



Ayrshire Birders Abroad

with Angus Hogg and Tony + Gerda Scott
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Private holidays for birding friends of the SOC and RSPB in Ayrshire and beyond. Friends travelling together sharing birding and cultural experiences in mainland Europe, the UK, Asia and the Americas.

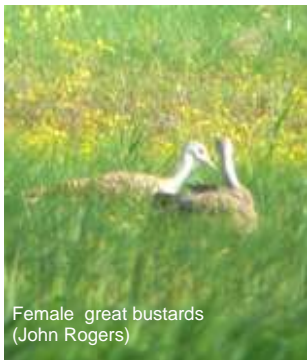


Spring birding in Austria & Hungary 08 - 16 May 2010

Our group in August 2007 at Rabensburger Weiden on the Austrian-Czech border



Young wryneck
(John Rogers)



Female great bustards
(John Rogers)

Leader: Angus Hogg Organisers: Tony & Gerda Scott

Staying for eight nights at the friendly, family run 4* HOTEL NATIONALPARK ILLMITZ once again - ideally placed on the very edge of the Nationalpark NEUSIEDLERSEE - SEEWINKEL. The hotel has most spacious rooms with en-suite accommodation, swimming pool and open-air cafe-terraces. The cuisine is excellent with many regional dishes and local wines.



Marsh harrier
(John Rogers)

Springtime holds so many delights for birders in this amazingly bird-rich corner of Austria's Burgenland. Things should be literally jumping with life at this time of the year. We will be spending many hours visiting the lakes within the Seewinkel area and looking for great bustards on the steppes of the Ferto Hansag Nemetzi park over the border in Hungary. We can marvel at the many white storks nesting in two totally different habits. Those nesting traditionally on the roofs of houses in villages around the lake and particularly in the pretty wine village of Rust. There are also those tree-nesting storks in the huge colony at the WWF reserve of Marchegg on the border with Slovakia. We will also have great views of raptors. On our last visit we saw common and honey buzzards, marsh harriers, white-tailed eagles and Eastern Imperial eagles to name but a few. Warblers, shrikes, woodpeckers, bee-eaters, nutcrackers and a cast of thousands should brighten up our birding days! We will be flying to Vienna and all of our ground travel in Austria will be provided by Blaguss Reisen who have a fleet of modern, comfortable coaches and who looked after us so well in 2007. **The cost of £1175.00 will include flights, eight nights accommodation with a buffet breakfast, one lunch and dinner each day, all coach travel within Austria and the services of our bird leader. If you would like to join us, please send a deposit of £200.00 with your application form. The balance will be payable in two instalments of £475.00 on or before 06 November 2009 and the final £500.00 by the end of February**



White storks at Rust
(Tony Scott)

Photos from top down:

- 1 - KLM Fokker 70 at Glasgow (JR);
- 2 - Hotel Nationalpark Illmitz (GS);
- 3 - Nationalpark Infocentre Illmitz (TS);
- 4 - Group at Lange Lacke (GS);
- 5 - Red-backed shrike - Illmitz (JR);
- 6 - Wryneck, Illmitz (JR);
- 7 - Observation tower, Tadten (GS).

Photo credits: JR - John Rogers;
GS - Gerda Scott; TS - Tony Scott.



Ayrshire Birders Abroad

Spring birding in Austria
& Hungary Saturday 08 May
to Sunday 16 May 2010



Itinerary

Saturday 08 May 2010

TRAVEL TO VIENNA & ILLMITZ

Meet at Dodds of Troon coach depot at 09.45 hrs. Cars may be left safely in the car park here. Drive to EDINBURGH AIRPORT to arrive there at 11.30 for a check-in at 11.55 hrs. Our LUFTHANSA flight LH 4941 (Boeing 737-300) departs at 13.55 and arrives in FRANKFURT (Main) at 16.50 hrs. We depart again at 18.40 hrs on LH 6346 (Fokker 100 - operated by Tyrolean Airways) and arrive in VIENNA at 20.10 hrs. Our coach will await us and leave SCHWECHAT AIRPORT at 20.50 - arriving at our hotel in ILLMITZ for around 22.00 hrs and time for a nightcap before retiring to our comfortable rooms.

