

Trip Report — Hungary & Romania: The Best of Eastern Europe 2025

April 19-May 5, 2025 with Terry Stevenson & Lajos Nemeth-Boka



There are more and more Brown Bears in Transylvania—an estimated 10,000 animals are now roaming the countryside. We had great close looks at this totally friendly small family on the roadside. Photo by guide Lajos Nemeth-Boka.

This was our seventh Hungary & Romania tour, once again led by Terry Stevenson and Lajos Nemeth-Boka. We followed what is now our well-tried route, which included the amazing Danube Delta, the Carpathian Mountains, the woodlands and farms of Transylvania, and finally the Hungarian plains around Kiskunsag. Birding highlights were many, but of particular note were Great Bustard, Dalmatian Pelican, Imperial Eagle, Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker, Northern Nutcracker, Bearded Reedling, and Wallcreeper. Mammals varied from tiny Eurasian Ground Squirrels to Western Roe Deer, and we had amazing looks at a mother and two cub Brown Bears feeding right next to our vehicle.



Enjoying Alpine Swifts and Eurasian Crag-Martins from the upper edge of Turda Gorge. Photo by guide Lajos Nemeth-Boka.

The dates of the tour are planned to catch the migration of birds returning from Africa to their European breeding grounds, the spring song, and to be not so late in the season that the trees are completely full of leaf. We've found this is the timing that works best, and so we left our hotel in Bucharest and headed east for three nights in the Danube Delta area and the Black Sea coast. This gave us time to explore not just the delta but other major habitats, including the Babadag Hills, the surrounding farmlands, and the Cheia Dobrogen Gorge. Just some of the birds we saw included Gray Partridge, Common Cuckoo, White Storks nesting on the village roofs and telephone poles, Booted Eagle, Pallid and Montagu's harriers, Long-legged Buzzard, Eurasian Hoopoe, Great-spotted, Syrian, and Gray-headed woodpeckers, Red-footed Falcon, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Lesser Gray and Woodchat shrikes, Eurasian Jackdaw, Rook, 5 species of lark including Wood, Sky, Crested, Greater Short-toed and Calandra, Wood Warbler, Chiffchaff, Lesser and Greater Whitethroats, European Pied Flycatcher, a gorgeous male Collared Flycatcher, Black Redstart, European Goldfinch and Ortolan Bunting.



Tawny Owl by guide Lajos Nemeth-Boka.

Leaving the coast and delta behind, we then returned to Bucharest and left the following day for the historical city of Brasov and a visit to Bran (Dracula's) Castle. This was largely a travel day, but we were now in place to bird the Homorod Valley -- the main site for Lesser Spotted Eagle (we saw three), and also picked up Little Owl (they live on buildings in the villages), Eurasian Jay, Marsh Tit, Eurasian Nuthatch, Fieldfare, Hawfinch, Eurasian Linnet, European Serin and Yellowhammer. Our new base was now at Odorheiu Secuesc, allowing us day outings to Bicaz Gorge, where we added European Turtle-Dove, Great Gray Shrike, White-throated Dipper, and the amazing Wallcreeper! And then a day to Mt. Hargita that proved exceptional, with Eurasian Pygmy-Owl, Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker, Coal, Crested, and Willow tits, Common Firecrest, Ring Ousel, Mistle Thrush, and Eurasian Bullfinch. Even the local city park was productive, with good looks after dinner one night at Eurasian Scops-Owl.



Whiskered, White-winged, and Black terns during our boat trip in the Danube Delta. Photo by guide Lajos Nemeth-Boka.

We now headed further west, passing through the Sighisoara Forest, where we picked up Middle-spotted and Eurasian Green woodpeckers, another male Collared Flycatcher, and Short-toed Treecreeper. And then, just before our charming hotel at Conacul Secuiesc, we stopped in the Cheile Valisoarei Gorge for European Red-rumped Swallow and Rock Bunting and had the unexpected bonus of a flying flock of 17 Common Cranes -- on their journey to who knows where? We were now in one of the most beautiful parts of Transylvania, birding in the traditionally farmed area (yes, unlike most of Europe they still practice strip farming here) and we also made a visit to the spectacular Turda Gorge. New birds included Alpine Swift, Red-backed Shrike, and Common Nightingale (actually seen here).



