer to central Slovakia and the Lower Tatras mountains, with a brief roadside stop *en route* at Straten to admire a cluster of globeflowers.

Faunal and floral highlights of the day were rock bunting, fire salamander, alpine aster, coralroot orchid and the scent of *Dianthus praecox* whilst, more generally, the vote went to the karst plateau including the flowers, looking down into the gorge below and our walk in the rain. The Carpathian blue slugs and the impromptu ‘picnic’ at the petrol station came a close second!

Thursday 22/5/03 – cheese, subterranean ice, a spectacular church and a very, very steep hill!

Two nutcrackers flew over the pines on the slopes of the Demnovsk Valley outside Penzi Limba at breakfast time providing, along with the breakfast itself, a great start to the day. Low cloud and rain necessitated a change in our schedule and we decided to postpone the mountain climb by chair-lift until Friday, hoping that the predicted improvement in the weather would come to fruition. We headed instead north to the Liptov village folk museum at Pribylina. Here there are a number of re-erected buildings, all from the Liptov region, including a number ‘rescued’ when the valley was flooded following construction of the Liptovsk Mikul reservoir. Several are set out with their traditional furnishings and household belongings relevant to the wealth and social status of the former occupants. The buildings are set within a cleared forest area and, despite the rain, a number of birds including tree pipit, fieldfare, willow tit, serin and crossbill distracted us as we toured the site. A dunnoek was the first of our holiday and a great spotted woodpecker outside the entrance was particularly confiding. Mention should also be made of the brown rats taking advantage of the spilt grain in one of the barns – truly authentic, live museum exhibits!

Next stop was the salas at Ľiar where we sat down to taste curdled sheep’s milk (not to everyone’s liking!) and locally produced cheeses including a particularly tasty smoked variety. Outside were several fieldfares and a singing icterine warbler, as well as an abundance of marsh-marigolds in flower along the stream. Returning to the Demnovsk Valley, we stopped at a small area of wet valley mire which held bogbean and a diminutive butterwort, as well as the ubiquitous broad-leaved marsh-orchid, *en route* to the ice caves. There were a number of interesting plants on the climb up to the cave entrance including Clusius’s gentian, auricula and the snowbell *Soldanella carpatica*, as well as more Carpathian blue slugs.

Following our subterranean adventure we headed off again the short distance to the magnificent Evangelical Lutheran church at Svät Kríž, one of the finest examples of wooden churches in Europe. Although conditions were still overcast, the rain had by now let up so after looking round the church we walked the short distance to an area of grassland, scrub and raised mire where we soon located three great grey shrikes perched in the pines, as well as tree pipit, stonechat and red-backed shrike. A male goshawk was seen relatively well as it skimmed across the top of the adjacent pine plantation and amazingly, we picked it up again some time later when it returned with prey, as we headed back to the minibas.



Making the most of the day, we made one final stop in the Demnovsk Valley behind Penzi Limba. As we drew up to our parking spot, two golden eagles came into view as they soared over the valley. Then followed a very slow, very steep climb up a forested hillside, which we all found tough going (except Pavol!). Finally reaching our allotted vantage point, a short burst of recorded call on Pavol’s CD player brought in close a magnificent male black woodpecker which gave superb,

prolonged views, making the climb well worthwhile. Also on the hillside were nutcracker, firecrest, crested tit and roe deer, with the delicate flowers of alpine clematis noted as we negotiated - by various methods - the return down hill!

Highlights of the day were goshawk, black woodpecker, great grey shrike, firecrest and all the raptors. Non-avian highlights were the ice caves, folk museum, the sheep's milk and Derek's 'slip-sliding' solution to getting down the black woodpecker hill!

Friday 23/5/03 – the chairlift to Chopok and the Chořsk Hills

This morning we drove south into the heart of the Lower Tatras National Park to the chairlift terminal at Tri Domky, for the climb onto the high northern slopes of the Chopok (2024m) ridge. With sun and clear skies we had luck on our side and had certainly chosen the best of mornings to be at such a high altitude. As we queued for our turn on the lift, a superb male ring ouzel was seen by Bill and Steve. Coming down to earth again on the slopes high above the treeline, we made our way up the meandering footpath to the vantage-point overlooking a number of ridges and a valley way below. Water pipits were present, undertaking highly visible song-flights and perching on the overhead cables, whilst several dunnocks sang from deep within the patches of dwarf pine scrub. Sitting down at the vantage-point to scan the ridges, Pavol soon picked up a couple of alpine chamois, difficult to spot as they sat among the rocks and short vegetation. We managed to spot four chamois in total, while directly below us a lone alpine marmot was scurrying around outside a burrow entrance. An alpine accentor was heard singing from a nearby rocky outcrop so Pavol played a few bursts of recorded song, bringing an instant and dramatic response as three birds circled in front of us, calling as they did so. Further bursts brought them within just a few metres, on the ground, providing unbelievable views. Flowering plants were few and far between although delicate least primroses were quite numerous and snowbells also helped to make up for the lack of quantity.

Back on lower ground, we ate lunch and warmed up with a welcome cup of coffee near Jasna, in an open area of improved meadow surrounded by forest. Despite many pairs of eyes on the lookout few birds were in evidence except for a grey wagtail singing from the branches of a Norway spruce. After lunch we drove westwards towards the nearby Chořsk Hills, north of the reservoir Liptovsk Mikul Stopping at the edge of the reservoir south of Liptovsk Sielnica we needed only a brief search before locating two brightly-coloured, singing male scarlet rosefinches in willow scrub. Also active were a number of warblers including a marsh warbler and a singing river warbler which we saw incredibly well down to just a few feet. In the warm sunshine, butterflies were flying on the meadow full of dandelion seedheads, including two maps, orange tips and woodland ringlets.

