



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Danube Delta
1 – 8 June 2013

Holiday participants

Dixon and Valerie Gunn
Anne and Robin Law
Simon Cooke and Alice Everard
Richard and Sandra Beswetherick
Hilary Jones and Andrew Towers

Leaders

From Ibis: Eugen Petrescu, plus Mihai Petrescu for one day in Dobrogea.

<http://www.ibis-tours.ro/>

From Honeyguide: Russell Leavett

Report by Russell Leavett

Photos edged green by Hilary Jones and edged blue by Russell Leavett – these were taken during the holiday week.

Other photos by Daniel Petrescu

<http://www.danielpetrescu.ro/>

Cover montage of Daniel's photos: collared pratincole, rollers, whiskered terns, bee-eater.

Below: some of the group on the last day in Dobrogea.



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, the Romanian Ornithological Society's representative in the delta and one of our holiday leaders from Ibis.

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 £490 rounded to 630€ (£492). This brings the total given in Romania since the first Honeyguide holiday here in 1999 to £6,442. The total for all conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 was £89,420 as at June 2013.

DAILY DIARY

1 June – Bucharest to Tulcea



The Ibis 'floating hotel', our home for the next three days and nights.

Very much a day for travelling, with a five hour coach journey ahead of us after we arrived at Bucharest airport. Entering Romania was very smooth and quick and having met our Romanian leader, Eugen Petrescu, we were soon on the road and heading towards the Danube Delta. It was initially daunting to see the flat seas of agriculture, with vast acres of sunflowers, wheat and barley, and to be told that intensive agriculture was spreading rapidly and would do so even more once Romania was a full member of the EU. Already many new pieces of agricultural equipment were much in evidence, some in large storage areas awaiting the day when they could be used. Eugen told us that many areas we were passing had once been good for birds but apart from magpies and starlings little could be seen today. However here and there small areas had avoided cultivation, hinting at what would have been there in the past. As we got further away from Bucharest and these areas became more frequent, sudden surprises such as a red-footed falcon and then rollers delighted us. Cuckoos and turtle doves, now so scarce in much of Britain, soon appeared on roadside wires as did the occasional woodchat and lesser grey shrikes. In the case of the former it was the only one we were to see!

After we crossed the Danube into Dobrogea, agriculture became much less intense with a notable increase in birds such as rollers and, in a few places, calandra larks. We stopped to look over some fish ponds on route, which produced quite a lot of whiskered terns, a few ferruginous ducks and a lone ruddy shelduck, the only one we were to see. White storks were seen here and there and eventually a roadside nest gave us the chance to view the sparrows that were living 'downstairs' from the storks – a mixture of house and Spanish sparrows.

We made one major birding stop en route, at a rugged valley just off the main road which held an excellent colony of c40 bee-eaters. Below us sousliks (ground squirrels) were everywhere, diving into their burrows if we dared move. Eugen told us that their burrows made excellent nesting sites for Isabelline wheatears and it wasn't long before he had found some to show us. One pair was feeding freshly fledged young and others were nearby. We also saw several northern wheatears, both on route and at this stop. Overhead were buzzards – but these were long-legged buzzards with their pale, translucent tails, apparently hunting the sousliks. All this and distant rollers 'rolling' and the ever calling bee-eaters made for a delightful stop. I could have stayed for hours, but Tulcea was still some time away.

Eventually we arrived at the Ibis floating hotel, our home for the next few days. We were welcomed on board with a glass of schnapps and after a quick wash sat down to an excellent evening meal. The food was going to prove to be first class for our entire stay. We went to bed to the gentle movement of the boat, full of anticipation for tomorrow.

2 June – Danube Delta

After a good breakfast, we left the 'hotel' and climbed into a smaller boat for our journey through part of the delta. Within minutes we had spotted kingfishers in several places and had distant views of white pelicans soaring high in the sky. The riverside trees and scrub held an interesting collection of birds including nightingales, redstarts, chaffinches, lesser whitethroats and garden warblers – all very common, it seemed. The fluty song of the golden oriole was also heard but few got good views: just fleeting glimpses, so typical of the species. As we progressed deeper into the delta, a goldeneye was flushed from the water, not a bird I had expected to see at all but Eugen told us that they are becoming increasingly common in winter. I suggested putting up nest boxes in the hope that they might stay to breed.



