



## **Birding and Bears in Transylvania 2<sup>nd</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

### **A Birding holiday helping Wildlife Conservation**

The famous area of Transylvania in the northern part of Romania is a region rich in birds and wildlife. On this exclusive nine-day tour (eight nights) we will be the guests of Count Kálnoky at his family's Transylvanian Guesthouse in Miklósvár, with a further two nights at King Charles's private nature retreat in the nearby Zalău Valley at Zalăupatak. Guided by local professional expert Bobi Zeitz from The Milvus Group (a non-profit conservation organisation) and our Yorkshire Coast Nature guide Mark Pearson, our group will explore the forests, meadows and gorges in search of great birds and huge mammals!

This is a rare opportunity to experience the wildlife of an iconic region at a relaxed pace whilst directly helping a local conservation organisation.



Lesser Spotted Eagle © The Milvus Group

## Itinerary

### Day One. 2<sup>nd</sup> May

02 May BA 884 Departure Heathrow at 18:50 - arrival Bucharest at 00:05. (for clients wishing to fly from another airport we can provide a supplement cost)

Overnight stay at Bucharest Hilton Garden Inn airport hotel with breakfast

### Day Two. 3<sup>rd</sup> May

Morning travel from Bucharest to Miklosvar. Accommodation: Miklosvár Guesthouses.

After arrival and lunch, a relaxing birding afternoon around the woodlands and villages close to Miklosvar.

### Day Three. 4<sup>th</sup> May. Bucegi Mountains

Accommodation: Miklosvár Guesthouses

After an early breakfast, we'll depart to Sinaia in the stunning Bucegi Mountains, part of the Southern Carpathians. Our first stop will include a 1km walk on the King's Path in the beautiful mixed forest on the King's path, where we'll have the chance to see **Red-breasted, Collared, Pied and Spotted Flycatchers, Serins, Common and Black Redstarts**, and **White-backed, Grey-headed and Black Woodpeckers**.

The cable car will take us from Sinaia up to to 2000m, where we'll walk in beautiful alpine meadows searching for high mountain species as **Horned Lark, Water Pipit, Alpine Accentor, Nutcracker, Ring Ouzel and Alpine Swift**; We'll also enjoy our packed lunch in this gorgeous setting.

The cable car will take us back to town, where the minibus will pick us up and we will be back to Miklósvár Guesthouses for early evening.



Horned Lark Sinaia 2023 © Richard Baines



Bobi Zeitz at Sinaia 2023 © Richard Baines

## Day Four. 5<sup>th</sup> May. Carpathian Delta Day

Accommodation: Miklosvár Guesthouses

After breakfast we'll travel to Dumravita. This is one of the best birdwatching sites for waterfowl and waders in Transylvania, also known as The Delta of the Carpathians. We'll explore a range of habitats, including fishponds, meadows and oak forests, where we'll look for **Middle Spotted** and **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers**, **Golden Oriole**, **Collared Flycatcher** and many other woodland species.

At the fishponds we can expect to enjoy many wetland species, including herons, ducks, and waders; **Ferruginous Ducks** and **Pygmy Cormorants** are the highlights of the area, but we'll also be looking for raptors such as **White-tailed** and **Lesser Spotted Eagles**. We'll return to the Miklósvár guesthouse by 16:30, and part of the team will visit the Brown Bear hide after a break, returning for a late dinner; the other half of the team will enjoy a birding afternoon in the nearby meadows and forest with dinner on return.



Collared Flycatcher 2023 © The Milvus Group



Golden Oriole 2023 © The Milvus Group

## Day Five. 6<sup>th</sup> May. Zarnesti Gorge

Accommodation: - /Miklosvár Guesthouses

After an early breakfast we will depart to Zernyest in the Piatra Craiului Mountains, which are part of the Southern Carpathians mountains range. After a two-hour drive, we'll spend plenty of time in Gorge of Zernyest – a great area for **Alpine Swift**, **Crag Martin**, **Rock Bunting** and **Wallcreeper**. After our walk we'll visit a nearby watchpoint, where we will have our packed lunch while looking out for **Black Stork**, **Short-toed Eagle**, **Honey Buzzard**, **Peregrine** and **Golden Oriole** among others.

We'll return to the Miklósvár guesthouse by 16:30, and part of the team will visit the **Brown Bear** hide after a break, returning for a late dinner; the other half of the team will enjoy a birding afternoon in the nearby meadows and forest with dinner on return.



