



Hungarianbirdwatching.com

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Spring birding in Bükk and Zemplén Hungary April 2012

Day 1 (Friday) – Arrival to Budapest and driving to Zemplén Mountains

Our tour will start at your hotel in Budapest, where we will pick you up and start our journey to Zemplén Mountains. Along the M3 Motorway we will stop at certain places from where there is a chance to see Imperial Eagles circling in the sky assuming good weather conditions.



Imperial Eagle

After some three hours driving, we will arrive to Tokaj, where we spend 2 nights. Tokaj is a small medieval town, which has a wonderful centre with some nice sculptures and interesting buildings. We will check in the hotel, have some refreshments and will make a short sightseeing in the centre.



Tokaj

Based on the arrival of your plane if we have time we will go to a close abandoned stone mine, where sometimes Eagle Owl can be observed. Above the mine Ravens or raptors might appear. After visiting the abandoned stone mine we will go to Kopasz-hill near Tokaj, where we will check wine yards and bushes, looking for Rock Bunting. With some luck we can find Rock Thrush. We have dinner at the hotel or a nearby restaurant.



Kopasz Hill, Tokaj

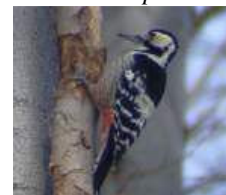
Day 2 (Saturday) – Full day birding in Zemplén Mountains

After an early breakfast we will drive immediately to the Zemplén Mountains. 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.



Black Woodpecker

Beside the Great-spotted Woodpecker we have good chance to hear and see Black Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Middle-spotted and Syrian Woodpeckers. With some luck we can find even Grey-headed and White-backed Woodpeckers. In the surroundings of Újhuta we will also likely see Willow Tits, Marsh Tits, Long-tailed Tits, Mistle and Song Thrushes.



*White-backed
Woodpecker*



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We will also visit Beech forest areas where we will have reasonable chance to see our other target bird the Ural Owl. Thanks to the nesting program its population is steadily growing in Hungary. Currently some 200 pairs nest in Hungary most in the Zemplén area. 2008 was a very good year for the Hungarian Ural Owl population, many chicks were born, so we hope 2009 will be successful as well and we will be fortunate to see this rare owl.

During our trip if you are interested in architecture and history we can stop at Regéc or Boldogkőváralja castle, which are the most beautiful ruins of Hungary, and will have a closer look at a lovely mountainous village called Hejce. We will return to Tokaj late afternoon and have dinner in the hotel and as an optional program we can visit vine cellars.



Ural Owl



Hejce village



*Boldogkőváralja
castle*



Regéc castle

Optional program - Winetasting: In the evening we can visit a wine cellar in Tokaj, where the world famous Tokaji wines can be tasted. The Tokaj wine region is noted for its sweet wines made from grapes affected by noble rot, a style of wine which has a long history in this region. Aszú, Szomorodni, Furmint and Muskotály are the most characteristic wines of the region.



Wine Cellar

Day 3 (Sunday) – Morning birding in Zemplén and travel to Bükk

After breakfast we check out from the hotel and will visit some other areas to see the woodpecker or owl species we missed the previous day. This period of the year is also good to see Wrynecks, so we hope you can add this interesting specimen to your list. If we were lucky with woodpeckers, we can 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.

In the afternoon we will drive to the Bükk Mountains, where we will be accommodated for the third night. We will be birding around Noszvaj village and the reservoir at Hór valley. At this time of the year we likely see and hear Corn Bunting, Rock Bunting, Stonechat, Wood Pigeon and Collared Dove. On the reservoir we see Great White Egrets,



Wryneck



Bükk Mountains



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Mallards and Cormorants.

We continue our tour in the Hór valley which is the longest valley in Hungary and offers good habitat for woodland species like Syrian Woodpecker, Middle-spotted Woodpecker, Great-spotted Woodpecker and Black Woodpecker. During our excursion we will see Serins, Blue Tit, Penduline Tit, Long-tailed Tit, as well Treecreepers, Nuthatch and different finches. We return to the hotel in the evening hours.



Syrian Woodpecker

Optional program - Winetasting: In the evening we can visit a very good cellar in Noszvaj which has won several gold medals in Hungary and abroad. We will taste the famous local wine Bikavér (Bulls Blood) which is a special cuvee from different redwines. .



The Thummerer Cellar

Day 4 (Monday) – Morning birding in Bükk and fly away

On the fourth day of our birding tour we make an early breakfast and check out from the hotel. We give a second chance to see woodpeckers or if we were lucky during the past days we can visit open areas where raptors can be seen. . If the weather is good and we are lucky, we have a chance to spot Short-toed Eagle, Lesser-spotted Eagle, Imperial Eagle.



Common Buzzard

Beside the eagles we will see Kestrels and Common Buzzards and with some luck even Goshawk and Sparrow Hawk as well. Bükk Mountain also offers excellent habitat for mammals. Very likely we see Roe Deers and Brown Hares on our trip. In the woods we will see Red Squirrels.



Roe Deer

We arrive to the airport by the check-in time.

Weather

The weather in April is quite unpredictable. Some times it's quite dry, sunny and warm (15-20 C). In other years it is rainy or even snowy and cold (0-5C), so be prepared for rain as well. We recommend taking raincoats and waterproof shoes with you.