

WILD ECHO



2017

Nature holidays and wildlife photography tours

Welcome to our new brochure representing a selection of our tours for 2017. As always here are our most popular classic tours, plus of course a few new exciting itineraries to tempt you with. It has been another very good year for us and the tours we ran were very successful. We are always looking to improve our tours and where possible we have made changes and upgrades to further enhance your experiences with us. It is our philosophy to listen to all feedback and create a natural process of learning, changing and improving. From our platform of high standards we still seek to get better and better.

Our first tour to Ethiopia last November was both successful but also an eye opener in some respects. I am very much looking forward to returning there and enjoy Ethiopia with its birds, wildlife and atmosphere. Besides the birding tour we are offering a specially designed itinerary for wildlife photographers as this vast country rich in birds and wildlife offers excellent opportunities. Another new one for the wildlife photographers is also our tour aimed at the 'king of the forest', the Capercaillie. It offers a different approach for this so desired bird and it is certain you will leave with memorable photos and moments. We have also developed a new itinerary for butterflies and macro photography which includes different species compared to our ever popular classic tour. So far we have run it more than ten times in the last five years.

While on the butterfly front we have two new itineraries. The first one is aimed at the beautiful False Apollo which very few people have seen. Because it is so local, rare and emerges really early in the season, it requires a special tour in order to be seen, plus there will be a number of other excellent early and attractive species.

The other new tour is to Morocco and its rare and beautiful butterflies. Our itinerary there is specially designed in order to see the maximum of the species found there and the route goes to sites and locations not visited by our colleagues from other companies.

Looking further ahead to 2018, we plan to be ready with an itinerary to Lapland where with favourable weather there is a chance to see many Arctic butterflies.

On the birding front, besides improving the itinerary of our tour to Ethiopia, we have added Cuba into the program. Our visit there in March earlier in the year was simply great – relaxing and smooth birding in a beautiful country with a lot of endemic species and real beauties too.

Back home, our popular Via Pontica – early autumn migration tour is now a one stop holiday. For the entire week we will be staying in a luxury spa hotel, offering excellent service and is perfectly situated at the Burgas wetlands where we can witness the spectacular bird migration along the Bulgarian coast of the Black Sea – the second biggest migration route in Europe. The tour dates are in the prime time and we expect to see no less than 160 species of bird.

Regarding the prices, so far we have always had our prices in Euro (and each price was also shown in pounds at rate of the time of printing the brochure). However, as we are increasing our range of destinations to countries that use the US Dollar as a leading currency, and given the current global madness, we have decided to give the costs of the tours to these countries directly in USD.

Finally our new name Wild Echo is making its way into the birding/naturalists world but for the time being to help with the transition we will still use the old address and website under Spatia Wildlife.

We hope you enjoy reading through our 2017 brochure and that you will find a tour that appeals to you. Our full selection of tours can be seen on our websites:

www.wildechotours.com or www.spatiawildlife.com

Best regards,
Dobromir Domuschiev



Photographing Apollo early in the morning

Tour calendar

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Sunday 18th – Sunday 25th September
Saturday 24th September – Saturday 1st October

NOVEMBER 2016

Sunday 20th – Saturday 26th November

DECEMBER 2016

Sunday 11th – Saturday 17th December

JANUARY 2017

Sunday 15th – Sunday 22nd January
Saturday 21st – Sunday 29th January
Sunday 22nd – Sunday 29th January

FEBRUARY 2017

Sunday 12th – Saturday 18th February
Sunday 12th – Thursday 16th February
Sunday 12th – Sunday 19th February
Monday 27th February – Thursday 9th March

MARCH 2017

Sunday 26th March – Sunday 2nd April
Monday 27th March – Friday 7th April

APRIL 2017

Saturday 1st – Saturday 8th April
Sunday 2nd – Saturday 8th April
Sunday 23rd – Saturday 29th April

MAY 2017

Monday 24th April – Saturday 6th May
Saturday 29th April – Wednesday 10th May
Saturday 29th April – Sunday 7th May
Tuesday 2nd – Tuesday 9th May
Saturday 6th – Saturday 13th May
Sunday 7th – Thursday 18th May
Sunday 7th – Saturday 20th May
Monday 8th – Wednesday 24th May
Wednesday 10th – Monday 22nd May
Saturday 27th May – Saturday 3rd June
Sunday 28th May – Sunday 4th June 2017

JUNE 2017

Wednesday 31st May – Sunday 11th June
Sunday 4th – Monday 12th June
Wednesday 7th – Tuesday 20th June
Sunday 11th – Sunday 18th June 2017
Saturday 17th – Saturday 24th June
Sunday 18th – Thursday 29th June

JULY 2017

Sunday 2nd – Sunday 16th July

AUGUST 2017

Sunday 30th July – Monday 7th August
Saturday 5th – Saturday 12th August

SEPTEMBER 2017

Saturday 2nd – Saturday 09th September
Sunday 17th – Sunday 24th September
Saturday 23th – Saturday 30th September

OCTOBER 2017

Sunday 15th - Sunday 29th October

NOVEMBER 2017

Monday 30th October – Friday 10th November
Sunday 19th – Saturday 25th November
Monday 20th – Thursday 30th November

DECEMBER 2017

Sunday 10th – Saturday 16th December

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Golden eagles and Winter birds 18

Bulgaria in Winter

Sunday 15th - Sunday 22nd January 2017

Sunday 21st - Sunday 28th January 2018



Because of its mild winter, the Bulgarian Black Sea coast is a haunt for many birds, which winter here in their thousands. For several species Bulgaria is the best place to see them, especially during this time of the year. Foremost among them is the spectacular Red-breasted Goose. In January and February almost the whole world's population is concentrated here. Other attractive species wintering in big numbers are the Pygmy Cormorant, the White-headed Duck and the Dalmatian Pelican. Additionally we have a good chance for real rarities, such as Lesser White-fronted Goose and Spotted Eagle. Even the Great Black-headed Gull is possible as we usually observe several birds every February around the Burgas wetlands. We expect well over 100 bird species in our checklist. This holiday will be on a relaxing pace, with only two hotels to be used.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Burgas airport and short transfer to our hotel, where we stay the next three nights.

DAYS 2 and 3 We spend both days exploring Burgas wetlands which are important Ramsar sites and IBAs. We will also visit some wetlands further south. Meanwhile we enjoy viewing species like Pygmy Cormorant, Dalmatian Pelican, White-headed Duck, Smew, Red-crested Pochard, Pintail, Spoonbill, White-tailed Eagle, Bittern etc. Great Black-headed Gull is also possible. Some early waders such as Sanderling, Black-tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank and Curlew will be already arrived. The deciduous forests around the lakes can provide several species of woodpeckers - Grey-headed, Syrian, Middle and Lesser Spotted and other birds, such as Sombre Tit, Hawfinch, Cirl Bunting etc. The wetlands support a healthy population of Common Otters and the winter is the best time to see them out in the open.

DAY 4 After breakfast we head north, with several stops and lunch on the way. Goritsa hills will provide opportunity for woodpeckers, including White-backed and Black plus other woodland birds. Late in the afternoon we reach Duralnkulak village where we will stay the next four nights.

DAYS 5 to 7 These days we will explore Duralnkulak and Shabla lakes, as well as the surrounding wheat fields where the geese feed.



Great black-headed Gull

Beside our main goal - the Red-breasted Goose flocks, we will carefully check the White-fronted geese flocks as it may reward us with Lesser White-fronted Goose. Other birds will be Bean and Greylag geese, Black-necked and Red-necked grebes, Black-throated and Red-throated divers, Syrian Woodpecker, Rough-legged and Long-legged buzzards, Hen Harrier, White-tailed Eagle, Goshawk, Merlin, Peregrine and the powerful Saker Falcon. We also stand a good chance for the Spotted Eagle. Passerines will include Bearded Reedling, Moustached Warbler, Calandra and Crested larks, Yellowhammer, Corn Bunt-

ing, Hawfinch and many more. We will also visit some rocky areas in order to find the majestic Eagle Owl.

DAY 8 Three and a half hours transfer brings us to Burgas airport for your flight back home. En-route, we shall have few more birding stops. Departure.

NOTE: This tour is also possible to start/end at Varna Airport! You may also consider our Red-breasted Geese weekend.



Dalmatian Pelican

Ground price: 760 EUR
Group size: 6-12 + leader
Single supplement: 120 EUR
Deposit: 250 EUR

Individuals: 3-5 + leader
Ground price: 890 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.

Kuwait's Wetlands and Deserts

Sunday 22nd - Sunday 29th January 2017

Saturday 1st - Saturday 8th April 2017



The small state of Kuwait, situated on the north-eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, lies at the very south-eastern edge of the Western Palearctic, but also on two major migration routes – Eurasia to Africa and Turkey to India.

Because of it and despite its small size and landscape being mainly a sandy desert, Kuwait is a great place to go birding and one put on the birding map relatively recently. For a few species Kuwait is the only place they are to be found within the Western Palearctic – Grey Hypocolios, Lesser Sandplover, Red-vented Bulbul, Bank Myna, Afghan Babbler and White-eared Bulbul. Beside these, many other highlights are around – Crab Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Socotra Cormorant, Red-wattled Lapwing, Greater Crested Tern, Bridled Tern, White-cheeked Tern, Egyptian Nightjar, Grey-headed Swamphen, Dunn's Lark, Black-crowned Sparrow-lark, Common Babbler, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Menetries's Warbler, Upcher's Warbler, Daurian, Turkestan and Steppe Grey shrikes, Semi-collared Flycatcher, Pale Rock Sparrow, Cinereous Bunting, Persian Wheatear and many more.

The coastline holds considerable amount of waders, along with the best three listed above – also Terek, Marsh, Broad-billed Sandpipers, Red-necked Phalarope; gulls – Greater Black-headed, Armenian, Slender-billed and various races of the Lesser Black-backed. The even smaller reedbeds can reveal virtually everything possible in the area, including alongside view of the three 'great' warblers – Great reed, Clamorous and Basra. On our recce trip we have seen 15 + specimens of the 3 crake species, plus the water rail within 50 sq. meters!

The oases and small farms scattered throughout the adjacent deserts will also bring a lot of goodies – White-throated Robin, Persian and quite a few other wheatears, and numerous other passerines. Raptors will include both Levant Sparrowhawk and Shikra, Pallid Harrier and Great Spotted Eagle. And there is always a chance for the Pallid Scops Owl.

We can expect over 150 species in just a week. The beginning of April is the time when the migration is in full force, while we may still catch up with many of the wintering birds some of which are still in the area. It will be already warm, but not too hot, around 30 Celsius or so. This will require early starts, but we can return to the hotel for siesta in some of the days. The hotel we have chosen is located at the edge of the city and to reach most the sites we will have very little driving through the traffic. It is not only perfectly situated near one of the major wetlands, but also has a swimming pool - a valuable asset in the middle of the day and in between excellent morning and afternoon birding sessions.

ITINERARY

We will have six full days to explore Kuwait and each day we will go to different areas. However, some of the sites along the coast and wetlands near the hotel we will visit more than once and it also depends on the tides times. The furthest site requires not more than hour and a half drive to be reached.

The city itself is a place where we will look for the Grey Hypocolios, Red-vented Bulbul and the Bank Myna, plus there will be many other migrating birds – Pied Wheatear, various subspecies of Yellow Wagtails, Red-throated Pipits and Ortolan Bunting which can be seen feeding on every tiny patch of green grass. All these can be found at the Green Island, Jahra City Park and Jahra Fields.

The coast will produce most of what we will see in within the holiday – Sulaibikhat Bay, Jahra pools, Jahra east outfalls, Doha spit and Doha south are all excellent spots for birding, both in spring and winter. Gulls, waders – Terek, Marsh and curlew sandpipers, also Red-necked phalaropes, Gull-billed terns, even raptors migrating through Spotted Eagle, Lesser Kestrel, Levant Sparrowhawk. The few fresh water wetlands and the outfalls will add even more species – warblers, crakes and more of the waders commoner to us. The adjacent fields will reveal Upcher's Warbler, Steppe Grey and Daurian Shrikes, Eastern Orphean and Lesser Whitethroat warblers and more raptors.

We will also visit the small Abdali farms further north, near the Iraq border and here we will be

looking for Afgan and Common Babblers, as well as many migrants – White-throated Robin, Masked Shrike, Semi-collared and Red-breasted flycatchers, Bush Chat, Pallid Harrier, Graceful Prinia and both Daurian and Turkestan Shrikes. A trip to the south will allow us to see Socotra Cormorant, as well as few tern species – Bridled, White-cheeked, Greater and Lesser Crested Terns.

Another day we will drive westwards into the desert and another small farm (Wafra) nested among the sands – it is amazing to see such a variety of birds clustered in such a small piece of greenery – Montague's and Pallid harriers will glide gracefully above small onion plantations, Shikra and Levant Sparrowhawk will dash into the bigger trees where Pallid Scops Owl can sometimes be found. Here we can also look for the 'Waxwing of the south' - Grey Hypocolios. The bushes around can hold an amazing variety – from White-throated Robin to Siberian Chiffchaff. The adjacent deserts we will check for various larks, Quail and Blue-cheeked Beatears.

The desert itself supports an amazing number of grazing animals which appear to be feeding on sand, as there is almost no vegetation. Camels, sheep and goats, as well as some good Arab horses can be seen almost everywhere. Relatively recently some large areas have been fenced so no grazing is allowed and the vegetation there is recovering – a green and yellow carpet as far as you can see.