Sunday 09 May 2010

NATIONALPARK CENTRE NEUSIEDLERSEE & SEEWINKEL LAKES

A leisurely breakfast (following a bird walk in the nearby meadows for those who wish, from 06.30 - 08.00). **Breakfast from 08.00 and today we leave at 09.15** for a visit to the nearby PARK CENTRE to find out what is about. We will then spend the rest of the morning looking at the local wet meadows - an important breeding zone for waders and other species. **We will return to the hotel for an included special buffet lunch from 13.00 - 14.00 hrs.** In the afternoon we will again stay locally - covering many areas of SEEWINKEL - the vast wetland area just east of Neusiedlersee. Here we will find a large number of saline lakes interspersed with water meadows, marshes and small woodland copses. The lakes change in size according to fluctuations in the water table and create feeding zones for migrating waders. There are a total of about 45 lakes, so it is important we get the best info from the park centre earlier in the day. One of the most popular lakes for birders is LANGE LACKE which we will visit in any event. **Resident birds include:** great egret, greylag, white-tailed eagle, grey partridge, black-headed gull, long-eared owl, crested lark, bearded tit, rook, reed bunting, corn bunting. **In summer:** black-necked grebe, little egret, night heron, little bittern, great bittern, spoonbill, white stork, shelduck, garganey, shoveler, red-crested pochard, marsh harrier, Montagu's harrier, quail, water rail, spotted crake, black-winged stilt, avocet, little ringed plover, Kentish plover, lapwing, curlew, black-tailed godwit, redshank, Mediterranean gull, common tern, turtle dove, skylark, tree pipit, short-eared owl, blue-headed wagtail, nightingale, stonechat, grasshopper warbler, Savi's warbler, sedge warbler, marsh warbler, great reed warbler, Icterine warbler, barred warbler, penduline tit, golden oriole, red-backed shrike. **On passage:** wigeon, gadwall, teal, pintail, osprey, red-footed falcon, Saker falcon, peregrine falcon, common crane, ringed plover, golden plover, grey plover, dunlin, little stint, Temminck's stint, curlew sandpiper, ruff, spotted redshank, greenshank, marsh sandpiper, wood sandpiper, common sandpiper, common snipe, little gull, lesser black-backed gull, Caspian tern, whiskered tern, black tern, white-winged black tern, bee-eater, sand martin, meadow pipit, whinchat, northern wheatear, redwing. **Return for dinner and overnight to our hotel in Illmitz. Dinner at 19.30 hrs.**

Monday 10 May 2010

HANSÁG STEPPES & FERTŐ HANSÁG NEMETZI PARK, HUNGARY

Breakfast today at 07.15 and depart 08.30 by coach. From Illmitz east to the Hungarian border, the terrain takes on an aspect of the steppes further east. A large area has been set aside for preservation of the steppe flora and fauna and the area is now home to a small number of great bustards as well as other steppe species. This protected area is bounded by two roads running from Tadten and Andau to the Hungarian border. There are observation towers on both roads to help birders scan the surrounding fields. We will be here at the best time to look for bustards, when the males should be displaying and the vegetation is low.

Photos from top down:

- 1 - Great bustards near Tadten (JR)
- 2 - Einser Kanal (JR)
- 3+4 - Nyirkai-Hany reserve (JR + TS)
- 5 - White-tailed eagle & buzzard (JR)
- 6 - Our group at WWF Marchegg (JR)
- 7 - White storks nests, Marchegg (TS)
- 8 - Gerda & Eleanora show off their new hats from Schneeberg (TS)