From there, we drove the short distance to the Prosiecka Valley where we set off along the stream; John, Rosemary and Steve quickly coming across a fast-flying Camberwell beauty. Birds were generally difficult to locate in the wooded valley although we did find tree pipit, several grey wagtails, firecrest and willow tit. The walk itself more than compensated for the dearth of visible birds with butterflies and many flowering plants to slow our progress. Butterbur was the most abundant plant along the stream lower down in the valley floor with frequent bird's-nest orchid, common twayblade and lesser butterfly orchid, plus small colonies of coralroot orchid and toothwort, all on the shadier, wooded valley sides. The bare rock faces of the gorges harboured alpine aster and the inconspicuous edelweiss, with yellow wood violet in the shadiest parts, the latter admired during one of the ladder climbs! Other species included Clusius's gentian and as we came out onto the wide alpine meadows above the valley, there were masses of kidney vetch and lady's-mantle as well as broad-leaved marsh orchids and swathes of cotton-grass neatly demarcating areas of very wet bog. Birds were more visible in these wider, open spaces, with a hobby, three whinchats and several meadow pipits, as well as a fox and a female roe deer with fawn, whilst two ring ouzels frequented pines at the edge of the meadows. Five yellow-bellied



toads and a number of freshwater leeches were present in a small ephemeral pool. Reaching the minibus, which was parked up ready for us, we spotted a superb nutcracker perched in the tops of a pine. It flew in front of us before settling in pines again some distance away, allowing us to observe it through telescopes for some considerable time, before we headed back to Penziňn Limba.

In the evening we enjoyed an absolutely tremendous traditional Slovak dinner at Chata Koliesko, next to the chair lift at Tri Domžeky, complete with its huge, cuddly Newfoundland dog. We toasted the success of the holiday and the wildlife we had so enjoyed seeing, thanking Pavol for making it all possible. The evening was rounded off in the best possible way with a tremendous 'surprise' cake celebrating John's birthday.

Highlights of the day were alpine accentor, scarlet rosefinch and the leeches in the pool on the alpine meadows above Prosiecka Valley; as well as the alpine meadows themselves, the walk through the Prosiecka Valley gorge and the achievement of reaching the top!

Saturday 24/5/03 – return to Prague

After breakfast, we loaded our bags into the minibus once again in the cool of the morning and headed off from Penziňn Limba for the last time (plus one last nutcracker!). It was time to leave behind the mountains of the Lower Tatras and head for Košice and our flight back to Prague.

Heading east, we passed through the open Spiš countryside, arriving at the historic walled town of Levoča. There we took in a little culture around the main square, with visits to the Roman Catholic church, home to many pieces of religious art and an impressive sixteenth-century altar (completed around 1517), reputedly the tallest Gothic altar ever made! Next to the church was the town hall with museum and outside, the wrought iron Klieťka hanby ('cage of disgrace'), erected by Protestants around 1600 as a pillory for women! On the road again, we passed the impressive and imposing castle ruin Spišský hrad, burnt to the ground in 1781, before heading south at Prešov along the rather bland and 'uneventful' dual carriageway towards Košice. Once there we went our separate ways: most heading to the main street to stroll or search for presents, whilst Irene and Bob headed off to the nearby local park to cram in a last birding session!

Our week in Slovakia was nearing an end as we headed out of Košice towards the airport. In the bright sunshine we reluctantly checked in for our early afternoon return flight to Prague and before boarding said farewell to Pavol. What a fantastic week it had been, full of exciting wildlife moments and with many memories to treasure. Quite extraordinarily, it had been a week for both exceptional and prolonged views of several very desirable birds and we had enjoyed our best ever views of little bittern, saker, Ural owl, middle-spotted woodpecker, alpine accentor, river warbler, icterine warbler, barred warbler and scarlet rosefinch with, in addition, more than acceptable views of lesser spotted eagle, honey buzzard, corncrake, black woodpecker, Syrian woodpecker, ring ouzel, great reed, marsh and Savi's warblers and nutcracker.

Many thanks to Pavol for organizing a packed but very rewarding itinerary. Many thanks to our drivers Pavol and Fedo for driving safely and so well throughout the week and to our guides Josef, Stefan, Miloš, Eva and Peter, whose company and knowledge enriched our stay. Finally, I'd like to thank Pavol, John, Rosemary, Derek, Bill, Margaret, Irene and Bob for being such great company.

In producing this report I'd again like to thank Pavol for his help, patiently answering my pedantic questions and providing place names where I had gaps.

Bird highlights of the week were Ural owl, corncrake and alpine accentor, the raptors as a whole and for Pavol, finding an additional territorial pair of lesser spotted eagles!

Non-avian highlights were the fire salamanders in the rain, the meadows near Bačkov and the Slanské Hills as a whole, the flowers in Prosiecka Valley and the long walks on Wednesday and Friday, whilst

Derek's was the entire holiday!

Systematic lists

Birds

Little Grebe

1 seen and several heard, Senník wetland, 19/5 and 2 at the small wetland near Bažka, 20/5.

Great Crested Grebe

3 on Zemplinska Ťrava and several, Senník wetland, 19/5 and on the wetland south of Turniansky hrad, 21/5.

Red-necked Grebe

3, Senník wetland, 19/5 and 2 at the small wetland near Bažka, 20/5.

Black-necked Grebe

c.18, Senník wetland, 19/5.

Cormorant

Senník wetland, including a breeding colony, 19/5.

Bittern

1-2 heard booming, Senník wetland, 19/5 and 1 booming at the wetland south of Turniansky hrad, 21/5.

Little Bittern

Splendid views of an adult male, Senník wetland, 19/5 and 1 at the small wetland near Bažka, 20/5.

Night Heron

Senník wetland, 19/5; 1 at a pond near Vojany and many pairs breeding within a mixed heronry at Rad in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Little Egret

Senník wetland, 19/5 and breeding within a mixed heronry at Rad in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Great White Egret

c.30, Senník wetland, 19/5 (as numerous as little egret); 1, at a pond near Vojany and c.5, Stráň, 20/5; 1, on the wetland south of Turniansky hrad, 21/5.

Grey Heron

Seen daily, 19/5-23/5, including several at Senník wetland on 19/5 and breeding within a mixed heronry at Rad in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Purple Heron

3, Senník wetland, 19/5 and 1 from the minibus, south of the Latorica river valley, 20/5.