Brown Bear Transylvania 2023 © Richard Baines

### **Day Six. 7<sup>th</sup> May. Homorod Lakes - Miklósvár Owls**

Accommodation: Miklosvár Guesthouses

After breakfast at the guesthouse, we'll visit Homorod Lakes, another fishpond and lake system, situated 60 km north of our accommodation. In the first half of May this area is famous for the spring migration of **Red-footed Falcons** – sometimes in their hundreds! - but it's also a place where there are regular records of **Citrine Wagtail** and **Red-throated Pipit**.

A large variety of waders, ducks and herons are present at the fishponds in spring, and some of the species we'll be looking for here include all three species of marsh terns, (**Whiskered, Black and White-winged**), **Ferruginous Ducks, European Bee-eaters, Eurasian and Little Bitterns, Broad-billed Sandpiper** and **Lesser Spotted Eagle**; we'll take our packed lunch here and we'll drive back to the guesthouses in the afternoon. After a rest and freshen-up we'll have an early dinner at 1800hrs, after which we'll spend the evening searching for owls via a drive and walk – looking and listening for **Ural Owl, Long-eared Owl, Scops Owl, Tawny Owl, Nightjar** and **Woodlark**.



Wallcreeper Transylvania 2023 © Richard Baines

## **Day Seven. 8<sup>th</sup> May. Mikósvár Surroundings – The Horse and Cart Day**

Accommodation: Miklosvár Guesthouses

The horse and cart day is a leisurely, relaxing trip by horse and cart to learn about bird populations and the ecology of the surrounding habitats, changes in the landscape, land-use techniques and the like. The journey will start at 0800hrs, and we will visit the nearby marshlands with several stops and walks in the meadows and forests of the area.

Species we'll be looking for include **Ural Owl, Collared, Red-breasted and Spotted Flycatchers, Green, Grey-headed and Black Woodpeckers, Wrynecks, Honey Buzzard, Lesser Spotted Eagle and Black Stork.** We will have our packed lunch in beautiful surroundings, continuing our journey and returning to the Guesthouses by 1600hrs. Because this will be our final evening at Miklósvár Guesthouses, we'll offer an (optional) talk before dinner, all about Romanian birds, their conservation and Milvus Group's achievements will be presented.



Ural Owl © The Milvus Group

## **Day Eight. 9<sup>th</sup> May. Miklósvár Meadows - Zalánpatak Meadows, Zalánpatak Owls**

Accommodation: Zalánpatak Guesthouses

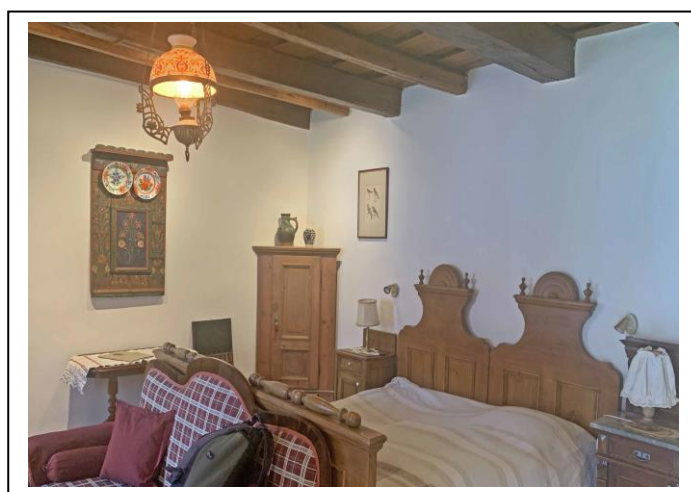
The day will begin with a pre-breakfast walk along the Olt River, in a mosaic of wet meadows, bush lines, pastures and agricultural fields. Here we'll hope to see and hear **Corncrake, Great Grey, Lesser Grey and Red-backed Shrikes, Golden Oriole, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Scops Owl, Wryneck** and much more.