Exploring side channels on the day launch.

Now it was time for the real waterbirds of the delta. Our excitement at seeing our first squacco heron was soon put into perspective when we saw lots more, both hunting on the channel-edge or in flooded marshes. They were everywhere it seemed, as were night herons, grey herons, a few purple herons and a number of little egrets. As we passed flooded marshland both glossy ibises and spoonbills flew up, giving us excellent close views. Pygmy cormorants and great cormorants added to the variety, as did Dalmatian pelicans that were found in small numbers in similar situations. Eugen carefully pointed out the differences between white and Dalmatian pelicans, the former often overhead in large numbers or feeding in tight groups on the water just ahead of us. Great white egrets were seen in several places, dwarfing the little egrets and squacco herons. A real highlight was our first view of a white-tailed eagle. Later in the day we saw several more and when we added them up at 'call-over' at the end of the day we came to the conclusion that six birds had been involved and we had also seen at least two nests. These enormous birds were spoilt for choice where food was concerned with so many waterbirds present, with their chicks in many cases – not to mention the many fishes, frogs etc.



White pelican (left) and Dalmatian pelican (right).
(Daniel Petrescu)

The riverside trees once again drew our attention, with a very noisy black woodpecker calling loudly from a dead tree. With time we had superb views of this bird and at one time it was vying with grey-headed woodpeckers for our approval – a real treat!

Suddenly we turned a corner and there was our floating hotel ready with our lunch. While we had been meandering our way through the narrow channels of the delta it had followed one of the larger arteries to meet us at a given point. This was to prove to be the pattern for each day, with different places being chosen for lunch and also for overnight mooring.

After a fine lunch we once again set off through the narrower channels into the delta, as well as delving into marshy areas that the boat could get through. Here were lots of nesting whiskered terns and the first red-necked and black-necked grebes, along with the more familiar great crested grebes. These places teemed with damsel and dragonflies and although one was tempted to name some, there was a risk that they were different species to those we see in the UK and no book was to hand.

In places mute swans were common as were greylag geese and the ever-present ferruginous ducks. Other ducks included gadwall and mallard, both of which were common, and smaller numbers of shovelers. Three red-crested pochards flew up from a lake, where there were also several common pochards. This was all set against a continuing and seemingly endless background of egrets, herons, cormorants, pelicans and the ibises – a truly magical start to our tour of the delta. Reedbed birds included the first of the reed warblers and the great reed warblers, the latter singing its harsh and loud song from atop the reeds. It's almost the size of a small song thrush, truly the largest of the warblers. Apart from the white-tailed eagles, raptors were few and far between, but we did see a number of marsh harriers.

Once again we met up with our hotel, which was towed to its mooring place for the night. Sitting on deck we were surrounded by waterbirds in all directions, moving between their nearby nesting sites to their feeding grounds farther afield. Clearly frogs were taking some punishment from many of these birds and they were extremely noisy all night long in a pleasant sort of way. Occasional booms of bitterns were heard, as were the grunting calls of little bitterns, but neither showed themselves. The bitterns boomed for much of the night, I suspect, because on the odd occasions that I woke up I always heard them.

3 June – Danube Delta

I awoke early to the incessant noise of the frogs and shortly was up on deck to see what was going on. Almost immediately I was treated to a 'flypast' of practically every breeding species of egret and heron in the delta. Shortly afterwards a male little bittern emerged from the reedbeds, flew round right in front of me and landed in nearby reeds, though sadly it wasn't seen again. Little bitterns are very good at skulking at the bottom of reeds, so as a result can be very hard to see. And still the bittern boomed, but we never actually did see one!

After breakfast once again we set off into the delta via the narrow channels. A few green sandpipers were flushed from the edges of the very narrow waterways and kingfishers featured frequently. Flooded lagoons produced yet more red-necked and black-necked grebes and three garganeys rose up in front of us. As we made our way along one of the waterways, two grey-headed woodpeckers showed themselves really well so everyone got a good look at them. They posed well in the top of a dead tree.

Very exciting to see was a number of penduline tit nests, found overhanging the waterways. In most cases the adults were present, close to their nests that were built on the end of branches: tidy and complex affairs, made in part with reed seed. Yet another white-tailed eagle was overhead as were a few hobbies, the ever-present marsh harriers and from time to time kestrels, although they were never common.

