

Hungary in winter

12th-16th November 2010

Leader: Csaba Lendvai (Ecotours)

Daily diary:

Friday 12th November

Arrival to Hortobágy

Sunny with couple of showers, light breeze

From Ferihegy Airport we drove straight to Hortobágy National Park. On the way we counted more than 30 **Common Buzzards** by the motorway on sticks and trees. Our first stop was in Heves county to find **Eastern Imperial Eagle** on electric pylons. Before parking we found the eagle perching quite close on the second big pylon. During the coffee stop we admired this stunning adult bird. From this point several **Hen Harriers** showed up. After we finished our sandwiches we continued our journey to our next stop. Half an hour later we ticked on our list the magnificent Saker Falcon. One adult bird perched nearby its artificial nest by the main road. While we enjoyed this nice bird of prey, another Eastern Imperial Eagle showed up the opposite side of the road. Beside the Common Buzzards, the commonest raptors of the area were Hen Harriers. We've seen very well nice adult males together with young and female birds. Our last stop was the Lake Tisza. This reservoir holds thousands of ducks, geese and cormorants. We admired the large flocks of **Greater Whitefronts**, and **Greylag Geese**, **Coots**, **Great Cormorants** and lots of **Great Crested Grebes**. In the distance we spotted an immature **White-tailed Eagle** was chased by **Hooded Crows**. Most of the ducks were **Mallards**, but we've seen bigger flocks of **Gadwalls**, **Teals** and **Northern Shovelers**. Gulls were also quite numerous in the area. **Black-headed Gull** and **Caspian Gull** were present in high numbers and we saw a young **Little Gull** flying across the reservoir. We arrived to Tiszafüred before 6 pm. While we packed our luggages flocks of geese flew over the village.

Saturday 13th November

Hortobágy

Sunny & windy

After breakfast we drove to Nagyván village to meet the legendary local guide Gábor Kovács to find Great Bustards. Unfortunately the last few days were quite wet, all road were muddy, so we had to take a walk in the puszta (plain) to find the special bird of the area. Our effort was successful, we found 10 nice **Great Bustards**. On the way to bustards we saw a nice family of **Common Cranes** between cropfields. Rarely seen rocks in the plain, but we had one with his inhabitant, a pair of **Crested Larks**. Typical and common grassland bird at this time of the year the **Meadow Pipit**, which was heard and seen in high numbers. In the reeds we saw **Reed Buntings** and **Blue Tits**. After coffee stop we loaded up and headed to Hortobágy village. This place is famous for its wintering **Long-eared Owls**. While we counted the 11 owls spotted a **Hawfinch** perching on birch tree. During the lunch we heard and seen a nice male Syrian Woodpecker. After we took some photos from the Nine-arches bridge we drove to the Hortobágy Fishponds. On the first lake we found huge flocks of Gadwalls and Shovelers and a smaller flock of Pygmy Cormorants perching at the edge of the reedbed. We walked to the next fishpond, where we had opportunity to compare both cormorant species and see the big size difference. The third pond was drained, where we spotted some late shorebirds including **Grey Plovers**, **Eurasian Curlews**, and one **Common Snipe**. When we just started to walk back to the car we saw two **Peregrine Falcons** hunting over the fishponds. This was a good end for this productive and enjoyable day. On the way back we heard and seen Wrens, Blue Tits, and added the **Marsh Harrier** and **Sparrowhawk** to our raptor list.

Sunday 14th November
Sunny & windy

Hortobágy and Bükk Hills

In the morning we stopped to see and take photos from a nice roadside Bee-eater colony. After we headed to fishponds again. Here we had nice **Siskins**, **Goldfinches**, **Tree Sparrows** and two juvenile Marsh Harriers. Our first pond was absolutely drained, where saw Grey Plovers, Eurasian Curlews, **Lapwings** and some Greylag Geese. Then we headed to Csécs Fishponds to see Goose flocks. When we arrived to the ponds, suddenly around 1000 Greater Whitefronts flushed by two White-tailed Eagles. The Geese flew to the ponds for resting. We checked another drained pond, where added 11 Spotted Redshank to our shorebird list. On the way back our main goal was to find Penduline and Bearded Tit, because we failed to see them yesterday. All of us kept on eye the reedbeds, fortunately we were lucky both species. We admired a nice male Bearded Tit just a few meters in front of us. This fishpond system has scattered forest patches where we heard some winter visitor Bullfinches. After the coffee stop we drove to another site, which was a nice grasslands with dead trees. We caught up a flock of Fieldfares, more White-tailed Eagles and a Sparrowhawk. This was our last stop at Hortobágy National Park, and we headed directly to Bükk Hills. At sunset we parked at a nice reservoir to see some more waterbirds such as Great Crested Grebe, and rare winter plumaged Red-necked Grebe. A few other species to mention are Great Cormorants, Mallards and Teals. We arrived to Noszvaj before 5 pm after sunset.

Monday 15th November
Overcast & chill wind

Bükk Hills

Our pre-breakfast walk around the Hotel was very productive with **Coal Tits**, nice views of **Goldcrest**, a nice male **Middle-Spotted Woodpecker** and couple of **Ravens** flew over our head. In the garden was easy to see Siskins, **Greenfinches** and Hawfinches. Another woodpecker that we ticked after the walk is a **Green Woodpecker** which was quite loud. Our first stop was near a big quarry, without any luck. We headed our journey to a nice beech forest in the heart of Bükk Hills. We had to walk only 100 meters to find a **Grey-headed Woodpecker**. During the lunchtime we caught a two **Great-spotted Woodpeckers** and our second Middle-Spotted Woodpecker of the day. We tried to find more woodland species later, and finally a nice female **Black Woodpecker** showed up close to the road. Other common forest birds to mention are Great, Blue and **Marsh Tits**.

