



Hungarianbirdwatching.com

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**8-day birding in
Kiskunság, Bükk and Zemplén Mountains,
Lake Tisza and Hortobágy
mid-May, 2010**

During this trip we will travel across the East part of Hungary from Kiskunság to Hortobágy. The tour will allow us to visit different habitats: steppe, grasslands, fishponds, mountains giving us the opportunity to see a large variety of birds.

Day 1 – Sightseeing in Budapest (overnight in Kiskunság)

Our tour will start in Budapest at the airport, where we pick you up. We will drive to the City center, where our sightseeing tour will start. Since our time will be limited we will visit the “must-see” sights of Budapest the *Buda Castle, Matthias Church, Basilica, Parliament, Heroes Square* and the *City Park*. After sightseeing we will drive to Kiskunság where we will spend the first three nights in a nice pension, a former Tanya (Farm).



Building of Parliament



Buda Castle



Matthias Ch.



Basilica



Heroes Square



City Park



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Day 2-3 - Kiskunság (overnights in Kiskunság)

The next two days we will be birding in Kiskunság. Kiskunság like Hortobágy is a big “Pusta” (steppe) with grasslands, saline lakes and in certain areas quicksand. Since our accommodation is within the boundaries of the Kiskunság National Park we can start birding early morning around the Tanya (Farm).

In the Kiskunság and around our accommodation 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 and Kestrels hovering in the sky.

We also try to see the Great Bustard, which is also a symbolic bird of Hungary. 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 flocks (5-10 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 or Red-footed falcon.

We will also visit a place where the European Souslik lives. This species are globally endangered and Hungary is the most western country in Europe where it lives. The Souslik is very important, because it is the most important prey of the Saker Falcon and also for Imperial Eagle.

On the area where the Sousliks live we might also see different birds of prey like Buzzard, Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine or with some luck the other symbolic bird of Hungary the Saker. End of April the first Red-footed Falcons may also arrive and if we are very lucky we might even see Short-toed Eagle flying across the Pusta.

We will also visit a fishpond. Depending on water conditions at the fishponds we have chance to see Common Redshanks, Spotted Redshanks, Lapwings, Avocets, Black-winged Stilts and many Grey Herons, Great White Egrets, Purple Herons and with some luck Squacco Herons, Night Herons, Little Bitterns. We will have a chance to see raptors like Mars Harrier or if we are fortunate even White-tailed Eagle or Short-toed Eagle.



Kiskunság



Crested Lark



Great Bustard



European Souslik



Saker



Great White Egret



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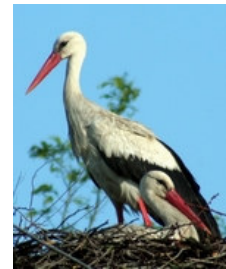
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On the water habitats of Kiskunság we will have the chance to see different duck species including Mallards, Pochards, Red-crested Pochards, Shovelers. In the reeds warblers and Penduline Tit, Bearded Tits may appear as well. Dunlin, Wood Sandpiper, Little Stint, Black-headed Gull and Yellow-legged Gull are also species we can see with good chance.

Kiskunság is also a good place to photograph White Storks from close distance, since these birds are living in villages either in nests on chimneys or electric poles. Young storks are still on nests or in the neighbourhood trying their wings. During our two days birding in Kuskunság we can also run in species like Greylag Goose, Syrian Woodpecker, Little Owl, Grey Partridge or even Montagu's Harrier.



Red-crested Pochard



White Stork

Day 4 – Birding in Bükk Mountains (overnight in Tokaj)

On Day 4 after an early breakfast we will drive the Bükk Mountains where we will be birding around Noszvaj village and a reservoir. At this time of the year we likely see and hear Corn Bunting, Rock Bunting, Stonechat, Red-Backed Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Collared Flycatcher, Wood Pigeon and Collared Dove. On the reservoir we see Great White Egrets, Mallards and Cormorants.