At one place we were able to go ashore, a welcome walk after being restricted to boats for a bit. We found both white and yellow wagtails by an area of embanked lagoons, and rather more in the way of waders. There were nice groups of black-winged stilts, some avocets, seemingly a lone curlew and a number of black-tailed godwits, the last mostly in their rich mahogany summer plumage. There were also lapwings that were clearly breeding there and best of all a small number of collared pratincoles, one of my favourite birds!

A mixed colony of marsh terns held many whiskered terns, as usual, but also some white-winged black terns and a few black terns. There were also common terns here and a few shelducks, some of the few we were to see.

On our way back to the boat we disturbed a hoopoe from some derelict buildings, to see it chase a little owl that was probably nesting there, too. These proved good value, affording us splendid views of both species. Reedbed birds later included our first bearded tits, or 'reedlings' as we are supposed to call them now.

While on our journeys through the delta we were regularly attended by groups of hunting hirundines, and bee-eaters and rollers were a common sight, often on dead trees by the waterside. We were struck by how common cuckoos were everywhere that we went – it was good to know that they are still common in some places. Yet more black-tailed godwits were located in a flooded area and very briefly towards the end of the day a female little bittern flew a short distance.

4 June – Danube Delta

This was to be our last full day on the delta before returning to Tulcea for the night. The plan was that we would return to our floating hotel for lunch and then be towed back to Tulcea where we would spend the night onboard tied up to the jetty.

Once again we set off through the narrow waterways into the heart of the delta, to just soak up the atmosphere of place and take our fill of the wonderful selection of birds on offer, many of which we probably wouldn't see again after today. As over the past few days, the sheer number of waterbirds often took our breath away. It was good to know that someone with Eugen's enthusiasm is working so hard to ensure that the bird interest of the delta is being maintained.



A flotilla of white pelicans.

From our observations it was clear that both squacco and night herons were the most numerous herons throughout the areas we visited, with rather fewer in the way of little egrets, great white egrets, purple and grey herons. Glossy ibises far outnumbered spoonbills and pygmy cormorants were more common than great cormorants. Of the ducks, gadwall, mallard and ferruginous ducks were very common, with lesser numbers of pochard and shoveler. Although both species of pelicans had been with us for much of the time we never tired of looking at them once again. The whites were especially impressive as they soared above us in great flocks: they were far more numerous than the Dalmatian pelicans.

We had our best views yet of red-necked grebes, including one with young on its back – what lovely birds they are. Once again we saw several black-necked grebes as well as great crested grebes and one marshy area held lots of ferruginous ducks and whiskered terns, again 'specials' of the delta. Another green sandpiper was flushed from a secluded corner of the waterways.

By one very narrow waterway, Eugen showed us a rookery complete with breeding pairs of red-footed falcons. It wasn't clear exactly how many birds were involved but they made quite a spectacle as they rushed around the rookery, causing havoc. Earlier we had a distant view of a white-tailed eagle winging its way over the marshlands.

We had yet more good views of a grey-headed woodpecker – thank goodness for the dead trees along the channel-sides and that Eugen was so good at enticing them into view. As we made our way steadily back towards Tulcea we heard our first chiffchaff of the trip. Golden orioles became more and more numerous, or at least their calls did, and blackcaps could be heard singing as well. We also heard blackbirds, not a species we had seen or heard much of so far.

After dinner we presented the catering staff and boatmen with a gift in appreciation of all of the hard work that they had put in on our behalf. The hospitality on board and the way in which the boatmen handled the boats was superb and added so much to our visit to the delta. Personally, I was sorry to be leaving our floating hotel.

