

## **Hungary Photo Trip 2011 with Ecotours Wildlife Holidays**

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The view from the lodge where we were staying in the National Park at Tiszaalpar was over the marsh. From here we could watch hundreds of different herons, spoonbills and Pygmy Cormorants. Young Great Tits were seen in the fuse box of the wall of the lodge and Tree Sparrows obviously also had a nest in the garden. From the garden we had great views of a Black Woodpecker as it flew around and later on green and great spotted also visited. Golden Orioles were regular visitors as were Long-eared Owl and Cuckoo. A Barred Warbler, Sparrowhawk, Hobby and Quail were also seen and River Warbler heard. A walk up the hill to the little white church on the hill gave us an even better view of the marsh and the 2 hides that we were going to be using and a red-backed shrike sat close by watching us. An evening drive took us to a site of Whiskered Terns, Ruff and Black-winged Stilts. Turning onto a track led us to the breeding ground of a pair of Saker Falcons..five birds - two adults and three youngsters gave us a great flying display before we headed off for the White-winged Black Tern colony. Turtle Doves and Hares were everywhere.

We were starting early every morning, about 4.00 am to make sure we got the morning light for our photography. Hide 1 which was set up beside the water gave us very close views of Spoonbill, Whiskered Tern, Little Ringed Plover, Common Sandpiper, Greenshank, Great White Egret, a family of Black-winged Stilts, Teal, Yellow Wagtail youngsters, Pygmy Cormorants, young Night Herons and Little Egret. Walking down the path to hide 1 also gave views of Penduline Tit, White-tailed Eagle and some butterflies. The site of the Whiskered Tern colony also gave photo opportunities of Bittern, Ruff, Redshank, and Little Bittern.

Setting the mobile hide up in the channel on the way to hide 1 gave a morning photo chance for Wood Sandpiper, young Night and Purple Herons. A camera shy Kingfisher took a liking to the hide and started to use it as its perch, diving into the shallow muddy water for fish and then bringing it back to the roof and consuming it. A visit to the colony of the White-winged Black Terns was a chance to practice flight and contrast skills photography as these birds dived and wheeled above our heads.

Walking to hide 2 was slightly more of a trek through deeper muddier water and the hide was slightly smaller than hide 1. A Pygmy Cormorant gave great photo chances as it swam round and eventually climbed out onto the tree placed in front of the hide. A walk deep into the flood plain meadows late in the evening gave us fantastic views of the Corncrake that had been heard there.

A visit was arranged to the hides of a photographer living a few kilometres away where we were to be able to photograph Bee-eaters and Roller. Some enjoyable hours were spent with these amazing birds before we set off to see a Red footed Falcon site. Here it was worth noting that there were 10 Kestrel chicks and 5 Red-foot chicks all in the same group of trees..the food source must be tremendous on these puszta plains.

We were treated to a drive round in the rain across the fields for views of wet Hares and Marsh

Harriers. It rained most of the day but this was transfer day to the other side of Budapest where it had been arranged for us to spend a day in the hide of Palankai Zsolt with the drinking pool. Another early start saw us settled in this hide the next morning in calm weather conditions with good light. Soon Marsh Tit and Greenfinch were visiting regularly. Suddenly a large bird flew in and it took a few seconds to realize that a Sparrowhawk was there. This beautifully marked male drank and washed and spent about 15 minutes totally unaware that we were watching it from less than 6 feet away. The bird of the day, possibly the trip!

We were taken back to Budapest airport via a scenic trip around the city. We both agreed that this had been one of the best trips we had ever done, some great birds, even better photographs and had woken a desire to do more of this type of trip.

Pictures can be found at Flickr site <http://www.flickr.com/photos/nwsurreywildlife/>