Some of the sites require permits to be visited and for those will apply shortly before our visit. In

any case there are enough sites we can visit and some of them we will visit several times as during the migration - things change very quickly.

One annoying thing among all that pleasure of birding at such a place is the shooting. There are a number of ignorant locals who would shoot everything that flies and good numbers of birds are killed this way. However, ecotourism and birdwatching is one of the best ways to diminish and actually stop such dreadful practices and there are already signs that it also works in Kuwait. Otherwise the people in Kuwait are very friendly and open to Westerners and it seems it is not only the Gulf war to be the reason.

Ground price: 1,800 USD

Group size: 6-12 + leader

Single supplement: 380 USD

Deposit: 300 USD

The price includes:

ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include: airfare, visa, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.

Birding Cuba

Monday 27th February – Thursday 9th March 2017

Monday 20th – Thursday 30th November 2017



Cuba is a fascinating country rich in nature, history, culture and boasts a unique political situation during the last 65 years. It is the largest island on the Caribbean with a territory of 110 thousand sq km (43 thousand square miles), including more than 4000 islands. The island has various and very different looking habitats – from the high mountains on the east side to the beautiful Vinales on the west side, vast lowlands, a few wetlands, forests, savanna like grasslands and endless beautiful sandy beaches. Despite the variety of habitats, most of which are well preserved, the number of species recorded is relatively small at 371 so far in Cuba. However quantity does not always reflect quality and here in Cuba quality abounds. Of them 155 breed on the island, which will be about the number we see on our visit – 150 to 160 species approximately. However, amongst them there are 26 endemic species (sadly, one of these is now extinct – the beautiful Cuban Macaw) and we will target all of them except the impossible and nearly mythical Cuban Kite and Zapata Rail. Some are scattered through the island, some are widespread, but be in no doubt some are the greatest gems to be seen in the birding world. Cuba is a home to the smallest bird in the world – the Bee Hummingbird at only 6 cm long. The Cuban Tody is another one, slightly bigger, but again a real beauty and it is wonderful that it can be seen all over the country. The same can be said for the national bird – the Cuban Trogon. The two endemic and beautiful quail-dove however are rare and need early starts and being in the right location in order to see them. The most difficult species are found in the vast Zapata peninsula, often wrongly called wetland. Although large parts of it are wet, there are also dry grasslands and forests. Here is found the most difficult endemic possible to be seen – the elusive Zapata Wren. We will visit four main areas during our tour on an optimal tour route. Beside the birds, which are the main target we will definitely see, feel and experience the unique lifestyle of the Cuban people and the way things work in this country. Despite the hardship of the daily life, the people of Cuba are very friendly, relaxed, and extremely positive, readily extending a warm welcome to visiting foreigners.

We will be staying in state owned hotels and good quality sea resorts as well as in private houses (casa particulares). This is the only way to feel, enjoy and understand the current life in Cuba.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Havana airport in the early evening, followed by less than two hours' drive that takes us to the beautiful Viñales valley, in Pinar del Rio province, west of the capital. Stay overnight for two nights.

DAY 2 Very short drive will bring us to the nearest national park and we will take a short walk into it. This is one of the best places to

see the endemic Cuban Solitaire – it is not that rare but it is not easily seen, even after we understand its location by its gentle and somewhat sad song, it might take some time to really see the bird. There will be other endemic woodland birds such as Cuban Vireo, Cuban Trogon, Cuban Blackbird, Cuban Bullfinch, Cuban Green Woodpecker, Cuban Grassquit and Cuban Tody as well as many other different birds – Western Spindalis, warblers on migration, Yellow-faced Grassquit, plus many more.

Broad-winged Hawk is found here as well as the very rare and endemic Gundlach's Hawk, while Turkey Vultures are virtually everywhere. We will spend the morning here and after lunch will visit a different woodland nearby where we will look for Olive-capped Warbler, which is only found among pine trees. Other warblers will be seen too and there is a small reservoir which will bring wetland birds to the day list.



Greater Flamingos



Cuban Tody

DAY 3 Early morning birding for species we might have missed the previous day, followed by a long transfer to Cayo Coco Island which will take most of the day. However we will break the journey with a few stops. Accommodation for two nights in beach resort.

DAY 4 The island of Cayo Coco boasts some of the finest and most beautiful beaches in Cuba and probably in the whole of Caribbean. We will definitely take advantage of them during the day, but first thing in the morning will be to look for the local specialties - Cuban Gnatcatcher, Thick-billed Vireo, Oriente Warbler, Bahama Mockingbird and West Indian Whistling Duck. The vegetation will reveal many different warblers on migration, while the wetlands and coast sustain large numbers of flamingos, waders, rails, herons, pelicans, gulls and terns.



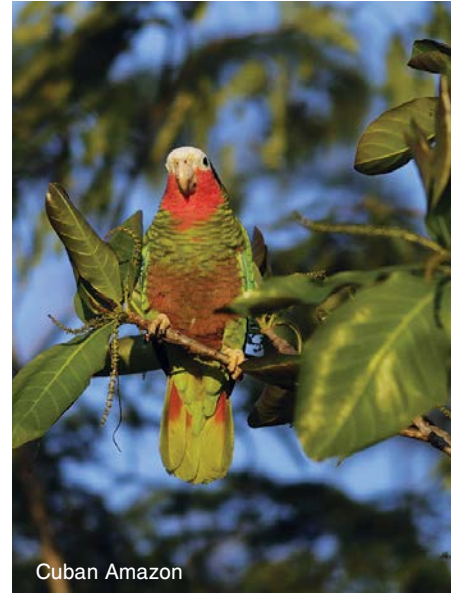
Blue-headed Quail Dove

DAY 5 We will pack and set off to La Belen, Camagüey province further east, but before that we will have another birding session for species we might have missed the previous day. The journey after will take a few hours again but we will break it with some stops for Eastern Meadow Lark, Palm Crow etc. Arrival in the evening and overnight in La Belen for two nights – a basic accommodation but perfectly situated in the middle of the park.

DAY 6 The whole day we will spend in the area – an open like savanna with trees, as well as denser woodland parts. Here we will have a chance for the elusive Gundlach's Hawk and the endemic and poorly known Giant Kingbird, plus endemics like Cuban Parakeet and Cuban Pygmy Owl, also Cuban Parrot, Plain Pigeon and Cuban Crow as well as the rare Cuban Palm Crow. A small reservoir will reveal Lesser Jacana, and the Limpkin is found in the forests nearby.

DAY 7 Early morning birding at La Belen then we shall drive to Zapata Peninsula. The drive will take most of the day and again we will have few birding stops on the way. For the next four nights we will stay in private houses where we can feel the real spirit of the Cuban life.

DAY 8 to 10 We have three full days to explore the Zapata - It is not a swamp as it is normally called but a vast peninsula consisting of different habitats – marshland, Salinas, mangrove forests, tidal areas, dense woodlands and savanna like grasslands. A great number of birds are found here including most of the endemics – Bee Hummingbird, both Blue-headed and Grey-headed quail-doves, Cuban Parakeet, Fernandina's Flicker, Pygmy and Screech Owl, Zapata Sparrow, Cuban Oriole, Cuban Red-winged Blackbird, Cuban Black Hawk and the most elusive of all – the Zapata Wren. Big numbers of non-endemic but equally beautiful and attractive birds are found here – Cuban Parrot has its stronghold in Zapata and some large flocks can be seen outside the breeding season, numerous war-



Cuban Amazon

blers can be seen in the area. The very beautiful Las Salinas will reveal a great number of waders, herons and flamingos, gulls and terns and many other species are possible as it is the migration time. The Magnificent Frigate birds soar in the distance and in the evening when we return we might see Cuban nightjars foraging along the road.



Cuban Pigmy Owl

DAY 11 We have about three hours transfer to Havana for our return flight and we have options to do some more birding in the morning or spend few hours in the beautiful old Havana town which is full of colonial buildings, museums and fortresses and inevitably tourists. Departure in the evening and we shall arrive home next morning, hopefully with many memorable moments in this fascinating country along with a quality bird list.

Ground price: 2,500 USD

Group size: 6-12 + leader

Single supplement: 170 USD

Deposit: 300 USD

The price includes:

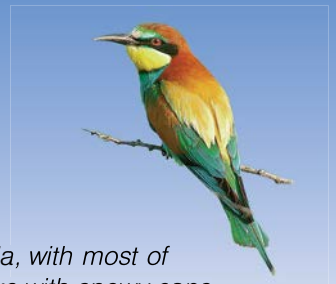
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:

airfare, visa, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.

Georgia in Spring – semi-deserts and high Caucasus

Saturday 29th April - Sunday 7th May 2017



The small state of Georgia is situated between the Black and Caspian seas, south of Russia, with most of its territory occupied by the mighty Caucasus. The vast and seemingly numerous rocky peaks with snowy caps are rough and beautiful. It is a tough land, with tough people but wonderful to explore, moreover not many birders have been here yet. Still there is a rich variety of very different habitats in the rest of the country – from wet forests and wetlands to steppes and semi-deserts. Thus the country offers excellent birding and for some of the species here it is one of the very few places in the Western Palearctic where they can be seen – namely the Caucasian Snowcock, the Caucasian Black Grouse, the Great Rosefinch and the beautiful Giuldenstadt's Redstart. These four are not easy to see and would normally require a lot of walking, or better trekking, throughout most of the year to catch sight of them. However, our tour is designed to coincide with a short time window in the spring when the birds can be seen more easily, as they are much lower down than their breeding sites, forced to be there by the thick snow cover which still blocks them. To find them, we will be based in the village of Stepantsimnda, at 1800 meters a.s.l - the best location in Georgia to find its Caucasian specialties; and close to Kazbegi peak, one of the highest in the Caucasus at 5033 meters. Before it we will visit few wetlands and semi-deserts in the south of the country, where the birdlife is very different. We expect to record over 140 bird species on this tour.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Tbilisi airport and check-in in a city hotel for our first three nights of the tour. We can rest after the flight, have city sight-seeing tour as Tbilisi many old churches and historical buildings are well worth a visit, or start straight with the birding.

DAYS 2 and 3 Both days we will explore various habitats from Tbilisi - David Gareja and a couple of wetlands near to the Azerbaijan border. Migration will be in full force, with most of the local breeders already on site, so we expect Demoiselle cranes, Armenian Gull, crakes, various terns, Rollers, Bee-eaters (Blue-cheeked is also possible), terns, waders, Pygmy Cormorant; also Citrine Wagtail, Eastern Orphee, Barred and Paddyfield Warblers, Western Rock Nuthatch, Isabelline, Black-eared, Pied and Finch's wheatears, Red-rumped Swallow, Red-footed Falcon, Black, Griffon and Egyptian vultures, Long-legged Buzzard and many more.

DAY 4 Today we will move north and a five hours drive will bring us at Stepantsimnda village, where will stay the next 4 nights. En-route we will break the journey with several stops which will provide Rock Thrush, Wryneck, White-winged Snowfinch, Chough, the local race of the Common Buzzard (*menetrieze*) etc.

Already in the village we will check-in and if there is enough time, go birdwatching nearby.

DAYS 5 to 8 These days we will explore surroundings slopes, ridges, river valleys and patches of bushes. Our main targets here are the four Caucasian specialties – Snowcock and Grouse, as well as Great Rosefinch and Giuldenstadt's Redstart. Hopefully, the slopes above us will be still covered by snow, so we can find the first two species very close to the village, while the other two can even be seen in the village. In any case we have secured enough time and shall have good views of all four species. Along with them we will also see other species, some of them no less attractive at all. The slopes of the Caucasus are constantly patrolled by the majestic Lammergeyers and one pair breeds nearby the village. The beautiful Red-fronted serins are around too, as well as the Wallcreepers, Alpine Accentors and the smart local race of the Black Redstart - *semirufus*. Also, large flocks of both species of choughs, numerous Water pipits, Twites and Ring Ouzels. Many migrants can turn up – Mountain (or Caucasian) Chiffchaff, Red-throated Pipit, Thrush Nightingale, White-throated Robin, Red-breasted Flycatcher, even Corncrake and Quail were recorded on our recce trip. Raptors we will see are Golden eagle, Steppe Eagle, Peregrine, Pallid, Montague's and Hen harriers, Short-toed eagle,



Giuldenstadt's Redstart

Goshawk etc. On the slopes we can see the East Caucasian Tur.

In case our return flight is early one, on day 8 in the afternoon we will drive towards Tbilisi where we will overnight.

DAY 9 Birding in the morning, as much as our time permits. Then catch the return flight home.



Red fronted Serin

Ground price: 1,900 USD

Group size: 6-12 + leader

Single supplement: 220 USD

Deposit: 300 USD

The price includes:

ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:

airfare, visa, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.

