

TRAVEL I EXPERIENCE I CONSERVE

Tour Report

Bulgaria - Butterflies & Birds of Bulgaria

20-28 June 2019

Euphydryas aurinia



European crested tit



Melitaea didyma



Little owl



Compiled by: Assen Ignatov



Leaders Dr Stoyan Beshkov & Assen Ignatov

Day 1: Thursday 20 June 2019

Weather: sunny, then changeable with showers; 26°C

After a sunny start in Sofia, it clouded over as we drove away from the airport. The first stop was at Rila Monastery where we saw pallid swifts flying above.

Our second stop was in the Kresna Gorge to look for butterflies and other insects. We saw numerous caterpillars, some attractive grasshoppers and almost all the European species of martins and swallows. Our last stop for the day was to enjoy a quick view of some griffon vultures.

Day 2: Friday 21 June 2019

Weather: sunny, 28°C

An early morning birdwatching walk was very productive – in terms of birds, we saw golden orioles, common nightingales and red-backed shrike, and we also spotted a red fox.

After a good breakfast we went to Kozhuha Hill (or volcano). A walk on the northern part of it resulted in roller, short-toed eagle and long-legged buzzard. It was also a very rich place for butterflies and there were a few moths too including skippers, graylings, blues and fritillaries.

Twice we saw a tortoise and few green and wall lizards.

We found a nice spot for lunch then went to Rozhen Monastery. Going back to Melnik, it was good to find time to visit the town and do some wine-tasting in one of the local cellars. We had good views here of a very dark little owl.

Then we had dinner in the hotel garden.

Day 3: Saturday 22 June

Weather: sunny, 28°C

After another early birdwatching walk followed by breakfast, we headed to Slavianka Mountain. Here we stopped to see calandra lark and black-headed buntings and to enjoy panoramic views across to the Struma Valley and surrounding mountains.

We stopped the minibus south of Izvora Hut, in the heart of old marble quarry. This is a very rich habitat for many different animals – highlights here were singing wood lark, hunting short-toed eagle and some passing cirl buntings. There were lots of interesting butterflies and dragonflies; however, the species everybody wanted to take photos of were some thirsty Camberwell beauties and large tortoiseshells.

It was hot but we managed to walk in the shade of some very old *Platanus* trees, and took our lunch in a cool, shady place with a fountain. The afternoon was similar to the morning but with many beautiful damselflies and green lizards.

In the evening we had dinner in the garden again.



Day 4: Sunday 23 June 2019

Weather: changeable with patches of rain & sunshine, 26°C

After breakfast we drove to the Pirin Mountains, stopping before the top of the pass to admire some apollo butterflies. After managing some good views we walked the few hundred metres to Orelek Peak. Serins were singing around us, we also spotted goldcrests and firecrests, and heard nutcrackers and bullfinches. We also managed to get good views and photographs of a crested tit.

It was a bit cool to be ideal for butterflies, but we did see a lot of ringlets and blues.

Our next stop was in the town of Gotce Delchev where we bought fruit, vegetables and stopped for a coffee and ice-cream. We continued to drive east, stopping near the Mesta River where they are renovating a few fish farms and here we saw some waders and singing olivaceous warbler.

After the village of Satovcha, we had our picnic lunch in pleasant sunshine (about 24°C), serenaded by goldfinches and with eagles flying overhead.

Our last stop for the day was near Borino village. Here we mostly looked for fritillaries (knapweed, lesser spotted) and blues (small, sooty and Balkan), plus some interesting plants including a few orchids. Before arriving at our hotel, we made a stop to show the group where we would be looking for wallcreeper the next day ... but actually managed to see this sought-after bird well, and after only having to wait for a few seconds! It was a nice surprise and very exciting.

Day 5: Monday 24 June 2019

Weather: rainy & sunny - changeable, 24°C

We spend all the morning in the Trigrad Gorge area. Before breakfast we headed out above the hotel, following the old Roman Bridge and road. It was raining while we had our lunch of grilled trout in a local hut; after lunch we walked back out into the gorge again. In the afternoon we walked from Osmanov vir to Chairite – the highlight being views of many dippers.

