

## UKRAINE - BIRDWATCHING IN THE CRIMEA

Eighteen years after our first tour there, Sunbird's return to the Crimea provided a happy and satisfying mix of history, scenery, and above all outstanding birding. This was thanks in no small measure to the excellent planning of our ground agents. Their knowledge of the country and their ability to adapt the itinerary according to the vagaries of weather and migration ensured that each day brought new delights and an understanding not only of the special avifauna but also of the culture of this little-known peninsula.

The picnics were a daily highlight, memorable for the varied buffet treats and for the birds at each location – Demoiselle Crane, Great Bustard, and Saker at one (the latter seemingly homing in on us from a distance and flying around low above our heads); Imperial Eagle, Barred and Eastern Orphean Warblers, and Chukar at another; Rock Thrush at a third; or Great black-headed Gull, Pallid Harrier, and Caspian Tern; Siberian Stonechat; and hundreds of White Pelicans at the last en route to the airport (suitably celebrated with caviar and champagne).

Roadside birding was also outstanding – with literally thousands of Red-footed Falcons, marsh terns, Calandra Larks, Mediterranean Gulls, and a constant supply of Golden Orioles, Hoopoes, Lesser Grey and Red-backed Shrikes, Bee-eaters, Rollers, Pied Wheatears, and Black-headed Buntings. Typical was a verge-hugging sentry line of spindly little trees which yielded in rapid succession not only the Golden Oriole which prompted our stop but also Red-breasted and Pied Flycatchers and Common Redstart. Or the lake shoreline with Temminck's and Little Stints, Kentish Plover, summer-plumage Curlew Sandpiper, and displaying Ruffs alongside the coach. Or a seemingly unprepossessing phragmites-fringed pool with Paddyfield and Savi's Warblers, Bearded Tits, Red-necked Grebe, Red-crested Pochard, and Ferruginous Duck. And another which offered Penduline Tits building a nest, Collared Pratincoles, and Spoonbills. Other from-the-coach species included Bittern, Purple Heron, Glossy Ibis, White Stork, Garganey, Montagu's Harrier, Griffon Vulture, Common Crane, Stone-curlew, Slender-billed Gull, Little and Short-eared Owls, Syrian Woodpecker, Tawny Pipit, Great Reed Warbler, Woodchat Shrike, and Ortolan Bunting. Plus (still from the roadside) Black-throated Diver, Peregrine, Alpine Swift, Firecrest, Treecreeper, Wood Warbler, and Crossbill. Indeed, it would have been possible to amass a magnificent tally without any walking at all. Even Pygmy Cormorant, White-tailed Eagle, and Hobby were seen from the comfort of our silent electric boat gliding through the Dnipr tributaries from the very garden of our hotel.

Add to this wealth of birdlife the beauty of the little harbour of Balaclava and the many old palaces and fine houses from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fascination of the Odessa steps and the valley of the charge of the Light Brigade, the vastness of the steppe with such distant horizons contrasting with mountains higher than any point in Britain rising so close to the sea, the range of other life from the wild peonies to Saiga, Asian Wild Ass, European Bison, and Przewalski's Horse, and of course the excellent company, and the Crimea was certainly a very good choice to spend eight days in May.

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### BIRD LIST:

Column A = Number of tours on which this species has been recorded.

Column B = Number of days this species was seen on the last tour.

Column C = Maximum daily count for this species on the last tour.