Bulgaria in Spring

Sunday 7th - Thursday 18th May 2017



This tour is specially prepared to show you the best of the Bulgarian birdlife under an optimal time schedule. You will arrive at Varna airport and thus our tour will start from the north Black sea coast where we will catch many of the northern migrants. After it we will drive down to the south sea coast to explore the wetlands here for more migrant and breeding birds. The second half of our tour will be spend into the mountains of south Bulgaria where the late breeders have already arrived. Our tour will end up at Vitosha Mountain, and your departure flight will be from Sofia airport. We are going to see more than 200 species, including some of the rarest European and Bulgarian specialties – Olive-tree and Paddyfield warblers, Semi-collared Flycatcher, Isabelline and Pied wheatears, Wallcreeper, Black-headed Bunting, Long-legged Buzzard, Imperial eagle and the Levant Sparrowhawk. There will be plenty of opportunities to see butterflies, plants and magnificent scenery.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Varna airport and transfer to Shabla lake. Next three nights we will accommodate in hotel next to the lake, an excellent location to explore the area next two days. If time permits birding around.

DAY 2 Today we will explore both Durankulak and Shabla lakes at our leisure. Here we can see Paddyfield, Savi's, Great Reed, Marsh, Reed, Cetti's and other warblers, Caspian, marsh and Little terns, Purple Heron, Glossy Ibis, Ferruginous Duck, Squacco Heron, Lesser Grey Shrike, Bearded Reedling, waders, Garganey and many more. Forests around the lakes will provide Lesser Spotted and Syrian woodpeckers, Spotted and Red-breasted flycatchers, Hawfinch and Golden Oriole.

DAY 3 We devote the day to the area around cape Kaliakra – the last remaining steppe habitat in Bulgaria. It is a place for Pied Wheatear, Roller, Short-toed and Calandra larks, Black-headed Bunting, Stone Curlew, Long-legged Buzzard and Shag. Here we can enjoy the last migrating Red-footed falcons, flying just around us. Despite a bit early in the season Rose-coloured starlings are also possible. At the end we will visit the nearby river valley where we have good chance for Eagle owls family. Back to Shabla for our last overnight here.

DAY 4 After breakfast we head south. We will have several stops on the way mainly in forest habitat where we can see several species of woodpeckers as well as Semi-collared Flycatcher, Wood and Boneli's warblers, Booted and Lesser Spotted eagles, Short-toed Treecreeper, Middle Spot-

ted Woodpecker, Hawfinch and many more. Overnight just outside of Burgas for the next four nights.

DAYS 5 and 6 Both days we will explore the Burgas wetlands – Ramsar and IBA sites. Here we can observe Terek, Broad-billed, Wood, Marsh and Curlew sandpipers, Red-necked Phalarope, Little and Temminck's stints, Spoonbill, Glossy Ibis, Dalmatian and White pelicans, Gull-billed, Black, White-winged and Whiskered terns, Mediterranean and Slender-billed gulls; Ruddy Shelduck, Little Bittern, Penduline Tit and Bearded Reedling, Olivaceous Warbler, Black Stork and many more.

DAY 7 We drive south to Strandja Mountain looking for woodpeckers – White-backed, Grey-headed, Middle and Lesser Spotted, as well as other woodland birds – treecreepers, Cirl Bunting, Hawfinch. Nightjar is also very possible. On our way we will visit coastal wetland for more waders, herons, terns, gulls, Pygmy Cormorant, White-tailed Eagle, Hobby, Garganey, Little Grebe and many others.

DAY 8 Today we have long transfer to Eastern Rhodopi mountain. We will have one main stop on the way – the site is optimal for Olive-tree Warbler, Masked Shrike, Cirl Bunting, Calandra and Short-toed larks. Lesser Spotted Eagle, Egyptian Vulture and Black Stork are also here. Late in the evening we arrive in our hotel near the town of Krumovgrad, where we stay the next two nights.

DAY 9 We will explore the nearby Krumovitsa river valley and here we will enjoy Rock Nuthatch, Orphea, Sardinian and Olive-tree warblers, Nightingale, Black Stork, Levant Sparrowhawk, Black-eared Wheatear (both western and eastern races), Wryneck, Roller, Rock and

Blue Rock thrushes, Chukar and many others. Great Spotted Cuckoo is also possible. Late in the evening, after dinner we look for the tiny Scops Owl in the poplar trees around our hotel.

DAY 10 After a breakfast we head west and after about four hours transfer we reach Trigrad gorge – a magnificent area, the best place for watching the Wallcreeper. We will have several stops on the way and once in the gorge we will look for the Wallcreeper. Late afternoon walk can provide Rock Bunting, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Bulfinch, Serin and Black Redstart. Overnight in family hotel in the village of Trigrad.

DAY 11 We will spend the morning looking for the Wallcreepers in the gorge and other birds will be Alpine Swift, Grey Wagtail, Crag Martin, Dipper, Rock Bunting, Black Redstart, Honey Buzzard and Peregrine. Afterwards we drive north and reach hilly area next to the Rhodopi Mountain where we can see Imperial Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, Stone Curlew, Isabelline Weather, Woodchat Shrike, Bee-eaters and many others.

Late in the afternoon we drive to Vitosha mountain, right next to Sofia city, where we accommodate in a hotel situated on the mountain slopes.

DAY 12 In the morning we will look around for Nutcracker, Ring Ouzel, Water Pipit, Pallid Swift and other birds and latter on we drive to Sofia Airport for your back flight. Departure.

Ground price: 1,195 EUR

Group size: 6-12 + leader

Single supplement: 190 EUR

Deposit: 250 EUR

Individuals: 3-5 + leader

Ground price: 1,450 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.



Sombre Tit

Wild Mongolia

Monday 8th - Wednesday 24th May 2017



Mongolia is situated in the heart of the great Asian continent, sandwiched between China in the south and Russia in the north. With its size of 1.5 mln sq. kilometers and 2.5 million people, of which one and a half million live in the capital city of Ulan Bator, it is one of the least densely populated countries on the planet. The vast open spaces are a true wilderness, giving you a wonderful feeling of freedom and loneliness. The nature here is shaped by the climate, which except in the spring is nothing but harsh. Bitterly cold winters with temperatures as low as minus 50 and baking hot summers at 50 + Celsius have resulted in huge deserts and steppes with little vegetation. The Himalayas further south also contribute; by receiving all the rains very little precipitation reaches Mongolia's southern parts. Despite this, Mongolia is a home to numerous wildlife and some of the rarest animals in the world are found here – the Gobi bear, the only true wild camels, Snow Leopard, Argali Sheep, Wild Ass and the recently reintroduced Prezhewalski's Horse, which was once extinct in the wild.

To visit Mongolia and watch its wildlife has long been a dream and it came true in June 2013 when I went there on a recce trip. They were a very intensive two weeks, but enough to check all the locations we have planned to visit. Plus some others we discovered while there.

There are two ways of exploring Mongolia in search of its birds – an easy one in June where one can use ger camps and hotels throughout the tour and still see a good variety of local species.

However, there is a second option. It needs to be early in the spring and requires camping in tents throughout most of the tour. We have decided to go for this one. This is not a holiday, but a tour, or better expedition, but the reward is in the form of excellent chances of seeing Mongolia's special birds – Relict Gull, Black-billed Capercaillie, Hodgson's Bush Chat, Oriental and Greater Sand plovers, Altai Snowcock, Asian Dowitcher, Henderson's Ground Jay, Saxaul Sparrow, Siberian Rubbythroat, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, Pallas's Sandgrouse, Demoiselle and White-napped cranes, Azure Tit, Pallas's Fish Eagle, Saker and Amur falcons and Eastern Marsh Harrier.

We have two reasons to start the tour that early. The first one is the Black-billed Capercaillie. The other few tours that come to Mongolia and its birds are in June – long after lekking is over. Our trip will be there towards the end of the lek, when the birds are still very active. Additionally, on our recce trip we located a new site where we can see the Capercaillie with less effort. Most important the forest here is not that dense and we have better chances for proper views, instead of quick glimpses of birds that shoot off. The second reason for the early start of the tour of course are the migrants which pass through Mongolia in early spring and it gives us opportunities to catch up with some special rarities – these can well be Siberian Crane, Baikal and Falcated teals, Red-necked Stint and many more.

Along with all those specialties we will also see a number of good birds, not unusual for Europe, but quite rare – Lammergeyer, Wallcreeper, Citrine Wagtail, Taiga Flycatcher etc.

To see all that variety we will visit various habitats – the vast steppe, steppe lakes, taiga forests, sand dunes, saxaul "forest" and rocky gorges. We will need to do some driving in order to cover all these habitats. We expect over 250 birds species to be recorded.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Upon arrival we shall quickly sort out the border formalities at the small airport in UB and less than two hours or so drive will bring us into Gun Galuut National Park, east

of the capital city. If there is no need of a rest after the night flight we can visit a couple of wetlands where we will find Demoiselle and White-napped Cranes, the beautiful Goldeneye, Bar-headed Geese, Velvet Scoter, White-winged Black tern and many more. Houbara

Bustard may also be seen and if we are lucky enough we can spot the rare Argali sheep. Overnight in a ger or tent camp.

DAY 2 Drive further east for a couple of hours until we reach the taiga edges where we will look for one of the prime species – Black-billed Capercaillie. Stops en-route at a few smaller wetlands which despite being small may need most of the day to be checked carefully. Arrival at the camp late in the afternoon where we will have an early night as the next day requires very early start. Overnight in a tent camp.

DAY 3 Early morning start as we need to be near the lek as early as possible, best if we arrive while it is still dark. We will try to locate the birds and it needs us to be absolutely quiet. We will also search the forest for Hazel Grouse as well as Red-throated Thrush, Daurian and Common redstarts, woodpeckers, plus Daurian Jackdaw, Olive-backed Pipit, Eyebrowed Thrush and Pine and Meadow buntings in the



Argali sheep

surrounding meadows, where we will spend the rest of the day.

DAY 4 In case we need another try for the Capercaillie we will do so and when ready will head west, passing UB and our goal is Hustai National Park. On the way we will stop at a couple of sites near UB where we will look for Azure Tit, Fork-tailed Swift, some warblers - Two-barred, Yellow-browed, Pallas's Leaf, Arctic and Dusky, also Brown Shrike etc. Late in the afternoon we will arrive in the national park where we will stay for one night. If time permits we will explore the park's territory, which is a home to the recently reintroduced Prezhewalski's Horse. The animals have adapted surprisingly well to the extremes of the climate and the predators and there are now more than 70 foals born in the wild. We can see the horses late in the afternoon when they come to drink by the small creeks; with some luck we can also see Mongolian Gazelle and even a Wolf. Driving and walking on the set trails into the park we can see many raptors - Oriental Honey Buzzard, Amur and Saker falcons, Upland and Long-legged buzzards, Black and Bearded vultures. Great Bustard is also possible.

DAYS 5 to 12 From now on we will drive west and then south visiting few large lakes and many smaller wetlands in the steppe. We will have rough plan where to stay overnight camping but if there is a need we can be flexible and save or spend an extra night here and there. It depends on what we see and weather of course. Major wetlands will be Ogiy, Sangiyn Dalay, Orog and Boon Tsagaan lakes plus numerous small ones. We will record many wetland birds - cranes -the very common Demoiselle, White-naped and Common and if lucky we can see the Siberian crane too; Bar-headed, Swan, and Bean geese, Falcated Duck and Baikal teals; Relict, Greater Black-headed, Brown-headed, Mongolian and other gulls, Asian Dowitcher, Red-necked Stint, Citrine Wagtail, Blyth's Pipit, Pallas's Reed Bunting, Paddyfield Warbler, Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler plus very many other familiar ducks, grebes, waders, terns and passerines. Raptors will be Pallas's Fish



Relict Gull

Eagle, Eastern Marsh Harrier, Saker Falcon, Steppe and Golden eagles, Black and Griffon vultures, Black-eared Kite. With some luck we will also find the smart Hogdson Bush Chat. Along the roads we will find many commoner species such as Ruddy Shelduck, Rock Sparrow, Pere David's Finch, Hill Pigeon and many more. On the evening of day 12 we will arrive at Baga Bogd mountain - one of the many Gobi-Altai ridges. We will drive through most of the day to get there but will break the journey with few birding stops - here we will see the beautiful Pallas's Sandgrouse, it is virtually everywhere and we will carefully look for the even more beautiful Oriental Plovers, also for the Greater Sand Plovers. We will reach the camp in the evening and will accommodate for 2 nights here.

DAY 13 Today we will have earlier start, and it will be good to wake up as early as possible and explore the picturesque gorge and home of the Altai Snowcock - another Mongolian highlight. Here, unlike most of the sites where this bird is looked after we can see the calling males from the point where our vehicles will bring us. A bit of a climb however, half a mile walk and ascend about 200 meters or so will bring us even near to the displaying males and we can enjoy there gentle whistling calls, watch them feeding and eventually one will fly above us, crossing the narrow gorge and landing on the opposite slope. Another member of the family we can see here is the Chukar. Other birds we will see in the gorge are the beautiful Wallcreeper, White-winged and Mongolian finches, Common Rosefinch, Brown and Alpine accentors, Godlewski's Bunting, Chough, Golden Eagle, Hill Pigeon, Rock Sparrow and Rock Thrush. When ready we will descend a little and will be soon looking again for another of our targets - the Henderson's Ground Jay, also a pair of Greater Sand Plover.

When ready - long drive and our destination is the famous Gobi's sand dunes. On the way we will see numerous Sandgrouses, Pied and Desert wheatears, Rock Thrush, Ortolan Bunting, Saker, Long-legged and Upland buzzards, Griffon and Black vultures. We will look again for the ground jays as it is a bird wonderful to watch, but also for our first encounter with the handsome Saxaul Sparrow. Goitered Gazelles are also in the area so we have to be quick to spot them as they will disappear fast. Arrival at the ger camp in front of the sand dunes latter in the evening.