Black Stork

1 soaring over farmland near Ťava, southeast of KoŤce, 17/5 and 2, Senník wetland, 19/5. 2 overhead at the pond near Vojany; 1 near Beňá in the Latorica River valley and 2, Stráň, 20/5.

White Stork

Seen daily, including foraging individuals (often in newly mown or ploughed fields) and birds at village nests. 15+ gathered on meadows, Senník wetland, 19/5.

Spoonbill

2, Senník wetland, 19/5.

Mute Swan

Senník wetland, 19/5 and at the wetland south of Turniansky hrad, 21/5.

Greylag Goose

c.6, Senník wetland, 19/5.

Wigeon

4-5, Senník wetland, 19/5.

Gadwall

Senník wetland, 19/5 and 1 at a pond near Vojany, 20/5.

Mallard

Seen daily, 19/5-23/5, including 1 on the snow reservoir near Tri DomŤeky, Lower Tatras National Park, 23/5.

Garganey

c.15, Senník wetland, 19/5; 1 at a pond near Vojany and 1, near Beňá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Pochard

6, Senník wetland, 19/5; 1 at a pond near Vojany and 2, at the small wetland near Bažka, 20/5; several on the wetland south of Turniansky hrad, 21/5.

Tufted Duck

Senník wetland, 19/5.

Honey Buzzard

Seen daily, 17/5-22/5.

Black Kite

1 near Rad, in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

White-tailed Eagle

An immature, soaring in the distance, Senní wetland, 19/5.

Marsh Harrier

Seen daily in the lowlands, 17/5-21/5 and again on 24/5. Numerous at Senní wetland, 19/5 and males in spectacular display flight near Beňá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Montagu's Harrier

An immature high over farmland near a-a, southeast of Košice, 17/5 and a female over farmland near Hráel', 20/5.

Goshawk

A male, low over the conifer plantation at Svätý Kríž 22/5.

Buzzard

Seen daily, 17/5-23/5.

Lesser Spotted Eagle

1 seen well near Krátna, southeast of Košice, 17/5; 2 near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills and 2 near Višňov, 18/5; 1 adjacent to a quarry site near Hráel', 20/5.

Imperial Eagle

1 soaring over farmland near a-a, southeast of Košice, 17/5; a female, southeast of Michalovce, 19/5; a female and an immature in farmland near Hráel', 20/5 and 1 over the goldendrop site, Slovak Karst National Park south of Turniansky hrad, 21/5.

Golden Eagle

2 over the Demänovská Valley near Hotel Limba, 22/5.

Kestrel

Seen daily.

Hobby

1, near Beňá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5 and 1, on the high meadows north of Prosiecka Valley, Chošská Hills, 23/5.

Saker

A pair in farmland southeast of Košice, 17/5; 1, Senní wetland, 19/5 and 1 in farmland west of Košice, 21/5.

Partridge (Grey Partridge)

2 in lowland farmland, 19/5.

Quail

All heard: 1, near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5; 3, Senní wetland, 19/5; 1, near Beňá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5 and 1, Turá nad Bodvou, 21/5.

Pheasant

Seen or heard daily in the lowlands, 17/5-20/5.

Water Rail

Heard, Senní wetland, 19/5.

Corncrake

1 seen very well in a meadow, Kosiare forest area, Juskova Vol'a, Slanské Hills, 18/5.

Moorhen

Singles, Senní wetland, 19/5 and at the small wetland near Bažka, 20/5.

Coot

Present at Senní wetland, 19/5; at a pond near Vojany and the small wetland near Bažka, 20/5; on the wetland south of Turniansky hrad, 21/5.

Crane

4, Senní wetland, 19/5.

Avocet

Senní wetland, 19/5.

Little Ringed Plover

5+, Senní wetland, 19/5.

Ringed Plover

c.8, Senní wetland, 19/5.

Grey Plover

3, Senní wetland, 19/5.

Lapwing

Seen daily, 19/5-20/5 and 22/5-24/5 including 9, Strážne, 20/5.

Temminck's Stint

10, Senní wetland, 19/5.

Curlew Sandpiper

4+, Senní wetland, 19/5.

Dunlin

Senník wetland, 19/5.

Ruff

Senník wetland, 19/5.

Black-tailed Godwit

c.15, Senník wetland, 19/5.

Redshank

2+, Senník wetland, 19/5.

Wood Sandpiper

Senník wetland, 19/5.

Little Gull

c.30, Senník wetland, 19/5.

Black-headed Gull

Seen daily, 19/5-23/5.

Yellow-legged Gull

Senník wetland, 19/5 and Liptovské Mikulce 22/5.

Whiskered Tern

2, Senník wetland, 19/5; several at a pond near Vojany and c.11 at the small wetland near Bažka, 20/5.

Black Tern

c.10, Senník wetland, 19/5 and 11 at the small wetland near Bažka, 20/5.

White-winged Black Tern

1 in splendid summer plumage, Senník wetland, 19/5.

Feral Pigeon

Small numbers seen daily.

Stock Dove

Small numbers in lowland farmland, 17/5-19/5 and on 21/5.

Woodpigeon

Seen daily.

Collared Dove

Seen daily, 17/5-21/5 and on 24/5.

Turtle Dove

Small numbers seen or heard daily, 17/5-22/5.

Cuckoo

Seen or heard daily, 17/5-23/5.

Eagle Owl

An adult on a ledge at a quarry near Hráčel', 20/5.

Ural Owl

Superb views of a female in beech forest southeast of Košice, 17/5.

Swift

Small numbers seen daily, 19/5-24/5.

Bee-eater

1 calling, high over farmland near Čača and 2, near Nizná Mysl'a, southeast of Košice, 17/5; 2 at a quarry site near Hráčel', 1 near Hrad and a breeding colony, Strážske, 20/5.