5 June – Dobrogea

After transferring our suitcases to the Ibis Hotel on shore, we boarded a minibus for our first explorations into the Dobrogea area. After such excellent sightings in the wetlands we approached the much drier areas with the anticipation of a whole new range of species. Working our way along country roads away from Tulcea we were again impressed by the number of cuckoos, rollers and from time to time red-backed or lesser grey shrikes perched on roadside wires and bushes. Here and there we flushed hoopoes from the roadside and bee-eaters could be seen hawking insects overhead. Eagle-eyed Eugen soon spotted a raptor high in the sky and this turned out to be a honey buzzard, our first for the holiday. Our first proper stop was by an area of rising steppe, leading up past some scattered trees to an area of scrub higher up the slope. Here we found a Levant sparrowhawk, one of two we were to see that day and the only birds of the week. Close to the trees, a male ortolan bunting was in full song: happily it performed well so everyone got good views. It later moved to another vantage point and continued to sing. Four ravens flew over calling loudly and yet another honey buzzard was seen – during the course of the day our tally for this species came to six birds. A singing woodlark was located above the hillside and here too we heard several skylarks. The scrubby area on top of the hill held a very active barred warbler, which we all saw but all too briefly as it dived into dense scrub, reappeared elsewhere and promptly disappeared again. That's the nature of barred warblers, I guess!

On our way back down the hill, an adult pale phase booted eagle came into view and soared around above us affording really good views. By the time we got back to the vehicle lunch was set up for us on a table, a welcome rest after a warm morning on the hillside. While having lunch, another, or the same, booted eagle was seen nearby, which was good because one or two had still to see it. Yet more long-legged buzzards were seen, along with what was considered to be the 'steppe' race of the common buzzard, which was more likely in the type of habitat that we were in. After lunch we moved to a well wooded area with remnants of a stream running through it. Working along the edge of the woodland produced two middle-



Lunch!

spotted woodpeckers and later a great spotted woodpecker, the only day we were to see either species. At a place where some water was lying in a pool a hawfinch was flushed, which some of the group saw, and a song thrush was located, our only one for the trip. When hawfinches come to drink is often a good time to see them, but despite us waiting for a bit there was no return to the pool. We searched for sombre tit here but without joy, but a singing icterine warbler more than made up for it and eventually it was seen in the canopy above our heads.

Moving to another area, Eugen called up a wryneck in a matter of moments. He clearly knew the bird was breeding nearby. We all had fine views of it in a dead tree before moving on into an interesting area of woodland where we almost immediately heard a distant nuthatch. The general area also turned up some greenfinches and goldfinches, notably absent until now. A wander under the trees found us listening to the song of a wood warbler, later gaining fine views. Back at the vehicle, two red-rumped swallows were spotted by Eugen but they proved very elusive with only a few of the group seeing them. Our longish journey back to Tulcea was punctuated by frequent looks at roadside birds. One of the target species was the black-headed bunting, which we eventually found perching on some roadside telegraph wires. Crested larks also came up from the road edge and both kestrel and hobby were seen, making seven species of raptors today. Other roadside and steppe birds included tawny pipit, corn bunting and linnet.

At the end of the day our journeys through the Dobrogea area today had added twenty five new species to the list, several of which we weren't to see again. All in all, a good introduction to the area. The Ibis hotel onshore proved to be absolutely first class with fine cuisine, and with bigger beds than the floating hotel – I had a king-sized bed all to myself!

6 June – Dobrogea

After making our way out of Tulcea we headed along the edge of the delta, seeing a large range of wetland bird species but at that point not adding anything new to our lists. It was good, however, to see garganey and red-crested pochard again as neither had been common in the delta. A high raptor stopped us and there was our first short-toed eagle, probably an immature bird, as it lacked the dark head markings characteristic of full adults. We stopped off on the edge of some reeds: “A favoured place for paddyfield warber,” said Eugen. Sure enough, with a bit of patience, we saw at least one, probably two, birds. This was the nearest I came to seeing a new species on this trip as I had only seen this species briefly once before – so as good as new for me! Although it was ‘lively’ we had good views of this rare bird for Romania.

Next stop was at some coastal lagoons near the Black Sea which were clearly going to prove productive with mixed breeding colonies of terns and gulls and a scattering of waders on the mud. There were many black-headed gulls, some Mediterranean gulls and best of all two adult slender-billed gulls in full summer plumage. Eugen was excited by seeing these as they are rare breeding birds in the delta. The Mediterranean gulls had failed apparently; they had been happily going about breeding on Eugen's last visit but today they were clearly just an unattached small group.