DAY 14 After breakfast we will visit the sand dunes and the bird we really need to find here is the Saxaul Sparrow. In order to see it we will spend some time along the river, where the sparrows usually come to drink. There are also a few more pairs of the Ground Jay around, plus many Pallas's Sandgrouse, Desert Wheatear, Isabelline Shrike, Short-toed and Horned larks. When ready, a few hours' drive, with a couple of short stops, will bring us to Yolín Am - the valley of the Lammergeyers.

DAY 15 Explore Yolín Am we will see these magnificent raptors, also Saker Falcons, Golden eagles, Goshawk and Upland Buzzard.

Mongolia's only endemic bird lives here - Kozlov's Accentor, as well as Brown Accentor, Common and Chinese Beautiful Rosefinches and Godlewski's Buntings, White-winged Snowfinch and again the Wallcreeper. The Spotted Great Rosefinch is much rarer, but we also have a chance for this one. The gorge itself is a spectacular formation and being here is a privilege. Towards its lower end the gorge is less narrow, but more open smoothly turning into a wide valley. Here we can see Barred Warbler, wheatears, Short-toed Lark etc. Stay overnight in a nearby camp.

DAY 16 Early start in order to get our return flight to UB where after arrival we can continue birding and look for the species we might have missed the previous days - Azure Tit, Azure-winged Magpie, Baikal Wagtail, Pine and Meadow Buntings. The capital city of Ulan Bator is strikingly different compared with the traditional life in the countryside gers and small settlements. There are a couple of historical and cultural sites we can visit, provided there is an interest. We can also buy some fine cashmere products to bring home as presents.

DAY 17 Morning flight will take us out of Mongolia and we will arrive home later in the evening.

For full tour details please visit our website.



Altai Snowcock

Ground price: 3,640 USD

Group size: 6-12 + leader

Single supplement: 330 USD

Deposit: 300 USD

The price includes:

ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:

airfare, visa, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.

Birding Ethiopia

Sunday 15th - Sunday 29th October 2017



Ethiopia is a vast country, situated in north-eastern Africa, the so called Horn of Africa, to which it also belongs along with neighbouring Eritrea and Somalia. It is predominantly a mountainous country and a green one too as it receives a lot of rain. Ethiopia has an amazing 850 bird species of which at least are 30 endemic (some are shared with its neighbor Eritrea).

Moreover, the birds seem to be everywhere – wherever you turn your eyes there are birds nearby and often in good numbers. They are also quite approachable as they are not persecuted and hunted here by the local people. There is also a good diversity of mammals (279 species) and other wildlife and we will be looking for them too. The main one is the unique Ethiopian Wolf – endangered and endemic, but also Gelada Baboon, Mountain Nyala, Menelik's Bushbuck and many more. Our tour will coincide with the bird migration period so besides seeing nearly four hundred bird species many of them in considerable numbers too.

We will be visiting various habitats in order to record all this variety – the remote and beautiful Bale Mountains, the Rift Valley, few wetlands and big lakes, one of the few remaining forests and the Blue Nile tributaries.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival in Addis Ababa and transfer to a hotel for a two nights stay. Around it we can find many birds – Ruppell's and Hooded vultures, as well as the peculiar endemic Thick-billed Raven, also Brown-rumped Seed-eater, Grey-headed Sparrow, Baglafaecht's Weaver, Dusky Flycatcher, Africa Rock Martin, Tacazze Sunbird, Red-eyed and Dusky Turtle doves, Wattled Ibis and White-collared Pigeon.

DAY 2 Drive on to a gorge carved deeply by a tributary of the Blue Nile, where we will explore the forested escarpment above the monastery of Debre Libanos. Here we will look for the endemic Ruppel's chat and many other species. Walk along the gorge till we reach a good picnic spot with a spectacular view over the valley where Lammergeyers, Ruppel's Griffons, Lanner Falcons, Fan-tailed Ravens and Black Kites soar. Here we can also find the endemic White-billed Starling and White-winged Clift Chat. Here we will enjoy the splendid Gelada Baboons, found in no other part of the world.

DAY 3 and 4 Early morning departure (with stops en-route) to Awash National Park which boasts over 450 birds species. Here we will be looking for Arabian, Buff-crested, Hartlaub's and White-bellied Bustards, Three-banded Courser, Chestnut-bellied and Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Black-billed Barbet, Plain Nightjar, Northern Carmine Bee-eater, Wire-tailed Swallow, Red-winged Lark, Singing Bushlark, Red-backed Scrub-robin, Red-billed Quelea and Crimson-rumped Waxbill

and many more. There will be some mammals - Oryx, Soemmering's Gazelle, Impala, Hamadryas Baboon, Greater and Lesser Kudu.

DAY 5 Today we will drive to Lake Langano, one of the Rift Valley lakes, surrounded by arid acacia savanna. En route birding at a few excellent stops looking for Sombre Rock-chat, Blackstart and Chestnut-headed Sparrow-lark and many more. In the late evening we will look for Slender-tailed Nightjar. Overnight at lodge on the lake's shore for two nights.

DAY 6 Full day around the lodge where we can find a great variety – Yellow-fronted Parrot, Black-winged Lovebird, Narina Trogon, Lemon and Tambourine doves, African Emerald Cuckoo, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, Ethiopian Boubou, Black Cuckoo-shrike, Dark Chanting-goshawk, African Hawk-eagle, Long-crested Eagle, Black-chested and Banded Snake-eagles, Red-faced Crombec and many more.

DAY 7 Drive to Wondo Genet for one night with a few stops on the way. Upon arrival and check-in we will explore the hotel's surroundings for Abyssinian Woodpecker, White-winged Cliff-chat, Dark-headed Oriole, Abyssinian Slaty-flycatcher, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Double-toothed and Red-fronted Barbets, White-cheeked Turaco, Lesser and Green-backed Honeyguides, White-rumped Babbler and many more.

DAY 8 Today we set off to Bale Mountain, an area of high altitude plateau, with volcanic crags and lakes, forests, alpine moor land, trout filled

streams and a striking variety of fauna and flora. Over 60 species of mammals and 260 birds have been recorded here – Blue-winged Goose, Rouget's Rail, Spot-breasted Lapwing, White-collared Pigeon. At a higher elevation and the foothills of the national park several endemic mammals occur, including the Mountain Nyala, Simien Wolf and Menelik's Bushbuck, as well as



Black-winged Lovebird

16 endemic bird species have been recorded. Two nights at Goba.

DAY 9 Today's drive will take you to the Afro-Alpine grasslands of the Sanetti plateau. It is cited as the world's largest expanse of Afro-Alpine moorland, a habitat confined to altitudes of 3,500m to 4,500 m on east Africa's tallest mountains. Here we will find the endemic Ethiopian Wolf and the Giant Mole rat and walking on the plateau we will enjoy the awe-inspiring landscape and its' birds Blue-winged Goose, Spot-breasted Plover, Wattled Crane, Abyssinian Siskin and many more.

DAY 10 Today we will have a long journey as we will drive to Negele by crossing again the Sanetti plateau. Just below it is found Haremma forest – the most extensive and intact forest in Ethiopia. Here we will look for Mountain Buzzard, Rameroon Pigeon, Abyssinian Crimson-wing, Cinnamon Bracken Warbler etc. Later on we continue to Negele and will have stops en-route for our main target here – Prince Ruspoli's Turaco. Stay overnight for two nights.

DAY 11 Birding in the area as we will visit Wadera and the Liben Plains in search of Coqui Francolin – a rare and localized bird in Ethiopia. Its powers of concealment rival those of the Sidamo Lark. There are no more than 300 larks left mak-



Abyssinian Wolf



Little Bee-eater

ing it one of the rarest in world. The Liben plain is also a home to many other species and birding here is a real pleasure. Near Negele there is another site where we will look for the very beautiful Prince Ruspoli's Turaco.

DAY 12 Between Negele and Yabello lays a rugged swatch of savanna punctuated by the slightly lush vegetation of the Dawa River valley. En route we shall encounter flocks of Magpie Starlings, White-winged Dove, Black-bellied Sunbird and Salvadori's Weaver, Bare-eyed Thrushes and eventually we may be lucky to spot a male

Black Cuckoo Shrike.

As we approach Yabello we will enter the prime area for the turaco again and we will have a detailed look here in case we have missed it the previous days. Two nights at Yabello.

DAY 13 In the area are found two of Ethiopia's most sought-after species: the Stresemann's Bush-crow and the White-tailed Swallow. Driving to Mega we expect to see a small flock of Bush-crows and as we move closer - small groups of White-tailed swallows. Other birds in the area will be Red-napped Bush-Shrikes, D'Arnaud's Barbet, Rufous Chatterer, White-bellied Canary and Shelley's Rufous Sparrow. We may also have a night drive which will reveal Donaldson-Smith's nightjars and African Scops Owls.

DAY 14 Drive to Lake Awassa where amongst the lilies and great reed beds that encompass the lake we will find Black, Goliath and other herons and egrets, Lesser Jacana, White-backed Duck, Fulvous Whistling Duck, Dainty Pygmy Geese, Fulvous and White-faced Whistling Duck, Knob-billed Duck, Black Crakes, African



Stresemann's Bush Crow

Jacans, Three-banded plovers; Pied, Malachite, Grey-headed and Woodland kingfishers; Red-breasted Wrynecks, Green Wood-hoopoes, Sulphur-breasted Bush Shrikes, White-browed Robin-chats, African Thrushes, Rufous Chatters, Swamp Warblers, Red-faced crombeces, Wattle-eyes, Puffbacks, Spotted Creepers and many other. Overnight in lakeside hotel.

DAY 15 Drive to Addis Adaba for our return flight, with a few stops on the way. Departure.

ADDITIONAL INFO:

Ethiopian roads are good to poor and most transfers will take few good hours. Accommodation varies from good to basic. Food is also good but outside of Addis Ababa the variety of choices is not great. Some of the days - in the Bale Mountains and around Addis Ababa we will be at altitude of over 2,000 meters above the sea level. Terrain will be uneven on many sites so good walking boots are recommended.

Ground price: 3,250 USD

Group size: 6-12 + leader

Single supplement: 300 USD

Deposit: 400 USD

The price includes:

ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:

airfare, visa, travel insurance, hard drinks and all items of purely personal nature.



Sanetti plateau

Via Pontica – Autumn Migration

Saturday 2nd – Saturday 09th September 2017

Saturday 23th – Saturday 30th September 2017



After we have been running our Via Pontica tour for more than ten years, it is a time for a change now to a holiday which will still provide you with a lot of good birds and spectacular views of the true migration, but it will be even more relaxing and near to a high quality holiday. For the entire holiday we will be staying in one hotel only, perfectly situated between the Black Sea, with a fine sandy beach right in front of it, while Pomorie Lake is just behind and both are a few minutes walking distance. The hotel itself is a luxury, five stars one and offers high quality spa services. Having the hotel as a base, we will explore the nearby Burgas wetlands at our leisure. These are four big lakes designated as Ramsar sites and IBAs. We will be also visiting woodlands, grasslands and scrubby habitats. All will be done at leisure and we will make sure we have spent enough time at each location. We will have early evenings and even siestas provided everybody is happy. In case the group is bigger we will have two vehicles which will give us great flexibility. This tour gives you the opportunity to see more than 140 bird species and to witness the spectacular autumn migration on the Black Sea coast. Along it is the second biggest migration route in Europe – Via Pontica. Every autumn more than 90 000 raptors, 30 000 pelicans, 240 000 storks as well as thousands of waders and passerines fly over this way to their wintering grounds. The Bulgarian Black Sea coast and especially its southern part is a “bottle-neck” for the migrating birds from all Eastern Europe, also Scandinavia and Russia. That’s why it is likely to see more than 10 000 storks, 3 000 pelicans or 2 000 Lesser Spotted eagles just in a single day. The other difference between them is that the first period is more suitable for waders, terns and storks, while the second period is characterized with more intensive raptor and passerine migration. We will also see mammals – Golden Jackal and Otter, as well as good number of butterflies too.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Burgas airport followed by short transfer to Pomorie and check-in at the hotel we will be staying for the entire holiday. Time permitting we will explore the lake next to the hotel for waders, terns, gulls, grebes etc.

DAY 2 to 7 Six full days to explore the wetlands and some neighboring different habitats. The lakes have many excellent spots for very productive birding and we will be visiting each one more than once as during the migration things change quickly. Waders will be everywhere, including rarities as Terek, Broad-billed and Marsh sandpipers, but also Curlew Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Little and Temminck’s stints, Spotted Redshank, both godwits, plovers, and virtually every European waders is possible to be seen including real rarities as Great Snipe for example. Other wetland birds will be Dalmatian and White pelicans – in great numbers, Spoon-bill, Glossy Ibis, Gull-billed, Caspian, Black, White-winged and Whiskered terns; Caspian, Mediterranean and Slender-billed gulls; Ruddy Shelduck, Garganey, Ferruginous

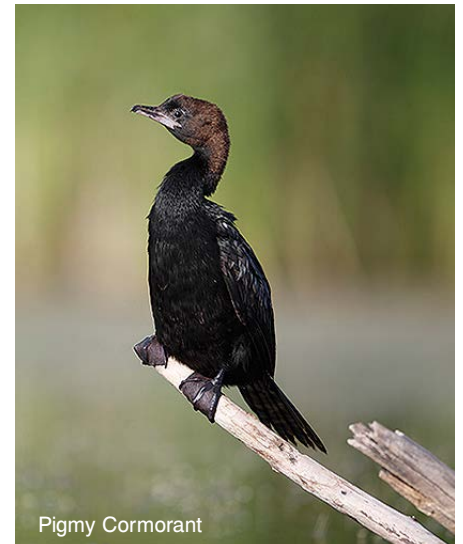
Duck, Little Bittern, Bittern, Purple Heron, all the three crakes, Pigmy Cormorant etc.