Hoopoe

1, near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5; 1, Senník wetland, 19/5; 1, Strážske, 20/5 and 1, opposite the abandoned vineyards south of Turnianský hrad, Turá nad Bodvou, 21/5.

Wryneck

1 and another heard, near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5 and 1 heard, Biela hora, Michalovce, 19/5.

Grey-headed Woodpecker

1 heard by Stefan and Steve, in the park adjacent to the Zemplínske museum, Michalovce, 19/5.

Black Woodpecker

An adult male gave superb views in forest on steep slopes near Hotel Limba, Demänovská Valley, 22/5.

Great Spotted Woodpecker

A male with family party, in forest near Hotel Dargov, 19/5; 1 heard in forest on the plateau above Zdielska Gorge, Slovak Karst National Park, 21/5; 1, Liptov village folk museum, Pribylina, 22/5 and 1, Hotel Limba, Demänovská Valley, 23/5.

Syrian Woodpecker

Excellent views of 1 in the park adjacent to the Zemplínske museum, Michalovce, 19/5; 1 at the small wetland near Bažka, 20/5 and 1-2 in the abandoned vineyards next to the goldendrop site, south of Turnianský hrad, 21/5.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker

1, Biela hora, Michalovce, 19/5.

White-backed Woodpecker

1 heard by Pavol on the forest walk near Juskova Vol'a, Slanské Hills, 18/5.

Crested Lark

1 and another heard, near Beňa in the Latorica River valley and 1 near the border crossing into Hungary, Slovenske Nové Mesto, 20/5; 2, Turá nad Bodvou, 21/5.

Woodlark

3, near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5.

Skylark

Seen daily.

Sand Martin

Several wetland, 19/5; several, Strážne, 20/5 and several over the river in Liptovské Mikulce, 22/5.

Swallow

Seen daily.

House Martin

Seen daily.

Tree Pipit

2, near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5; 2+, Liptov village folk museum, Pribylina and 1 in scattered scrub and pines on the nature reserve adjacent to the church at Svätý Kríž, 22/5; 1, Prosiecka Valley, Chočské Hills, 23/5.

Meadow Pipit

Several on the high meadows north of Prosiecka Valley, Chočské Hills, 23/5.

Water Pipit

Several on the slopes of Chopok, Lower Tatras National Park, 23/5.

Blue-headed Wagtail

Seen daily in the lowlands, 17/5-21/5.

Grey Wagtail

Seen daily, 20/5-23/5 including a male at the pond near Hotel Dargov, 20/5 and 4, Prosiecka Valley, Chočské Hills, 23/5.

White Wagtail

Seen daily.

Dipper

1 in Záhorská dielska Gorge, Slovak Karst National Park, 21/5.

Wren

1, in forest near Hotel Dargov, 19/5; 1, Záhorská dielska Gorge, Slovak Karst National Park, 21/5 and 1 heard, Hotel Limba, Demänovská Valley, 23/5.

Duncock

1, Liptov village folk museum, Pribylina and 1 on steep slopes near Hotel Limba, Demänovská Valley, 22/5; several in pine scrub on the slopes of Chopok, Lower Tatras National Park and in Prosiecka Valley, Chočské Hills, 23/5.

Alpine Accentor

Amazing, close views of 3 birds down to a few feet, Chopok, Lower Tatras National Park, 23/5.

Robin

Seen or heard daily, 17/5-19/5, on 21/5 and again, 23/5-24/5.

Nightingale

Heard singing on 17/5 and daily, 19/5-21/5, particularly at the river valley sites and at sites in the south close to the Hungarian border on 20/5. 1 seen briefly in the park adjacent to the Zemplínske museum, Michalovce, 19/5; 1 seen at the 'eagle owl' quarry near Hrádel, 20/5 and 1 seen well by Steve in the abandoned vineyards next to the goldendrop site, south of Turniansky hrad, 21/5.

Black Redstart

Seen daily including a pair with nest at Hotel Dargov.

Whinchat

3 on the high meadows north of Prosiecka Valley, Chočské Hills, 23/5.

Stonechat

Seen daily, 17/5-22/5.

Wheatear

2, near Beňa in the Latorica River valley, 20/5 and 1, on Chopok, Lower Tatras National Park, 23/5.

Ring Ouzel

Bill and Steve had good views of a male in a Norway spruce at the chairlift at Tri Domky, Lower Tatras National Park and there were 2+ males in spruces on the edge of the high meadows north of Prosiecka Valley, Chočské Hills, 23/5.

Blackbird

Seen or heard daily.

Fieldfare

Seen in the lowlands on 18/5 and then daily, 21/5-24/5, including 4 in Košice, 21/5; birds around Hotel Limba; Liptov village folk museum at Pribylina and the salas at Ľiar on 22/5 and 1 in the park Petrovov sad, Košice, 24/5.

Song Thrush

Seen or heard daily.

Mistle Thrush

3 in scattered scrub and pines on the nature reserve adjacent to the church at Svätý Kríž 22/5 and 1 in Norway spruce on the lower slopes of Chopok, Lower Tatras National Park, 23/5.

River Warbler

1 heard, near Kráľova, southeast of Košice, 17/5; 1 heard on the outskirts of Vranov nad Topľou, 18/5; 1 and another heard, near Beľá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5; incredible views of 1 in scrub at the edge of Liptovská Mara reservoir south of Liptovská Sielnica, 23/5.

Savi's Warbler

2 heard 'reeling', Senný wetland, 19/5 and good (but brief) views of 2 near Beľá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Sedge Warbler

Senný wetland, 19/5; 2 heard, near Beľá and heard near Rad, in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Marsh Warbler

Heard near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5; 1, at a quarry site near Hrádel' and 2 heard at the small wetland near Bažka, 20/5; 1 heard singing in the abandoned vineyards next to the goldendrop site, south of Turniansky hrad, 21/5; 1 seen well in scrub at the edge of Liptovská Mara reservoir south of Liptovská Sielnica, 23/5.

Reed Warbler

One heard, Senný wetland, 19/5.

