

# Hungary

Wildlife at Leisure

## A Greentours Trip Report

24<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012

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Daily reports & systematic lists by Amanda da Rocha.



## Day 1 Thursday 24th May Arrival & transfer Kondor Lodge, via Ócsa Meadows

**Weather:** warm & sunny into the late evening, a bit different to the wet & cold we left in England

Our journey to Hungary was relatively smooth with a bit of turbulence as we started to descend into Budapest Terminal 1. We would be one of the last air flights to be using Terminal 1, as it will be officially closed by the time we return. Geoff, Liz & Amanda, met up with Csaba, who took us to a nearby nature reserve, Merzse-mocsár, to fill in the hour's wait for Peter & Joyce. The Merzse marsh is unusual in that it is one of the last remaining typical large swamp wetlands that stems back to the 19th century. The area is of great ecological value, with several rare and complex wetland plant communities, particularly of high-sedge, reed and willow communities. The park is undergoing a rehabilitation program, to try and restore the original wetland conditions that had been drained for agricultural purposes over the years.

Due to the short time, we were only able to explore a small area of the sedge meadow, where the lovely *Iris pseudacorus* brightened up the greeny-brown sward of the *Carex* vegetation. Chaffinch and Great Tit called from the surrounding trees, and as we were leaving a Nightingale started to sing. A cup of tea was on hand from the back of the vehicle, after which, we returned to the airport to pick up Peter & Joyce, before heading south to Kiskunság National Park and Kondor Lodge.

A brief stop was made at Ócsa Meadows, to stretch our legs and explore one of the lovely grassy meadows that we were driving past. Chestnut Heath butterflies clung tightly to the waving grass as the wind tried to shake them off, while Green-underside & Common Blues flittered across our path. We tried to take photos of the orchids that were starting to appear as we got our eye in. A Wryneck called from the hedge-line of shrubby bushes as we walked further round the meadow. Plant species included Crested Cow-wheat, Squinancywort, Hungarian Milfoil, Quaking Grass, Yellow Rattle, Marsh, Fragrant and Marsh Lax-flowered Orchid.

Our continuing journey took us through lush green landscape, flowery meadows, and rustic villages. Marsh Harriers quartered alongside the minibus, Buzzards soared overhead; while various species of Hirundines displayed aerial acrobatic manoeuvres over the fields. The day ended with a pair of Rollers on a wire near to the lodge, Golden Oriole singing from the surrounding Poplars, and a lovely Common Redstart singing from the roof of our accommodation.

**Kondor Lodge** is based in the heart of Kiskunság National Park, settled amongst woodland environs. The accommodation is traditional style Hungarian thatched-roof buildings; the comfortable rustic atmosphere is topped off with typical Hungarian cuisine, making the experience truly unique.

The evening saw a spot of moth identification on the lodge's walls, and removing a Common Spadefoot Toad off the path before it got flattened by someone's foot. With all the day's sightings an exciting day awaited for us tomorrow.

## Day 2 Friday 25th May Kondor Environs – Kiskunság National Park

**Weather:** sunny & warm with the temperature rising in the afternoon, cooling down in the evening

**Kiskunság National Park** is the second oldest national park in Hungary, established in 1975. The park lies between the rivers Danube and Tisza. The area is a mosaic of bogs, marshes, salt lakes and dry grassy plains. The great plain steppes of the Upper- Kiskunság is called Puszta, a large saline lowland, referred to as the Great Hungarian Plain, home to the largest population of Great Bustard in Europe. Other areas include Bugac which is the largest separate area of the park and the Fülöpháza Sand Dunes, one of the most unique sand-dune systems in Central Europe.

The grazing lands, saline meadows and terraces are also home to the typical ancient Hungarian Grey Cattle & Racka Sheep with the twisted horns. Traditional farming methods are also employed here, and combined with the natural landscape makes this unique Kiskunság National Park.

The dawn chorus was a musical overture of Golden Orioles waking those who wanted to listen, but by the time breakfast was served it was over, with only the calls of Redstart and Black Redstart joining us from the surrounding branches.

This morning was spent exploring the environs of Kondor Lodge, and as we headed along the sandy track towards the lake, Sand Lizards scuttled across our path, and a Queen of Spain Fritillary basked in the morning sun. We stopped at the nesting hole that Liz had watched before breakfast to see if we could decide what species was feeding young. Geoff stayed while the rest of us wandered off towards the lake; he eventually joined us, and pronounced that it was a Starling rather than the suggested Wryneck.

We slowly made our way towards the lake admiring some Rollers, when the lovely tickling of Bee-eater came over our heads. A pair of these gorgeous coloured birds flew around above us, before heading off to sit on the telegraph wire. Peter went off to try and get some video shots of them, while Joyce and Liz were exploring the various plants and finding some interesting insects, such as the large Spurge Hawk Moth caterpillar, Rose Cockchafers and Large Grizzled Skipper. However, with the wind blowing the butterflies were not settling, so we turned our attention to the birds over the low muddy reedbeds. Black-tailed Godwit and Lapwing called and displayed from the marshy meadows. Whiskered Terns whizzed back-and-forth along the water strips, Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint, and Dunlin to name a few waders were scoped probing around the margins, while the small groups of duck were mainly Mallard, although male Garganey was spotted among them. It was becoming quite frustrating to watch anything with the wind, so we moved round into a sheltered bit of a field, where the insect activity was quite lively. Black-tailed Skimmers zipped in front of us, as we held our breath for them to land, several damselfly tandems bounced along landing gently on the leaves, while single individuals basked in lines. This allowed us to get very close to the insects, and examine the various segments for identification. Several stages of Blue-tailed Damselfly were noted, but the most interesting was a male Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly gripping the back of a female Dainty Damselfly, who was frantically trying to be realised from the grip. Butterflies were also nipping along the sheltered ride with a brief stop now-and-again from Queen of Spain

Fritillaries. A couple of interesting plants to note were *Silene conica*, *Helianthemums* and *Stipa borystherica*.

After a while we wandered back towards the lodge for a tea break, but not before spending time over a copulating pair of Granville Fritillary on a sprig of *Lithospermum purpurocaerulea*. A refreshing tea underneath the large white poplar tree in the lodge's grounds set us up for the next walk along the woodland ride. Golden Orioles sang all around us with a male giving a quick flyby among the trees for some of us, but it was the abundance of butterflies that was absorbing everyone's interest. This path proved to be a treasure trove of butterflies with around 16 different species fluttering up and down a small sheltered section of the path. The Musk Thistle proved very popular with several fresh Cardinals feeding off the large heads, while the smaller Large Skippers fought them for space, although a Niobe Fritillary preferred the horse pooh along the path! Common Gliders gracefully glided by, with several of us in pursuit, Orange-tips and an Eastern Bath White bounced around the woodland verge vegetation. These delightful lovelies were joined by several dragons; Golden-ringed which decided to perch itself at the top of a bush out of view of those people who missed it. A Large White-faced Darter briefly sat on a leaf, for the cameras before flying off, while a Four-spotted Chaser and White-legged Damselfly were much more obliging. In the mist of it all a Tree Pipit was heard and seen singing as it parachuted down from the trees to the heathland area behind the ride.

Reluctantly, we made our way back to the lodge to lunch enjoyed amidst green woodlands, and next to a bright red cheerful poppy field, giving a startling contrast against the yellow corn. Before boarding the vehicle for the afternoon's exploration, a Hawfinch flew over our heads into the nearby woods, a bird to keep our eyes-out-for when we come back.

We didn't travel very far from the lodge, when we were tempted to stop to investigate a colourful meadow, where Corn Bunting sang, Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrike called from various bushes. The group separated with some exploring the flowery meadow, discovering swards of *Leopoldia comosa*, *Salvia pratensis* and carpets of *Dianthus pottedera*, while in the forest Csaba had located an Icterine Warbler. This proved very elusive at times as it blended into the green woodland foliage, but we all eventually got superb views of this bird. A further two stops were made for several picturesque plants of Beardless Iris, Forked Larkspur, Dyer's Greenweed, while Yellow Wagtail sung from the trees, and a Montagu's Harrier floated overhead.