Almost all European raptors can be seen here, in fact all, except the Spanish Imperial Eagle and the Gyr Falcon. At this time of the migration the most numerous will be the Honey and the Steppe buzzards but eastern specialties such as Lesser Spotted Eagle, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Levant Sparrowhawk, Long-legged Buzzard, Pallid Harrier, Red-footed and Saker falcons can be seen along all the other raptors. In order to see them we will spend some time at certain raptor watching points. Large flocks of White and Black storks will be seen too.

Passerines include Red-breasted and Semi-collared flycatchers, Hawfinch, Cirl Bunting, Sombre Tit, Penduline Tit and Bearded Reedling; Olivaceous Warbler, Lesser White-throat, Icterine Warbler and many more. Flocks of Bee-eaters, also Roller and Hoopoe as well as numerous Red-backed Shrikes, Red-rumped Swallow as well as woodpeckers – Middle Spotted, Lesser Spotted, Grey-headed, Black, Green, and Great Spotted woodpeckers, possibly Wryneck and we even stand a chance for the White-backed Woodpecker.

We can also visit the nearby old towns of Nessebar (Unesco World Heritage Site) and Sozopol in the south.

DAY 8 Birding in the morning, depending on your return flight. Departure.



Pigmy Cormorant



Dalmatian pelicans

Ground price: 1,220 EUR

Group size: 6-12 + leader

Single supplement: 340 EUR

Deposit: 250 EUR

Individuals: 3-5 + leader

Ground price: 1,600 EUR

The price includes:

ground transport, breakfast, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:

airfare, travel insurance, lunch and dinner, hard drinks and all items of purely personal nature.

False Apollo

Sunday 26th March - Sunday 2nd April 2017



Focused on the very first spring butterflies of Northern Greece, our main target is the beautiful and extremely local False Apollo. As it is only on the wing early in spring, our trip has been specially created to see the False Apollos in pristine condition and is unashamedly the main focus of this unique tour. We will of course seek out other spring fliers and they will enrich the trip further. During the tour we will visit various habitats, including; dry maquis, rocky places to meadows in a pine forest, riverbanks and an impressive gorge. Where we will also find other local and interesting species like both Eastern and Southern Festoons, Gruner's Orange Tip, Eastern Greenish Black Tip, Powdered Brimstone, Cleopatra, Krueper's Small White, Eastern Wood White, Small Bath White, Eastern Baton Blue, Eastern Dappled White, Nettle-tree Butterfly. There will also be the chance to enjoy a number of beautiful early Mediterranean flowers and many birds.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Thessaloniki airport (Greece) and transfer to our hotel, at Alexandroupoli for three nights. Accommodation and dinner.

DAYS 2 and 3 Both days we will explore the town surroundings, where False Apollo is found. Interestingly, one hundred years ago the Bulgarian entomologist Delcho Ilchev released twice 500 False Apollo caterpillars (raised in the Entomological station in Sofia) in this area. They were collected on the Kurudag, Gelibolu Peninsula in European Turkey, where now the species is probably extinct. Once found we shall have plenty of time to relax with them, watching and photographing them well and when ready, we shall look for some other early species that might have emerged already. Species to be seen here are Southern Festoon, possibly Eastern Festoon, Powdered Brimstone, Camberwell Beauty, Large Tortoiseshell,

Eastern Dappled White, Southern Small White, Small Bath White and possibly Grecian Copper. We also have the option to visit Dadia National Park and Evros River where we can see a good number of birds including raptors.

DAY 4 Transfer to Xanthi with stops at a river valley not far from Komotini and at the foothills of Mt. Avgo. Searching for Nettle-tree Butterfly, Green-underside Blue, Eastern Baton Blue, Grecian Copper, Gruener's Orange Tip etc.

DAY 5 Visits to the impressive Nestos (Mesta) gorge and its surroundings where we will search for Krueper's Small White, Eastern Wood White, Southern Comma, Cleopatra, both Festoons and Green Hairstreak.

DAYS 6 and 7 Transfer to Drama for two nights with some stops along Mesta River on the way. Explore the surroundings of Bozdag/Falakro Mt for Eastern Greenish Black-tip, Gruener's Small White, Eastern Dappled White, Eastern Bath White etc.

DAY 8 Transfer to Thessaloniki airport for your flight back home. Time permitting we will have stops along the way.

COST: 1,190 EUR
Group size: 6-12 + leader

Single supplement: 170 EUR
Deposit: 300 EUR

Individuals: 3-5 + leader
Cost: 1,480 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.



False Apollo

Early Butterflies

Monday 24th April - Saturday 6th May 2017



This tour is focused on the early spring butterflies of Bulgaria and Greece. It is not possible to see most of these species on the later summer tours and that is the reason why we have developed this special tour which enables us to see them. Besides being early, most of the species also have a limited distribution, so they are rare and very local. Within the tour we will visit various habitats which will allow us to find most of the species specific to the area – Southern Swallowtail, both festoons, Iolas Blue, Powdered Brimstone, Cleopatra, Gruner's Orange Tip, Eastern Greenish Black Tip, Grass Jewel and Dalmatian Ringlet. Of course we will also record a good number of early flowers and many birds. We shall be running it for a sixth consecutive year.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Sofia airport at midday and transfer to Kerkini Lake in Greece where we will stay for the first two nights. The transfer is about three and a half hours but we will have a few stops on the way to break the journey. Accommodation and dinner.

DAYS 2 Today we will explore the lake surroundings and Belasitsa mountain foothills for Southern Comma, Southern and Eastern festoons, Lattice Brown, Nettle-tree Butterfly, Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell, Powdered Brimstone, Yellow-banded Skipper, Eastern Dappled White.

DAY 3 We will drive further south and our next base will be in Siatista, where we will stay for three nights. On the way we will have several stops where we expect to find Gruner's Orange Tip, Chequered Blue, Eastern Baton Blue and Dalmatian Ringlet.

DAYS 4 and 5 Both days we will explore the area for Grass Jewel, Gruner's Orange Tip,

Eastern Greenish Black Tip, Dalmatian Ringlet, Bavius Blue, Powdered Brimstone, Lesser Fiery Copper and Inky Skipper.

DAY 6 Drive to Pindos mountain, where we will be based near Konitsa, for three nights stay. Upon arrival we will explore the surroundings.

DAYS 7 and 8 Both days we will explore Pindos mountain for Southern Swallowtail, Eastern Festoon, Mountain Small White, Eastern Orange-Tip, Blue Argus, Iolas Blue, Freyer's Purple Emperor, Pygmy and Mediterranean Skippers.

DAY 9 Drive to Olympus for a one night stay. Here we will look for Cleopatra, Grass Jewel and Powdered Brimstone.

DAYS 10 to 12 Drive to Bulgaria for a three nights stay near Kresna gorge. Few stops on the way for Gruner's Orange Tip, Southern Comma and Lattice Brown. Both days we will explore the area, including Kresna Gorge and Rupite locality. Here we expect to see Bal-

kan Green-veined White, Kruper's Small White, Small Bath White, both Eastern and Southern Festoons, Southern Comma, Little Tiger Blue, White-banded Grayling, as well as some of the coppers and blues that have already emerged plus Scarce Swallowtail and Swallowtail.

DAY 13 Drive to Sofia for our flight back home, with several stops on the way if time permits. Departure.



Eastern Greenish Black-tip



Southern Swallowtail



Eastern Orange Tip

Ground price: 1,290 EUR
Group size: 6-12 + leader
Single supplement: 230 EUR
Deposit: 300 EUR

Individuals: 3-5 + leader
Cost: 1,600 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.

The Butterflies of Morocco

Wednesday 10th - Monday 22nd May 2017



The butterfly fauna of Morocco is the richest and most diverse of all of North Africa. The number of species gradually increases from Egypt westward along the Mediterranean coast. The Moroccan fauna comprised 5 families, 66 genera and 135 species of butterflies. There are several endemic species here. For most Europeans, Morocco is a perfect link with Africa - in the north the landscape and habitats are similar to Andalucía, in the south is the Sahara where forms the border. Also the Moroccan dragonfly fauna of 58 species is very inviting, with a prevalence of Mediterranean species. During the tour we shall visit many different habitats: from desert oases, through cedar forests and humid fir/pine/oak forests, to high mountain zones which will allow us to find many local and interesting species like Spanish Festoon, Spanish Fritillary, Moroccan Orange-tip, Desert Orange-tip, Sooty Orange-tip, Scarce Green Striped White, Desert Swallowtail, Moroccan Copper, Donzel's Silver-line, Allard's Silver-line, Martin's Blue, Allard's Blue, Black-Eyed Blue, Lorquin's Blue, African Babul Blue, Desert Babul Blue, African Grass Blue, Mediterranean Tiger Blue, Common Tiger Blue, Fatma's Bavius Blue, Spotted Adonis Blue, Moroccan Hairstreak, Moroccan Marbled White, Dark Giant Grayling, African Grayling, Desert Fritillary. The tour allow not only to admire the beauty of the scenery, butterflies, dragonflies, flowers and other natural wonders, but also to enjoy the local Moroccan culture and cuisine, offering an unforgettable all-round experience.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Fez (Tangiers) airport and transfer to our hotel, situated in Chefchaouen for two nights. Accommodation and dinner.

DAY 2 We will explore Rif Mountains, which receives more rainfall than any other region in Morocco. The slopes are covered in forests of Atlas cedar, cork oak and holm oak, as well as the only remaining forests of Moroccan fir. Species to be seen here are Spanish Festoon, Spanish Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, Southern Scarce Swallowtail, Martin's Blue, Black-Eyed Blue, Lorquin's Blue, Spanish Marbled White, Spanish Gatekeeper, Dark Giant Grayling, Portuguese Dappled White, Provençal Fritillary, Vaucher's Heath, Moroccan Pearly Heath and False Marbled Skipper.

DAY 3 Transfer to Ifrane for four nights with stops on the way. Optional visit to the nearby Roman city at Volubilis - a unique frontier-post of the ancient Roman Empire listed in UNESCO World Heritage List.

DAYS 4 to 6 We will explore Middle Atlas Mountains (including very rich Ifrane surroundings), which is primarily limestone. The jewel of the Middle Atlas is its Ifrane National Park, located in caucase atlasic between Khenifra and Ifrane. We will visit different habitats - from dry limestone, rocky places to meadows in a cedar forest, riverbanks and lakes. Species to be seen here are Spanish Festoon, Moroccan Orange-tip, Sooty Orange-tip, Portuguese Dappled White, Greenish Black-tip, Donzel's Silver-line, Allard's Silver-line, Mediterranean Tiger Blue, Common Tiger Blue, Fatma's Bavius Blue, Spotted Adonis Blue, Lorquin's Blue, Moroccan Hairstreak, Provence Hairstreak, Chapman's Green Hairstreak, Spanish Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, Aetherie Fritillary, Southern Scarce Swallowtail, Moroccan Marbled White, Western Marbled White, Vaucher's Heath, African Grayling, Cleopatra, False Mallow Skipper,

Red-underwing Skipper, False Marbled Skipper, Sage Skipper, Rosy Grizzled Skipper.

DAY 7 Transfer to Asni for three nights with stops at Ksiba, Bzou & El Kelaa des Srahna. Searching for African Grass Blue, African Babul Blue, Mediterranean Tiger Blue, Common Tiger Blue, Spanish Marbled White, Allard's Silver-line, Marsh Fritillary, Green-striped White, Western Dappled White etc. Asni is a small town in the foothills of the High Atlas Mountains near Marrakech, which is connected to Ikkiss and Imilil by picturesque roads.

DAYS 8 and 9 Both days we will explore the High Atlas Mountains. The range includes Djebel Toubkal, which at 4,167 m is the highest in the range and lies in Toubkal National Park. This range serves as a weather system barrier in Morocco running east-west, separating the Sahara from the Mediterranean and continental zones to the north and west. The High Atlas with contrasting landscapes will remind visitors of Colorado, with its high plateau, its gorges and canyons, and its peaks sometimes splintered by erosion. We will visit different altitudinal zones - from valleys near Marakesh and its surroundings to high mountain zone. Species to be seen here are Desert Orange-tip, Moroccan Copper, African Babul Blue, African Grass Blue, Moroccan Hairstreak, False Baton Blue, Black-Eyed Blue, Spotted Adonis Blue, Common Tiger Blue, Spanish Marbled White, Dark Giant Grayling, Vaucher's Heath, Aetherie Fritillary, False Marbled Skipper, False Mallow Skipper, Rosy Grizzled Skipper, Red-underwing Skipper.