After the rain it was cooler and fresh with not so many butterflies; however, we had good views view because the atmosphere pressure was low. Many orchids and toads.

Day 6: Tuesday 25 June 2019

Weather: changeable, 28°C

Today involved a lot of driving, with a comfort stop in Smolyan and lunch just past Ardino. The highlights from today's road trip were breeding night herons, pygmy cormorants and little egrets.

Our new base was the town of Krumovgrad, in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains.

Day 7: Wednesday 26 June 2019

Weather: mostly cloudy with a few showers – changeable, 28°C

After breakfast we drove for 30 km to Potochnitca. A 20-minute walk brought us to the local 'Vulture restaurant' where there were many griffon vultures, black kites and black storks as well as good views of Egyptian vultures, and a singing (but well hidden) subalpine warbler. Before heading back to our hotel, we



saw fallow deer leaving the 'restaurant' as well as a good many butterflies, an ant lion plus a few dragonflies.

Crossing the village, we saw a little owl chasing some of the local birds – shrikes, buntings, sparrows, starlings and barred warbler.

After lunch, we set off to our next location, stopping en route to look for butterflies but also finding some fallow deer feeding near to the road. The rain started and we made the decision to return to Krumovgrad a little bit earlier than planned.

After dinner we went out to see if we could hear a scops owl ... but they remained elusive!

Day 8: Thursday 27 June 2019

Weather: mostly sunny, 29°C

Today we headed to Madzharovo to see vultures again. En route, we saw an Egyptian vulture above us, so we stopped to admire it. Stoyan suggested that we follow a small road going down to the valley. It was good idea as it turned out that there were many raptors (including honey buzzard), woodpeckers – green, lesser-spotted and middle spotted, very close long-tailed tits, ravens, orioles and many butterflies.

Bellow one of the griffon vulture colonies we had a pleasant walk and saw blue rock thrush, Ortolan bunting, vultures, swifts, peregrine and rock swallows.

Our last lunch of the trip was in a wooden pavilion with panoramic views of the Arda River valley.

Day 9: Wednesday 28 June 2019

Weather: mostly sunny, 28°C

Transfer to Sofia airport.



Checklist



	Common Name	Latin Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9
	BIRDS	AVES									
1	Mute swan	Cygnus olor						✓			
2	Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos						✓			
3	Black stork	Ciconia nigra							✓	✓	
4	White stork	Ciconia ciconia	✓	✓	√	✓		✓	√	✓	
5	Little bittern	Ixobrychus minutus						✓			
6	Black-crowned night heron	Nycticorax nycticorax						✓			
7	Grey heron	Ardea cinerea						✓	✓	✓	
8	Little egret	Egretta garzetta						✓			
9	Pygmy cormorant	Microcarbo pygmeus						✓			
10	Great cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo	✓	✓					✓	✓	
11	Egyptian vulture	Neophron percnopterus				✓			✓	✓	
12	European honey buzzard	Pernis apivorus							✓	✓	
13	Griffon vulture	Gyps fulvus							✓	✓	
14	Black kite	Milvus migrans							✓		



15	Long-legged buzzard	Buteo rufinus		✓						✓	
16	Common buzzard	Buteo buteo	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
17	Common moorhen	Gallinula chloropus						✓			
18	Eurasian coot	Fulica atra						✓			
19	Wood sandpiper	Tringa glareola							✓		
20	Yellow-legged gull	Larus michahellis	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	
21	Rock dove	Columba livia					✓				
22	Common wood pigeon	Columba palumbus	✓		Н				✓	✓	
23	European turtle dove	Streptopelia turtur	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	
24	Eurasian collared dove	Streptopelia decaocto	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
25	Common cuckoo	Cuculus canorus	Н		Н	V				Н	
26	Little owl	Athene noctua		✓		Н			✓		
27	European nightjar	Caprimulgus europaeus						Н			
28	Alpine swift	Tachymarptis melba					✓	✓		✓	
29	Common swift	Apus apus	✓	✓	√	✓	✓		✓	✓	
30	Pallid swift	Apus pallidus	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	
31	European roller	Coracias garrulus		✓	✓						
32	Common kingfisher	Alcedo atthis						✓			
33	European bee-eater	Merops apiaster		Н	Н	Н		✓		Н	
34	Eurasian wryneck	Jynx torquilla		V							