Travelling through the varied landscape, White Storks were sitting on nests wherever possible in the small villages, telegraph wires or on purpose built towers, while Marsh Harriers quartered the fields and reeds. A close quartering female Marsh Harrier prompted us to stop by a small lush green river channel, disturbing a Night Heron which flew out from the surrounding bushes. The stop proved fruitful with several spikes of Fragrant and Marsh Lax-flowered Orchids scattered around a sedge meadow, while beautiful stands of Yellow Iris highlighted the roadside, and the carnivorous bog plant Greater Bladderwort was found in the pool behind the sluice as we were watching the Marsh Frogs.

Today we had kept our trips short and local, and were rewarded with an amazing array of colourful treasures, from the bountiful butterflies of the morning walk, the blazing colours of Roller and Bee-eater, and to the multi-coloured meadows. What will tomorrow dazzle us with?

### **Day 3 Saturday 26th May Kunpeszér Viper Centre – Bugyi Area**

**Weather:** sunny & warm with the temperature rising in the afternoon, cooling down in the evening. A cool breeze was also blowing.

Csaba had sorted out a special trip today to visit the Hungarian Meadow Viper Conservation Centre near Kunpeszér, located in the middle of Kiskunság National Park. Starting off we made our way through several bright coloured villages, housing many White Stork's nests on the various pylons or chimneys. It was at one particular chimney near a village square that we stopped to take a closer look at the adult and a couple of the young chicks, which kept putting their heads up over the large twiggy nest basket. Walking along the footpath we had to watch out for the large numbers of Hornets flying around, unfortunately none would land long enough for a photo. The same applied for the Syrian Woodpecker as it called from the nearby tree.

Leaving the village we noticed a small colony of Bee-eaters, but as soon as the vehicle slowed down they were off. However, we did spot the unusual ground squirrel – the Suslik, well everyone but Peter, and as we were all telling him, '*it's there, no, it's there*, they would disappear; even a brief walk in the area didn't help. A dead one further up the road, which was probably a result of a raptor kill, let him know we weren't making it up, but it just isn't the same.

The striking contrast of the poppy and corn field made us stop Csaba for photos. Fields of this colour are very rare in Britain now, so it was a good opportunity to make the most of it. We spent some time admiring this view, listening to Blackcaps and Nightingale behind us, and watching a Roe Deer bounce through the small woodland at the side.

#### **Hungarian Meadow Viper Conservation Centre**

The Hungarian Meadow Viper (*Vipera ursinii rakosiensis*) is the most endangered snake in Europe, with an estimated wild population of around 500 specimens in Hungary and Romania. Once widespread on the Hungarian Plain, the Hungarian meadow viper is now limited to Hanság, in grasslands close to the Austrian border, and Kiskunság, on the 'puszta' plains south of Budapest, where the remaining populations survive in the Kiskunság National Park. The meadow viper is a small, non-lethal snake that grows to around 50 cm. Its natural habitat has been greatly reduced, notably by massive conversion to intensive agriculture and forestry.

Due to its endangered status, the conservation of the Hungarian Meadow Viper was part of the Hungarian LIFE programme in 1992, a 20 year project funded by the European Commission. The aim of which was to restore its favoured grassland habitats and raise public awareness through campaigns to reduce concerns about the risks of reintroducing venomous snakes and to prevent farmers and local citizens killing the vipers. The centre was created in 2004 as part of this programme to establish a captive breeding programme, so reintroductions could be made back into suitable grassland habitats, ensuring its long-term conservation. The breeding programme started with ten adult vipers, collected from four different local populations to ensure diversity. Male/female pairs were kept inside wired enclosures where they were able to breed in conditions replicating semi-natural viper grassland habitat. The centre now has over 800 vipers.

We were greeted by our guide Csaba, a popular name in Hungary and for the next hour and half, Csaba told us about the centre, why it was formed, who supports it, and one of its most important aims, public awareness, in providing information about the snakes and change people's perception of venomous snakes through education. After which we were taken under the large

nets that protected the snakes from aerial predators, and housed the outdoor terraria. We wandered around the containers to try and spot any snakes, Liz found the first one. Eventually, Csaba raised a log and we all got some nice views of this interesting reptile. While we were searching for any signs of the snakes, Balkan Lizards were spotted basking on the large stones that were in the tanks, it was the only time we saw these lizards for the trip. Since our visit in May, 87 vipers have been released back into the Kiskunság region.

We ate our lunch at the centre under the canopy of the seating area. A brief stop was made to admire the herd of Hungarian Grey Cattle, with doleful eyed calves as we made our way out of the protected area. A Great Reed Warbler singing loudly from the top of a reed near the road made us stop to see if we could get a nice shot, before it decided to fly and sing from the top of the nearby tree.

The afternoon saw us head out towards the dry plains and grassy hummocks of the Puszta. Crested Larks sung from the various prominent perches; Buzzards sitting on the fence posts eyed the ground curiously. The grassy hummock gave an excellent vantage point to scan the massive steppe plain for Great Bustard; a very distant white speck apparently was one of these great birds. From the hummock we could also see just how flat the steppe area was. A pair of Black-tailed Skimmer's flew around us, while Small Heaths and Common Blues were chased off settled perches by White-legged Damselflies as we explored the area. It was then decided that we should move on, but wait, what was this slow-flapping, huge bird approaching the van. Unbelievable, a Great Bustard was heading towards us, and flew over the vehicle, how fantastic was that, we all got excellent views of this difficult to see bird. We were all in a positive mood, when Csaba pulled over to scan some agricultural fields. White Storks probed the ground. Marsh Harriers quartered over the distant fields, Brown Hare were running around us, when he spotted several Collared Pratincoles flying around. We all got some lovely views of this species, and also spotted a pair of Black-tailed Godwit.

Admiring the decorated roadside with Red Pheasant-eye, Beardless Iris, Wild Sage and Cornflowers, Csaba turned off on to a dirt track. It was then we had one of those magic moments. Driving around a corner, 50+ bee-eaters took off in front of the vehicle. Wow. We had arrived at a Bee-eater colony, unfortunately they had only just arrived from migration, and weren't settled in any particular hole, so they just settled around the bushes away from the colony, so we moved on not wanting to disturb them more than we needed to, but it was an incredible sight of blue, green, and yellow ribbons flying together in the wind, astounding.

Our next stop was at the lakes of a working quarry. Here we added a new species of bird for the trip Mediterranean Gull, a small colony was breeding on one of the islands. It was the only place we saw this bird for the trip. The day was moving on and so we started to make our way back. It must have been the day for it, but we had another surprising moment as we passed the agricultural fields. The pair of Black-tailed Godwit we had seen previously were right next to the road, and with them were three little bundles of fluff, and huge big feet!

The day ended with a superb view of a Little Owl, but most importantly Peter actually got to see a Suslik, in fact several. We headed back and if the wind died down a possible Nightjar walk after dinner.

The wind had died down so it was decided to try for Nightjar's after dinner. It was a beautiful clear sky and the stars were sparkling, which did mean that the temperature had dropped, but we still continued along the woodland track to the heathland beyond. All was quiet; apart from the undergrowth noises, drawing our attention to look down at our feet. There hopping around the edges were Common Spadefoot Toad, one and two at first, but then we realised they were everywhere, so we had to watch where we were treading.

After a while of standing around in a suitable place we heard our first Nightjar. A distant bird was calling then a nearer one, but they remained distant and out of view. The night drew on, and no Nightjar appeared, so we moved on to a Scops Owl site. Standing under a remarkable black sparkly sky, listening to the soft nocturnal noises of insects was incredible. Lapwing and Black-tailed Godwit could also be heard giving a haunting feel to the atmosphere. The Scops Owls were staying indoors, and nothing was calling, so we decided to call it a night.