Traditional Szekler gate by guide Terry Stevenson.

Continuing still further west, we crossed into Hungary and stopped at one of the most productive wetlands of the whole tour. It's spectacular to spend a few hours at Foldes, and although many of the species had been seen earlier in the Danube Delta, everyone agreed it was well worth a visit. Just some of the highlights were large numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds, with new birds including Eurasian Wigeon, and Spotted Redshank and Dunlin (in breeding plumage); we also enjoyed Eurasian Spoonbill and a variety of herons and egrets. The surrounding woodlands held Long-eared Owl, European Bee-eater, and a colony of Red-footed Falcons.



Out birding on the enormous Danube Delta, by guide Lajos Nemeth-Boka.

After a night in Hajduszovoszlo (no one can pronounce it), we headed to the famous Hortobagy NP and then on to Kiskunsag, a vast area of carefully managed farmlands interspersed with woodland, heath, and marshy wetlands. This was a great way to finish our tour, with once again great looks at so many waterbirds, plus some real highlights, including Great Bustard (displaying males and females), Eurasian Nightjar, Eurasian Thick-knee, a colony of Mediterranean Gulls, European Honey-buzzard, Imperial Eagle, European Roller, Eurasian Wryneck, Saker Falcon, Eurasian Penduline-tit, Great Reed Warbler, River Warbler, and Common Grasshopper Warbler.



A pair of White-tailed Eagles by guide Lajos Nemeth-Boka.

As always, we concluded the tour near the historical city of Budapest, with the option of extra nights and a city tour to learn more about the history of this fascinating area.



The town of Brasov, where we watched residents performing traditional dances in the small town square, by guide Lajos Nemeth-Boka.

Mammals seen on the tour:

European Hare (*Lepus europaeus*) -- Small numbers in the farmlands of Hungary; in all we saw about 15.

European Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*) -- Also known as Souslik, we saw about 30 between Bucharest, Baia, and Babadag.

Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*) -- Fantastic close looks at a mother and two cubs feeding on grass right next to our vehicle on the way to Bicaz Gorge.

Western Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) -- Eight in the Homorod Valley, 2 near Coltesti, and about 18 between Hortobagy and Kiskunsag.

You can see my complete trip report on eBird at this link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/388705>