We'll have a late breakfast and leave for our next accommodation, Zalanpatak Guesthouses, again by horse and cart! After arriving, we wander in the nearby meadows, where we'll look for **White-backed Woodpecker, Honey Buzzard, Goshawk, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Woodlark, Golden Oriole, Hoopoe and Wryneck.** We'll return for an early dinner and a short rest before another owl searching evening drive/walk. During this walk we'll hope to hear/see **Ural Owl, Long-eared Owl, Scops Owl, Little Owl, Tawny Owl and Nightjar.**

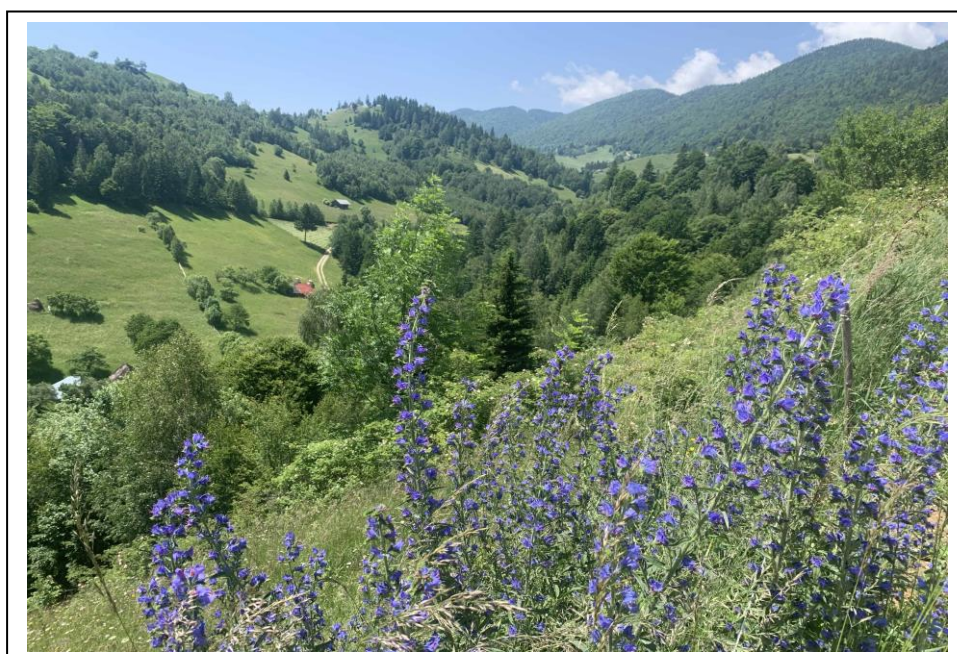
## Day Nine. 10<sup>th</sup> May. Vargyas Gorge

Accommodation: Zalánpatak Guesthouses

The Vargyas limestone gorge is situated at 60 km distance from Zalánpatak Guesthouses, the one-way walk will take place along the Vargyas stream from the upper entrance of the gorge, downstream. During our walk we will cross bridges several times and the trail will be uneven. We will have our packed lunch during our walk. During the upper and lower edge of the walk we will pass grassland, pastures and meadows with area is grassland, in the gorge, limestone cliff and beech forest. Expected species are the **Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Dipper, Collared and Red-breasted Flycatchers, Green, Grey-headed, Black and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers**. The bus will pick up at 15:00 at the end of the gorge, driving back to Zalánpatak



King Charles retreat. The group accommodation 2023 © Richard Baines



Wild Transylvania 2023 © Richard Baines

## **Day Ten. 11<sup>th</sup> May. Departure**

After breakfast the group will depart by minibus to the airport to travel back to the UK.

1 May BA 887 Departure Bucharest at 21:05 - arrival Heathrow at 22:35 (clients flying from North will need to overnight and fly home next day).

**PLACES:** Limited to eight clients

**FOR BOOKING. PLEASE [CLICK HERE](#)**

### **THE COST**

Per person sharing twin or double room £3,405.00 including flights.

Single Room Supplement £1388.00

### **GUIDES**

Mark Pearson – Yorkshire Coast Nature.

Bobi Zeitz – Milvus Group Transylvania

### **Cost Includes:**

- BA Flights economy outward from UK to Bucharest and return
- Accommodation six nights at Count Kálnoky Transylvanian Guesthouses.
- Accommodation two nights at King Charles's retreat at Zalánpatak
- Full board meals with house wine. Picnic lunch on birding days.
- Service of an experienced tour leader from UK and expert guide from The Milvus Group
- All transfers and sightseeing arrangements including visit to the Brown Bear hide.
- 100% protection of your payment by our ATOL and ABTA Licenses