#### **Day 4 Sunday 27th May Apaj Area of the puszta (Great Plain) – Bugyi Area including Fishponds**

**Weather:** Even though the sky was blue there was a crisp cool chill to the morning. However the day started to warm up later in the afternoon.

Today saw us heading to the northern part of the park taking in the Great Plain before visiting the Fishponds. A small marshy area with a good selection of waders provided a short stop, but an impromptu stop further along the road caused a flurry of excitement. A superb male Red-footed Falcon was hovering over a grassy meadow and feeding on the wing, giving excellent views. We watched this bird for a while, before heading back to the vehicle, where we were distracted by another interesting creature a White-letter Hairstreak which was feeding on Elm next to our vehicle.

The sun was starting to beat down, and the long stretch of road to the plain was punctuated with a stop for Water Buffalo that were wallowing in a muddy ditch. We stopped to watch the activity, but the *Thymus longicaulis* on the road verge was more attractive and had a nicer smell. Thus, it was decided to have a short walk to stretch our legs. The thyme was busy with visits from Small Heath, Brown Argus, Common Blues, and the highlight a lovely Large Copper. Another attractive highlight was the lovely clumps of blue *Consolida regalis*.

Moving further on a brief stop was made to admire the traditional Grey Cattle, before stopping at a reed-side river channel. We stopped under the Poplars, which provided ideal shade as we took a tea-break. Great Reed Warblers called from the reed-side, a Red-footed Falcon flew over headed. From here we carried further on down the river channel, *Elaeagnus angustifolia* interspersed the reed-side and the various *Odonata* including Black-tailed Skimmer, Emperor, Norfolk Hawker, Broad-bodied Chaser and Blue-tailed Damsel actively quartered over the water, chasing each other, resting and feeding as we walked along the side.

Nightingales sang and flittered in front of us, giving some superb views of this often elusive bird. Golden Orioles sang and again the male gave some of the group a glimpse of this stunning bird. However, the highlight of this stretch of water was the male Penduline Tit nest building, a bird

that everybody wanted to see. Time was spent watching this species, which was very obliging, but due to the location of the nest the wind and branches didn't help the photography.

It was time of lunch and Csaba took us over to the Fishponds, a large area of open water, channels and reed-beds. It is a protected area and thus a permit is needed. The area is managed in a traditional way by cattle grazing, the fencing of which provided Csaba with an obstacle challenge, however once through we could follow the channels to the look-out tower. However, we did have to back up the vehicle for a family of Greylag Geese, who didn't want to move. This proved beneficial as we stopped at a small pool. Little Ringed Plovers probed the Swan Muscles that littered the muddy sides, Avocet, Black-tailed Godwit, Black-winged Stilt and over 50 Dunlin fed around the far edge. Coots, Pochard and Ferruginous Duck dabbled in the open water, while Black Tern's called as they flew back and forth.

Lunch was eaten in the shade of the tower, listening to the natural sounds of the reed-beds, Coot, Pochard, Red-crested Pochard, Bearded Tit, Sedge and Reed Warblers, even Marsh Frogs joined in the medley. Montagu's and Marsh Harriers quartered over the reed-beds, Purple Herons squawked and landed awkwardly in the middle of the marshy area and Caspian Gulls were eating the various dead fish that happened to have fallen foul to a water bird.

We exited the protected area at the opposite end of the reserve and followed a very bumpy road, where local fishermen were enjoying the hot day. A brief stop was made at a bridge to watch the Sand-martins and Swallow chase the flies over the water. A cacophony of Marsh Frogs gave choir, as we viewed Lesser Grey Shrike and Black-winged Stilt through the telescope, while the glorious Yellow Wagtails investigated the disturbed muddy areas of the fields.

The remainder of the afternoon was spent around the large dry grassland plain near Bugyi. A stop was made again to watch the Collared Pratincoles, the numerous White Storks that were feeding around the fields, Brown Hares abounded, and an Eastern Imperial Eagle was spotted, although distant we all got to see this magnificent bird. It was only noticed due to the Great Bustard which was being scoped in the distance. The dry flowery meadows provided some dazzling fresh Adonis and Common Blues, Queen of Spain Fritillary, Small and Chestnut Heath and Large Grizzled Skipper. Unfortunately we couldn't find any Zephyr Blues even though their food plant *Astragalus asper* was abundant. The flower list was also building up with new species such as Bug Orchid, *Campanula sibirica* and the endemic *Centaurea sadleriona*.

## **Day 5 Monday 28th May Böddi-szék – Bugyi Area**

**Weather:** warm, sunny blue skies, with temperatures rising in the afternoon, slight breeze

The dawn chorus was at its best again at 04:45 for at least ten minutes before it quietened down and let those of us, who wanted to, return to our slumber for a couple of hours before breakfast. Breakfast was an interesting affair as we were had been asked the previous night, if we would be interested in trying a typical Great Plain dish, of Csabi sausage (Kolbász). The excitement soon subsided when a very pallid, limp sausage appeared, and most passed on the offer after seeing Amanda's face as she lifted one up!

We were heading south west this morning to the unusual alkaline lakes of the park, but not before trying to find Liz's Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, which she had been watching just outside



the grounds of the lodge, before breakfast. This is a bird that she had wanted to see for years. Unfortunately, it did not re-appear, so we headed towards the sodic lakes, passing the resident Rollers as they perched on their usual piece of telegraph wire near the lake. Buzzards soared effortlessly as we passed traditional rustic farmhouses, landscaped by flowery meadows, and lush green woodlands. Various agricultural crops added to the mosaic, including an unusual cash crop – Elder. It was very strange to see purpose planted rows of Elder growing in straight lines, which had been shaped and kept tidy.

Our first stop was next to several stands of the traditional reed haystacks, amidst a small sparse wooded dry grassland. The meadow was alive with the calls of the various Bush-crickets, Field Crickets and grasshoppers, ideal food for the other species we were here to see – Red-footed Falcon. A female had been spotted sitting in the trees, when we realised there was a nest. We all emerged out of the vehicle, some attention was made for the falcon, but it was the lively meadow that most of us wanted to explore, with the various insects exploding out of our way as we moved through the grass.

Interesting flowers in the sward included several spikes of Bug Orchid, *Silene nutans*, and *Astragalus asper*. Vivid Adonis Blues and Large Coppers fluttered around the colourful plants, along with Little Blues and Small Heaths, while Brimstones flounced around the wooded areas.

In due course we moved on to the puszta of Sós-ér & Böddi-szék, part of the sodic chain of lakes in the Kiskunság, covering over 700 hectares, and of international importance for wildfowl and shorebirds. It is the only place to find breeding Kentish Plover in Hungary, unfortunately we didn't see any. Csaba pointed that it may be due to the low levels of the alkaline lakes. We watched Swallows and House Martins collecting the nearby soft mud, before they disappeared into the barn. In the meantime Liz amazingly picked out a single Stone Curlew among the arid grassland, the only one for the trip.

It was nearly lunch time, so we started to make our way to another area, but we could not just pass the small colony bank where several Bee-eater's were investigating. Stealthily, so as not to scare the birds, we made our way using the trees to hide us, to a good viewing point to watch these attractive birds. A Sedge Warbler called from the bushes behind us, and a Hobby flew overhead. Lunch was near a riverine channel and fishponds a popular area for fishermen. We ate our lunch under the shade of the poplars, listening to the very common Golden Orioles and Nightingales, while the Odonata were Black-tailed Skimmer and Four-spot Chaser, that would rest on the broken reed stems at the water's edge, while Norfolk Hawkers patrolled the open channel.

The afternoon found us investigating a damp sedge marsh meadow, noted for its orchids, but due to the unusual wet weather, orchid species and numbers were low. Only several small stands of Marsh Lax-flowered Orchid were found, but they brought out the arty photographer in us, as did the delicately posed Common Blue on one of the orchid spikes. It was interesting to note the quietness of the site, no Skylark or Meadow Pipit called. The next brightly coloured grassy meadow, curiously of introduced *Redbeekia*, was more productive for orchids with several spikes of Fragrant, Marsh Lax-flowered, and Heath Spotted Orchids, while Meadow Browns, Large Skippers, Common Blues, Brown Argus and Brimstones gave aerial decoration to the meadow.

