



Hungarianbirdwatching.com

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Spring tour “B” Kiskunság - Bükk Mountains - Lake Tisza - Hortobágy (5 days, 4 nights)

During this 5-days (4 nights) tour we will visit 3 National Parks. Kiskunság NP, Bükk NP and Hortobágy NP offering us the opportunity to see a great variety of habitats and birds. During birding we try to see the most characteristics birds of Hungary, the Great Bustard, Great White Egret, White Stork, various woodpeckers, Saker, Red-footed Falcon, Imperial and Lesser Spotted Eagle, warblers, Bee-eater, Roller, Pigmy Cormorant, Ferruginous Duck, Penduline Tit and Bearded Reedling and many other species. We also visit wonderful towns and villages including Unesco World Heritage areas (Hollókő village and Hortobágy) and the historic castle in Eger. As an optional program we can visit Poroszló Ecocenter with the largest fresh-water aquarium of Europe. And of course we will taste prize-winning Hungarian wines and will enjoy the Hungarian cuisine in local restaurants.





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Day 1

Birding in Kiskunság

Overnight Noszvaj, Bükk Mountains

After checking out from the hotel, we will drive to **Kiskunság** to visit the Kiskunság National Park. Kiskunság like Hortobágy is a big “Pusta” (steppe) with grasslands, saline lakes, fishpond systems and in certain areas quicksand. The main objective is 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 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, Red-footed Falcon or another symbolic bird of Hungary the Saker.

In the afternoon we will also go to a fishpond. Depending on water conditions at the fishponds we have chance to see Ruff, Redshank, Spotted Redshank, Lapwing, Avocet, Marsh Sandpiper and many Grey Herons, Great White Egrets and with good chance Squacco Heron, Purple Heron, Spoonbill. Very likely we will see and hear Sedge Warblers and Great Reed Warblers as well. We will have a chance to see raptors like Mars Harrier or if we are fortunate even White-tailed Eagle.

In Kiskunság we can also see some birds, which are very typical for this area, like White and Yellow Wagtails, White Stork, Corn Bunting, Stonechat, Tree Sparrow, Sky and Crested Larks, Red-backed Shrike, Pheasant. On certain fields, Greylag Geese can be seen as well. We will have good chance to see Bee-eaters and with some luck even Rollers.

We finish our trip birding at Kiskunság early afternoon, and start our journey to Bükk Mountains. On the motorway we will stop at certain places from where there is a chance to see Imperial Eagles either sitting on electric pylons or circling in the sky assuming good weather conditions. In that area many times we also see Sakers as well.



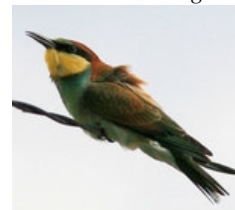
Kiskunság



Great Bustard



Great White Egret



Bee-eater



Imperial Eagle



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On the way to Bükk mountains we leave the Motorway to visit a lovely village called Hollókő (Raven Stone). The small picturesque village of Hollókő is one of Hungary's most popular attractions and is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Hollókő was developed mainly during the 17th and 18th centuries; its traditional rural houses preserve the cultural heritage of local Palóc families. The village conservation area consists of 58 houses and a small church. The village is a representative of single street village type characteristics of the region. In the middle of the village, stands a small church with a wooden steeple and shingle roof, which was built in 1889.



Hollókő



We arrive to Noszvaj late afternoon and have dinner in the hotel or a nearby restaurant.

Day 2

Birding in Bükk Mountains, sightseeing in Eger, winetasting

Overnight Bükk, Noszvaj

In the morning we start birding near Noszvaj village. The forests near the village offer good habitat for woodpeckers like Syrian, Middle Spotted, Great Spotted, Green and Black Woodpecker. Here we can also see Chaffinch, Serin, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Golden Oriole, Nuthatch and Treecreepers.