A scattering of waders on the mud included two smart marsh sandpipers in summer plumage, rather like small and dapper greenshanks; another nice bird to see as most would have passed through by this time. Searching revealed yet more black-tailed godwits and our first redshanks of the trip. I was confused for a bit by a summer plumaged sanderling but by a process of elimination it became clear what it was. Other waders included our first Kentish plover, some lapwings, groups of black-winged stilts and avocets. Top marks though went to the hawking collared pratincoles that treated us to their wild aerial displays – clearly several were breeding here. Here too we saw our only Caspian tern of the trip, a single bird in flight. There were common terns and among them we found a couple of little terns, again the only ones seen. Toes dipped in the Black Sea for some and we were on our way back to the minibus via some shelducks, a few hoopoes and a tawny pipit.



Where we searched for stone-curlews.

It was now time to try to search out some stone-curlews, but try as Eugen did at so many of his favoured sites, we failed on that one. However one place in particular had northern wheatears, Isabelline wheatears and our only pied wheatears of the trip. These very handsome birds were sheer delight: to my mind male pied wheatears are the stars of the group, at least in Europe. We also saw a dark phased booted eagle from the roadside and elsewhere red-footed falcons. We went back to looking for stone-curlews, but still no joy. Though there is another day tomorrow ... Eugen wasn't going to give in that easily...

As we wound our way back to Tulcea another black-headed bunting was found. We saw calandra larks close to cultivation along with crested larks and skylarks. The usual roadside ‘suspects’ turned up as we went along, such as rollers, cuckoos, red-backed shrikes and bee-eaters, until the end of yet another productive, if long and fairly tiring day.

7 June – Dobrogea

Today we were joined by Mihai Petrescu, one of Romania's leading botanists. The group split into those who especially wanted to look at the plants and those who wanted to continue looking mainly at birds, although from time to time we all came together and folk moved within the groups. We mainly concentrated on the steppe, rocky areas and on woodland we encountered. Apart from his interest in plants, Mihai was also something of an authority on the complex history of the region. During the course of our journeys to the places he and Eugen wanted to visit, he told us much about the various religions and ethnic groups that had lived in the area, or indeed still live in the area. All this added much to our visit, and gave our eyes a rest!

Once again we were often close to marshy areas so again saw many of the now familiar marshland birds. I noted mixed hirundines as being more numerous today than any other – swallows, sand and house martins seemed to be everywhere with house martins the least numerous. There were also lots of swifts plus both white and yellow wagtails in good supply. A stop for a raptor revealed yet another booted eagle and we also saw several steppe buzzards and long-legged buzzards. Marshy pools here and there held Mediterranean gulls and in one case a marsh sandpiper.

The botanists were shown so many endemic plants in an area that is truly a botanists' paradise. Unfortunately our usual field guides illustrated few of these but in the evening Mihai showed us his book on the plants of the region, which will make it much easier in the future. The variety of plants that we were shown left no doubt as to the value of the steppe country for plants and what could be lost as a result of increased intensification of agriculture in the area, a familiar enough story to us in the UK.

While the botanists had their heads down looking at plants, the birders went off in search of new goodies. In one wooded place they got to grips with a sombre tit and at another yet another barred warbler. From time to time potential areas were visited to search for the elusive stone-curlew – but again with no joy. I think our stamina was beginning to run out at this stage of the trip. Amazingly on our way back to the hotel a little bittern leapt out of some reeds and flew right alongside the bus briefly and, even better, everyone saw it!



Lizard orchid

It was a great pleasure to present Eugen with the cheque from the holiday's conservation contribution, that will go towards the great work that the Romanian Ornithological Society is doing in the country. On the previous evening he had told us something of his own impressive involvement with encouraging young people to care about the special wildlife of their country. From what we have seen over these few days it was very clear that both the Delta and Dobrogea are amazing areas, requiring protection at all costs.

8 June – return

After breakfast our suitcases were packed into the minibus in readiness for the slow drive back to Bucharest airport. We planned to look into some of the pools and marshy areas as we went and Eugen wanted to take us on a detour into some steppe country – doubtless in pursuit of stone-curlews, which he felt had let him down badly! Our leisurely journey took us again past occupied white storks nests and several were seen either soaring in the sky or feeding out in the cultivation. Corn buntings again adorned some fences and calandra larks were flushed from roadsides.

Our detour into steppe country failed to locate any stone-curlews but more Isabelline shrikes were seen, along with the delightful sousliks. Both 'steppe' buzzards and long-legged buzzards were identified when close enough to the vehicle to see them properly. Eugen had a brief view of yet another black-headed bunting and also some linnets. As someone said, "Why is it that birds are always on the other side of the bus to me?"