A brief stop was made at an oak woodland, to look at a different habitat, but it was very quiet so we moved on. Just before returning to the lodge, we stopped again at the Roller site, but unfortunately, it was a Public Bank Holiday and the locals were out in force, and there was no sign of the Rollers.

## **Day 6 Tuesday 29th May Tóserdő Area – SE of Kiskunság National Park**

**Weather:** warm, sunny blue skies, with temperatures rising in the afternoon, slight breeze

Today we would be visiting the SE region of Kiskunság National Park near the Lower Tisza floodplains, the Spark and the Alpári-meadow, which is commonly known as the Tóserdő. The journey to the area took us through the interesting city of Kecskemét, with its collection of splendid masterpieces of Art Nouveau architecture, and mishmash buildings of traditional and modern.

Our day started at Tóserdő Forest, an important area for Grey-headed and Black Woodpecker. The woodland was predominantly Oak-Ash with beautiful stands of White Poplar and Aspen, the foliage of which was very lush green making birding very hard. A variety of calls could be heard, but the one call we all wanted and heard was that of the Black Woodpecker. Eventually after a few black silhouettes flying around the tree-tops, we could see a bird drumming away in the high canopy, and watched this for a while. It was a very good day for woodpeckers, with views of Great Spotted, Middle-spotted feeding young, Syrian around the urban area, Green and possible Grey-headed calling but as we couldn't track the call, it was only a possibility. Hawfinch was another good bird that was seen high, feeding in the canopy.

Moving out of the forest we turned into a glade, before venturing into a marshy floodplain meadow that followed the shore of the Tisza River, a good place to hear Corncrake, but unfortunately nothing. This was possibly due to the weather again, as there had been few records of the birds across Hungary for this time of year. We walked through the meadow towards the look-out tower, disturbing various Meadow Browns and Small Heaths, as well as tandem Blue-tailed Damselflies and emerging female Black-tailed Skimmers.

The lake was busy with chattering Whiskered Terns gliding and diving back-and-forth, Night and Squacco Herons flew from the bushes, while Pygmy Cormorants basked with open wings on dead branches that were protruding from the water. Garganey, Mallard and Ferruginous ducks dabbled in the vegetation, while coots bobbed up and down in the water. A new species was recorded for the trip as we were leaving the meadow, a very lovely and delicate Southern Emerald Damselfly, resting on some sedge leaves.

We were heading towards the delightful village of Tiszaalpár for lunch. Parking the vehicle next to the banks of the church garden, Amanda had an excitable moment. There were several large holes punctuating the soil, and there appearing out of them were very large wolf spiders, in fact one of the largest spiders in Hungary, *Geolycosa vultuosa*. Closer inspection was required to note colour and sex, they were mainly females, and one was covered in spiderlings. She was very beautiful.

Lunch was eaten underneath the overhanging Lime branches beside the Baroque Catholic Church at Tiszaalpár. We sat listening to the bird calls, when a male Golden Oriole sat in full view on one of the branches, and at last Joyce got her bird, with some stunning views. After lunch we walked behind the church to admire the view over the ox-bow lake, before heading down to the marshy Alpári-meadow below. From this vantage point we could see various waterbirds feeding in and around the water, Spoonbill, Egrets, Purple Heron and Shoveler, to name a few, but it was the appearance of a White-tailed Eagle that captivated us, as it flew high, before soaring over the river, flushing the various bird species.

The rest of the afternoon was spent around Tiszaalpár. Due to the low water level we were able to walk through the floodplain meadow and Alder Carr to the edge of the lake. Whiskered Terns called over our heads, while Pygmy Cormorants, Night and Grey Herons perched on the dead branches of the surrounding trees. A superb Large Copper feeding on the lovely pink heads of Flowering Rush was in no hurry to move, thus allowing lots of macro and video photography. Sedge and Great Reed Warbler sang from somewhere in the reeds as we walked to the water's edge. The afternoon light was ideal as you looked back behind to the picturesque view of the church, towering over the marsh land, a classic postcard look for this area of Hungary, a beautiful way to finish the day.

## **Day 7 Wednesday 30th May Kígyós Area – Danube River – Apaj Area**

**Weather:** a glorious sunny day, with temperatures soaring in the afternoon

The morning was spent along a riparian vegetation channel and fishpond complex. We had previously visited the area at the beginning of the week, but with the wind on that day there was little on the wing. Today, however, the sun was out, and we were visiting some different areas along the channel which were sheltered, this was after a momentary pause to watch a Little Owl sitting on a telegraph pole, pointed out by Geoff.

Noisy Great Reed Warblers greeted our arrival, while Nightingales sang and posed for those who were interested. These were joined by the chatter of Great and Penduline Tits, Chaffinch, Blackcaps, and the beautifully tuned Golden Orioles. Again the males were on view, but Joyce had seen her bird now, and was quite happy if she only just got a glimpse. Cuckoos called and flew following the reedy channel, stopping frequently allowing some good views, while a Night Heron was trying to disguise itself as an overhanging branch.

The group mingled around the water's edge searching and spying the various species or enjoying the sunny spots. Peter had found one of these areas, and was videoing the various dragonflies that were resting on the various stems that were sticking out of the water. There were large numbers of different *Odonata* species, which included Blue-tailed and White-legged Damselflies, many of which were in tandems. The beautiful copper brown and green-eyed Norfolk Dragonfly, the large Emperor, Four-spotted Chaser, a lovely mature female Scarce Chaser, which made us check the other skimmers and chasers closer, just in case we had overlooked this species, as it was the first time we had recorded Scarce Chaser for the trip. Black-tailed and White-tailed Skimmers were busy chasing each other around the reed-edges. A new species for the trip was the striking Scarlet Darter, which were plentiful around all the water areas. A large dragonfly was also spotted chasing off Norfolk Hawks and Emperor Dragonfly,

which was probably Lesser Emperor Dragonfly, as there was a noticeable blue marking on the abdomen, but it did not rest, so a definite identification cannot be verified.

Dragonflies were not the only interesting insect that we were all taking notice of. A pair of Lesser Purple Emperor butterflies was fluttering back and forth along the path, stopping at various points to puddle in the muddy wheel tracks of the dirt road, often accompanied by an intense dazzling brown Comma.

A short ten minute journey saw us sitting along the shores of the River Danube, on the Pest side of Budapest. This is an area where we might see the lovely Freyer's Purple Emperor, but of the emperors we saw, we could not put a definite identification to one, even though our first one along the road, was a very good candidate.

Lunch was eaten in different spots enjoying views of the famous Danube, listening to the waves lapping against the shore. The rest of the afternoon was taken at a slower pace, with a short walk through a shaded grassy woodland ride. Great Spotted and Green Woodpecker called from the various trees, damselflies were scrutinised, along with other insects but no-one could get on to Peter's large flying iridescent insect. A short stop was made at the Penduline Tit site again, but there was no bird this time, but the rowdy Great Reed Warblers gave some excellent views as they chased each other between the reeds. Our next stop was along the road-side to view a Saker family. Through the scope, three large chicks were sitting or stretching their wings in preparation for that first flight. An adult flew in and left them screaming as it flew off into the distance. We had a brief stop at the plains, but no bustards, so we carried on back to the lodge to end a thrilling day.

## **Day 8 Thursday 31st May Departure via Fülöpháza Sand Dunes – Ócsa**

**Weather:** another glorious sunny day, with temperatures soaring in the afternoon

Due to a late return flight we were able to visit a couple of sites, before checking into Terminal 2. We thanked Margaret for her cooking, before heading off for the unique sand-dune system of Fülöpháza. It is one of the most diverse and interesting sand-dune areas in Central Europe. The morphological features on the surface are created by the predominance of the North-western and South-eastern winds depositing sand from the ancient Danube, and there are still a number of drifting sand-dunes in the area. The dunes are a mosaic of grasslands and Juniper-Poplar thickets, giving home to a wide range of fauna and invertebrate species which have adapted to live in such a specialised environment.