Syrian Woodpecker

We continue our birding trip towards Bogács and stop at a more airy habitat in the Bükk Mountains. At this time of the year we likely see Corn Bunting, Rock Bunting, Stonechat, Whinchat, Red-Backed Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Skylark, Swallow, House Martin and Tree Sparrow, and near to agricultural buildings Little Owl as well.



Bükk Mountains

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 Snake 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.



Lesser Spotted Eagle



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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 woodpeckers, tits, finches, including Hawfinch. Beside finches and tits we likely see other woodland species like Collared Flycatcher. Near to streams we see Grey Wagtails and during the day we see several times Yellow Wagtails and White Wagtails.



Collared Flycatcher

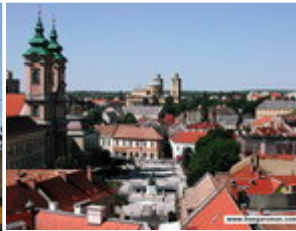
Bükk Mountain also offers excellent habitat for mammals. Very likely we see Red Squirrels, Roe Deers and Brown Hares on our trip, but with some luck we can also see Red Deers.



Roe Deer

Sightseeing in Eger

After birding we make a short sightseeing in the historic town Eger. Eger played an important role during the long-lasting Ottoman era. Visiting the Basilica, the famous Eger Catle or the Minaret are the highlights.



Eger

Optional program – Winetasting: In the evening we visit a very good family-owned 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. We also visit the cellar where we can understand the winemaking process as well.



The Thummerer Cellar

Day 3

Birding at Lake Tisza and Hortobágy, optionally visiting Tisza Lake Ecocenter

Overnight Hortobágy area

We make a short morning birding to give a second chance to see the birds we missed the previous day, then we drive to our next destination the Tisza Lake. Lake Tisza is actually a large reservoir on the Tisza river, but fortunately it does not look like a reservoir rather 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, 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.



Yellow Floating Heart



Grey Heron



Optional Program - Visiting Lake Tisza Ecocenter

At Poroszló we can visit the recently opened Lake Tisza Ecocenter, which is adjacent to the Nature Trail. The Ecocentre was designed to collect and show the rich flora and fauna of the Tisza valley and its lake, which is the second largest in Hungary.

The four-storey, 2,600 sq metre visitor centre has permanent exhibitions and a huge freshwater aquarium with a capacity of over 735,000 litres (largest freshwater aquarium of Europe). The natural-looking displays give visitors a truly memorable experience. The aquarium on level -1 contains over 40 native Hungarian fish species and about 15 amphibians and reptiles.



Lake Tisza Ecocenter



Aquarium



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Birders with children will enjoy the Ecocenter's big recreation park, which was designed in the spirit of 'exploring nature'. Visitors can closely observe animals, enjoy animal shows and try challenging playgrounds. e.g. boating lake with rafts and ropeways, log playground, cormorant colony and pelican-lake, otter house, kingfisher-watching, Fishermen's Outdoor Museum, Village Museum, Golden jackal's run. Visiting the Ecocenter can be a joy for all family members.



Recreation park

Driving to Hortobágy we stop at an area, where a large colony of Red-footed falcons lives. In a small steppe forest Red-footed falcons nest in the nests of Rooks and also in artificial nest boxes. It's an amazing view to see the dozens of this colourful falcon flying around. Near to the colony we stop at a sand wall, where Bee-eaters and Sand Martins nest. We arrive to the hotel late afternoon and have dinner in the hotel or nearby restaurant.



Red-footed Falcon

Day 4

Birding at Hortobágy Great Fishpond

Overnight Hortobágy area

This day we will be birding at Hortobágy National Park (HNP). HNP the first and so far the biggest National Park of Hungary was established in 1973 on a 52000 ha area. This original area is entirely an UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The recent area is about 82000 hectares. The Hortobágy NP has been inscribed on the World Heritage List by UNESCO in 1999 in the category of cultural landscapes. According to its brief description "the Hortobágy is a vast area of plains and wetlands that have been used by humans for grazing their domestic animals for more than two millennia".

