

Black Sea Coast

5th - 12th June 2025 Led by Simeon Gigov



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Wildlife of the Black Sea Coast

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Day 1

We started the day just after noon, when I picked up Richard and Hellen from the hotel in Sozopol.

The first site of the trip was a nice open forest area by a river in the foothills of the Dyulino Pass.



We were immediately met by the calls of Golden Orioles, Nightingales and Bee-eaters. A male Redbacked Shrike was obligingly sitting on a bush too. A little exploration in the meadows around us produced Blue Argus, Amanda's Blue, Silverstudded Blue, Queen of Spain Fritillary, Hungarian Skipper and other butterflies. We also had Woodcock and Pyramidal Orchids at that location.

Next we stopped just along the road back to Burgas, as we saw a Roller perched on the wires near a reservoir. Even though we didn't manage to get good pictures as the bird we flew off, we saw

and photographed other interesting bird species here like Black-headed Bunting and Crested Lark.

The last location for the day was Pomorie Lake at the Salt Museum, where we enjoyed watching the nesting mixed colony of Sandwich and Common Terns, Avocets and Black-winged Stilts. We also found here Pygmy Cormorants, Mediterranean Gulls and Kentish Plovers.

Before we headed back to Sozopol, we had dinner in a nice restaurant in Sarafovo and picked up

Phil from the airport in the late evening.

Day 2

We travelled south towards the Turkish border and explored an area of the Southern Black Sea coast today. Our first location was Ropotamo Riverine Forest Nature Reserve, where we mostly focused on the birds – Greater Spotted, Middle Spotted and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, Icterine Warbler, Long-tailed Tit, Common Nightingale and more.

Later we explored an open oak forest near Veleka river and we spent most of the morning there.



Probably the biggest find at this place was a roosting Nightjar, which Helen found and kindly called us to see and photograph. Quite a few target butterfly species were found here including Eastern Festoon, Black-veined White, Spotted Fritillary, Glanville Fritillary, Ilex Hairstreak, Blue Argus, Lattice Brown, Pearly Heath and others. We also explored a small stream nearby and a little lake, which produced a Greek Stream Frog and several species of dragonflies such as Eastern Spectre, Broad-bodied Chaser and Beautiful Demoiselle. We found big numbers of Long-lipped Serapias Orchid as well.

After a nice lunch at Sinemorets we explored a riverine forest and some meadows near Veleka River, where we managed to see our main target today – Large Chequered Skipper. Alongside it we also found Southern Small White and Queen of Spain Fritillary. We had some really nice views of a pair of Red-backed Shrikes at this location. But most numerous and diverse were the



dragonflies including Blue Emperor, Eastern Spectre, Norfolk Hawker, Scarce Chaser, Banded Demoiselle and White-legged Damselfly.

On the way back we stopped at the beach near the village of Varvara, where a very nice panorama had opened in front of us.

Additionally to that we saw and photographed Little Ringed Plover and Olivaceous Warbler and found a Long-tailed Blue butterfly.

Our last stop for the day was at Fazanovo River, where we followed the river for several

kilometres. We had some really good views of Lesser Spotted Eagle, Turtle Dove and Bee-eater. Butterflies were also good in the area – Swallowtail, Eastern Festoon, Knapweed Fritillary, Queen of Spain Fritillary, Hungarian Skipper, Oriental Marbled Skipper, and others were seen.

Day 3

We had an early start today and went to watch birds and photograph insects covered with morning dew in the first hours of the day. In terms of birds we saw Ferruginous Duck, Purple Heron, Pygmy Cormorant, Marsh Harrier, Gull-billed Tern, Crested Lark, Olivaceous Warbler, Great Reed Warbler and others. Dragonflies were especially numerous with plenty of Scarlet Darters emerging at this time of year, we also had Lesser Emperor, Southern Darter, Small Red-eyed Damselfly, Azure Damselfly, Common Blue Damselfly, Blue-tailed Damselfly and Eastern Willow Emerald Damselfly.

