



**Hungarianbirdwatching.com**

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## **From Kiskunság to Hortobágy through Zemplén June, July 2010**

*During this trip in the first day we will be birding in Kiskunsag a Pusta (steppe, grassland). Kiskunság is some 70 km South-East of Budapest and is the biggest habitat of Great Bustard which is our main target bird for the day. We will also visit fishponds where different gulls, herons, shanks and waders can be seen. On the second day we will be birding in Zemplén Mountains. Zemplén is an excellent habitat to see woodpeckers and owls as well as raptors. We spend two nights in a lovely small medieval town Tokaj, also very famous of its wine. On the third day we will visit the Lake Tisza, and reach Hortobágy the best marketed birding place in Hungary, where we will spend the fourth day with birding at the Great Fishpond system.*

### **Day 1 – Birding in Kiskunság**

Our tour will start at 07.30 at your hotel, where we will meet. During our way to Kiskunság, we will stop at an artificial Saker nest, where we hope we can see Saker falcon either in the nest or flying. The nest is on an electric pylon and we can observe the Saker from safe distance without disturbing this globally endangered raptor.



*Saker*

We will continue our trip to Kiskunság. Kiskunság like Hortobágy is a big “Pusta” (steppe) with grasslands, saline lakes and in certain areas quicksand. The main objective is to see the *Great Bustard*, which is also a symbolic bird of Hungary.



*Kiskunság*

The Great Bustard is a resident bird in Hungary and one of its highest populations can be found in Kiskunság. Usually it can be seen in larger flocks (30-40 species) and it is an unforgettable experience when you see them in flying. If we are fortunate on the steppe we will also see different birds of prey like *Buzzard*, *Kestrel*, *Merlin* or *Red-footed falcon*.



*Great Bustard*

In the Kiskunság we will have lots of opportunity to see some smaller birds which are typical for grasslands such as *House and Tree Sparrows*, *Reed Buntings*, *Corn Buntings*, *Sky Larks*, *Crested Larks*, *Red-backed Shrikes*, *White and Yellow Wagtails*. We will also see several *Buzzards*, with some luck even *Rough-legged Buzzard* and *Kestrels* hovering in the sky. We will take our sandwich lunch at a watching tower.



*Crested Lark*



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We will also go to a fishpond. Depending on water conditions at the fishponds we have chance to see *Ruffs*, *Redshanks*, *Spotted Redshanks*, *Lapwings*, *Avocets*, *Marsh Sandpipers* and many *Grey Herons*, *Great White Egrets* and *Spoonbills*. We will have a chance to see raptors like *Mars Harrier* or if we are fortunate even *White-tailed Eagle*.

We finish our birding trip at Kiskunság at 4pm, and start our way to Tokaj in the Zemplén area, where we will spend the next two nights. We envisage to reach Tokaj at around 7.30pm.



*Great White Egret*

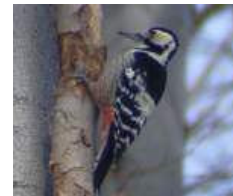
### *Day 2 – Birding in the heart of Zemplén*

We will leave at 7am from the Hotel and will drive immediately to the Zemplén Mountain, where we will arrive at around 8.30h. We will visit the inner parts of the mountains, observing woodpeckers, raptors and songbirds. The first bigger region where we will start birding is the surroundings of Újhuta, where our target species are woodpeckers, like Black, Middle-spotted or Syrian Woodpecker.



*Black Woodpecker*

With some luck we can find even Grey-headed and White-backed Woodpecker. In the surroundings of Újhuta we will likely see Willow Tits, Marsh Tits, Long-tailed Tits, Golden Orioles, Wryneck, Mistle and Song Thrushes. On the fields we will see several Red-backed Shrikes and Tree Sparrows and we will have reasonable chance to see Lesser Grey Shrikes.



*White-backed WP*

In the afternoon we will visit some places where raptors usually appear. In the Zemplén area Imperial Eagles, Lesser Spotted Eagles, Golden Eagles or even Short-toed Eagles might be observed in good weather conditions. During our trip if you are interested in architecture and history we can stop at Boldogkőváralja, which is one of the most beautiful ruins of Hungary, and will have a closer look at a lovely mountainous village called Hejce.



*Imperial Eagle*

At sunset we will be already in a volcanic stone-mine in Southern Zemplén, looking for Eagle Owl. In the evening we can have our dinner in Tokaj and taste excellent wines.



*Eagle Owl*



*Boldogkőváralja  
castle*



*Hejce village*



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### *Day 3 – Visiting the Tisza Lake and birding in Hortobágy*

On our third day we will check out from the Hotel at 7.30 and will drive to our next destination the Tisza Lake. The Tisza Lake is actually a large reservoir on the Tisza river, but fortunately it does not look like a reservoir but a flood-plain of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



*Tisza Lake*

Two-thirds of the lake, whose total area is 127 square kilometers, has been designated to fall under the Ramsar Convention because of its notably significant wetland habitats.