DAY 10 Transfer to Tafraoute for three nights, visiting mountain pass Tizi n'Test. Searching for Moroccan Orange-tip, Desert Orange-tip, lolas Blue, Black-Eyed Blue, Common Tiger Blue, Provence Hairstreak, Spanish Festoon, Western Dappled White, Vaucher's Heath, Spanish Marbled White, Moroccan Small Skipper, Mediterranean Skipper, Southern Scarce Swallowtail, Cleopatra etc. Tafraoute is a small town in

the central part of the Anti Atlas Mountains.

DAYS 11 and 12 Both days we will explore Anti Atlas mountains, which represents a desolate world of rocky outcrops and lunar landscapes where the contrasts are extreme. Most of the land is dry and barren, bordering to the south with Sahara desert. A number of wadis and seasonal rivers terminate in the deserts to the south of the mountains. Species to be seen here are Desert Swallowtail, Desert Fritillary, Greenish Black-tip, Scarce Green Striped, White Desert Babul, Silver-line, Moroccan Copper, Moroccan Hairstreak, Allard's Blue, Mediterranean Tiger Blue, Common Tiger Blue, Spanish Marbled White, Moroccan Small Skipper, Aden Skipper and Red-underwing Skipper.

DAY 13 Transfer to Agadir airport for your flight back home. Time permitting we will have few stops on the way.

COST: 2,320 EUR
Group size: 6-12 + leader

Single supplement: 240 EUR
Deposit: 300 EUR

Individuals: 3-5 + leader
Cost: 2,790 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages, visa and all items of purely personal nature.

Scarce Butterflies

Wednesday 31st May - Sunday 11th June 2017



This tour is focused on some of the rarest butterflies in Bulgaria – Scarce and Freyer's fritillaris and Large Chequered, Spinose and Tessellated skippers. However, the various habitats we will visit guarantee over a hundred plus species of butterflies, as well as many dragonflies and damselflies, and of course birds. Most of our tour will explore sites and areas in eastern Bulgaria which are not visited by the classic tours. In fact this area has not been studied in great detail, so even more new discoveries are possible. We will also have the option to visit several cultural sites and the Thracian tumulus near Isperih, listed in the UNESCO World Heritage List, definitely a worthwhile excursion. We have run this trip twice in the last four years and both were very successful. This new itinerary is slightly optimized and we are looking forward to making this a regular tour in our brochure.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Varna Airport and transfer (about two hours) to the small village of Kamentsi, north of Dobrich, for a two night stay.

DAY 2 We spend the day in Suha Reka (Dry River) valley. This region hosts most of Bulgaria's Scarce Fritillary population and is the only place in the country where it is widespread and common. Here we also expect to see: Yellow-banded Skipper, Clouded Apollo, Chestnut Heath, Weaver's Fritillary, Large Copper and many more.

DAY 3 Drive (about two hours) west to Isperih town for one night stay, with several stops on the way for Glanville, Knapweed, Lesser Spotted, Heath, Marbled and Twin-spot Fritillary, Map Butterfly, many blues etc. Afternoon visit to the nearby Thracian Tomb at Sboryanovo – a unique monument of the ancient Thracian culture listed in UNESCO World Heritage List.

DAY 4 Explore the valleys and the woodlands around the tomb and our main target will be the elusive Freyer's Fritillary. Here we can also see: Eastern Bath White, Eastern Festoon, Common Glider and many more. In the afternoon we will explore another prime butterfly area nearby for Tufted Marbled Skipper, Eastern Pale and Berger's Clouded Yellow, Purple-shot Copper, False Eros Blue, Twin-spot, Nickler's, Heath and Niobe fritillary. Late in the afternoon we will drive further south to our next base – the picturesque town of Zheravna where we stay for three nights.

DAY 5 Explore the surroundings for Spinose and Tessellated skippers, Great-banded Grayling, Eastern Baton Blue, Russian Heath, Geranium Argus and Lattice Brown.

DAY 6 Explore the Blue Stones Nature Park which is another butterfly rich site. Here we ex-



Scarce Fritillary

pect to find some rare and beautiful butterflies, such as both Eastern and Southern festoons, Poplar Admiral, Purple Emperor, Apollo, Clouded Apollo, Yellow-banded Skipper, Krueper's Small White, Southern Small White, Small Bath White, Assmann's and Marsh fritillary and many more.

DAY 7 Drive east towards the Black Sea coast. On the way we shall visit the Burgas wetlands, particularly Mandra and Poda lakes. Here we expect to see many species including skippers - Oriental Marbled, Orbed Red-underwing and Oberthür's Grizzled; coppers – Grecian and Lesser Fiery; blues - Chequered, Blue Argus, Lang's Short-tailed; Nettle-tree Butterfly, Tree Grayling etc. Many dragonflies and birds will be also recorded. Two nights stay on the Black Sea coast, south of Burgas.

DAY 8 Today we explore some marshes along the Black Sea coast. Here we hope to see Large Chequered Skipper, Mountain Small White, Balkan Green-veined White, Iolas Blue, Lattice Brown, Freyer's Purple Emperor, Tree and Freyer's Grayling, Southern White Admiral, Camberwell Beauty etc.

DAY 9 Drive near to Kovach locality for a two nights stay. Species we will look for today include Large Blue, Assman's Fritillary, Oriental Meadow Brown, Dryad; Eastern Rock, Delatin's and Great Banded graylings, Cardinal etc.

DAY 10 Explore the woodlands of Strandzha National Park for typical inhabitants of the deciduous forests and clearings – Large Cheq-

uered Skipper, Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell, Lesser Spotted Fritillary. Along rivers and streams - some interesting dragonflies: Odalisque, Goblet-marked Damselfly, Southern Migrant Hawker, Small Pincertail, Eastern Spectre, Turkish Goldenring, Balkan Emerald; as well as woodland birds.

DAY 11 Drive west to Bratsigovo, for our last overnight within the holiday. Stops on the way for Large Copper, Green-underside Blue, Reverdin's Blue, Osiris Blue, Adonis Blue and Twin-spot Fritillary. Upon arrival we will check in at the hotel and afterwards explore the nearest hills for Little Tiger Blue, Eastern Rock Grayling, Hermit, Anomalous Blue.

DAY 12 Drive to Sofia for your flight back home, with stop en-route for Chequered Blue, Lesser Purple Emperor, Hungarian and Common gliders if time permits. Departure.

Ground price: 1,260 EUR

Group size: 6-12 + leader

Single supplement: 190 EUR

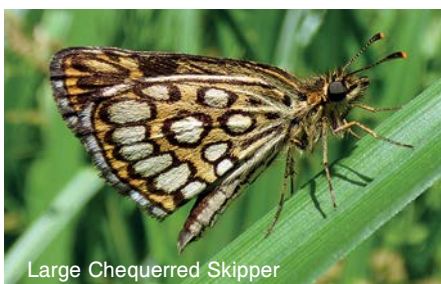
Deposit: 250 EUR

The price includes:

ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:

airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks and all items of purely personal nature.



Large Chequered Skipper

Butterflies of the West Balkan – Bulgaria and Serbia

Sunday 18th - Thursday 29th June 2017



Our butterfly tour will take you to the beautiful scenery of the Balkan Mountains, covering different altitudes and vegetation zones. Our main target species are: Bog Fritillary, Freyer's Fritillary, Violet Copper, Lesser Lattice Brown, Bulgarian Ringlet and False Comma. A good combination of rare and beautiful butterflies. Our route will take us along part of the border between Bulgaria and Serbia. The whole tour we will be located in the Stara Planina Mountains, known in both countries as the Balkan Range, the name given to the whole peninsula.

We expect to see a veritable feast of butterflies during the tour. More than a 120 species, including: Apollo, Clouded Apollo, Mountain Small White, Purple Emperor and both Lesser and Freyer's Purple Emperors, Poplar Admiral, Common and Hungarian Gliders, Camberwell Beauty, Large Tortoiseshell, Balkan Copper, Lesser Fiery Copper, Blue-spot Hairstreak, Eastern Baton Blue, Chequered Blue, Large and Alcon Blue, Eros Blue, Ripart's Anomalous Blue, Cardinal, Balkan Fritillary, Lesser Spotted Fritillary, Delattin's Grayling, Almond-eyed Ringlet, Bright-eyed Ringlet, Ottoman Brassy Ringlet, Great Sooty Satyr, Lattice Brown, Eastern Large Heath, Russian Heath as well as Spinose, Hungarian Skipper, Yellow-banded and Safflower skippers. To name but a few!

In addition there will be dragonflies, birds, reptiles, amphibians and flowers, set against beautiful and variable habitats, all contributing to an excellent nature holiday.

It is our first tour that includes Serbia – a country with well-preserved nature and although not having many prominent highlights among the butterflies and the birds; it does offer a fine and rich biodiversity during the easy to moderate walks that we will make. Most of the hotels we stay at are located next to rich habitats, giving excellent opportunities for relaxed butterfly photography early in the mornings. This tour is ideal for butterfly enthusiasts and nature lovers at any level of experience.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Sofia airport and short transfer to the small town of Dragoman, situated just northwest of Sofia, for a three-night stay. On the way we will visit the Aldomirovo marsh. Accommodation and dinner.

DAYS 2 and 3 Both days will explore the Dragoman marsh and its surroundings – dry limestone hills, bushy and mountain areas. The limestone hills around are home for many butterflies to search for. We will also explore the Ponor Mountain, a part of the Balkan Range, looking for Balkan Copper, Large Copper, Russian Heath, Safflower Skipper, Weaver's Fritillary, Eros Blue, Mountain Small White, Meleager's Blue, and many more.

The marsh itself is a precious wetland, one of the three marshes in Europe on lime terrain. It has extensive reedbeds, home to birds such as all the European crakes, Bittern, Ferruginous Duck, Bearded Tit and many more. Other birds will include Sombre Tit, Long-legged Buzzard, Goshawk, Rock Thrush, Rock Bunting, Alpine Chough and many more, while the wet meadows are full of Corncrakes and Quails.

DAY 4 Travel north to our next base – the small town of Chiprovtsi, famous for its traditional handmade carpets. Stay for three nights in a small family hotel. On the way we will explore some more limestone hills and meadows near Gintsi, the Petrohan pass and high mountain zone close to the border.

DAY 5 Today we will drive with 4WD vehicle and walk towards the highest zone near to 2000 meters above the sea level. The day will be spent high up in the mountains looking for high altitude species and especially for the recently discovered, new species to Bulgaria

– the Violet Copper. Other species to be seen Clouded Apollo, Eastern Large Heath, Mountain Argus, Bright-eyed Ringlet and Freyer's Purple Emperor.

DAY 6 Exploring some of the remote valleys at the footslopes of the mountain. Our pleasant walk will bring us many species of butterflies, including one of the holidays' main target – the Freyer's Fritillary and many others like Cardinal, Blue Argus, Geranium Argus, Chequered Blue, Amanda's Blue.

DAY 7 We will be entering Serbia today, through the recently opened new border crossing point. Drive to the mountain locality known as Babin Zub on the opposite side of the Stara planina, where we will spend the next two days. We will break the journey with a few stops on the way, looking for butterflies. Upon arrival, accommodation for three nights in local hotel ideally situated for exploring the area next two days.

DAYS 8 and 9 Both days we will explore the surroundings of Babin Zub. Will spent time in some of the meadows up to the subalpine zone in the area, mountain bogs and rivers. Our main targets here are the very rare Bog Fritillary and the elusive False Comma, but we expect to see over a 50 species of butterfly in this pristine habitat – Balkan Copper, Eros Blue, Twin-spot Fritillary, Yellow Banded Skipper, Great Sooty Satyr, Almond-eyed Ringlet.

DAY 10 Transfer to our next base situated in mountain woods above Pirōt for a two-night stay. On the way will explore a rocky river valley for a good variety of species, including large numbers of Apollo. Other species will include: Hungarian and Common Gliders, Freyer's Fritillary, Zephyr Blue, Tufted Marbled Skipper.

DAY 11 Day spent in some of the gullies and meadows in the limestone area SE of the town. Relaxing walks in this remote areas among beautiful sceneries and many butterflies: Purple Emperor, Lesser Purple Emperor, Delattin's Grayling, Nickerl's Fritillary, Large Tortoiseshell, Ripart's Anomalous Blue, Eastern Baton Blue, Spinose Skipper.

DAY 12 Transfer to Sofia airport for the flight back home. Time permitting we will have few stops on the way.



Violet Copper

Ground price: 1,370 EUR

Group size: 6-12 + leader

Single supplement: 195 EUR

Deposit: 300 EUR

Individuals: 3-5 + leader

Ground price: 1,610 EUR

The price includes:

ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:

airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.

Golden Eagle and Winter Birds

Sunday 11th - Saturday 17th December 2016

Sunday 12th - Saturday 18th February 2017

Sunday 19th - Saturday 25th November 2017



Bulgaria boasts a healthy population of Golden eagles and more than 160 pairs inhabit its mountains. Our tour gives you the opportunity to take photos of these impressive raptors. From a distance of 25 to 35 meters you can photograph their natural behavior – feeding, preening and even mating without disturbing them. In the winter, when the food is scarce, the eagles visit willingly the baits in front of our hides.