Great Reed Warbler

2 seen well and several heard; at both Senný wetland on 19/5 and at the small wetland near Bažka, 20/5.

Icterine Warbler

3, in the park adjacent to the Zemplínske museum, Michalovce, 19/5; 1 at the salas at Ľiar, 22/5; 1 heard at the edge of Liptovská Mara reservoir south of Liptovská Sielnica, 23/5 and 1 seen by Bob and Irene in the park Petrovov sad, Košice, 24/5.

Barred Warbler

Several, near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5; 1, at a quarry site near Hrádel' and 1 heard near Beľá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5; 1, plus another heard, in the abandoned vineyards next to the goldendrop site, south of Turniansky hrad, 21/5.

Lesser Whitethroat

Seen on 19/5; 1, at a quarry site near Hrádel' and 1 heard at the small wetland near Bažka, 20/5; 1 heard at the salas at Ľiar and 1 heard on steep slopes near Hotel Limba, Demänovská Valley, 22/5.

Whitethroat

Seen daily, 17/5-20/5 and again on 24/5.

Garden Warbler

Seen or heard daily on 17/5-18/5, again on 20/5 and daily, 22/5-23/5.

Blackcap

Seen or heard in song daily, 18/5-24/5.

Wood Warbler

Several, near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills and 1 heard, Kosiare forest area, Juskova Vol'a, Slanské Hills, 18/5; 1, in forest near Hotel Dargov, 19/5; 1 heard in forest on the plateau above Zdielska Gorge, Slovak Karst National Park, 21/5 and 1 heard, Prosiecka Valley, Chošské Hills, 23/5.

Chiffchaff

Seen or heard daily, 18/5-19/5 and 21/5-23/5.

Willow Warbler

Seen or heard daily, 21/5-23/5.

Goldcrest

1 plus another heard, Demänovská ice-caves, Demänovská Valley and 1 in the conifer plantation at Svätý Kríž 22/5; seen and heard singing, Prosiecka Valley, Chošské Hills, 23/5 and heard, Hotel Limba, Demänovská Valley, 24/5.

Firecrest

1 heard singing, Hotel Limba, Demänovská Valley and 1, plus another singing, in forest on steep slopes near Hotel Limba, 22/5; 1, Hotel Limba and 1, Prosiecka Valley, Chošské Hills, 23/5.

Spotted Flycatcher

Seen daily, 18/5-24/5 including a pair around Hotel Dargov and 3 in the park adjacent to the Zemplínske museum, Michalovce, 19/5.

Red-breasted Flycatcher

1 seen well and another briefly, Kosiare forest area, Juskova Vol'a, Slansk Hills, 18/5 and 1 heard in forest on the plateau above Zdielska Gorge, Slovak Karst National Park, 21/5.

Collared Flycatcher

2 males and a female, near Bažkov on the edge of the Slansk Hills and 1 male and another heard, Kosiare forest area, Juskova Vol'a, Slansk Hills, 18/5.

Long-tailed Tit

Several heard in the scrub above Zdiel, Slovak Karst National Park, 21/5.

Marsh Tit

2-3, Biela hora, Michalovce, 19/5.

Willow Tit

1, Liptov village folk museum, Pribylina, 22/5 and 1, Prosiecka Valley, Chošsk Hills, 23/5.

Crested Tit

1 heard, Demnovsk ice-caves and 2, plus another singing, in forest on steep slopes near Hotel Limba, Demnovsk Valley, 22/5; 2, Hotel Limba, 23/5, with 1 heard there, 24/5.

Coal Tit

2, Liptov village folk museum, Pribylina and heard, Demnovsk ice-caves, Demnovsk Valley, 22/5; 1, Prosiecka Valley, Chošsk Hills, 23/5.

Blue Tit

1, Hotel Dargov and heard in the scrub, above Zdiel, Slovak Karst National Park, 21/5.

Great Tit

Seen or heard daily, 17/5-23/5.

Nuthatch

1 heard, near Kršna, southeast of Košce, 17/5; Biela hora, Michalovce and in the park adjacent to the Zemplinske museum, Michalovce, 19/5.

Treecreeper

1 heard, Kosiare forest area, Juskova Vol'a, Slansk Hills, 18/5 and 1, in forest near Hotel Dargov, 19/5.

Penduline Tit

1 heard near Nizna Mysl'a, southeast of Košce, 17/5; a pair making frequent visits to the nest, plus another seen near the tower, Senn wetland, 19/5; 1 heard at a quarry site near Hráč and 1 seen well at the nest and others heard, near Beň in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Golden Oriole

Seen or (mostly) heard daily in the lowlands, 17/5-21/5, including early morning song at Hotel Dargov and 3+ seen well near Beň in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Red-backed Shrike

Seen daily, 17/5-23/5.

Great Grey Shrike

3 in scattered scrub and pines on the nature reserve adjacent to the church at Svätý Kríž 22/5.

Jay

Seen daily, 19/5-23/5.

Magpie

Seen daily.

Nutcracker

2, Hotel Limba, Demnovsk Valley and 1-2, in forest on steep slopes near Hotel Limba, 22/5; 1 at the edge of the high meadows north of Prosiecka Valley, Chošsk Hills, 23/5 and 1, Hotel Limba, 24/5.

Jackdaw

Seen daily, 19/5-24/5, including a partial albino in Michalovce, 19/5.

Rook

Seen on 17/5 and daily, 19/5-23/5, including several in Michalovce, 19/5; in Poprad on 21/5 and at a rookery in Liptovský Mikuláš 22/5-23/5. A bird of the urban environment and farmland.

Hooded Crow

Seen daily, 18/5-23/5.

Raven

Seen daily, 17/5-19/5 and 21/5-23/5 including a group of 5 near Kršna, 17/5. In eastern Slovakia, frequently seen in open, lowland farmland.

Starling

Seen daily.

House Sparrow

Seen daily, 17/5-21/5 and 23/5-24/5.

Tree Sparrow

Seen daily, 17/5-21/5 and on 23/5. Present around Hotel Dargov.

Chaffinch

Seen or heard daily.