We stopped to overlook one or two fish ponds and, as on the outward trip, found a few ferruginous ducks, some little egrets, glossy ibises and the occasional squacco heron. Some pools had small numbers of black-winged stilts and one had a great white egret. With so many magpies in this area it was a wonder that any eggs or young birds survived, not to mention the hooded crows that were often numerous too. Crested larks and tawny pipits were flushed from roadsides but as soon as we crossed the Danube back into the heavily cultivated areas they disappeared.

The rest of our journey back to Bucharest was predictably quiet for birds – time to reflect on what a good week it had been and how well Eugen had looked after us. We arrived at the airport to discover that we had a two and a half hour delay on our flight – not what we wanted to hear. However we eventually arrived back at Luton, but not until shortly before 10.30 p.m.

Birds of the Danube Delta (DD), Dobrogea (Do) in June 2013

Mute Swan	Seen in many places in DD and Do.
Greylag Goose	Fairly common in DD and Do.
Shelduck	Small numbers in suitable habitat in DD and Do.
Ruddy Shelduck	A single by a pool on route to DD the only sighting.
Mallard	Common in DD and Do.
Gadwall	Numerous in DD, scarce in Do.
Shoveler	In DD and Do in small numbers.
Garganey	Usually isolated singles or pairs flushed from the channel-sides of DD.
Pochard	In DD and Do, often frequent, especially in DD.
Red-crested Pochard	Small numbers in DD and Do.
Ferruginous Duck	Numerous in many places in DD and also in Do and en route to DD. Often the commonest duck.
Goldeneye	A single bird in DD on June 2, a rather unexpected sighting.
Pheasant	Occasionally seen or heard, both in DD and Do, involving singles only.
Black-necked Grebe	Many pairs nesting alongside whiskered terns in DD and at a few sites in Do, sometimes 20+ were seen.
Great-crested Grebe	In DD, quite common on the open lakes of the delta, occasional in Do and en route to DD.
Red-necked Grebe	In DD only. Several pairs were seen with young, mainly in clear-water channels with surface vegetation such as white water-lilies.
White Pelican	Very frequent to numerous in DD and commonly seen in Do.
Dalmatian Pelican	One on a lake en route for DD and then groups of usually less than ten at other places throughout DD and Do.
Cormorant	Seen in DD and Do but less frequent than pygmy cormorant.
Pygmy Cormorant	Common to numerous in DD, where colonies were seen in thickets of willow. Small numbers were seen at a few sites in Do.
Bittern	Just one or two heard – none seen. Also one heard in coastal reeds in Do. Probably would have been towards the end of the “booming” period.
Little Bittern	Heard in DD with Russell seeing a single male bird only. A female was seen briefly in channel-side vegetation in DD as well and another in Do on June 7.
Night Heron	Perhaps vied with squacco as the dominant heron species in DD. Seemed to be part of multi-occupancy with squaccos, pygmy cormorants and grey herons at nesting colonies. Not seen in Do.
Squacco Heron	Very frequent in the DD, probably the commonest heron, often seen hunting in shallow water at the sides of channels – sometimes birds were no more than ten yards apart! Also recorded from Do in small numbers and en route to DD.
Little Egret	Fairly common in DD and Do but much less so than squacco.
Great Egret	In the DD area but not numerous. Scarce in Do.
Grey Heron	Often seen in DD and Do.
Purple Heron	Infrequent in both DD and Do.
White Stork	Several nests with young were seen in DD and Do. At one nest, 40 sparrows' nests were counted; mainly Spanish but some house sparrows nests.
Glossy Ibis	Occasional en route for DD and one of the more frequent wetland species in DD and by pools in Do.
Spoonbill	Frequent in DD in small numbers, occasional in Do.
White-tailed Eagle	Up to six in the marsh or forest areas of DD on June 2 and two nests seen, singles on other days.
Short-toed Eagle	Only in Do and only a single on June 6.
Booted Eagle	Seen on three days in Do, both light and dark phases involved.
Marsh Harrier	Often seen, usually as single birds, over reeds in DD and over crops in Do.
Long-legged Buzzard	Singles/twos in several places in DD and Do. Five seen en route to DD.
Common Buzzard	Seen in Do, some of which may have been the Steppe sub-species