Tuesday 16th November
Overcast & windy

Bükk Hills

On our last day we visited a nice long valley to see some more forest birds. Despite the valley was very quiet we noted several new species for the trip including **Common Crossbill**. We did some stop in the valley, to see more and more woodpeckers. We heard and seen many Great Spotted Woodies. Jays were also very active collecting seeds for the winter. We saw many Goldcrests, Bullfinches and Hawfinches. At the edge of the clearing we've seen a very close Common Buzzard. After the valley we headed directly to the airport to catch up our flight back home.

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Species list:

Birds

- Red-necked Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: 1 winter plumaged bird at the Bogács reservoir on 14th.
- Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*: noted on 3 days.
- Pygmy Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*: ca. 20 Hortobágy Fishponds on 13th.
- Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*: noted on 3 days.
- Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons*: noted on 3 days.
- Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*: noted on 3 days.
- Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope*: noted on Hortobágy Fishponds on 13th.
- Gadwall** *Anas strepera*: 500 Lake Tisza on 12th and few hundred Hortobágy fishponds on 13th.
- Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca*: noted on 3 days.
- Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*: noted on 3 days.
- Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*: 200 Lake Tisza on 12th and several Hortobágy fishponds on 13th.
- Great White Egret** *Egretta alba*: noted on 3 days.
- Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*: noted on 3 days.
- White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla*: noted on 2 days.
- Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*: noted on 2 days at fishponds.
- Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*: noted on 2 days.
- Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipter nisus*: noted on 2 days.
- Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*: noted on each days.
- Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca*: 2 in Heves county on 12th.
- Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*: noted on 4 days.
- Saker Falcon** *Falco cherrug*: 1 adult bird in Heves county on 12th.
- Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*: 2 seen together Hortobágy Fishponds on 13th.
- Common Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*: noted on 3 days.
- Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra*: noted on 3 days.
- Common Crane** *Grus grus*: noted 2 days on Hortobágy plains.
- Great Bustard** *Otis tarda*: 10 at Southern Hortobágy on 13th.
- Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*: 1 flying bird Hortobágy fishponds on 13th.
- Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata*: noted on 2 days.
- Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*: 11 Csécs Fishponds on 14th.
- Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*: noted on days Hortobágy Fishponds.
- Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*: noted on 2 days.
- Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans*: noted on 3 days.
- Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus*: noted on 3 days.
- Little Gull** *Larus minutus*: 1 Lake Tisza on 12th.

- Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia f. domestica*: noted on 4 days.
- Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*: noted on each days.
- Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus*: 11 seen roosting Hortobágy village on 13th.
- Middle-spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos medius*: 2 seen Bükk Hills on 15th.
- Great-spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*: noted on each days.
- Syrian Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos syriacus*: 1 heard and seen Hortobágy village on 13th.
- Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius*: 1 female Bükk Hills on 15th.
- European Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis*: 1 heard Bükk Hills on 15th.
- Grey-headed Woodpecker** *Picus canus*: 1 Bükk Hills on 15th.
- Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*: noted on 2 days.
- Eurasian Magpie** *Pica pica*: noted on each days.
- Eurasian Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula*: ca. 50 Csécs Fishponds on 14th.
- Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*: noted on 4 days.
- Hooded Crow** *Corvus cornix*: noted on each days.
- Northern Raven** *Corvus corax*: noted 2 days Bükk Hills.
- Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula*: noted on 2 days.
- Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*: noted on 2 days.
- Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*: 2 seen Bükk Hills on 15th.
- Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*: noted on 3 days.
- European Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*: noted on 3 days.
- Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*: noted on 2 days.
- Eurasian Treecreeper** *Certhia brachydactyla*: 1 Bükk Hills on 15th.
- Winter Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*: noted on 4 days.
- Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus*: noted on 4 days, several caudatus form.
- Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*: noted on 2 days.
- Bearded Tit** *Panurus biarmicus*: 5 heard and seen Csécs Fishpond on 14th.
- Marsh Tit** *Parus palustris*: several Bükk Hills on 15th.
- Coal Tit** *Parus ater*: several Bükk Hills on 15th.
- Great Tit** *Parus major*: noted on 4 days.
- Blue Tit** *Parus caeruleus*: noted on each days.
- Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus*: several Csécs Fishponds on 14th.
- Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata*: noted on 2 days.
- House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*: noted on 4 days.
- Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*: noted on 3 days.
- Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*: noted on 2 days.
- Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*: 2 Hortobágy Fishponds on 13th.
- Common Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*: several seen Bükk Hills on 15th.

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*: noted on 2 days.

Eurasian Siskin *Carduelis spinus*: noted on 3 days.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*: noted on 3 days.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*: a flock heard Bükk Hills on 16th.

Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*: noted on 3 days.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*: noted on 4 days.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*: noted on 2 days.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*: several Hortobágy plains on 13th.

Mammals

Roe deer *Capreolus capreolus*: noted on 2 days.

Butterflies

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*: noted on 14th.

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*: noted on 14th.