Serín

Seen or heard daily, including bright, singing males at Hotel Dargov and Hotel Limba.

Greenfinch

Seen daily, 17/5-23/5.

Goldfinch

Seen daily.

Siskin

1, Liptov village folk museum, Pribylina and heard calling around the church at Svätý Kríž 22/5.

Linnet

3, Senný wetland, 19/5 and small numbers seen daily, 21/5-23/5.

Crossbill

1, Liptov village folk museum, Pribylina and 2 over the conifer plantation at Svätý Kríž 22/5.

Scarlet Rosefinch

2 stunning males, a female and another male singing, in scrub at the edge of Liptovský Marš reservoir south of Liptovský Šielnica, 23/5.

Bullfinch

2, Liptov village folk museum, Pribylina, 22/5.

Hawfinch

c.7, near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5; 4, at a quarry site near Hrádel', 20/5; 1, Liptov village folk museum at Pribylina, 22/5 and 3, at the edge of Liptovský Marš reservoir south of Liptovský Šielnica, 23/5.

Yellowhammer

Seen or heard daily, 17/5-23/5.

Rock Bunting

A male and female at the goldendrop site, Slovak Karst National Park, south of Turnianský hrad, 21/5.

Reed Bunting

2, Senný wetland, 19/5 and 1, near Beňá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Corn Bunting

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5; Senný wetland, 19/5 and in open farmland (from the minibus) on 18/5 & 21/5.

Budgerigar

1, for a while being hotly pursued by a male saker, in farmland near Šaľa, southeast of Košice, 17/5.

Mammals

English & scientific names follow *The Atlas of European Mammals* (Mitchell-Jones *et al.* 1999)

Eastern Hedgehog *Erinaceus concolor*

Road kills noted on 19/5, 20/5 & 24/5.

Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*

1 just outside Trebišov; 1 in arable farmland near Hrádel' and 1 at a pond near Vojany, 20/5.

Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

1, near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 19/5 and 1 at the goldendrop site, Slovak Karst National Park, south of Turniansky hrad, 21/5.

Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

1, Hotel Limba, Demänovská Valley, 22/5.

Alpine Marmot *Marmota marmota*

1, Chopok, Lower Tatras National Park, 23/5.

European Sousek *Spermophilus citellus*

Several seen well on a 'sousek meadow', Strážske, 20/5.

Muskrat *Ondatra zibethicus*

1, Senná wetland, 19/5. A Nearctic species, introduced to Europe in 1905.

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*

2, Liptov village folk museum, Pribylina, 22/5.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

1, on the high meadows north of Prosiecka Valley, Chočské Hills, 23/5. Scats (droppings) noted near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 19/5 and Strážske, 20/5.

Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

1, in forest near Hotel Limba, Demänovská Valley, 22/5; 1 near Liptovské Mara reservoir, south of Liptovské Sielnica and a female with fawn, on the high meadows north of Prosiecka Valley, Chočské Hills, 23/5.

Alpine Chamois *Rupicapra rupicapra*

4, Chopok, Lower Tatras National Park, 23/5.

Amphibians & Reptiles

English & scientific names follow *A Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Britain and Europe* (Arnold & Burton 1978)

Fire Salamander *Salamandra salamandra*

5 (in the rain!), in forest above Zdielska Gorge, Slovak Karst National Park, 21/5.

Yellow-bellied Toad *Bombina variegata*

1, near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5 and 5 in ruts along the track on the high meadows above Prosiecka Valley, Chočské Hills, 23/5.

Fire-bellied Toad *Bombina bombina*

Heard at Senná wetland, 19/5.

Marsh Frog *Rana ridibunda*

Near Beňuš and near Rad, in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis*

A juvenile seen by Rosemary, near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5.

Green Lizard *Lacerta viridis*

1 seen by Bob at the goldendrop site, Slovak Karst National Park south of Turniansky hrad, 21/5.

Butterflies

English & scientific names largely follow Collins Field Guide to Butterflies of Britain & Europe (Tolman & Lewington 1997)

Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*

In farmland near Ľáa, southeast of Košice, 17/5 and at the goldendrop site, Slovak Karst National Park, south of Turniansky hrad, 21/5.

Scarce Swallowtail *Iphiclides podalirius*

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills and Kosiare forest area, Juskova Vol'á, Slanské Hills, 18/5; near Beňá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Southern Festoon *Zerynthia polyxena*

Near Beňá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Black-veined White *Aporia crataegi*

Near Beňá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Green-veined White *Artogeia napi*

Near Beňá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5 and Prosiecka ('Bear') Valley, Chošské Hills, 23/5.

Orange Tip *Anthocharis cardamines*

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5; Senné wetland, 19/5; Near Beňá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5; meadow and scrub near the edge of Liptovské Mara reservoir south of Liptovské Sielnica and Prosiecka Valley, Chošské Hills, 23/5.

Pale Clouded Yellow *Colias hyale* or **Berger's Clouded Yellow** *Colias alfacariensis*

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5.

Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*

Prosiecka Valley, Chošské Hills, 23/5.

Wood White *Leptidea sinapis* or **Fenton's Wood White** *Leptidea morsei*

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5 and Prosiecka Valley, Chošské Hills, 23/5.

Black Hairstreak *Satyrium pruni*

At a quarry site near Hráel', 20/5. In blackthorn scrub.

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

Senné wetland, 19/5 and near Beňá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5 and near Beňá in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Camberwell Beauty *Nymphalis antiopa*

Prosiecka Valley, Chošské Hills, 23/5; seen by John, Rosemary and Steve.

Peacock Butterfly *Inachis io*

Meadow and scrub near the edge of Liptovské Mara reservoir south of Liptovské Sielnica, 23/5.

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

In farmland near Ľáa, southeast of Košice, 17/5; near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5 and near Senderov, 19/5.

Map Butterfly *Araschnia levana*

2, in the meadow and scrub near the edge of Liptovské Mara reservoir south of Liptovské Sielnica, 23/5.