After breakfast we travelled towards Burgas and a part of Mandra Lake, where we saw Common Cuckoo, Great Crested Grebe, Little Egret, Squacco Heron, Lesser Spotted Eagle and Great Reed Warbler among others. The spectacle here was a Hobby hunting House Martins just above us. Eastern Festoons and Lattice Brown butterflies were also seen, and dragonflies were again numerous with Blue Emperor, Lesser Emperor, Norfolk Hawker, Black-tailed Skimmer, being among the highlights here.

Next we moved to scrubland area next to Zidarovo village, where we were almost immediately greeted by the songs of Black-headed and Corn Buntings. We also saw Alpine Swift, Bee-eaters, Common Whitethroat, and Olivaceous Warbler. As for butterflies, we saw Black-veined White, Bath White and Spotted Fritillary.

On the way back to Burgas we stopped at Dimchevo village to take a few pictures of the White Stork nests with their Spanish Sparrow tenants, and we were also surprised by a white morph Booted Eagle flying over.

As the day was quite hot, we had an afternoon break after lunch and went to watch birds at Atanasovsko Lake in the late afternoon. The abundance and diversity of birds here was impressive and we spent the rest of the day here – Common and Ruddy Shelduck, Pallid Swift, Black-winged Stilt, Avocet, Oystercatcher, Curlew, Black-tailed Godwit, Wood Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Little Gull, Mediterranean Gull, Sandwich Tern, Greater Flamingo, Syrian Woodpecker and many others held our attention.



Day 4



We had another pre-breakfast birding experience at Vaya Lake, where we watched Dalmatian and Great White Pelicans, Common Pochard, Great Crested Grebe, Cetti's, Olivaceous and Great Reed Warblers.

After breakfast we travelled inland to Strandzha Mountain Nature Park. We first stopped at Bosna, where we explored a nice forest meadow, well known for Assmann's Fritillary, but we also saw Twin-spot, Heath and Glanville Fritillaries, Sloe and Ilex Hairstreaks, Mazarine Blue, and others. European Honey and Common Buzzards flew over us and Greater Spotted Woodpecker was calling from the forest.

Next stop was at Mladezhka River, looking for some very rare dragonflies and soon we found two of them – Bulgarian

Emerald and Turkish Goldenring.

We had lunch at Kovach next to Veleka River and afterwards, we explored the river bank. We found young Grass Snakes in a small pond by the lake, and quite a few species of dragonflies including Bulgarian Emerald, Club-tailed Dragonfly, Odalisque, Banded Demoiselle, Azure Damselfly and White-legged Damselfly.

We finished the day at a nice meadow near Mladezhko where we saw quite a few butterflies including Cardinal, Heath Fritillary, Dark Green Fritillary, Marbled Fritillary, Freyer's Purple Emperor, Grecian Copper and White-letter Hairstreak. Eastern Spectre and Turkish Goldenring were patrolling the nearby river. Phil also found an obliging Middle Spotted Woodpecker.

Day 5

In the morning we went again early at Alepu marsh to photograph more insects with morning dew on them. Nothing new as species, but the light was very nice for some macro photography and the results were very good.

After breakfast we visited the western part of Strandzha mountains near the village of Golyamo Krushevo, where we explored another open forest area, extremely rich in butterflies including among others Black-veined White, Purple-shot Copper, White-letter Hairstreak, Mazarine Blue, Twin-spot Fritillary, Niobe Fritillary, Eastern Knapweed Fritillary and Freyer's Fritillary. Lesser Spotted Eagle and European Honey Buzzard flew over and also Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Ortolan Bunting and European Stonechat were seen or heard.

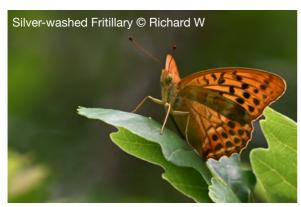


Then we visited an area near the village of Panchevo, where stopped to photograph some Beeeaters. We also found Mallow and Dingy Skippers, Silver-studded Blue and more Eastern Festoons.