At around noon we will visit open areas near to Bükkzsérc, which offer excellent habitat for raptors. If the weather is good and we are lucky, we have a chance to spot Short toed Eagle, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Imperial Eagle. Beside the eagles we will see Kestrels and Common Buzzards and with some luck even Goshawk and Sparrow Hawk as well.

In the afternoon 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 Golden Orioles, Serins, Blue Tit, Penduline Tit, Long-tailed Tit, as well Treecreepers, Nuthatch and different finches.

Bükk Mountain also offers excellent habitat for mammals. Very likely we see Roe Deers and Brown Hares on our trip, but with some luck we can also see Red Deers and Red Squirrel.

Late afternoon we will drive to Tokaj, where we will spend the next three nights.



Bükk Mountains



Common Buzzard



Syrian Woodpecker



Roe Deer



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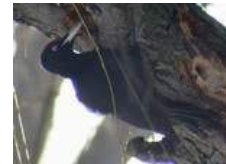
Day 5-6 – Birding in Zemplén Mountains (overnights in Tokaj)

On Day 5 and 6 we will be birding in different parts of 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, like Black, Middle-spotted or Syrian Woodpecker.

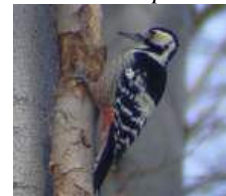
With some luck we can find even Grey-headed and White-backed Woodpecker. In the surroundings of Újhuta we will likely see Willow Tits, Marsh Tits, Long-tailed Tits, Golden Orioles, Wryneck, Mistle and Song Thrushes. On the fields we will see several Red-backed Shrikes and Tree Sparrows and we will have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

We will also 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.

One evening at sunset we will visit a volcanic stone-mine in Southern Zemplén, looking for Eagle Owl. In the evenings we can taste excellent wines. If you are interested in winetasting we can arrange to visit a family-run wine cellar but this optional program is not included in price.



Black Woodpecker



White-backed WP



Imperial Eagle



Eagle Owl



*Boldogkőváralja
castle*



Hejce village

Day 7 – Visiting the Tisza Lake and birding in Hortobágy (overnight Hortobágy)

On our 7th 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 18th century.



Tisza Lake



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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.

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.

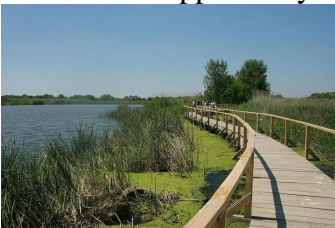
In 2005 a Water Walk and Nature Trail, was created in the Poroszló Basin, via which we can take in the wonderful living world of Lake Tisza as we walk the 1,500 m of the water walkway. The nature trail jetty can be approached by rowing-boat. On our way we will come to two bird hides and an 8-metre high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



Tündérfátyol

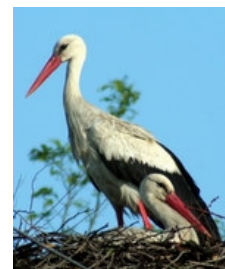


Grey Heron



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 8 – 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. 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.

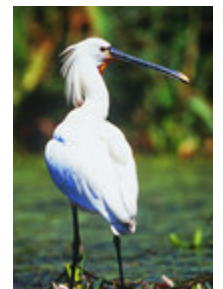
This lake offers a big variety of species, and the birds of the neighbouring plains also visit the lakes and their airspace. During the trip Great White and Little Egret, Night Heron, Purple Heron, Little Bittern, Squacco Heron, Spoonbill and the rare breeder Pygmy Cormorant can be seen.

Gulls, terns, plovers occur here in great numbers and among the waterfowls there is a chance to find such rarity like Collared Pratincole. 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 at the Great Fish Pond system and will return to the Hotel in late afternoon.

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



Great Fish Pond



Spoonbill



Ferruginous Duck



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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 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 unfavorable weather conditions or unforeseen reasons.

Weather

The weather in this season is unpredictable. It can be can be sunny and warm, but cold and rainy as well. So please be prepared for rain showers, and take raincoats and waterproof shoes or boots with you.