Glanville Fritillary *Melitaea cinxia*

On the plateau above Zdielska Gorge, Slovak Karst National Park, 21/5.

Knapweed Fritillary *Melitaea pheobe*

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5.

Woodland Ringlet *Erebia medusa*

Goldendrop site, south of Turniansky hrad and on the plateau above Zdielska Gorge, Slovak Karst National Park, 21/5 and in the meadow and scrub near the edge of Liptovské Mara reservoir south of Liptovské Sielnica, 23/5.

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5; near Beňá in the Latorica River valley and at a quarry site near Hráel', 20/5.

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5.

Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*

At a quarry site near Hráel', 20/5.

Chequered Skipper *Carterocephalus palaemon*

Kosiare forest area, Juskova Vol'á, Slanské Hills, 18/5.

Large Skipper *Ochlodes venatus*

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills, 18/5.

Moths

Elephant Hawk-moth *Deilephila elpenor*

1, Hotel Dargov, 18/5.

Dragonflies

a *Gomphus* dragonfly, probably **Club-tailed Dragonfly** *Gomphus vulgatissimus*

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slansk[⊕] Hills, 18/5.

Lesser Emperor *Anax parthenope*

Senn[□] wetland, 19/5.

Some miscellaneous invertebrates

Longhorn beetle sp.

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slansk[⊕] Hills, 18/5.

A large, spotted **weevil**

Prosiecka Valley, Chožsk[□] Hills, 23/5.

Field Cricket

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slansk[⊕] Hills, 18/5 and in the abandoned vineyards next to the goldendrop site, south of Turniansky hrad, 21/5.

Hornet *Vespa crabro*

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slansk[⊕] Hills, 18/5 and near Beř^á in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

a **Raft Spider** sp.

Seen by Rosemary on a pond near Rad, in the Latorica River valley, 20/5.

Roman Snail

Near Bažkov on the edge of the Slansk[⊕] Hills, 18/5; in the abandoned vineyards next to the goldendrop site south of Turniansky hrad and in Z[□] dielska Gorge, Slovak Karst National Park, 21/5 and in Prosiecka Valley, Chožsk[□] Hills, 23/5.

Carpathian Blue Slug

4 (1 violet-blue in coloration, the others green!) in the Z[□] dielska Gorge, Slovak Karst National Park, 21/5; 2 (both green), Dem[□] novsk[□] ice-caves and 2 (1 violet-blue/1 green), in forest on steep slopes near Hotel Limba, Dem[□] novsk[□] Valley, 22/5. **Endemic to the Carpathian mountains region.**

A freshwater **leech**

A number in an ephemeral pool in ruts on the alpine meadows above Prosiecka valley, Chožsk[□] Hills, 23/5.

Flowering and other plants

Saturday, 17 May Beech forest near Kránska, east of Košice (Ural owl wood)

Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*

Sunday, 18 May Slanské Hills

Forest & scrub near Bažkov on the edge of the Slanské Hills

Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*

Green-winged Orchid *Orchis morio*

Lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis*

Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*

Solomon's-seal sp. *Polygonatum*

White Helleborine *Cephalanthera damasonium*

Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*

Kosiare forest area, Juskova Vol'a

Asarabacca *Asarum europaeum*

Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*

Coral-root Bitter-cress *Cardamine bulbifera*

Dwarf Elder *Sambucus ebulus*

Goldilocks Buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus*

Pyramidal Bugle sp. *Ajuga pyramidalis* or *genevensis*

Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*

Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*

Wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*

Monday, 19 May

Biela hora, Michalovce

Solomon's-seal sp. *Polygonatum*

White Helleborine *Cephalanthera damasonium*

a Wood Melick *Melica* sp.

Senný wetland

Large stands of Ragged-Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*

Tuesday, 20 May

Arable farmland near Hrádel'

Cornflower *Centaurea cyanus*

Quarry site near Hrádel'

Crosswort *Galium cruciata*

Field Eryngo *Eryngium campestre*

Hoary Cinquefoil sp. *Potentilla* sp.

a purple Orache *Atriplex* sp.

Oxlip *Primula elatior*

Swallow-wort *Vincetoxicum hirundinaria*

Near Beňa in the Latorica River valley

Birthwort *Aristolochia clematitis*

Carthusian Pink *Dianthus carthusianorum*

Dropwort *Filipendula vulgaris*

Hound's Tongue sp. *Cynoglossum* sp.

Star-of-Bethlehem sp. *Ornithogalum* sp.

Yellow Vetch *Vicia lutea*

Wednesday, 21 May

Goldendrop site, Turniansky hradny vrch, Slovak Karst National Park

Bastard Balm *Melittis melissophyllum*

a Bellflower *Campanula siberica*

Bladder Campion *Silene vulgaris*

a Broomrape sp. *Orobanche*

Cornelian Cherry *Cornus mas*
 Downy Oak *Quercus pubescens*
 Field Cow-wheat *Melampyrum arvense*
 Field Eryngo *Eryngium campestre*
 Flax sp. *Linum*
 Goldendrop *Onosma viciani* (branched). Not in flower.
 Greater Celandine *Chelidonium majus*
 Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*
 Houseleek sp. *Sempervivum*
 Jurinea *Jurinea mollis* ssp. *macrocalathia* **Subspecies endemic to the Slovak Karst region**
 Meadow Clary *Salvia pratensis*
 Mountain Germander *Teucrium montanum* (has yellow flower)
 Mountain (or Blue) Lettuce *Lactuca perennis*
 Orange Mullein *Verbascum phlomoides* (flowers violet rather than yellow or orange-yellow as described)
 a Rockrose *Helianthemum nummularium* ssp. *grandiflorum*
 a Seseli sp. *Seseli* sp.
 Sickle Hare's-ear *Bupleurum falcatum*
 Solomon's-seal sp. *Polygonatum*
 Spring Pheasant's-eye *Adonis vernalis*
 a Spurge *Euphorbia polychroma*
 Stinking Meadow-rue *Thalictrum foetidum*
 Swallow-wort *Vincetoxicum hirundinaria*
 Towercress *Arabis turrata*
 Tur-a Goldendrop *Onosma tornensis* (unbranched). **Endemic to the Slovak Karst region**
 White Helleborine *Cephalanthera damasonium*
 a Yarrow *Achillea pannonica* (an alpine Yarrow species)
 Yellow Woundwort *Stachys recta*