35	Middle spotted woodpecker	Dendrocoptes medius			Н					Н	
36	Lesser spotted woodpecker	Dryobates minor		Н	V					V	
37	Syrian woodpecker	Dendrocopos syriacus		Н							
38	Great spotted woodpecker	Dendrocopos major				Н					
39	European green woodpecker	Picus viridis		Н	Н	Н				✓	
40	Common kestrel	Falco tinnunculus	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	
41	Red-backed shrike	Lanius collurio		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
42	Woodchat shrike	Lanius senator		✓	✓				✓		
43	Eurasian golden oriole	Oriolus oriolus		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
44	Eurasian jay	Garrulus glandarius	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
45	Eurasian magpie	Pica pica	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
46	Spotted nutcracker	Nucifraga caryocatactes					Н				
47	Western jackdaw	Coloeus monedula	✓					✓	✓	✓	
48	Rook	Corvus frugilegus	✓				✓	✓			
49	Hooded crow	Corvus cornix	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
50	Northern raven	Corvus corax				✓	✓		✓	✓	
51	Coal tit	Periparus ater				✓	Н				
52	European crested tit	Lophophanes cristatus				✓					
53	Sombre tit	Poecile lugubris		Н							
54	Eurasian blue tit	Cyanistes caeruleus		√	✓	✓				✓	



55	Great tit	Parus major	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
56	Woodlark	Lullula arborea		Н	✓				✓		
57	Eurasian skylark	Alauda arvensis								✓	
58	Crested lark	Galerida cristata		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
59	Calandra lark	Melanocorypha calandra			✓						
60	Sand martin	Riparia riparia						✓			
61	Barn swallow	Hirundo rustica	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
62	Eurasian crag martin	Ptyonoprogne rupestris	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
63	Common house martin	Delichon urbicum	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
64	Red-rumped swallow	Cecropis daurica	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
65	Long-tailed tit	Aegithalos caudatus			✓	✓				✓	
66	Common chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita				✓	✓	✓		Н	
67	Great reed warbler	Acrocephalus arundinaceus						✓			
68	Eastern olivaceous warbler	Iduna pallida		✓							
69	Common grasshopper warbler	Locustella naevia						Н			
70	Eurasian blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
71	Lesser whitethroat	Sylvia curruca	✓	✓	Н						
72	Eastern Orphean warbler	Sylvia crassirostris							✓		
73	Subalpine warbler	Sylvia cantillans							Н		
74	Common whitethroat	Sylvia communis	✓	✓	✓	✓					



75	Common firecrest	Regulus ignicapilla				✓	✓				
76	Goldcrest	Regulus regulus				Н	Н				
77	Eurasian wren	Troglodytes troglodytes	Н		✓	✓	✓				
78	Western rock nuthatch	Sitta neumayer								✓	
79	Eurasian nuthatch	Sitta europaea	✓							✓	
80	Wallcreeper	Tichodroma muraria					✓				
81	Eurasian treecreeper	Certhia familiaris				Н		Н			
82	Short-toed treecreeper	Certhia brachydactyla								✓	
83	Common starling	Sturnus vulgaris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
84	Ring ouzel	Turdus torquatus									
85	Common blackbird	Turdus merula	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
86	Mistle thrush	Turdus viscivorus				✓					
87	European robin	Erithacus rubecula			✓	✓	✓				
88	Common nightingale	Luscinia megarhynchos	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
89	Black redstart	Phoenicurus ochruros	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			
90	Northern wheatear	Oenanthe oenanthe				✓					
91	White-throated dipper	Cinclus cinclus				✓	✓	✓			
92	House sparrow	Passer domesticus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	√	
93	Italian sparrow	Passer italiae								√	
94	Spanish sparrow	Passer hispaniolensis	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	