In the afternoon we went to the reedbeds of Atanasovsko Lake, where we spent the rest of the day. At the entrance to the reserve we were met by a pair of Woodchat Shrikes. On the path to the reedbeds we saw our first Peacock butterfly and plenty of dragonflies, including a female Black Pennant. Of course, the biggest highlight here were the birds – Alpine and Common Swifts, Lapwing, Collared Pratincole, Hobby, Red-rumped Swallow, Great Reed and Olivaceous Warblers and a male Penduline Tit, building a nest.

Day 6

We had an excellent early morning today at Ropotamo Nature Reserve during which we observed 42 species of birds with some of the highlights being an immature White-tailed Eagle, Black Stork, Peregrine Falcon, Golden Oriole, Woodchat and Red-backed Shrikes, Woodlark, Olive-tree Warbler, Short-toed Treecreeper, Hawfinch and Cirl Bunting. We also found a Spur-thighed Tortoise in the dunes.



After breakfast we visited Silkosia Nature Reserve and the village of Kosti. It was cloudy and windy today so we saw a lot fewer birds and butterflies here than expected, but we still had Honey Buzzard, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Bee-eater, Marsh Tit, Nuthatch and others. Silver-washed Fritillary and Lattice Brown were the most interesting species among the butterflies.

In the afternoon we had a little rest and later decided to walk around the old town and have dinner in a fish restaurant by the coast. The group spent some

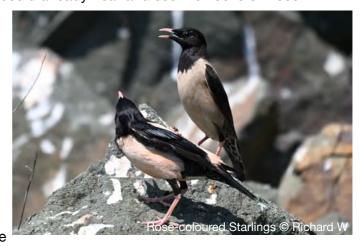
quality time sightseeing and souvenir shopping in the evening.

Day 7

We spent the early morning at Cape Agalina near Sozopol, where we found a small breeding colony of European Shag on the cliffs nearby. Other birds here were Olive-tree and Olivaceous Warbler, Common Whitethroat, Red-backed Shrike and Cirl Bunting.

After breakfast we travelled for about hour and half inland before we reached the Karnobat hills. We stopped shortly along the main road to have a look around and we managed to spot a small group of Rose-colored Starlings coming to feed on a Cherry tree. I already knew, where we had to go next, but as the birding was too good it took us some time to reach the quarry. On the way we saw Marsh Harrier, Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Isabelline and Northern Wheatears, Black-headed and Corn Bunting. As we reached the quarry we could already hear and see the flocks of Rose-

colored Starlings. On a arrival we had an incredible view of over a thousand birds breeding in a remote part of the quarry, constantly calling and arguing between themselves over a perching spot or when is the right time to leave for another trip to the orchards. The magnificent experience was additionally boosted by excellent views of Bee-eaters and Spanish Sparrows breeding in the quarry. On departure we managed to spot a big raptor flying overhead, which turned out to be an Eastern Imperial Eagle, soon after a male Montagu's Harrier also joined the hunting party and a group of White



Storks was also feeding nearby. And if the birds were not enough to we also had quite a few large butterfly species hilltopping in the area – Swallowtail, Scarce Swallowtail, Bath White, Queen of Spain, Cardinal and Silver-washed Fritillaries, Great Banded Grayling, as well as a single Blue Emperor dragonfly, surprisingly quite far from the nearest lake.

Around noon we left towards the picturesque ethnographical village of Zheravna, where we had lunch. In the village we found Black Redstart, European Serin, White Wagtail, Red-rumped and House Swallows, Common Swifts. High in the sky a Honey Buzzard and a Long-legged Buzzard were soaring.