Honey Buzzard	Six in Do on 5 June.
Levant Sparrowhawk	A few singles were briefly seen in a few places but only in Do.
Kestrel	Generally singles seen throughout DD and Do.
Red-footed Falcon	A few pairs around a rookery in DD and singles were seen over the delta's forest or perched in waterside trees from time to time. Occasional singles seen in Do.
Hobby	Scattered singles in DD and Do but not frequent.
Moorhen	Not uncommon in DD but easily overlooked. Not recorded in Do.
Coot	Common on the lakes and channels of DD and also in wet areas of Do.
Avocet	In DD and Do but never numerous.
Black-winged Stilt	In DD and in Do, dozens in shallow pools.
Stone-curlew	Despite Eugen's best efforts we failed to locate this species, which he assured us was watching us!
Collared Pratincole	Fairly common near a coastal lagoon by the coast of Do and less common at one site in DD.
Kentish Plover	One or two birds near a coastal lagoon in Do.
Lapwing	Seen in DD and Do. Fairly common.
Green Sandpiper	A few flushed from narrow channels in DD.
Redshank	Only in Do but only a few, or singles, here and there.
Marsh Sandpiper	In Do only, 2 in summer plumage at a brackish pool near the coast and a few elsewhere.
Black-tailed Godwit	In DD and Do, easily 'lost' amongst marsh vegetation but after black-winged stilts probably the commonest wader.
Curlew	A few flushed in DD.
Sanderling	Odd birds in summer plumage in a brackish pool in Do.
Black-headed Gull	In DD and Do and numerous over the main channels of the delta where the passage of boats probably brings food towards the surface.
Slender-billed gull	Two at a coastal gull colony on June 6 in Do. Both in full summer plumage.
Mediterranean Gull	Not seen in DD but several in Do at what appeared to be a failed breeding colony on June 6.
Yellow-legged Gull	Not specifically distinguished among the Caspian gulls but almost certainly present.
Caspian Gull	Seen commonly in DD and Do.
Little tern	Some within a common tern colony near the coast of Do.
Common Tern	Very frequent in DD, perhaps less so in Do unless near a colony.
Caspian Tern	One seen at one site in Do.
Black Tern	In DD but only about 5 in total within three lakes. Not seen in Do.
White-winged black tern	A number seen in a colony of whiskered terns in DD.
Whiskered Tern	The commonest tern in DD. Also seen in Do.
Stock Dove	Scarce with a very few sightings in DD only.
Woodpigeon	Noted in DD and Do but never very common.
Collared Dove	Common in DD and Do.
Turtle Dove	Several along the roadside in a few places in Do.
Cuckoo	Seen and heard very commonly in DD, as well as in Do. On one day upwards of 100 birds?
Little Owl	One was seen being chased by a hoopoe at one place in DD. An old building clearly providing it with a nesting site.
Swift	In DD and Do in small numbers.
Hoopoe	Fairly frequent in DD and Do, usually as singles or pairs, some carrying food.
Kingfisher	Very frequent along the channels in DD but not seen in Do.
Bee-eater	Numerous, at several colonies near DD and in Do.
Roller	Very frequently seen throughout DD and along the roadsides in Do. Common en route to DD from the airport.
Black Woodpecker	Excellent views of a single bird in DD on a channel-side tree. Other trees had been well hacked by birds in the past.