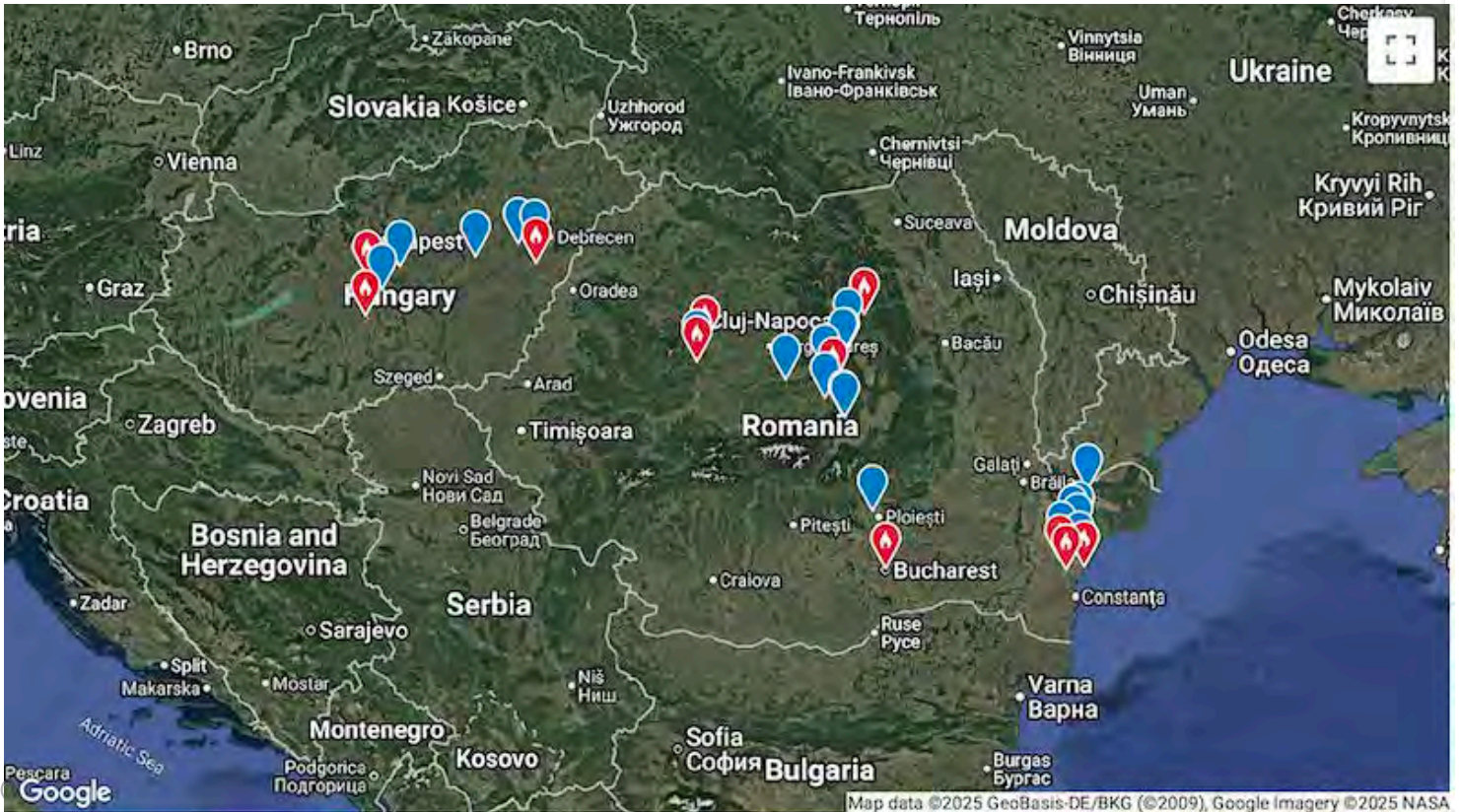
—Terry Stevenson



Field Guides Birding Tours – HUNGARY & ROMANIA (with Terry Stevenson & Lajos Nemeth-Boka)



21 Apr – 4 May 2025 (14 days) Public



[Hungary](#) | [Romania](#) [Subregions](#)

Terry Stevenson



For a narrative summary of this tour, including a Field Guides photo gallery and additional media for this trip...

202

37




















































Species Observed

Checklists

LIFERS  118 
























Species Observed
























[Show all details](#)
























746	Graylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		 8
400	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i> 		 8
2	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>		 1
164	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i> 		 6
217	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>		 7
54	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		 3
28	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		 5
2	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>		 1
138	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		 10
26	Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		 2
14	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i> 		 3
56	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>		 7
30	Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i> 		 4
1	Gray Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i> 		 1
30	Ring-necked Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i> * 		 13
5	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>		 4
176	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i> *		 9
85	Common Wood-Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i> 		 12
4	European Turtle-Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i> 		 3
160	Eurasian Collared-Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		 15
8	Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i> 		 2
























23	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	▶  15
1	Eurasian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> ✓	▶  1
30	Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>	▶  1
39	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i> ✓	▶  3
4	Eurasian Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	▶  2
272	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	▶  8
22	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i> ✓	▶  3
3	Eurasian Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i> ✓	▶  2
59	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	▶  5
371	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	▶  5
9	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Thinornis dubius</i>	▶  3
63	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i> ✓	▶  9
7	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	▶  1
3	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i> ✓	▶  2
9	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	▶  3
8	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	▶  4
2	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	▶  1
81	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	▶  7
9	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	▶  2
6	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i> ✓	▶  3
1	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	▶  1
481	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	▶  7
4	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	▶  2
30	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i> ✓	▶  1
























300	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	1
21	Little Gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i> ✓	3
1292	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> ✓	10
2	Pallas's Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus</i> ✓	1
103	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i> ✓	2
31	Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i> ✓	3
24	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i> ✓	4
1	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	1
191	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	3
204	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i> ✓	2
46	White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i> ✓	3
3	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	1
9	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	1
2	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	1
8	Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i> ✓	1
81	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	4
50	Eared Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	1
4	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	2
251	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	14
46	Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo pygmaeus</i> ✓	3
58	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	6
72	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	2
22	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	3