After lunch we explored the meadows around and found Black-veined White, Southern Small White, Purple-shot Copper, Large Blue, Amanda's Blue, Twin-spot Fritillary, Knapweed Fritillary,

Chestnut Heath, etc. Soon after we heard a Wryneck calling and we managed to see it flying by and later also perched on a tree. Other birds here were singing Quail, Green Woodpecker, Ortolan Bunting, Hawfinch, Red-backed Shrike.

Last stop of the day was at Sinite kamani Nature Park near Sliven. It was already late afternoon and most birds were resting, but we still managed to find quite a few interesting species here – Glanville Fritillary, Iolas Blue, Chequered Blue, Reverdin's Blue, Blue Argus, Yellow-banded and Lulworth Skippers.

Day 8

We had an almost full day today before I had to leave Helen and Richard at the hotel and Phil at



the airport, so we visited a couple of good birding spots around Burgas. First we visited Poda Nature Reserve, where the bird and dragonfly abundance was spectacular. Dalmatian Pelican, Pygmy Cormorant, Pochard, Caspian, Sandwich and Common Terns, Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Marsh Sandpiper, Night Heron, Squacco Heron, Little Egret, Spoonbill, Marsh Harrier, Great Reed Warbler, Cetti's Warbler, and more. From the butterflies we saw Great Banded Grayling, Eastern Bath White and Queen of Spain Fritillary and from the dragonflies, Blue and Lesser Emperors, Norfolk Hawker and Black-tailed Skimmer.

The last spot for the trip was at the reedbeds of Pomorie Lake, where we saw Common Shelduck, Garganey, Lapwing, Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Kentish Plover, Little and Mediterranean Gull, Little, Gull-billed and Common Tern and Great Reed Warbler. We also managed to find quite a few dragonflies here including Dark Spreadwing, Southern Migrant Hawker, Southern Darter and Scarlet Darter.

We concluded the trip with a nice lunch in Sarafovo. Then I dropped Helen and Richard at the hotel in their resort and then Phil at the airport for his evening flight. Overall, we had a very good trip with a good variety of birds, butterflies and dragonflies with some very rare species seen and photographed during the trip, the biggest highlight for everyone being the Rose-colored Starling colony.

Species Lists

Birds

Mute Swan	Cygnus olor	Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo
Common Shelduck	Tadorna tadorna	European Shag	Phalacrocorax aristotelis
Ruddy Shelduck	Tadorna ferruginea	Pygmy Cormorant	Microcarbo pygmaeus
Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos	Black-crowned Night Heron Nycticorax nycticorax	
Gadwall	Anas strepera	Squacco Heron	Ardeola ralloides
Shoveler	Anas clypeata	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta
Garganey	Anas querquedula	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea
Common Pochard	Aythya ferina	Purple Heron	Ardea purpurea
Ferruginous Duck	Aythya nyroca	White Stork	Ciconia ciconia
Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis	Black Stork	Ciconia nigra
Great Crested Grebe	Podiceps cristatus	Eurasian Spoonbill	Platalea leucorodia
Great White Pelican	Pelecanus onocrotalus	Greater Flamingo	Phoenicopterus roseus
Dalmatian Pelican	Pelecanus crispus	Eastern Imperial Eagle	Aquila heliaca