95	Grey wagtail	Motacilla cinerea			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
96	White wagtail	Motacilla alba	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
97	Common chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
98	Hawfinch	Coccothraustes coccothraustes	✓	√	√						
99	Eurasian bullfinch	Pyrrhula pyrrhula				Н					
100	European greenfinch	Chloris chloris		✓	√	✓		✓	✓	✓	
101	Red crossbill	Loxia curvirostra				✓					
102	European serin	Serinus serinus	✓	√	√	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
103	Eurasian siskin	Spinus spinus				✓	✓	✓			
104	Corn bunting	Emberiza calandra	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
105	Yellowhammer	Emberiza citrinella				Н					
106	Rock bunting	Emberiza cia					Н				
107	Ortolan bunting	Emberiza hortulana							Н	Н	
108	Cirl bunting	Emberiza cirlus		Н	Н					Н	
109	Black-headed bunting	Emberiza melanocephala		✓	✓	✓			√	√	
	BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS	LEPIDOPTERA									
1	Essex skipper	Thymelicus lineola	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
2	Lulworth skipper	Thymelicus acteon								✓	
3	Large skipper	Ochlodes venatus		✓	✓		✓				



4	Dingy skipper	Erynnis tages		✓					✓		
5	Mallow skipper	Carcharodus alceae		✓	✓					✓	
6	Grizzled skipper	Pyrgus malvae					✓				
7	Oberthur's grizzled skipper	Pyrgus armoricanus								✓	
8	Sandy grizzled skipper	Pyrgus cinarae			✓						
9	6-spot burnet	Zygaena filipendulae			✓	✓					
10		Zygaena ephialtes								✓	
11	Transparent burnet	Zygaena purpuralis				✓	✓				
12	Chimney sweeper	Odezia Atrata					✓				
13	Black-veined moth	Siona lineata					✓				
14	Speckled yellow moth	Pseudopanthera macularia					✓				
15	Cream-spot tiger moth	Arctia villica					✓				
16	Burnet companion moth	Euclidia glyphica					✓				
17		Zygaena nevadensis				✓					
18	Slender Scotch burnet	Zygaena loti					✓				
19		Zygaena angelicae					✓				
20	Humming-bird hawkmoth	Macroglossum stellatarum			✓	✓					
21	Apollo	Parnassius apollo				✓					
22	Swallowtail	Papilio machaon		✓	✓					✓	
23	Scarce swallowtail	Iphiclides podalirius	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	



24	Wood white	Leptidea sinapis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
25	Eastern wood white	Leptidea duponcheli	✓		✓				✓	✓	
26	Clouded yellow	Colias crocea		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
27	Brimstone	Gonepteryx rhamni			✓	✓					
28	Black-veined white	Aporia crataegi			✓						
29	Large white	Pieris brassicae			✓	✓					
30	Small white	Pieris rapae		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
31	Balkan green-veined white	Pieris napi (balcana complex)	✓		✓	✓				✓	
32	Southern small white	Pieris mannii			✓					✓	
33	Mountain small white	Pieris ergane			✓						
34	Kreuper's small white	Pieris krueperi						✓		✓	
35		Pontia edusa						✓		✓	
36	White admiral	Limenitis camila				✓					
37	Southern white admiral	Limenitis reducta schiffermuelleri		✓	✓					✓	
38	Poplar admiral	Limenitis populi					✓				
39	Peacock	Inachis io			✓	✓					
40	Painted lady	Cynthia cardui		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
41	Small tortoiseshell	Aglais urticae			✓						
42	Comma	Polygonia c-album	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
43	Silver-washed fritillary	Argynnis paphia			✓	✓		✓	✓		