The lake has a special flora, here you can see Europe's largest Yellow Floating Heart and Water Chestnut fields and large part of the lake is covered by White Water-Lily.



*Tündérfátyol*

Tisza Lake is also an ideal habitat for herons. In bigger continuous reeds heron colonies like Purple Heron, Little Egret, Great White Egret, Spoonbill and Squacco Heron and Little Bittern can be found.

Lots of Cormorants, Grey Herons and Common Terns can be also observed at Tisza Lake and in the gallery forests of the reservoir Black Stork, Black Kite, Saker and Hobby can also appear.



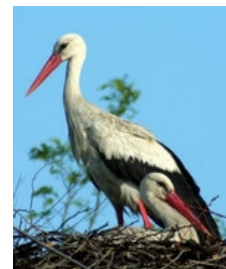
*Grey Heron*

In 2005 a Water Walk and Nature Trail, was created in the Poroszló Basin, via which we can take in the wonderful living world of Lake Tisza as we walk the 1,500 m of the water walkway. The nature trail jetty can be approached by rowing-boat. On our way we will come to two bird hides and an 8-metre high bird-watching tower, which offers an excellent opportunity to shot landscape pictures.



From Tisza Lake We will drive to Hortobágy. At around 4pm we will visit Nagyiván which is a special Hungarian village. In this village nest the most White Storks per citizen in Hungary, almost on every pylon there is a Stork nest. At the village there is a grassland where we can see Tree Sparrows, Crested Larks, Corn Buntings and Red-backed Shrikes.

From Nagyiván we will drive to the Hotel to check-in and leave our luggage in the rooms and continue our way to Szálkahalom nature trail. Szálkahalom nature trail shows the typical surface forms and important plant communities of the Hortobágy steppe.



*White Stork*



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### Day 4 – A whole day at Great Fish Pond

The whole day we will spend at the Great Fish Pond (Nagy Halastó) in Hortobágy which is regarded as a birding Eldorado in Hungary. Over 300 bird species have been observed here so far by birders and in almost every season ten and hundred thousands of birds can be seen. The system of fishponds of Hortobágy Halastó covering 2073 hectares was created in 1915 in an alkaline grassland area called Bad Lands.



*Great Fish Pond*

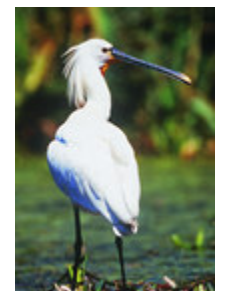
Formerly there were 17 ponds, while now 7 are out of use being covered by reed or other marsh vegetation. Great Fish Pond is a Ramsar site maintaining breeding and migrating waterfowl populations of outstanding importance, so it is considered as one of the most important water bird habitats in Europe.



We will start birding at 7.15 by visiting the several ponds of the Great Fish Pond system.

This lake offers a big variety of species, and the birds of the neighbouring plains also visit the lakes and their airspace. During the trip Great White and Little Egret, Night Heron, Purple Heron, Little Bittern, Squacco Heron, Spoonbill and the rare breeder Pygmy Cormorant can be seen.

Gulls, terns, plovers occur here in great numbers and among the waterfowls there is a chance to find such rarity like Collared Pratincole.



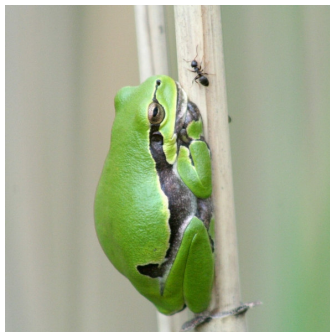
*Spoonbill*

We can see the globally endangered Ferruginous Duck either floating on the water or flying, but this area offers new experiences every time you visit it. We will have good chance to see other ducks like Gadwal, Teal, Mallard and Shoveler. We will also have chance to see different raptors in the area like White-tailed Eagle or Marsh Harrier. We will have our sandwich lunch at the Great Fish Pond system and will return to the Hotel in late afternoon.



*Ferruginous Duck*

Beside birds you can also see wonderful plants, flowers, dragonflies, butterflies, frogs.





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Before leaving Hortobágy to Budapest we can make a short walk in the Village of Hortobágy by admiring the wonderful 9-arch bridge, which is a symbol of the Hortobágy.

In the village you can also buy hand-made articles for souvenirs. We leave Hortobágy at around 4 pm and arrive to the hotel in Budapest at 7pm.



*9-hole bridge*



*Gray Cattles at Hortobágy*



*Shepherds Statue*



*Shed*



*Folklore program*

### Disclaimer

We cannot guarantee good birding weather and cannot guarantee that all the birds or any of the specific birds listed in our itinerary can be observed. We take no responsibility for any damages, lost or injuries during the trip, so please arrange proper insurance. Some programs may change due to unfavourable weather conditions or unforeseen reasons.

### Weather

The weather in summer is quite unpredictable. Some times it's quite dry, sunny and warm (28-34 C). In other years it is rainy and cold, so be prepared for rain as well. We recommend taking raincoats and waterproof shoes with you.