Lesser Spotted Eagle Syrian Woodpecker Aquila pomarina Dendrocopos syriaca Middle Spotted Woodpecker Dendrocopos medius Short-toed Eagle Circaetus gallicus Lesser Spotted Woodpecker Dendrocopos minor **Booted Eagle** Aquila fasciata Eurasian Wryneck Jynx torquilla Western Marsh Harrier Circus aeruginosus Circus pygargus Common Skylark Alauda arvensis Montagu's Harrier Crested Lark Gallerida cristata Long-legged Buzzard Buteo rufinus Woodlark Lululla arborea Common Buzzard Buteo buteo Sand Martin Riparia riparia Pernis apivorus European Honey Buzzard Barn Swallow Hirundo rustica Common Kestrel Falco tinnunculus Red-rumped Swallow Cecropis daurica **Eurasian Hobby** Falco subbuteo Common House Martin Delichon urbicum Peregrine Falcon Falco peregrinus Tawny Pipit Anthus campestris Water Rail Rallus aquaticus White Wagtail Motacilla alba Gallinula chloropus Common Moorhen **Eurasian Coot** Fullica atra Yellow Wagtail Motacilla flava Luscinia megarhynchos Common Nightingale Pied Avocet Recurvirostra avosetta Common Redstart Phoenicurus phoenicurus Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus Northern Wheatear Oenanthe oenanthe Collared Pratincole Glareola pratincola Isabelline Wheatear Oenanthe isabellina Charadrius dubius Little Ringed Plover Song Thrush Turdus philomelos Kentish Plover Charadrius alexandrinus Mistle Thrush Turdus viscivorus Northern Lapwing Vanellus vanellus Common Blackbird Turdus merula Spotted Redshank Tringa erythropus Common Redshank Tringa totanus Blackcap Sylvia atricapilla Common Whitethroat Svlvia communis Marsh Sandpiper Tringa stagnatilis Cetti's Warbler Cettia cetti Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa European Reed Warbler Acrocephalus scirpaceus **Eurasian Curlew** Numenius arquata Great Reed Warbler. Acrocephalus arundinaceus Black-headed Gull Chroicocephalus ridibundus Icterine Warbler Hippolais icterina Little Gull Hydrocoloeus minutus Olive-tree Warbler Hippolais olivetorum Mediterranean Gull Larus melanocephalus Olivaceous Warbler Iduna pallida Yellow-legged Gull Larus michahellis Common Chiffchaff Phylloscopus collybita Little Tern Sternula albifrons Sandwich Tern Thalasseus sandvicensis Great Tit Parus major Blue Tit Cyanistes caeruleus Gull-billed Tern Gelochelidon nilotica Common Tern Sterna hirundo Marsh Tit Poecile palustris Caspian Tern Long-tailed Tit Aegithalos caudatus Hydroprogne caspia Eurasian Penduline Tit Remiz pendulinus Feral Pigeon Columba livia **Eurasian Nuthatch** Wood Pigeon Columba palumbus Sitta europaea Short-toed Treecreeper **Eurasian Collared Dove** Streptopelia decaocto Certhia brachydactyla European Turtle Dove Streptopelia turtur Red-backed Shrike Lanius collurio Woodchat Shrike Lanius senator Common Cuckoo Cuculus canorus European Nightjar Caprimulgus europaeus Common Magpie Pica pica Common Swift Eurasian Jay Garrulus glandarius Apus apus Western Jackdaw Corvus monedula Pallid Swift Apus pallidus **Hooded Crow** Corvus cornix Alpine Swift Apus melba Eurasian Hoopoe Upupa epops Common Raven Corvus corax Common Starling Sturnus vulgaris Common Kingfisher Alcedo atthis Rose-coloured Starling Pastor roseus European Bee-eater Merops apiaster Eurasian Golden Oriole Oriolus oriolus European Roller Coracias garrulus House Sparrow Passer domesticus Green Woodpecker Picus viridis Eurasian Tree Sparrow Passer montanus Great Spotted Woodpecker Dendrocopos major

Spanish Sparrow Passer hispaniolensis Hawfinch Coccothraustes coccothraustes Common Chaffinch Fringilla coelebs Ortolan Bunting Emberiza hortulana Common Linnet Linaria cannabina Cirl Bunting Emberiza cirlus Carduelis carduelis European Goldfinch Black-headed Bunting Emberiza melanocephalus Chloris chloris Emberiza calandra European Greenfinch Corn Bunting European Serin Serinus serinus