The great advantage of Bulgaria when it comes to Golden Eagle photography are the various options for background, as well as light and perches. Here you will not photograph the eagles only in snow, but on small rocks, on the ground, on junipers bushes, on mountain hay meadow or on a wooden branch properly situated by us. The light in Bulgaria, even in the winter, can be excellent for photography and in fact gives you opportunity to be creative even with a difficult subject as the Golden Eagle. There are also opportunities for flight shots of the eagles when they land and take off from the bait. We have been running this tour successfully for over seven years and so far we have build up a number of hides giving various options for photography and avoiding obstacles as bad weather, no access due to a deep snow, recent disturbance etc. All of the hides are different in terms of setting, access, distance to the birds, perches, background etc. Every pair of Golden eagles visiting the baits is also more or less different – some birds prefer to feed in the morning, others in the afternoon; some are feeding individually, some pairs usually come together.

The same is true for the other species visiting the baits – one hide has a Goshawk visits daily, another one has a constant flock of 30 + Ravens, third one has a Common Buzzard pair and few Jays etc. We have also established few bird feeders around the hides and these are constantly visited by Hawfinch, Sombre Tit; Grey-headed, Syrian, Great Spotted, Middle Spotted, Green and even a Lesser Spotted woodpeckers; Willow Tit, Brambling, Yellowhammer, Bulfinch, Goldfinch, Fieldfare, Jay and many more commoner species.

The itinerary provided below is provisional in terms of sites and species that can be photographed, beside the Golden eagle of course which is the main target. If you are interested in that tour, please let us know what your preferences are as well as the period convenient for you, and we will be happy to suggest you what we think is the best option. That tour is possible from late November till the middle of February.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arriving at Sofia airport. Transfer to the village of Koprivshitsa, about two hours of driving east. Here we will accommodate in a small and cozy hotel.

DAYS 2 to 6 Five full days of Golden eagles photography. Early wake up, we have to leave the hotel before 06.00 am. We have up to 50 minutes driving and 5 to 10 minutes walking to the hide, where we need to be not later than 07.00 pm. Other species visiting the baits at the feeding site can be Goshawk, Common Buzzard and Raven. With some luck we can also have Long-legged and Rough-legged buzzards.

DAY 7 Morning session at the small birds feeders time permitting, followed by transfer to the airport for your return flight

Additional information: You can leave the hide only after 18.00 o'clock in the evening. It is possible also to leave the hide when there are unfavorable weather conditions: thick fog, heavy rain fall etc. when it is sure that the eagles will not see you leaving the hide. In case you think you have made a good photos during the first days, or you just want to have a day off, other program is possible which is subject to discussions. In any case there are enough options for bird photography.

Clothes: Warm clothes and boots, hat, gloves etc are necessary. We will also provide you with some small heaters. It can be as low as minus 10 outside, but in the hide the temperature is much more pleasant. However, during the last years winters in Bulgaria are getting milder and it is often well above the zero.

Physical conditions: You need to be in good physical conditions in order to stay all the day in the hide.

Equipment: At least 300mm lens plus converter. Stable tripod is essential.

Extension: The Golden eagle photo tour can be combined with a short extension trip for Dalmatian pelicans photography. Depends on the winter, there are several sites where we can do this in Bulgaria. Alternatively, the best site for that species is Lake Kerkini in Greece, just next to the Bulgarian border. Here we can also photograph Greater Flamingo, Pygmy Cormorant, Great White Egret etc. Best period is end of January and February when the pelicans'bill's lower mandible turn into a bright red color. Within two to three days you can get excellent photos of the pelicans in breeding plumage – feeding, resting, flying etc. Please contact us if you are interested in that option.



Golden Eagle

Ground price: 1,345 EUR
2-4 photographers

Single supplement: 120 EUR
Deposit: 300 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board,
accommodation, guide, entrance
fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
airfare, travel insurance,
hard drinks, beverages and all
items of purely personal nature.

Just Capercaillies

Sunday 23rd – Saturday 29th April 2017



Capercaillies - impressive in size and stature, admirable behavior during courtship, aggression and all set in the magical atmosphere of the Rila Mountain! Unfortunately this gorgeous bird is one of the most wanted hunting trophies in Bulgaria. Nature conservation bodies are working hard to stop this and restore the population, but the process is still in its very early stages. Ecotourism can help bring this cause to a wider audience. Shooting with cameras in place of shooting with guns, not only preserves the future of Capercaillie, the resulting 'trophy' photos or films can show the world through social media how fabulous 'The King of the Forest' is.

High up on the Rila Mountain is an area with a good population of Capercaillie. For a number of years it has been carefully observed and studied by a local ranger and as a result a number of males have become very approachable and photographed without the use of hides. If this isn't temptation enough, on this tour there is also no need to be woken in the middle of the night to go on a long walk in the dark for a long session seated in a hide.

Our journey begins with a one-hour transfer from Sofia Airport to the northern slopes of Rila Mountain. We will arrive at the location of the capercaillies in about another hour of off road drive. Our accommodation is a mountain hut (about 2,000 meters a.s.l.), with simple facilities but you will get to experience the tranquility and full sense of the mountain. There is electricity and water and some improvements are on the way. But there are also other, better options to stay in the area, although a bit more distant. While photographing the Capercaillies we will plan our day for the best photographic results, according to weather conditions, light and activity of birds. The birds are not afraid of people and tolerate our presence. This helps us tremendously, allowing us to move about, to choose the best backgrounds, even to lie on the ground to separate the background using low angle techniques. There can be several males in the area and our search for them will consist of short treks around the hut – not more than 1-2 km. When a displaying bird is found there will also be further males very close nearby.

Their choice of habitat is wide - some prefer shady coniferous forests, others - open areas and periphery. So we will be able to photograph them in a variety of situations. They are active from October to May, with a peak of activity during April – May. This is also the easier period to detect them and has the most favorable weather conditions. Other attractive species found in the area are the Nutcracker, Crossbill, Three-toed and Black woodpeckers and Pigmy Owl – but photographing them needs a bit of luck. Mammals in the area are represented by Chamois, Brown Bear and the Wolf.

Equipment: The best equipment for photographing capercaillies is a digital camera with lenses in the range of 300 F2 0.8, even 70-200 F 2. When we photograph in the forest, we will be under poor light and then we will definitely need such equipment. The distance to the birds is not problem, they are not afraid of people, but we will need relatively long optics, to keep a reasonable distance from them, so 400 mm lens will do too. We must carefully pack our backpacks and equipment, so that they are relatively light and safe during the walk. You will also need a lens coat or raincoat for the optics (if it snows or rains, the equipment needs to be protected); Lightweight tripods (there is no need for tripods for the Capercaillie,

lies, but they could be of use for photographing other species). Cloths and boots – warm clothes are must, as well as proper boots. Sunglasses when necessary to protect from the glare of the snow.

This is a tailor made tour, suitable for up to 4 photographers and it can be run in the period during October – May. There are set dates above, however we can run it in any other time within the given period. The costs of this photo tour depend on the number of the photographers and the type of accommodation we will be using. To give you the best chance of spending quality time with these fantastic birds, we suggest that you stay for 3 – 5 days.



Capercaillie



Capercaillie

Ground price: TBC
2-4 photographers

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.

Mediterranean Summer

Sunday 28th May - Sunday 4th June 2017



Bulgaria in spring offers a high variety of species for photography and our tour provides many opportunities to capture passerines and birds of prey, along with mammals and butterflies. We will take you to south-eastern Bulgaria, through the Eastern Rhodope Mountains and the Maritsa river valley, encompassing birds within these different habitats. This tour is ideal for passionate wildlife photographers, who can be both very experienced and goal-oriented, as well as those searching for a comfortable and relaxed wildlife photography experience. Photos will be taken primarily from professional photo-hides. In the Rhodope mountains we will visit the established feeding stations, which in spring-time attract birds like Griffon, Egyptian and possibly Black Vulture, Black Kite, Raven, as well as Red Fox and occasionally Golden Jackal and even the elusive Wolf.

Along Maritsa river we will use a hide located in a mixed forest by a drinking pool and feeder, attracting over 25 bird species, such as Nightingale, Hawfinch, Turtle Dove, Red-backed Shrike, as well as woodpeckers - Syrian and Green, plus many more commoner species. Regular visitors are also species which are among the very best south-eastern specialties – such as the Levant Sparrowhawk, Masked Shrike, and even Semi-collared Flycatcher.

We will also visit wetland areas around the Maritsa river bed, which are a common place for Black and White storks, egrets, Night and Grey Heron, Kingfisher etc. The water level of the river will determine the variety and number of species which visit, and may need to be judged as to the chances for success there at the time. There is an option to visit several Bee-eater colonies not far from the river bed.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Sofia airport, followed by transfer to Eastern Rhodope Mountains (around four hours drive), checking in the small family hotel, offering excellent organic, homemade food, where we will spend the next 3 nights. If time permits, late in the day we might do a short trip to some of the lovely areas along Arda River. After dinner we will discuss some of the specifications of taking photos of raptors from our hide.

DAYS 2 and 3 In order to reach the hide before sunrise, an early start at 5am is required. It will take around an hour with an off-road ve-

hicle – if there is no rain and the roads are dry we should be able to stop a few meters from the hide and no walking is needed. We will spend two full days in the hide, food and drinks will be provided and there is a chemical toilet inside. Going out of the hide will be in the afternoon, when the wildlife is not so active anymore and our vehicle arrives back. The rich biodiversity in the area will provide different opportunities, including car window, macro and also landscape photography.

DAY 4 We will visit another feeding station for vultures, which will give us a different perspective, background and setting. We will enter it early again and shoot until noon. When

ready we will continue north towards the small town of Dimitrovgrad for the second part of the tour. Around two hours drive will bring us there and we will take advantage of the afternoon light at the drinking pool in the forest. We will check in the hotel first and be in the hide around 4pm, giving us a good 4 hours of photography. Back to the hotel around 9pm, where we will spend the next four nights.

DAYS 5 to 7 We will have early starts and afternoon sessions; in case of sunny days a siesta is recommended, to avoid the strong light around noon. If there are more than 3 photographers (the capacity of the hide), we shall split into two groups. One will use the

Griffon vultures





Hoopoe

hide; the other one will photograph along the river bed.

Then we rotate, as we have enough time here. The Bee-eaters will be another possibility or Golden Jackals hide. There will be options for butterflies and macro photography.

DAY 8 Transfer to Sofia airport will take maximum 3 hours, so if time permit we will have another morning session in the hide. Departure.

Additional info: Best lenses are 300 mm + converters as it is perhaps the most universal combination for both stages of the tour. Other-

wise, zoom lenses such as 150-600 mm, 100-400 mm, 200-400 mm, would be ideal. 500 mm lenses are suitable for the vulture hide, but might not be as suitable for the larger birds visiting the drinking pool hide – they will often perch only 6-7 meters away. Therefore, if you are bringing one lens, it should be a more universal one, for both stages of the tour. Tripods are must.

Clothing: The weather will be hot (25+°C), so prepare accordingly. It is good to have hiking shoes and a raincoat, just in case. Sun hat and cream and mosquito repellent in case we need it.



Nightingale



Turtle Dove

Ground price: 1,400 EUR
for 4-6 photographers for
2-3 photographers – 1,600 EUR

Single supplement: 140 EUR
Deposit: 300 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board,
accommodation, guide, entrance
fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
airfare, travel insurance,
hard drinks, beverages and all
items of purely personal nature.

Wild Ethiopia Photography

Monday 30th October – Friday 10th November 2017



Ethiopia is a country offering excellent opportunities for true bird and wildlife photography. By true, we mean approaching them by walking and stalking and not using specially designed hides for wildlife photographers. We do have a lot of these at home (Bulgaria), and currently in Europe there are well over 1000 hides offering excellent opportunities. But more and more photographers are asking and turning an eye to the real hunt – find the animal get close by and shoot. Ethiopia is one of the right places for this type of photography for several reasons. First, there is a great variety of birds and mammals – 850 and 260 species respectively. And what birds and animals they are – some of the iconic wildlife species in the world. Moreover they are found in very good numbers and even more importantly they are reasonably approachable as are not persecuted or hunted by the local people. In my time spent birding I have not seen more approachable birds than those I saw during my first visit to Ethiopia last October. Therefore this tour was born. Still, we have chosen the sites we will visit carefully so they give us maximum chances for good results – abundant wildlife and/or being in remote places. Despite its 90 million people, Ethiopia, being a vast country is not so densely populated and there are still places where you can watch, enjoy and photograph the wildlife without being surrounded by a crowd of children as in almost any other country on the continent. The great variety of birds will definitely help us but we will concentrate on fewer species in the right locations. Bee-eaters, rollers, hornbills, barbets, raptors, waterfowl, kingfishers, parrots, starlings will be our main targets, everything else that comes along will be welcomed. However, along with the birds, we are aiming at two iconic mammals. The endemic Ethiopian wolf – the rarest canid in the world, with fewer than 500 animals left, is one of them. Mysterious, different, elegant, endangered and not as shy as the other wolves, it is very appealing challenge. His home range is also very impressive – the cold, wet and rough Sanetti plateau. We will spend two full days here in order to have the best chance for really good photographs of the wolves, by being at the right place at the right moment. On the plateau can also be found other species – Spot-breasted Plover, Wattled Ibis, Blue-winged Goose as well as some raptors – Lanner Falcon, Imperial and Spotted eagles.

The other mammal is also endemic and even more appealing – the unique Gelada Baboon. We will be visiting (within the extension) their famous home range – the impressive Simien Mountains, which every naturalist will have seen in documentaries. We will hopefully take not only portraits of the Gelladas, but also capture their interacting behavior and social life. The Simien Mountain as well as Sanetti plateau offers good options for landscape photography. Beside the mountains we will be visiting gorges, forests, semi-deserts and wetlands looking for our subjects.