We followed one of the main public trails that took us through Poplar woodland, where we stopped to examine several Spanish Festoon caterpillars, chomping away on Birthwort. Gabor said this was really late season for the species, but due to the abnormal weather conditions everything was three weeks behind, and that would explain why we had not seen as many butterflies as normal. Continuing along, the path started to open out on to the sand-dunes and we followed the trail through the juniper stands, stopping now and again to investigate various insects, and Sand Lizards that were basking in the sun. We all noticed the swards of American Milkweed which had colonised the large tracks of cleared areas underneath the recently erected

electric pylons. This is a big problem for the Hungarians, who are trying to address the problem, before it changes the whole dune system.

We walked around here for about an hour before departing for Ócsa with a brief stop at a woodland site, where we saw Lesser Purple Emperor, Speckled Wood and Comma. Ócsa town is renowned for its Árpád Age Romanesque church. It is one of the most preserved Romanesque churches in Hungary, and a fine example of a 13th century church of the Premontre Order. Next to the church was Ócsa museum, where we were able to take a short guided tour around the various buildings, with a young lady explaining to us about the traditional way of life at that time. After which it was time to check-in at the airport, where we said our goodbyes to Gabor and Andrea.

## **Itinerary**

Day 1	Thursday 24th May	Arrival & transfer Kondor Lodge, via Ócsa Meadows
Day 2	Friday 25th May	Kondor Environs - Kiskunság National Park
Day 3	Saturday 26th May	Kunpeszér Viper Centre - Bugyi Area
Day 4	Sunday 27th May	Apaj Area (Great Plain) Puszta - Bugyi Area including Fishponds
Day 5	Monday 28th May	Böddi-szék - Bugyi Area
Day 6	Tuesday 29th May	Tóserdő Area including Alpári-meadow - SE of Kiskunság National Park
Day 7	Wednesday 30th May	Kígyós Area - Danube River - Apaj Area
Day 8	Thursday 31st May	Departure via Fülöpháza Sand Dunes - Ócsa

## Systematic List Number 1

## Reptiles & Amphibians

The taxonomic nomenclature & systematic order follows both that of Collins: Reptiles & Amphibians of Europe, Arnold. A total of nine species was recorded for the trip. The numbers indicate the dates on which a species was seen.

Common Spadefoot Toad	<i>Pelobates fuscus</i>	common around Kondor Lodge, particularly at night
Green Toad	<i>Bufo viridis</i>	Csaba showed us a lovely specimen of this species at the Lodge
Common Tree Frog	<i>Hyla arborea</i>	unfortunately, this species was only heard over the course of the trip
Agile Frog	<i>Rana dalmatina</i>	a lovely individual was found near the wet woodland (31)
Marsh Frog	<i>Rana ridibunda</i>	a very common species around riparian channels & pools, often serenading us as we wandered around
Green Lizard	<i>Lacerta viridis</i>	a common species seen everyday
Sand Lizard	<i>Lacerta agilis</i>	seen most days around dry sandy tracks & dunes
Balkan Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis taurica</i>	individuals recorded around or inside the viper captive breeding pens (26)
Hungarian Meadow Viper	<i>Vipera ursinii rakosiensis</i>	several seen in the captive breeding pens

**NB:** We also found a reptile nest with eggs near the church at Tóserdő; they are yet to be identified.

## Systematic List Number 2      Birds

The taxonomic nomenclature & systematic order follows both that of Collins: Bird Guide 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. A total of 133 species was recorded for the trip. The numbers indicate the dates on which a species was seen.

Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	recorded by water bodies (27 & 29)
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	recorded by water bodies & marshy meadows (27 & 29)
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	common, seen almost everyday
Garganey	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	a lovely bird, several individuals recorded by Kondor Lake & SE of Kiskunsag National Park (25 & 29)
Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	small groups around the fishing ponds (27)
Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	one or two individuals recorded in the mixed groups of wildfowl in the fishing ponds (27)
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	one or two individuals recorded in the mixed groups of wildfowl in the fishing ponds (27)
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	a pair was flushed from the roadside bushes (26)
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	this species was heard over a couple of days (26 & 27)
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	common, seen almost everyday
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	recorded on two days around the pools & quarry (27 & 29)
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	occasionally recorded on water bodies (26, 27 & 29)
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	only recorded around the ox-bow lake in the Töserdő area (29)
Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pygmeus</i>	only recorded around the ox-bow lake in the Töserdő area (29)
Common Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	this species was only heard rather than seen (26 & 29)
Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	frequently seen over the trip
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	recorded by the group around the ox-bow lake in the Töserdő area (29)
Little Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	only recorded on two days (27 & 29)
Great White Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	common, seen everyday
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	common, seen everyday
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	frequently seen over the trip
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	common, seen everyday
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	only one individual seen as a flyby over the vehicle
Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	occasional sightings near large lakes (25, 28 & 29)
White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	an adult was spotted chasing the water-birds over the ox-bow lake in the Töserdő area (29)
Eastern Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>	a sub-adult was spotted over the plains (27)
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	common, seen everyday
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	frequently seen quartering over farm land
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	common, seen everyday

Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	a record was recorded by Peter (29)
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	common, seen everyday
Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>	excellent views of this fantastic species was enjoyed by all (27 & 28)
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	recorded on a couple of days (27 & 30)
Saker	<i>Falco cherrug</i>	scope views of an adult & three chicks of, this impressive species (30)
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	only recorded once (28)
Coot	<i>Filica atra</i>	common on water bodies
Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>	Hungary is renowned for this species, & we had a superb flyby of this very large bird, in fact it flew over the car, as we were standing next to it, very nice (26); our second view of this species was through the scope, & it was while we were taking in the views that the Imperial Eagle was noticed (27)
Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	recorded around shallow pool areas (27 & 28)
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	recorded around shallow pool areas (25 & 27)
Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>	Liz found our first & only one for the trip among the dry grassland puszta at Böddi-szék (28)
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	several individuals were seen flying around the agricultural fields (26 & 27)
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	occasionally seen around the lakes & fishponds (25, 26 & 27)
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	only recorded around Kondor Lake (25)
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	only recorded around Kondor Lake (25)
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	recorded everyday
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	recorded around water bodies, with a lovely flock of 50+ at the Fishponds (25 & 27)
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	two individuals were seen around Kondor Lake (25)
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	several individuals seen around Kondor Lake (25)
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	an individual seen around Kondor Lake (25)
Redshank	<i>Tringa tetanus</i>	common & seen everyday
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	frequent sightings of this species over the trip
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	occasionally over the grassy plains (26 & 27)
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	two individuals were seen around Kondor Lake (25)
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	one of the common gulls seen most days
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	several individuals of this striking gull at the quarry (26)
Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnanis</i>	one of the common gulls seen most days
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	a common seen regularly over the trip
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	a lovely little bird, with several individuals seen flying the Fishponds, only recorded once (27)
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	commonest of all the terns reported, seen everyday
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	common & seen everyday



Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	common & seen everyday in urban areas
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	seen everyday, with a small fall of over 20 individuals along one track on (30)
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	heard or seen everyday, our best views were along the river channels
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	excellent views of this lovely little owl (26 & 30)
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	seen or heard everyday
Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	unfortunately only heard on the Nightjar walk (26)
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	this species was only seen near the airport on day one
Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	this gorgeous bird was seen everyday, with a bit of a wow factor on day 3, with over 50 pairs flying off around us
Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	another gorgeous bird was seen everyday, a pair was nesting near the lodge allowing us to view regularly but not necessarily take pictures
Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	an individual seen & watched drumming in the woodland area at Töserdő (6)
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	frequently seen or heard over the seven days
Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>	possible this species calling from the woodland as we walked back from the meadow at Töserdő (29)
Great spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	only recorded on a few days (26 – 28)
Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>	mainly found around urban areas (26 & 29)
Middle-spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>	excellent views of this species feeding young at Töserdő woodland (29)
Lesser-spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	Liz watched one feeding on the branches around the Lodge one morning (28)
Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	this species was only heard on our first day at our first site (24)
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	seen on most days over the grassy plains & meadows
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	seen on most days over the grassy plains & meadows, often giving some excellent views, particularly on the road
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	recorded everyday
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	recorded everyday
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	recorded everyday
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	recorded displaying in the woodlands behind the lodge (25)
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	common & recorded everyday
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	recorded most days over the trip
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	a nesting pair around the lodge
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	this elusive bird was seen & recorded regularly each day
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	recorded everyday, as a pair was breeding around the lodge

Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochrurus</i>	recorded everyday particularly around the lodge & urban areas
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	only recorded on one day (27)
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	Joyce spotted the only individual for the trip (26)
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	common & recorded everyday
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	around urban areas (28 & 29)
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	frequent & recorded on most days
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	heard or seen everyday
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	only heard around the Kondor environs (25)
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	only heard around the Kondor environs (25)
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	heard or seen everyday around reed-beds
Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	an individual was heard around one of the reed-bed channel (25)
Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	one was seen singing from a bush at the Fishponds (27)
Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	this elusive species was only heard over a couple of days (26 & 27)
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	heard or seen around riverine vegetation
Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>	Csaba located this species in the woodlands around Kondor Woodlands, & when it stopped flitting around, we all got some excellent views of this species (25 & 28)
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	individuals only recorded on two days (25 & 26)
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	heard or seen everyday, particularly around the woodland just outside of the accommodation
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	heard or seen everyday
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	usually a common species, but only recorded on the last day for this trip (31)
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	all the birds recorded were of the white-headed variety, still a lovely bird; small groups were recorded around Kondor environs (25, 28 & 29)
Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	excellent views of this gorgeous bird, while we were having our lunch at the Fishponds (27)
Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	seen or heard around reed-bed channels & lakes
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	mainly recorded in the latter part of the trip around wooded areas
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	only a brief sighting of this species in
Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	an attractive bird recorded everyday, but the first & last
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	a striking bird recorded everyday, but the first & last
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	recorded everyday
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	frequent sightings over the trip
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	occasional recorded (27 & 28)
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	a species that Csaba got excited over, frequently seen in the cut meadows over the week
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	seen everyday in all habitats

Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	recorded in a mixed group of corvids (30)
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	seen & heard everyday
Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	the beautiful fluty song was heard everyday, bursting open the morning at the dawn chorus, & we all got good sightings of this attractive bird by the end of the trip
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	seen & heard everyday
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	seen & heard everyday
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	seen & heard everyday
Linnet agricultural	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	surprisingly only recorded once around the plains (27)
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	seen everyday
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	frequently recorded over the trip
Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	recorded around urban areas (29 & 31)
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	one flew over the group at the lodge (25), but better views & calls were seen & heard in the woodland area at Tóserdó (29)
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	recorded around water bodies (27, 29 & 30)
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citronella</i>	seen & heard everyday
Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	seen & heard everyday, singing from prominent posts around grassy meadows

## Systematic List Number 3      Butterflies

The taxonomic nomenclature & systematic order follows both that of Collins: Butterflies of Europe, Tolman & Lewington. Due to the unseasonal weather that Hungary was experiencing, many of the species were emerging later, or the rain had had a bad effect on the first brood. However, a total of 35 species was recorded for the trip. The numbers indicate the dates on which a species was seen.

Southern Festoon	<i>Zerynthia polyxena</i>	a species that should have been on the wing, but we only found some caterpillars on the last day (31)
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	common & seen most days
Small White	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>	surprising only a single specimen was recorded (29)
Green-veined White	<i>Artogeia napi</i>	several sightings of this species over a couple of days, near the woodland rides & edges (25 & 26)
Eastern Bath White	<i>Pontia edusa</i>	a single specimen of this lovely species sheltering from the wind near Kondor Lake (25)
Orange-Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>	several individuals flying along the woodland ride (25)
Pale Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias hyale</i>	Liz saw a 'pale clouded yellow type butterfly', which could have been this species flying around the grassland meadows (25)
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>	several individuals, mainly males were flying around the wooded area in the afternoon (28)
White-letter Hairstreak	<i>Satyrium w-album</i>	a single individual was spotted feeding at our first impromptu stop of the morning next to the vehicle (27)
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	the woodland ride near Kondor Lodge woodland provided a species-rich area for butterflies, it was the only place we recorded this species (25)
Large Copper	<i>Lycaena dispar</i>	commonest of the copper species, recorded in the lovely flowery meadows (27-29)
Little Blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>	several individuals feeding on the various colourful flowers of the meadows (25 & 28)
Green-underside Blue	<i>Glaucopsyche alexis</i>	fresh specimens of this species was incredible, & provided excellent photography opportunities over the week, particularly in the Kondor environs
Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>	a common species feeding on thyme & salvia's (26 - 28)
Adonis Blue	<i>Lysandra bellargus</i>	a very bright & spectacular butterfly but only recorded on one day within the meadow environ (27)
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus Icarus</i>	very common, seen everyday
Purple Emperor	<i>Apatura iris</i>	only sighting of this species was at the water's edge at
Lesser Purple Emperor	<i>Apatura ilia</i>	an individual was very obliging as it fed on the mineral salts of the road, near the river & fishing pools (30 & 31)
Freyer's Purple Emperor	<i>Apatura metis</i>	a possible sighting of this butterfly on the road, but was too flighty to allow a confirmed identification (30)

Common Glider	<i>Neptis sappho</i>	a delightful species giving some excellent views along the various woodland rides (25 & 30)
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	only a single sighting of this species for the trip (25)
Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>	recorded in woodlands towards the end of the trip (30 & 31)
Cardinal	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>	several fresh specimens gave some splendid photography opportunities for the group along the woodland rides (25 & 29)
Niobe Fritillary	<i>Argynnis niobe f. eris</i>	a nice specimen was found by Geoff, feeding on some horse dung along the woodland track. This subspecies lacks the white underside markings, but usual positions are outlined in black. (25)
Queen of Spain Fritillary	<i>Issoria lathonia</i>	recorded over a couple of days in flowery meadows (25 & 27)
Granville Fritillary	<i>Melitaea cinxia</i>	a copulating couple was scrutinized over as they perched on Purple Gromwell near Kondor Lodge (25)
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	grassland meadows (25 & 29)
Large Heath	<i>Coenonympha tullia</i>	only one individual near Kondor Lodge (25)
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	very common, seen everyday
Chestnut Heath	<i>Coenonympha glycerion</i>	very common, seen everyday
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria aegeria</i>	a single orange individual of this species flying around the woodland area at Duna-Ipoly National Park (31)
Large Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata maera</i>	a tatty individual was the only sighting of this species for the trip (25)
Large Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus alveus</i>	several individuals were recorded among the flowery meadows (25, 27 & 29)
Small Skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>	occasionally recorded over the trip
Large Skipper	<i>Ochlodes venatus</i>	common, seen most days

## Systematic List Number 4

## Dragonflies & Damselflies

The taxonomic nomenclature & systematic order follows both that of BHP – Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Britain & Europe, Klaas-Douwe B Dijkstra. A total of 15 species was recorded for the trip. The numbers indicate the dates on which a species was seen.