Butterflies

Scarce Swallowtail Iphiclides podalirius **Brown Argus** Aricia agestis Swallowtail Papilio machaon Amanda's Blue Polyommatus amandus Eastern Festoon Zerynthia cerisy Common Blue Polyommatus icarus Large Chequered Skipper Heteropterus morpheus Queen of Spain Fritillary Issoria lathonia Large Skipper Ochlodes sylvanus Twin-spot Fritillary Brenthis hecate Lulworth Skipper Thymelicus acteon Marbled Fritillary Brenthis daphne Small Skipper Thymelicus sylvestris Silver-washed Fritillary Argynnis paphia Hungarian Skipper Spialia orbifer Cardinal Argynnis pandora Oriental Marbled Skipper. Carcharodus orientalis Dark Green Fritillary Speveria aglaja Grizzled Skipper Pyrgus malvae Niobe Fritillary Fabriciana niobe Yellow-banded Skipper Pyrgus sidae Freyer's Purple Emperor Apatura metis Oberthür's Grizzled Skipper Pyrgus armoricanus Vanessa cardui Painted Lady Clouded Yellow Colias croceus Red Admiral Vanessa atalantica Black-veined White Aporia crataegi Peacock Aglais io Eastern Bath White Pontia edusa Small Tortoiseshell Agalis urticae Large White Pieris brassicae Polygonia c-album Comma Small White Pieris rapae Large Tortoiseshell Nymphalis polychloros Southern Small White Pieris mannii Marsh Fritillary Euphedryas aurinia Green-veined White Pieris napi Melitaea didyma Spotted Fritillary Freyer's Fritillary Purple-shot Copper Lycaena alciphron Melitaea arduinna Grecian Copper Lycaena ottomana Knapweed Fritillary Melitaea phoebe Sooty Copper Lycaena tityrus Eastern Knapweed Fritillary Melitaea ornata Ilex Hairstreak Satyrium ilicis Glanville Fritillary Melitaea cinxia White-letter Hairstreak Satyrium w-album Melitaea britomartis Assmann's Fritillary Sloe Hairstreak Satyrium acaciae Heath Fritillary Melitaea athalia Long-tailed Blue Lampides boeticus Small Heath Coenonympha pamphilus Large Blue Phengaris arion Chestnut Heath Coenonympha glycerion Chequered Blue Scolitantides orion Pearly Heath Coenonympha arcania Iolas Blue Iolana iolas Lattice Brown Kirinia roxelana Silver-studded Blue Plebejus argus Speckled Wood Pararge aegeria Reverdin's Blue Plebejus argyrognomon Marbled White Melanargia galathea Balkan Zephyr Blue Kretania sephirus Great Banded Grayling Brintesia circe Mazarine Blue Cyaniris semiargus Meadow Brown Maniola jurtina Blue Argus Aricia anteros

Dragonflies

Banded Demoiselle Calopteryx splendens
Beautiful Demoiselle Calopteryx virgo
Odalisque Epallage fatime
Dark Spreadwing Lestes macrostigma
Eastern Willow Emerald Chalcolestes parvidens

Blue-tailed Damselfly Ischnura elegans
Common Blue Damselfly Enallagma cyathigerum
Azure Damselfly Coenagrion puella
Small Red-eyed Damselfly Erythromma viridulum
White-legged Damselfly. Platycnemis pennipes

Southern Migrant Hawker
Norfolk Hawker
Blue Emperor
Lesser Emperor
Eastern Spectre Common Clubtail
Turkish Goldenring
Bulgarian Emerald

er Aeshna affinis
Aeshna isosceles
Anax imperator
Anax parthenope
Caliaeschna microstigma
Gomphus vulgatissimus
Cordulegaster pitta
Somatochlora borisi

Broad-bodied Chaser Scarce Chaser Black-tailed Skimmer Southern Skimmer Southern Darter Scarlet Darter Black Pennant Libellula depressa Libellula fulva Orthetrum cancellatum Orthetrum brunneum Sympetrum meridionale Crocothemis erythraea Selysiothemis nigra

Photo Gallery

















