After an early breakfast we visit the Great Fish Pond (Nagy Halastó). In Hortobágy 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.



*Hortobágy puszta
and tradition*



Great Fish Pond



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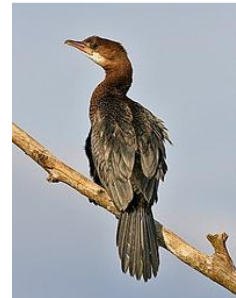
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Formerly there were 17 ponds, while now 7 are out of use being covered by reed or other marsh vegetation. Great Fish Pond is a Ramsar site maintaining breeding and migrating waterfowl populations of outstanding importance, so it is considered as one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

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, Glossy Ibis and the rare breeder Pygmy Cormorant can be seen. Gulls, terns, plovers, waders occur here in great numbers including Black-headed and Yellow-legged Gull, Whiskered, Black, White-winged Black Tern, Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Dunlin, Redshank, Spotted Redshank, Ruff.

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.

The reedbeds of the Great Fishpond System also offers an excellent habitat for different warblers. Marsh, Reed, Great Reed, Moustached, Sedge, Savi's and Grasshopper Warblers can be seen and heard with reasonable chance. Bearded Reedling and Penduline Tit will be likely seen or heard too. Beside birds we can also see wonderful plants, flowers, dragonflies, butterflies, frogs.



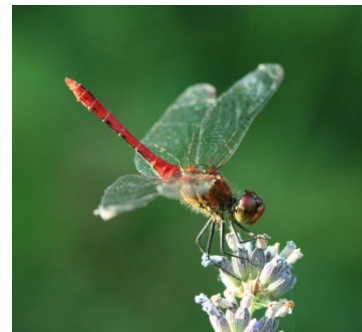
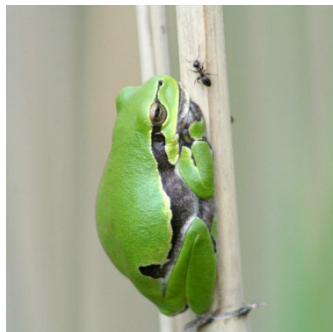
Pygmy Cormorant



Ferruginous Duck



Great Reed Warbler





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Day 5

Birding on the steppe habitats of Hortobágy

Return to Budapest

On the last day we will be birding on the steppe (puszta in Hungarian) habitats of Hortobágy. The rich rodent population of the steppe ensures a healthy numbers of predators. Among the many Common Buzzards and Marsh Harriers we will see Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Long-legged Buzzard as well as the magnificent Saker. Perhaps this is the only place where you can see Rough-legged Buzzard, Long-legged Buzzard and Common Buzzard together.

When we are driving in the Hortobágy area on many fields we can see can see archaic, traditional Hungarian domestic animals like the Grey Cattle, the twisted horned Racka Sheep or Water Buffalo. Other traditional domestic animals like the Mangalica Pig, Noniusz Horse, Kuvasz (Shepherd) Dog can be seen in the the Animal Park of Hortobágy.

During the day we will also 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 grassland where we can see Tree Sparrows, Skylarks, Crested Larks, Stonechats, Corn Buntings, White and Yellow Wagtails and Red-backed Shrikes.

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.

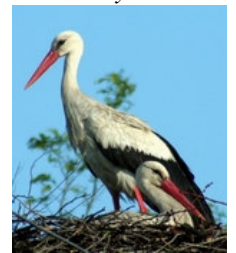
In the village you can also buy hand-made articles for souvenirs. We leave Hortobágy at around 3 pm and arrive back to the hotel in Budapest at 6pm. During the 3hrs trip we stop at certain places giving a second chance to see species we missed.



Long-legged Buzzard



Grey Cattles



White Stork



9-hole bridge



Gray Cattles at Hortobágy



Shepherds Statue



Shed



Folklore program



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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.