(H) = Mostly heard but some seen

A		B	C	
1	Black-throated Diver	1	10	<i>Gavia arctica</i>
1	Black-necked Grebe	2	2	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
1	Red-necked Grebe	4	6	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>
1	Great Crested Grebe	4	3	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
1	White Pelican	1	200	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>
1	Continental Cormorant	4	3000	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis</i>
1	Mediterranean Shag	2	50	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii</i>
1	Bittern	2	3	(H) <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>
1	Night Heron	3	6	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
1	Squacco Heron	3	4	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
1	Great White Egret	5	8	<i>Egretta alba</i>
1	Little Egret	6	10	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
1	Grey Heron	7	15	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
1	Purple Heron	3	5	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
1	Spoonbill	1	4	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
1	Glossy Ibis	1	4	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
1	White Stork	3	7	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
1	Greylag Goose	2	10	<i>Anser anser</i>
1	Mute Swan	6	30	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
1	Ruddy Shelduck	2	50	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
1	Shelduck	8	100	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
1	Mallard	5	20	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
1	Wigeon	1	7	<i>Anas penelope</i>
1	Garganey	3	5	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
1	Shoveler	2	1	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
1	Red-crested Pochard	2	1	<i>Netta rufina</i>
1	Pochard	6	24	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
1	Ferruginous Duck	2	3	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
1	Tufted Duck	2	2	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
1	Pallid Harrier	1	1	<i>Circus macrourus</i>
1	Montagu`s Harrier	2	1	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
1	Marsh Harrier	7	40	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
1	Sparrowhawk	2	2	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
1	Buzzard	8	10	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
1	Imperial Eagle	2	2	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>
1	Griffon Vulture	2	2	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>
1	Saker	2	1	<i>Falco cherrug</i>
1	Peregrine	1	2	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
1	Hobby	3	5	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
1	Red-footed Falcon	8	'00s	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>
1	Kestrel	8	30	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
1	Chukar	1	1	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>
1	Partridge	1	1	<i>Perdix perdix</i>
1	Quail	3	10	(H) <i>Coturnix coturnix</i>

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1	Pheasant	4	4		<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
1	Common Crane	3	250		<i>Grus grus</i>
1	Demoiselle Crane	2	9		<i>Anthropoides virgo</i>
1	Water Rail	1	1	(H)	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>
1	Moorhen	3	1		<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
1	Coot	7	50		<i>Fulica atra</i>
1	Great Bustard	1	11		<i>Otis tarda</i>
1	Oystercatcher	3	6		<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
1	Black-winged Stilt	6	20		<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
1	Avocet	4	44		<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
1	Stone Curlew	1	2		<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>
1	Collared Pratincole	1	50		<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
1	Little Ringed Plover	2	8		<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
1	Ringed Plover	2	8		<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
1	Kentish Plover	3	8		<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
1	Grey Plover	3	30		<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
1	Lapwing	7	10		<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
1	Little Stint	3	100		<i>Calidris minuta</i>
1	Temminck`s Stint	1	3		<i>Calidris temminckii</i>
1	Curlew Sandpiper	4	100		<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
1	Dunlin	4	60		<i>Calidris alpina</i>
1	Ruff	5	‘00s		<i>Phylomachus pugnax</i>
1	Black-tailed Godwit	1	20		<i>Limosa limosa</i>
1	Whimbrel	1	1		<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
1	Curlew	1	1		<i>Numenius arquata</i>
1	Spotted Redshank	2	6		<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
1	Redshank	5	5		<i>Tringa totanus</i>
1	Greenshank	3	1		<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
1	Wood Sandpiper	3	35		<i>Tringa glareola</i>
1	Common Sandpiper	2	2		<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
1	Turnstone	2	8		<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
1	Arctic Skua	2	1		<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
1	Great Black-headed Gull	2	2		<i>Larus ichthyæetus</i>
1	Mediterranean Gull	6	400		<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>
1	Little Gull	3	350		<i>Larus minutus</i>
1	Black-headed Gull	4	10		<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
1	Slender-billed Gull	3	30		<i>Larus genei</i>
1	Lesser Black-backed Gull	2	6		<i>Larus fuscus</i>
1	Caspain Gull	9	50		<i>Larus cachinnans</i>
1	Gull-billed Tern	4	100		<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
1	Caspian Tern	1	4		<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
1	Sandwich Tern	5	10		<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
1	Common Tern	7	40		<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
1	Little Tern	3	25		<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
1	Whiskered Tern	6	60		<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
1	Black Tern	3	2		<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
1	White-winged Black Tern	6	250		<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
1	Woodpigeon	8	20		<i>Columba palumbus</i>
1	Rock (Feral) Dove	7	40		<i>Columba livia</i>
1	Collared Dove	8	30		<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
1	Turtle Dove	5	32		<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
1	Cuckoo	8	7	(H)	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
1	Little Owl	1	1		<i>Athene noctua</i>
1	Long-eared Owl	3	2		<i>Asio otus</i>
1	Short-eared Owl	2	3		<i>Asio flammeus</i>
1	Alpine Swift	2	100		<i>Apus melba</i>