Southern Emerald Damselfly	<i>Lestes barbarus</i>	several individuals were spotted as we left the grassy meadow (29)
Blue-tailed Damselfly	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	common seen almost everyday
Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly	<i>Ischnura pumilio</i>	individuals were recorded with other damselfly species sheltering from the wind, one male was trying to couple a female Dainty Damselfly (25)
Dainty Damselfly	<i>Coenagrion scitulum</i>	this species was identified copulating as it sheltered with other species, near Kondor Lake (25)
White-legged Damselfly	<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>	recorded periodically over the week (25, 26 & 30)
Norfolk Hawker	<i>Aeshna isosceles</i>	several specimens were seen zooming around the various reed-beds (27, 28 & 30)
Emperor Dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>	only recorded on a couple of occasions over ponds (27 & 30)
Golden-ringed Dragonfly	<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>	unfortunately only one sighting of this dramatic species, along the woodland ride (25)
Four-spotted Chaser	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>	frequently recorded over the trip around the various water-bodies
Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>	only recorded a couple of times around the small pools (25 & 27)
Scarce Chaser	<i>Libellula fulva</i>	a mature female gave everyone excellent photogenic views before flying off & disappearing (30)
Black-tailed Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	the most common of the Odonata species for the trip, seen everyday
White-tailed Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum albistylum</i>	very common at the end of the trip with <i>O. cancellatum</i> , perhaps over-looked at the beginning of the trip, due to the similarity of the two species
Large White-faced Darter	<i>Leucorrhinia pectoralis</i>	a brief view of one individual for this species (25)
Scarlett Darter	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>	only recorded on the last day, but excellent views (30)

## Systematic List Number 5      Mammals

A total of five species was recorded for the trip. The numbers indicate the dates on which a species was seen.

Brown Hare	<i>Lepus timidus</i>	this was a common species seen most days during the trip, around agricultural areas
Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	the only sighting of this species was as it dashed on the road in front of the van (30)
European Suslik	<i>Citellus citellus</i>	an interesting creature, seen over several days in the short grassy areas of the meadows. It proved to be quite elusive for Peter, with everyone telling him, it's there, but he eventually got on to a live one in the end.
Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	rooting evidence was found on most days near the woodland edges & within the meadows
Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	recorded over several days, around wooded areas

## Systematic List Number 6      Moths

A total of 14 species were recorded on the trip, mainly around Kondor Lodge.

Clouded Border	<i>Lomaspilis marginata</i>
Common Tiger	<i>Pyrrharctia isabella</i>
Common White Wave	<i>Cabera pusaria</i>
Figure of Eight	<i>Diloba caeruleocephala</i>
Gold Triangle	<i>Hypsopygia costalis</i>
Lychnis	<i>Hadena bicruris</i>
Puss Moth	<i>Cerura vinula</i>
Ribbon Wave	<i>Idaea aversata</i>
Scarce Chocolate Tip	<i>Clostera anachoreta</i>
Silver Y	<i>Autographa gamma</i>
Speckled Yellow	<i>Pseudopanthera macularia</i>
Straw Dot	<i>Rivula sericealis</i>
White Ermine	<i>Spilosoma lubricipeda</i>
Willow Beauty	<i>Peribatodes rhomboidaria</i>

## Systematic List Number 7 Flora

The systematic order and nomenclature follows that of Collins: Flower Guide, 2009. This is not a comprehensive listing due to the lack of Hungarian flower books, and thus the list will be extended on further trips. The number in brackets indicates the dates that they were recorded on.

### *Dennstaedtiaceae*

*Pteridium aquilinum* Bracken

### *Pinaceae*

*Pinus sylvestris* Scots Pine

### *Cupressaceae*

*Juniperus communis* Juniper – sand dunes

### *Cannabaceae*

*Cannabis sativa* Marijuana – widespread along the road verges

### *Aristolochiaceae*

*Aristolochia clematitis* European Birthwort – Common

### *Ranunculaceae*

*Adonis annua* Red Pheasant's-eye – roadside edges (26 & 27)

*Caltha palustris* Marsh Marigold

*Clematis vitalba* Traveller's-joy

*Consolida regalis* Forking Larkspur – common

*Ranunculus acris* Meadow Buttercup

*Ranunculus bulbosus* Bulbous Buttercup

*Ranunculus parviflorus* Small-flowered Buttercup – the spreading small yellow buttercup that covered the marsh floodplain

*Ranunculus repens* Creeping Buttercup

### *Papaveraceae*

*Papaver dubium* Long-headed Poppy

*Papaver rhoeas* Corn Poppy fantastic displays of this attractive species

### *Ulmaceae*

*Ulmus canescens* Grey-leaved Elm – White-letter Hairstreak feeding off it (27)

*Ulmus minor* Small-leaved Elm

### *Urticaceae*

*Urtica dioica* Stinging Nettle – Widespread

### *Fagaceae*

*Fagus sylvatica* Beech

*Quercus frainetto* Hungarian Oak

*Quercus robur* Common Oak

### *Betulaceae*

*Alnus glutinosa* Alder

*Alnus incana* Grey Alder

*Betula pendula* Silver Birch

*Corylus avellana* Hazel



### *Caryophyllaceae*

- Agrostemma githago* Corncockle (27)
- Cerastium arvense* Field Mouse-ear
- Cerastium fontanum* Common Mouse-ear
- Dianthus carthusianorum* Carthusian Pink
- Dianthus pontederiae* Hungarian Pink – common around the steppes
- Lychmis flos-cuculi* Ragged Robin
- Myosoton aquaticum* Water Chickweed – marshy areas near the lake (29)
- Silene alba* White Campion
- Silene conica* Sand Catchfly
- Silene dioica* Red Campion
- Silene latifolia alba* Wood Campion
- Silene nutans* Nottingham Catchfly
- Silene vulgaris* Bladder Campion
- Stellaria media* Common Chickweed

### *Polygonaceae*

- Polygonum persicaria* Redshank
- Reynoutria japonica* Japanese Knotweed

### *Malvaceae*

- Malva moschata* Musk Mallow

### *Tiliaceae*

- Tilia cordata* Small-leaved Lime
- Tilia platyphyllos* Large-leaved Lime
- Tilia x vulgaris* Lime

### *Cistaceae*

- Helianthemum sp.* Rockrose – sandy area near Kondor Lake (25)

### *Salicaceae*

- Populus alba* White Poplar
- Populus nigra* Black Poplar
- Populus tremula* Aspen
- Salix alba* White Willow
- Salix caprea* Goat Willow
- Salix mielichhoferi* Austrian Willow
- Salix rosmarinifolia* Rosemary leaf Willow (sand dunes where the sand lizard was)

### *Resedaceae*

- Reseda lutea* Wild Mignonette
- Reseda luteola* Weld

### *Rosaceae*

- Agrimonia eupatoria* Agrimony
- Aruncus dioicus* Goatsbeard
- Filipendula vulgaris* Dropwort grassland meadows
- Fragaria vesca* Wild Strawberry
- Geum urbanum* Herb Bennet
- Potentilla arenaria*
- Potentilla argentea* Hoary Cinquefoil
- Potentilla erecta* Tormentil
- Prunus spinosa* Blackthorn
- Rosa canina* Dog Rose
- Rubus fruticosus* Bramble

*Sanguisorba minor* Salad Burnet  
*Sanguisorba officinalis* Great Burnet

### **Fabaceae**

*Amorpha fruticosa* Indigo Bush (introduced plant)  
*Anthyllis vulneraria* Kidney-vetch  
*Astragalus asper* Zephur Blue food plant but no butt – on Bugi road  
*Coronilla varia* Crown Vetch  
*Genista tinctoria* Dyer's Greenweed  
*Hippocrepis comosa* Horseshoe Vetch  
*Lathyrus nissiola* Grass Vetchling  
*Lathyrus pratensis* Meadow Vetchling  
*Lathyrus tuberosus* Tuberous Vetch  
*Lotus corniculatus* Common Bird's-foot-trefoil – Widespread in grassland  
*Medicago sativa* Lucerne Verges  
*Melilotus officinalis* Yellow Sweet-clover agricultural fields & red-footed falcon nesting area  
*Onobrychis viciifolia* Sainfoin  
*Ononis repens* Common Restharrow  
*Robinia pseudo-acacia* False Acacia – Widely naturalised, very common  
*Tetragonolobus maritimus* Dragon's-teeth – grassy meadows  
*Trifolium pratense* Red Clover  
*Trifolium repens* White Clover Common  
*Vicia crecca* Tufted Vetch  
*Vicia lutea* Yellow Vetch