4	Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	✓	▶  2
61	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>		▶  4
22	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		▶  3
14	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>		▶  1
15	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		▶  6
35	Gray Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		▶  12
12	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>		▶  7
114	Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>		▶  4
30	Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	✓	▶  3
2	European Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>		▶  1
5	Lesser Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga pomarina</i>	✓	▶  3
3	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>		▶  2
8	Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>		▶  3
3	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	✓	▶  2
5	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	✓	▶  5
1	Eurasian Goshawk	<i>Astur gentilis</i>	✓	▶  1
59	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		▶  12
4	Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>		▶  2
4	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>		▶  4
11	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	✓	▶  3
31	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		▶  11
2	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>		▶  2
1	Eurasian Scops-Owl	<i>Otus scops</i>	✓	▶  1

1	Eurasian Pygmy-Owl	<i>Glaucidium passerinum</i>	✓	▶  1
3	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	✓	▶  2
3	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	✓	▶  3
2	Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>	✓	▶  1
26	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		▶  9
91	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>		▶  3
5	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		▶  1
15	European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>		▶  4
1	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	✓	▶  1
1	Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>	✓	▶  1
2	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocoptes medius</i>	✓	▶  2
5	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓	▶  4
2	Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>	✓	▶  2
1	Gray-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>		▶  1
3	Eurasian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	✓	▶  2
75	Eurasian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		▶  17
55	Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>	✓	▶  8
1	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	✓	▶  1
9	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	✓	▶  3
3	Saker Falcon	<i>Falco cherrug</i>	Sensitive ✓	▶  1
1	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		▶  1
5	Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	✓	▶  4
9	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	✓	▶  5

1	Great Gray Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	✓	▶  1
4	Lesser Gray Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	✓	▶  3
1	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	✓	▶  1
7	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓	▶  5
124	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	▶  16
1	Northern Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	✓	▶  1
331	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	▶  14
1030	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	▶  14
36	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	▶  8
16	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	▶  6
8	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>		▶  2
1	Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>	✓	▶  1
1	Sombre Tit	<i>Poecile lugubris</i>	✓	▶  1
3	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	✓	▶  1
3	Willow Tit	<i>Poecile montanus</i>	✓	▶  1
4	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	▶  2
27	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	▶  10
2	Eurasian Penduline-Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	✓	▶  1
6	Wood Lark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	✓	▶  4
30	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓	▶  7
21	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>		▶  7
4	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	✓	▶  1
22	Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	✓	▶  2

2	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	✓	▶  1
2	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Iduna pallida</i>		▶  1
14	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	✓	▶  3
10	Common Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>		▶  6
1	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	✓	▶  1
1	River Warbler	<i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>	✓	▶  1
6	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	✓	▶  6
1	Common Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>	✓	▶  1
32	Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	✓	▶  4
18	Eurasian Crag-Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	✓	▶  3
334	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		▶  13
19	Western House-Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		▶  7
8	European Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis rufula</i>	✓	▶  1
3	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	✓	▶  2
7	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		▶  2
50	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		▶  7
6	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓	▶  3
3	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		▶  3
6	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i>		▶  5
8	Greater Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	✓	▶  3
1	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	✓	▶  1
4	Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	✓	▶  3
3	Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>		▶  1

5	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	✓	▶  3
2	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	✓	▶  1
2	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	✓	▶  1
374	European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		▶  15
2	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓	▶  1
6	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	▶  1
30	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	▶  8
12	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	✓	▶  3
13	Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	✓	▶  2
3	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>		▶  3
3	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	▶  3
8	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	✓	▶  6
1	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>		▶  1
3	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	✓	▶  3
3	Collared Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>	✓	▶  2
6	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	✓	▶  3
14	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		▶  8
19	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	✓	▶  10
22	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	▶  8
16	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	✓	▶  3
21	Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	✓	▶  2
106	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		▶  9
16	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	✓	▶  2

16	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	✓	▶  6
5	Gray Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		▶  3
121	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>		▶  7
27	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		▶  12
3	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	✓	▶  3
1	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	▶  1
5	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>		▶  3
120	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	▶  13
1	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	✓	▶  1
1	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	✓	▶  1
7	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓	▶  5
43	Eurasian Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	▶  4
42	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	▶  11
2	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	✓	▶  1
81	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	✓	▶  10
3	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>		▶  2
4	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	✓	▶  3
2	Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	✓	▶  1
2	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	✓	▶  2