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1	Swift	9	'00s		<i>Apus apus</i>
1	Roller	3	5		<i>Coracias garrulus</i>
1	Bee-eater	2	12		<i>Merops apiaster</i>
1	Hoopoe	4	8		<i>Upupa epops</i>
1	Wryneck	2	2	(H)	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
1	Great Spotted Woodpecker	2	4		<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
1	Syrian Woodpecker	4	4		<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>
1	Calandra Lark	5	'00s		<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>
1	Crested Lark	7	50		<i>Galerida cristata</i>
1	Short-toed Lark	1	4		<i>Calandrella cinerea</i>
1	Skylark	8	50		<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
1	Sand Martin	8	10		<i>Riparia riparia</i>
1	Swallow	9	'00s		<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
1	House Martin	8	50		<i>Delichon urbica</i>
1	Tawny Pipit	4	1		<i>Anthus campestris</i>
1	Tree Pipit	2	5	(H)	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
1	Yellow Wagtail	8	10		<i>Motacilla flava</i>
1	Black-headed Wagtail	4	4		<i>Motacilla feldegg</i>
1	Grey Wagtail	1	1		<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
1	White Wagtail	6	3		<i>Motacilla alba</i>
1	Robin	2	8	(H)	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
1	Thrush Nightingale	5	10	(H)	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>
1	Nightingale	2	3	(H)	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
1	Black Redstart	1	4		<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
1	Redstart	5	4		<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
1	Whinchat	5	12		<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
1	Siberian Stonechat	1	2		<i>S.maura variegata</i>
1	Wheatear	4	4		<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
1	Pied Wheatear	2	4		<i>Oenanthe pleschanca</i>
1	Rock Thrush	1	1		<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>
1	Blackbird	7	20	(H)	<i>Turdus merula</i>
1	Song Thrush	4	10	(H)	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
1	Mistle Thrush	2	2		<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
1	Savi`s Warbler	4	10	(H)	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>
1	Paddyfield Warbler	2	3		<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>
1	Reed Warbler	1	1		<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
1	Great Reed Warbler	6	4	(H)	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
1	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	1	1		<i>Hippolais ida</i>
1	Barred Warbler	1	1		<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>
1	Eastern Orphean Warbler	1	1		<i>Sylvia crassirostris</i>
1	Lesser Whitethroat	1	2		<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
1	Whitethroat	3	3		<i>Sylvia communis</i>
1	Garden Warbler	1	1		<i>Sylvia borin</i>
1	Blackcap	6	4		<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
1	Wood Warbler	1	7		<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
1	Chiffchaff	3	4		<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
1	Willow Warbler	4	2		<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
1	Red-breasted Flycatcher	1	4		<i>Ficedula parva</i>
1	Collared Flycatcher	2	2		<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>
1	Pied Flycatcher	1	4		<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
1	Spotted Flycatcher	4	8		<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
1	Firecrest	2	1		<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>
1	Bearded Tit	4	6		<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>
1	Coal Tit	1	10		<i>Parus ater</i>
1	Blue Tit	3	3		<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
1	Great Tit	9	15		<i>Parus major</i>

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1	Treecreeper	1	1	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>
1	Penduline Tit	2	2	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>
1	Golden Oriole	4	20	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
1	Red-backed Shrike	7	7	<i>Lanius collurio</i>
1	Woodchat Shrike	1	1	<i>Lanius senator</i>
1	Lesser Grey Shrike	5	12	<i>Lanius minor</i>
1	Jay	3	1	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
1	Magpie	9	15	<i>Pica pica</i>
1	Jackdaw	8	50	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
1	Rook	8	'00s	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
1	Hooded Crow	9	20	<i>Corvus cornix</i>
1	Raven	6	4	<i>Corvus corax</i>
1	Starling	9	100	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
1	House Sparrow	9	40	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
1	Tree Sparrow	5	20	<i>Passer montanus</i>
1	Chaffinch	7	30	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
1	Greenfinch	6	15	<i>Chloris chloris</i>
1	Goldfinch	8	50	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
1	Linnet	5	20	<i>Acanthis cannabina</i>
1	Crossbill	1	50	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>
1	Hawfinch	2	4	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>
1	Yellowhammer	1	6	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>
1	Ortolan Bunting	6	3	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>
1	Reed Bunting	4	2	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>
1	Black-headed Bunting	2	1	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>
1	Corn Bunting	7	'00s	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>