There will be also opportunities to take pictures of the local people in their traditional and colourful clothes and when they are in their duties in the beautiful and natural landscapes, it will result in memorable pictures. All the accommodation within the tour is carefully chosen – the lodges at Awash National Park and Langano Lake, as well as the hotel at Awasa Lake are very good quality, while the lodges at Bale and Simien mountains are upmarket, probably the best in Ethiopia.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival in Addis Ababa and transfer to a hotel for the first night stay. Accommodation and dinner. Flight permitting we will drive

straight to Awash Falls lodge, Awash NP. If not, overnight in Addis Ababa.

DAY 2 and 3 Both days we will spent in Awash NP where a great number of birds can

be found, also mammals such as Oryx. Here we can photograph Carmine and Little Bee-eater, Arabian Bustard, Rosy-patched Shrike, Red and Yellow Barbet, Somali Golden-breasted Bunting, different species of wood doves, Yellow billed Hornbill, Little Rock Thrush and many more. Two/three nights at the local lodge.

DAY 4 Today we will drive to Langano, one of the Rift Valley lakes, surrounded by arid acacia savanna. En route we will have a few a stops, the main one will be at Lake Ziway and its surrounding where again we will find many species of wetland birds in big numbers. Two nights at Bishangari Eco Lodge

DAY 5 and 6 We will explore the forest around the lodge and the lake shores – here will find again good numbers of species. The endemic Yellow-fronted Parrot and the Black-winged Lovebird are found around the lodge, also Broad-billed Roller, Narina Trogon, Red-shouldered and Emerald Cuckoos, Lemon, Blue-spotted and Tambourine Doves, different woodpeckers, Sharpe's Starling, Double-toothed Barbet, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Red breasted Wryneck, Masked Weavers, Beautiful



Abyssinian Wolf



Little Bee-eater

Sunbird and many more. It is home to a few mammals including the Bushbuck, Vervet and Black Colobus Monkeys, Olive Baboon and Golden-backed Jackal.

In the afternoon of day 6, we shall drive to Lake Awassa, where we will overnight at Haile Resort hotel which the gardens will provide easy photography early next morning.

DAY 7 to 9 Morning session in the hotels garden and then a boat trip into the lake which will provide good options for many birds and there are a few hippos living here. At noon, when ready, we will drive to Bale Mountain where we will spend three days photographing its mammals and birds. The endemic Ethiopian Wolf and the Mountain Nyala will be our main targets here. Other species will be Menelik's Bushbuck, and the birds may be the elusive Wattled Crane and the endemic Spot-breasted Plover, Blue-winged Goose, Rougets Rail and many other species etc. Overnight in the luxury Bale Mountain Lodge.

DAY 10 If needed, we will spend the good part of the day photographing at the plateau again, if not needed there is an option to visit Harennna forest – the largest intact forest in Ethiopia. Return to lake Awassa in the evening. One night at Haile Resort.

DAY 11 After the morning session in the hotel gardens and if needed another boat trip, we will drive to Senkelle Wildlife Sanctuary, 90 km from Awassa, well known for endemic and endangered subspecies of Swayne's Hartebeest as well as antelopes, warthogs, olive baboons, vervet monkeys and bushbuck. Although the sanctuary was set aside to protect the largest population of Swayne's Hartebeest in Ethiopia, a mammal endemic to Ethiopia, the original herd of 3,000 animals has dwindled to a few hundred due to poaching. Overnight at a lodge near Langano Lake.

DAY 12 Morning photography around the lake, followed by a transfer to Addis Adaba for the return flight. For those of us who will attend the extension, afternoon flight to Gondar.

Extension for Gellada Baboons

DAY 13 and 14 Both days we will spend in Simien National Park - one of the most spectacular landscapes in the world and home to globally threatened species, including the iconic Gelada baboon, possibly the Walia Ibex, a wild mountain goat found nowhere else in the world, and again the Ethiopian wolf. We will concentrate on these 3 species here, and whatever else comes along. Overnight at Semien Lodge

DAY 15 Morning photography and drive to Gondar for airport transfer to Addis Ababa. Fly home.



Namaqua Dove



Purple Roller



Doves

Ground price: 5,200 USD
 Group size: 4-6 + 2 leaders
 Single supplement: TBC
 Deposit: 500 USD

Extension cost: 2,500 USD
 Single supplement: TBC

The price includes:
 ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
 airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.

Butterflies and Macro Photography

Sunday 11th - Sunday 18th June 2017



Bulgaria in summer offers excellent macro photography opportunities due to its rich biodiversity and variety of habitats. Our main targets will be the butterflies, but the summer season and the various sites we shall visit will provide numerous other insects – dragonflies and damselflies, grasshoppers, spiders, beetles etc, as well as flowers and orchids. We will have early starts and late evenings in order to take advantage of the best light and it is also the time when butterflies and other insects are normally motionless. Early afternoons we may have siestas to rest, avoiding the harsh midday sun.

Our tour will start with a two night stay in a small village east of Sofia, where we will explore the areas around for fritillaries, the first blues, gliders and emperors. After which, we will be based in Koprivshitsa for the next two nights, a nice traditional village. One of the very few in Bulgaria designated as architectural reserve, situated in the heart of Sredna Gora mountain (Middle Forest). These days we will explore the immediate surroundings, having only short transfers. At the end we will move to the beautiful Dobrostan ridge in the Western Rhodope mountain, where we will stay for three nights, exploring the butterfly rich surroundings. We will also have a moth trap with us which will allow us to photograph a good number of moths, additional to the many butterflies we will get.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Sofia airport and transfer to the village of Mirkovo, about an hour drive, for a two nights stay. If time permits, we will have an afternoon session along a small river, not far from the hotel, where we can find Map Butterfly, Spotted, Niobe, Twin-spot and Marbled fritillaries.

DAY 2 Day in the area, looking for fritillaries, hairstreaks, Freyer's Purple Emperor, Southern White Admiral, Yellow-banded Skipper, Lattice Brown, Large, Sooty, Lesser Fiery and Purple-shot coppers and many more.

DAYS 3 and 4 Short transfer will bring us to our next base, the picturesque village of Koprivshitsa, where we will stay again for two nights. Both days will be spent in local meadows, having only short transfers. Here we will find Chequered, Large, Alcon and other

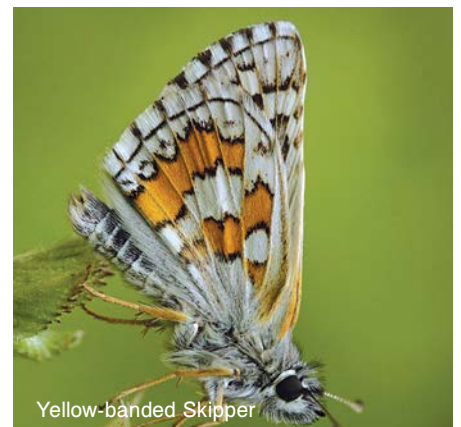
blues, Russian Heath, Black-veined White, White Admiral, many fritillaries and skippers, as well as dragonflies and damselflies.

DAYS 5 to 7 We will have morning session, followed by a transfer to our last base for the holiday – the beautiful Dobrostan plateau, in the Western Rhodope mountains. Here we will stay for three nights in a lovely hotel, situated in a tiny village, providing excellent panoramic views. In the afternoon, as well as the following two days we will explore the meadows around, looking for Apollo, Balkan and Scarce coppers, Niobe, High Brown, Dark Green, Twin-spot and other fritillaries, Great Sooty Satyr, many blues, hairstreaks and skippers. Here we will also find many orchids.

DAY 8 Option for another early session, time permitting, followed by a three hours transfer to the airport for your flight back home.



Marbled Fritillary



Yellow-banded Skipper



Apollo

Ground price: 890 EUR
for 4-6 photographers for
2-3 photographers – 1,150 EUR

Single supplement: 130 EUR
Deposit: 250 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board,
accommodation, guide, entrance
fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
airfare, travel insurance,
hard drinks, beverages and all
items of purely personal nature.

Our leaders

MARIO LANGOUROV

Mario is entomologist working in the Bulgarian Academy of Science. Besides being an expert in butterflies and insects, he is also one of the best herpetologists. He speaks Italian, English and Russian; and has a broad knowledge of the Bulgarian history. His expertise and easy going personality and sense of humor all contribute to the butterflies, birdwatching and reptiles and amphibians tour he leads.

MITKO PETRAKIEV

Mitko is engineer in hydrology but his love of mountains made him one of the leading experts in hiking and trekking in Bulgaria. He has travelled widely around the Balkans, Caucasus, Middle East, North Africa and South America leading trekking tours. Mitko is also an excellent birder and during the last four years he is also leading butterfly tours.

BOGDAN BOEV

Bogdan was professional basketball player while his hobby is the wildlife photography. He is however very professional in doing it and has an impressive portfolio of high quality images. As a sports-

man, he is very disciplined and task orientated, but in the same time Bogdan takes a great care for the animal when he is photographing wildlife.

DANIEL MITEV

Daniel has more than 30 years of experience as ornithologist and conservationist. He has been leading birding tours since 2012. In the last 6 years he was closely involved in the conservation of the wintering population of the Red-breasted Goose in North-eastern Bulgaria, responsible for the field conservation activities. Daniel holds master's degree in Veterinary Medicine. He has worked for six years in USA and has got a good experience with North American birds too.

KOSTADIN VALCHEV

Kostadin Valchev has a master degree from Wildlife Management Department of Forestry University Sofia. He has experience as a tour guide leading tours in Bulgaria as well as abroad. Kostadin has been involved in biodiversity conservation, species conservation and protected areas management and designation for more than 15 year. He works mainly with the large carnivores – Brown bear and the Wolf, but also the Balkan Chamois, Lynx, also the Capercaillie. He knows very well the Bulgarian countryside, especially the mountainous areas.

YORDAN KUTSAROV

Yordan has always been interested in wildlife and became a keen birder while already in school. As a student he worked intensively as a volunteer for the return of Griffon vultures. His love of wetlands led him to work as manager of Srebarna Lake Nature Reserve, and then to restoration of wetlands along the Danube River. He has extensive knowledge about the nature of Bulgaria. He is among the authors of the Atlas of Breeding Birds in Bulgaria and Atlas of the European dragonflies and damselflies. Yordan leads groups for 10 years now, in nature history, birdwatching, dragonflies and butterflies.

DOBROMIR DOMUSCHIEV

Dobromir is founder and owner of Wild Echo. He holds an MSc degree in economics and management from the Academy of Economics, Svishtov. Nevertheless, the love of birds and nature has been the actual reason for his involvement in their conservation and Dobromir was working on a number of environmental projects. His true wish is to make the local people believe that sustainable tourism is a real alternative to poverty and quick intensive depletion of natural resources in the beautiful countryside of Bulgaria.

HOW TO BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY

Once you decide which tour you want to book, just let us know sending an e-mail. You will be provided with all the needed information. After you send the deposit, we will send you your tourist voucher where all the tour details are described and thus your place is reserved. The payment of the balance has to be done 60 days before the tour starts.

CANCELLATION

Deposit - non-refundable.

60 - 30 days prior the tour - 50 % of the tour price.

29 - 0 days - 100 % of the tour price.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE PRICE?

We are ground operator and our tour price includes everything once you arrive in Bulgaria. This includes accommodation, full board plus coffees and refreshments,

guides, ground transfers, all entry fees and taxes for natural and cultural sites we visit during the tour, plus 25 EUR donation for nature conservation activities in Bulgaria. For our photo tours, hides and chairs are included. There are no hidden extras. The price excludes airfare, travel insurance, alcohol and all items of a purely personal nature. The price conditions are given for each tour described inside this brochure.

PASSPORT, VISA AND HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

To enter Bulgaria, a valid passport is required. European citizens, except those from Russia and Turkey, do not need a visa to visit the country. Bulgaria is not a country with dangerous diseases. However, some insects can be a problem, so the usage of an appropriate repellent is recommended if you visit the country in the summer months.

Being high in the mountains in the summer months means that sun screen is also essential in order to prevent sun burn.

ITINERARY CHANGES

Our itineraries are carefully prepared and no changes occur without a serious reason. We reserve the right to change the itinerary upon circumstances which are out of our control i.e. harsh weather, closed roads, not working chair or cabin lifts etc. However, in such a case we will discuss the situation with you and the group. We will just offer different options and the final decision will be taken in mutual agreement.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Before you book a holiday with Spatia Wildlife, please read carefully our terms and conditions. You will find them on our website: www.wildechotours.com or www.spatiawildlife.com

PHOTO CREDITS:

Bogdan Boev – Dalmatian Pelican, Great Black-headed Gull, Sombre Tit, White Pelicans, Pigmy Cormorant, Griffon Vultures, Hoopoe, Nightingale, Turtle Dove, Golden eagle; Back cover – Roller. **Kai Gauger** – Guldendstädt's Redstart. **Tumendelger Humbaa** - Argali Sheep, Altai Snowcock;

Mario Langourov – False Apollo, Southern Swallowtail, Eastern Orange Tip, Eastern Greenish Black-tip, Large Chequered Skipper, Violet Copper.

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