Z[] dielska plateau & gorge, Slovak Karst National Park

Alpine Aster *Aster alpinus*
 a white flowered Anemone
 Asarabacca *Asarum europaeum*
 Austrian Dragonhead *Dracocephalum austriacum*
 Barberry *Berberis vulgaris*
 Bastard Balm *Melittis melissophyllum*
 Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*
 Blue Gromwell *Buglossoides purpureo-caerulea*
 Butterbur sp. *Petasites* sp. (streamside, gorge)
 Carthusian Pink *Dianthus carthusianorum*
 a purple-flowered Clover *Trifolium alpestre*
 Common Juniper *Juniperus communis*
 Coral-root Bitter-cress *Cardamine bulbifera*
 Coralroot Orchid *Corallorhiza trifida*
Dianthus praecox ssp. *hungarica* (white, 'frilly-edged' flower)
 Downy Oak *Quercus pubescens*
 Drooping Bitter-cress *Cardamine enneaphyllos* (in gorge)
 Dusky Crane's-bill *Geranium phaeum* (streamside, gorge)
 Goatsbeard *Spiraea Aruncus dioicus*
 Hungarian Dyer's Greenweed *Genista tinctoria* ssp. *hungarica*
 Hungarian Iris *Iris aphylla* ssp. *hungarica*
 Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*
 Lady's-mantle sp. *Alchemilla*
 Lesser Honeywort *Cerinthe minor*
 Lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis*
 Mountain Clover *Trifolium montanum*
 Mountain (or Blue) Lettuce *Lactuca perennis*
 Needle-grass sp. *Stipa* ('feathery')
 Pasque Flower sp. *Pulsatilla*
 Perennial Honesty *Lunaria rediviva* (streamside, gorge)
 Pyramidal Bugle *Ajuga genevensis*
 Solomon's-seal sp. *Polygonatum*
 Spreading Bellflower *Campanula patula*

a Speedwell *Veronica prostrata*
Thyme sp. *Thymus* sp. (abundant on the sheep meadow)
Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria*
a Mustard sp. probably Tower Mustard *Arabis glabra*
White Helleborine *Cephalanthera damasonium*
Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*
a Woodruff sp. *Galium odoratum* or *Galium glaucum*
Yellow Archangel *Lamium galeobdolon*
Yew *Taxus baccata*

Brief roadside stop, Slovak Paradise National Park, Straten

Butterbur sp. *Petasites* sp.
Globeflower *Trollius europaeus*
Lady's-mantle *Alchemilla mollis*
Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*

Thursday, 22 May

Salas at Ľiar

Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*. Abundant along the stream

Dem'nová , Dem'novská Valley

Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*
Broad-leaved Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza majalis*
a Broomrape sp. *Orobanche*
Butterwort sp. *Pinguicula* sp. (not in flower)
Cotton-grass sp. *Eriophorum* sp.
Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis*
Marsh Arrow-grass *Triglochin palustris*
Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*
Valerian sp. *Valeriana* sp.
Water Avens *Geum rivale*

Dem'novská ice-caves, Dem'novská Valley

Auricula *Primula auricula* (not in flower)
Clusius's Gentian *Gentiana clusii*
Lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis*
May Lily *Maianthemum bifolium*
Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*
a Snowbell *Soldanella carpatica*
Solomon's-seal sp. *Polygonatum*

Wet raised mire near the church at Svätý Kríž

Bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*
Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis*
Heather *Calluna vulgaris*
Pyramidal Bugle sp. *Ajuga pyramidalis* or *genevensis*
Violet sp. *Viola* sp.
Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*

Forest near Hotel Limba, Dem'novská Valley

Alpine Clematis *Clematis alpina*
Broad-leaved Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza majalis*
Common Columbine *Aquilegia vulgaris*
Lungwort sp. *Pulmonaria* sp.
May Lily *Maianthemum bifolium*
Pyramidal Bugle sp. *Ajuga pyramidalis* or *genevensis*

Friday, 23 May

Chopok, Lower Tatras National Park

Alpine Avens *Geum montanum*
Lady's-mantle sp. *Alchemilla*
Least Primrose *Primula minima*
a Snowbell *Soldanella carpatica*

Prosiecka ('Bear') Valley, Chożsk□ Hills

Alpine Aster *Aster alpinus*
Asarabacca *Asarum europaeum*
Auricula *Primula auricula* (not in flower)
Great Masterwort (or Mountain Sanicle) *Astrantia major*
Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*
Bitter Vetch *Lathyrus montanus*
Butterbur sp. *Petasites*
Clusius's Gentian *Gentiana clusii*
Common Columbine *Aquilegia vulgaris*
Common Twayblade *Listera ovata*
Coralroot Orchid *Corallorhiza trifida*
Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*
Edelweiss *Leontopodium alpinum*
Goatsbeard Spiraea *Aruncus dioicus*
Great Meadow-rue *Thalictrum aquilegifolium*
Lesser Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera bifolia*
Lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis*
Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*
May Lily *Maianthemum bifolium*
Oxlip *Primula elatior*
Pasque Flower sp. *Pulsatilla*
a Snowbell *Soldanella carpatica*
Solomon's-seal sp. *Polygonatum*
Spleenwort sp. *Asplenium*
Strawberry sp. *Fragaria*
Thuringian Potentilla *Potentilla thuringiaca*
Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria*
Wall-rue *Asplenium ruta-muraria*
Wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*
Wood Spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*
Yellow Archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*
Yellow Wood Violet *Viola biflora*

On the alpine meadows above the valley

Broad-leaved Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza majalis*
Cotton-grass sp. *Eriophorum* sp.
Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis*
Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*
Lady's-mantle *Alchemilla mollis*
Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris*
Water Avens *Geum rivale*