44		Argynnis aglaja						✓		
45	Cardinal	Argynnis pandora							✓	
46	High brown fritillary	Argynnis adippe						✓		
47	Niobe fritillary	Argfynnis niobe				✓				
48	Queen of Spain fritillary	Issoria lathonia				✓		✓		
49	Marbled fritillary	Brenthis daphne	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
50		Euphydryas aurinia bulgarica					✓			
51	Knapweed fritillary	Melitaea phoebe		✓	✓	✓				
52		Melitaea didyma meridionalis		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
53	Lesser spotted fritillary	Melitaea trivia				✓				
54	Heath fritillary	Melitaea athalia			✓	✓	✓			
55	Marbled white	Melanargia galathea			✓	✓		✓	✓	
56	Balkan marbled white	Melanargia larissa						✓		
57	Eastern rock grayling	Hipparchia syriaca							✓	
58	Balkan grayling	Hipparchia senthes			✓					
59		Hipparchia circe	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
60	Oriental meadow brown	Hyponephele lupina			✓					
61	Meadow brown	Maniola jurtina		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
62	Ringlet	Aphantopus hyperantus					✓			
63	Small heath	Coenonympha pamphilus				✓				



64	Balkan heath	Coenonympha rhodopensis				✓					
65	Chestnut heath	Coenonympha glycerion				✓					
66	Speckled wood	Pararge aegeria		✓	✓		✓	✓			
67	Lattice brown	Pararge roxelana								✓	
68	Wall brown	Lasiommata megera	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	
69	Mourning cloak	Vanessa antiopa			✓						
70	Painted lady	Vanessa cardui		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
71	Red admiral	Vanessa atalanta			✓	✓					
72	Comma	Nymphalis c-album	✓	✓	√	✓	✓				
73	Large tortoiseshell	Nymphalis polychloros			✓	✓	✓	✓			
74	Small tortoiseshell	Nymphalis (Aglais) urticae			✓						
75	Nettle tree butterfly	Libythea celtis			✓	✓					
76	Ilex hairstreak	Nordmannia ilicis							✓		
77	Small copper	Lycaena phlaeas		✓	✓				✓	✓	
78	Sooty copper	Lycaena tityrus		✓	✓				✓		
79		Lycaena virgaureae balcanicola				✓					
80		Lycaena candens leonhardi				✓					
81	Lesser fiery copper	Lycaena thersamon								✓	
82		Heodes alciphron melibaeus			✓						
83	Balkan purple-edged copper	Palaeochrysophanus candens leonhardi				✓					



84	Holy blue	Celastrina argiolus	✓	✓	✓					
85	Large blue	Maculinea arion			✓					
86	Silver-studded blue	Plebejus argus			✓	✓	✓			
87	Brown argus	Plebejus agestis			✓		✓	✓		
88	Idas blue	Lycaeides idas			✓	✓	✓			
89	Turquoise blue	Plebicula dorylas				✓				
90	Anomalous blue	Polyommatus admetus			✓					
91	Escher's blue	Polyommatus escheri			✓	✓				
92	Meleager's blue	Polyommatus daphnis			✓					
93	Common blue	Polyommatus icarus		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
94	False eros blue	Polyommatus eroides			✓	✓				
95	Adonis blue	Polyommatus bellargus								
96	Mazarine Blue	Polyommatus (Cyaniris) semiargus			✓	✓		✓		
97	Chalkhill Blue	Polyommatus coridon								
98	Amanda's Blue	Polyommatus amandus			✓	✓	✓			
99	Chapman's Blue	Polyommatus thersites								
100	Hungarian skipper	Spialia orbiter		✓	✓			✓		
101	Yellow-banded skipper	Pyrgus sidae			✓			✓		
102	Small skipper	Thymelicus sylvestris				✓				
103	Chequered skipper	Carterocephalus palaemon					✓			



104	Eastern festoon	Zerynthia cerisy					✓		
105	Lesser Bath white	Pontia chloridice						✓	
106	Sloe hairstreak	Satyrium acaciae		✓			✓	✓	
107	Osiris blue	Cupido osiris		✓					
	OTHER SPECIES								
1	Odalisque	Epallage fatime				√			
2	Huge violet ground beetle	Carabus sommeri			✓				
3	Balkan goldring	Cordulegaster heros		✓					
4	Banded demoiselle	Calopteryx splendens		✓					