### **Elaeagnaceae**

*Elaeagnus angustifolia* Russian Olive – common along riparian area

### **Lythraceae**

*Trapa natans* Water Chestnut – around river channels edge

### **Celastraceae**

*Euonymus europaeus* Spindle

### **Euphorbiaceae**

*Euphorbia amygdaloides* Wood Spurge  
*Euphorbia cyparissias* Cypress Spurge  
*Euphorbia nicaeensis* Nice Spurge – Sandy areas  
*Mercurialis perennis* Dog's Mercury Woods – woodlands

### **Rhamnaceae**

*Frangula alnus* Alder Buckthorn – common in hedgerows

### **Linaceae**

*Linum narbonense* Perennial/Beautiful Flax – meadows  
*Linum viscosum* Sticky Flax – beautiful pink flax in grassy meadows

### **Polygalaceae**

*Polygala comosa* Tufted Milkwort – grassy meadows  
*Polygala vulgaris* Common Milkwort  
*Polygala major* Large Milkwort  
*Polygala serpyllifolia* Heath Milkwort

### **Aceraceae**

*Acer campestre* Field Maple  
*Acer platanoides* Norway Maple

*Acer pseudoplatanus* Sycamore

### ***Araliaceae***

*Hedera helix* Ivy

### ***Apiaceae***

*Eryngium campestre* Field Eryngo

*Heracleum sphondylium* Hogweed

*Sanicula europaea* Sanicle

*Silaum silaus* Pepper-saxifrage – the yellowy green umbellifer in the meadows

### ***Apocynaceae***

*Asclepias syriaca* American Milkweed – (an introduced invasive species)

*Vinca minor* Lesser Periwinkle – church

### ***Convolvulaceae***

*Calystegia sepium* Hedge Bindweed

*Convolvulus arvensis* Field Bindweed

### ***Boraginaceae***

*Anchusa officinalis* Alkanet/Common Bugloss

*Cynoglossum officinale* Hound's-tongue

*Echium vulgare* Viper's Bugloss

*Lithospermum purpureocaeruleum* Purple Gromwell

*Pentaglottis sempervirens* Green Alkanet

*Symphytum tuberosum* Tuberous Comfrey

### ***Lamiaceae***

*Mentha aquatica* Water Mint – shores of the ox-bow lake (29)

*Salvia nemorosa* Caradonna Sage – the beautiful indigo sage in the meadows (25)

*Salvia pratensis* Meadow Clary

*Salvia sclarea* Clary

*Salvia verbenaca* Wild Clary

*Thymus longicaulis* Creeping Thyme

*Thymus pannonicus* Hungarian Thyme

*Thymus vulgaris* Common Thyme

### ***Plantaginaceae***

*Plantago lanceolata* Ribwort

*Plantago major* Great Plantain

*Plantago media* Hoary Plantain

### ***Oleaceae***

*Fraxinus excelsior* Ash

### ***Scrophulariaceae***

*Rhinanthus minor* Yellow Rattle

*Rhinanthus pulcher* Greater Yellow-rattle

*Verbascum speciosum* Showy Mullein

*Verbascum Thapsus* Great Mullein

*Veronica pallens* Grey Speedwell

### ***Scrophulariaceae***

*Melampyrum cristatum* Crested Cow-wheat (24)

### **Lentibulariaceae**

*Utricularia vulgaris* Common Bladderwort – a lovely plant (25)

### **Campanulaceae**

*Campanula rotundifolia* Harebell

*Campanula sibirica* Siberian Bellflower – in the dry grassland meadow (27)

### **Rubiaceae**

*Asperula cynanchica* Squinancywort

*Cruciata glabra* Crosswort – meadows across the steppes

*Galium mollugo* Hedge Bedstraw

*Galium palustre* Common Marsh Bedstraw – probably this species down by the lake at Töserdő

*Galium verum* Lady's Bedstraw – Meadows & roadside verges

### **Caprifoliaceae**

*Lonicera perichlymenum* Honeysuckle

*Sambucus ebulus* Dwarf Elder

*Sambucus nigra* Common Elder

*Viburnum opulus* Guelder Rose

### **Dipsacaceae**

*Dipsacus fullonum* Teasel

*Knautia arvensis* Field Scabious

*Scabiosa columbaria* Small Scabious

### **Asteraceae**

*Achillea distans* Tansyleaf Milfoil

*Achillea pannonica* Hungarian Milfoil

*Anthemis ruthenica* Eastern Chamomile – along roadsides, & agricultural fields

*Artemisia vulgaris* Mugwort Roadsides

*Bellis perennis* Daisy

*Carduus nutans* Musk/Nodding Thistle

*Centaurea cyanus* Cornflower

*Centaurea jacea* Brown Knapweed

*Centaurea sadleriona* Pannonian Knapweed – scattered records across the meadows

*Centaurea scabiosa* Greater Knapweed Common

*Cichorium intybus* Chicory

*Cirsium arvense* Creeping Thistle

*Cirsium palustre* Marsh Thistle

*Cirsium vulgare* Spear Thistle

*Erigeron annuus* Annual Fleabane (29)

*Eupatorium cannabinum* Hemp-agrimony

*Leucanthemum vulgare* Ox-eye Daisy

*Rudbeckia sp* – the beautiful bright flower in the last meadow (28)

*Solidago canadensis* Canadian Goldenrod

*Solidago virgaurea* Goldrenrod

*Taraxacum officinale* Dandelion

*Tragopogon pratensis* Goat's-beard

*Tussilago farfara* Colt's-foot

### **Butomaceae**

*Butomus umbellatus* Flowering Rush – Töserdő Lake (29)

### **Cyperaceae**

*Carex arenaria* Sand Sedge – common around sandy areas

*Carex flacca* Glaucous Sedge

*Carex flava/viridula* sp. a complex group of related species mainly of Yellow-sedge – the most common of the sedges found in the marshy meadows

*Carex panicea* Carnation Sedge

*Eriophorum angustifolium* Common Cottongrass – marshy sedge meadows

### **Poaceae**

*Agrostis stolonifera* Creeping Bent-grass

*Alopecurus pratensis* Meadow Foxtail

*Anthoxanthum odoratum* Sweet Vernal-grass

*Arrhenatherum elatius* False Oat-grass

*Briza media* Quaking-grass

*Dactylis glomerata* Cock's-foot

*Deschampsia cespitosa* Tufted Hair-grass

*Elymus repens* Common Couch

*Festuca vaginata* Hungarian Fescue – common grass found across the steppes

*Lolium perenne* Perennial Rye-grass

*Phleum pratense* Timothy

*Phragmites australis* Common Reed

*Poa annua* Annual Meadow-grass

*Poa pratensis* Smooth Meadow-grass

*Poa trivialis* Rough Meadow-grass

*Stipa borysthencia* Sand Feather-grass

*Trisetum flavescens* Yellow Oat-grass

*Koeleria glauca* – common on the dunes (31)

### **Typhaceae**

*Typha latifolia* Greater Reedmace (Bulrush)

### **Liliaceae**

*Asparagus acutifolius* Wild Asparagus – often referred to as Asparagus fern

### **Iridaceae**

*Iris pseudacourus* Yellow Iris – meadows on (24 & 25)

*Iris spuria* Beardless Iris – roadside verges & orchid field (25)

*Muscari comosa* Tassel Hyacinth

### **Orchidaceae**

*Dactylorhiza maculata* Heath Spotted Orchid (28)

*Dactylorhiza majalis* Marsh Orchid (24)

*Gymnadenia conopsea* Fragrant Orchid

*Orchis coriophora* Bug Orchid

*Orchis laxiflora* subsp. *palustris* Marsh Lax-flower Orchid – common across the steppes (NB: this species has several names, including Jersey, Loose-flowered or Lax-flowered Orchid)