Grey-headed Woodpecker	Seen well in DD, singly/pairs in mature channel-side willows.
Great Spotted Woodpecker	In Do only and only on one day.
Middle Spotted Woodpecker	One or two seen in Do.
Wryneck	A single bird in Do the only sighting.
Skylark	Only recorded in Do and especially common in the steppe areas.
Crested Lark	A few seen in Do.
Woodlark	Only heard at one site in Do.
Calandra Lark	Flushed from roadsides in small numbers in Do and en route to DD, associated with cultivation.
Sand Martin	Seen in both DD and Do, mainly near bee-eater colonies.
Swallow	Common in both DD and Do and around villages.
Red-rumped swallow	One or two birds briefly on June 5 in Do.
House Martin	Occasional en route to DD and in villages in Do but not especially common.
Tawny Pipit	A few seen in steppe country and in open ground near the coast.
White Wagtail	Fairly common in DD and Do. .
Yellow Wagtail	Occasional in DD and Do, with a high proportion of <i>M.f. feldegg</i> .
Thrush Nightingale	Suspected in DD but not confirmed.
Nightingale	Heard in DD and Do, but mainly in channel-side willows in DD.
Redstart	Heard (and seen occasionally) in mature willows in DD, where it may have been the second commonest, non-wetland passerine.
Northern Wheatear	Fairly frequently seen in the steppe or rocky hills of Do but also seen in DD and en route to DD.
Isabelline Wheatear	Perhaps the commoner of the two steppe-habitat wheatears in some places. Birds with juveniles were seen at one site.
Pied Wheatear	A few seen in the rocky limestone hills in Do, including one singing and one carrying food.
Song Thrush	One seen in a forest area in Do.
Blackbird	Only one or two were seen or heard in forest or open woodland in Do. Also recorded from DD.
Barred warbler	In Do, one was singing in bushes and then song-fighting briefly on June 5, another on June 7.
Garden Warbler	Heard frequently in DD, in mature willows along with redstarts and chaffinches. Not heard in Do.
Blackcap	Perhaps less common than garden warbler in DD; also heard frequently in Do.
Lesser Whitethroat	A few were heard in DD and one in a scrubby hill in Do.
Sedge Warbler	Not seen or heard but song period would have ended by early June.
Reed Warbler	Heard in DD only and possibly less common than Great Reed Warbler in the DD.
Paddyfield Warbler	One or two birds present at a favoured reedbed site in Do.
Great Reed Warbler	Frequently heard ,and sometimes seen, in DD and reedbeds in Do.
Icterine Warbler	Single birds were singing well at one or two places in Do.
Chiffchaff	Fairly frequent in DD.
Wood warbler	One seen and still singing well in a forest in Do on June 5.
Great Tit	Fairly frequent in DD and Do.
Blue Tit	Noted in DD but not in Do.
Sombre Tit	One was seen well at one place in Do.
Long-tailed Tit	A few were seen in DD only.
Bearded Reedling	A few were seen on reed-edge in DD.
Penduline Tit	Several nests were found in DD, some with birds attending them, affording excellent views.
Nuthatch	A single heard in Do only.
Lesser Grey Shrike	Often seen in DD and Do but mainly on roadside cables or trees/bushes in Do.
Red-backed Shrike	The most frequent of the shrike species and seen in both DD and Do.

Woodchat Shrike	A single roadside bird en route to DD.
Magpie	Common.
Jackdaw	Very common in DD and Do.
Rook	Some were still around the colonies in DD. Largish flocks seen in farmland in Do.
Hooded Crow	In DD and Do and quite common in the former.
Raven	Four on June 5 in Do.
Starling	Common in DD and Do..
Golden Oriole	Singles were seen in several places in DD and at sites in Do. Some were still singing well.
House Sparrow	Common and lived alongside Spanish sparrows in storks' nests.
Spanish Sparrow	Seen at several places in and around DD, as well as in Do; always near storks' nests.
Tree Sparrow	Seen in DD and Do in small numbers. Perhaps overlooked?
Chaffinch	Very common in the channel-side willows in DD. Also seen/heard throughout Do.
Linnet	Scarce and in D only.
Goldfinch	Only a few were seen in Do, at a wooded valley near a nunnery.
Greenfinch	Very few and only in Do, including the woods by a nunnery.
Hawfinch	One drinking at a stream in Do.
Reed Bunting	Singles were often seen from the boat in DD. Also at wetland sites in Do.
Ortolan Bunting	Heard in several places in Do.
Black-headed Bunting	Single birds on roadside wires in Do on June 5, 6 and 8.
Corn Bunting	Scarce in DD but more frequent in Do, especially on hillside bushes and by roadsides.

MAMMALS, REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS					
European souslik	Eastern hedgehog	Red fox	Dice snake	Spur-thighed tortoise	Marsh frog
BUTTERFLIES					
Red admiral	Painted lady	Silver-washed fritillary	Common blue		
DAMSEL/DAGONFLIES					
Beautiful demoiselle	Banded demoiselle	Blue-tailed damselfly	Emperor dragonfly		
Plus darters of unidentified species					



European souslik (*Daniel Petrescu*)



Spur-thighed tortoise showing its single tail plate.