From here we drive as far as the border with Hungary where we can park and cross the bridge over the EINSER KANAL. The canal banks support many species of warbler, and the bridge is a good place to scan the sky for storks and raptors, especially above the treetops of the forest on the Hungarian side. We can arrange packed lunches with the hotel, so this would be an ideal place to enjoy them. On from here to cross the border into Hungary at PAMHAGEN. We will immediately notice a change in architectural style and road quality as we drive on through the villages of Pomogy, Földér, Miklósmajor and Osli. This is an area where sunflowers are grown in profusion and the terrain varies between extensive field systems and forests. Our destination this afternoon are the wetland reserves at BÖSÁRKÁNY and NYIRKAI-HANY. The coach will park on a dyke and we can bird the extensive area from a viewing tower. Thousands of amphibians rely on this important Biosphere, as do the many bird species - wetland birds as well as those on passage - all find food and rest in this extensive protected area.

Residents in the areas we visit today: great bustard, grey partridge, yellowhammer, serin, reed bunting, corn bunting. **In summer:** white stork, marsh harrier, Montagu's harrier, quail, lapwing, curlew, turtle dove, short-eared owl, cuckoo, skylark, tree pipit, yellow wagtail, nightingale, stonechat, whinchat, grasshopper warbler, river warbler, sedge warbler, marsh warbler, Icterine warbler, barred warbler, golden oriole, red-backed shrike. **On passage:** black stork, honey buzzard, sparrowhawk, Imperial eagle, red-footed falcon, Saker facon, meadow pipit, water pipit, northern wheatear, pied flycatcher. In the Hungarian reserve a wide variety of water birds and ducks - including ferruginous duck, may be seen.

On our way back to Illmitz, we will call at the town of FERTÖD, where we can relax for a short time with a coffee or a cool beer in one of the al fresco cafes near the Esterhazy Palace. Anyone wishing to do so will have time to visit the grounds of this recently restored architectural gem. The extensive grounds have similar species to many of the Viennese parks - so nuthatch, treecreeper, green woodpecker, black woodpecker and great spotted woodpecker can be searched for if we have the time. Return to our hotel for dinner (20h00) and overnight.

Tuesday 11 May 2010

THE LOWER MARCH FLOODPLAIN

Breakfast at 07.15 and depart at 08.30. Our route today takes us up towards the town of Neusiedl before joining the Autobahn which heads off to BRATISLAVA. We take an exit near the town of BAD DEUTSCH-ALTENBURG and then to MARCHEGG and the WWF reserve there. The river March is a tributary of the DONAU (Danube) which forms the border between Austria and Slovakia. Its floodplain consists of permanent marshes, water meadows and riparian woodland which is regularly inundated. The WWF reserve supports a well-known colony of tree-nesting white storks as well as many other aquatic species. We can take two trails through this reserve, but the shorter of the two holds the most birding interest. This area is also a good spot for raptors and occasionally records rarer species such as Saker falcon. On our last visit, we had good views of both white-tailed eagle and Eastern Imperial eagle in the sky together. **Residents include:** great cormorant, white-tailed eagle, goshawk, sparrowhawk, pheasant, stock dove, common kingfisher, grey-headed woodpecker, black woodpecker, middle spotted woodpecker, lesser spotted woodpecker, green woodpecker, long-tailed tit, yellowhammer, reed bunting, corn bunting. **In summer:** white stork, black stork, garganey, honey buzzard, black kite, red kite, marsh harrier, quail, spotted crane, corncrake, wryneck, collared flycatcher, penduline tit, raven. A picnic lunch will be arranged again today and we may watch raptors as we eat! After lunch we will drive on through the village of Ringelsdorf to Rabensburg and the nearby RABENSBURGER WEIDEN. These wet meadows lead to the river THAYA which forms the boundary between Austria and the Czech Republic. On our last visit here we saw marsh harriers, white-tailed eagles, common buzzards and kestrels. The whole day had given us over 20 kestrels, five Eastern Imperial eagles, 12 marsh harriers, one black kite, two hobbys, 14 black storks and a few white storks, plenty of common buzzards and one honey buzzard. In May, the number of white storks should be high. Before returning to ILLMITZ we will pay a visit to a deserted farmhouse called MAYERHOF - where we should hopefully pick up on hobby and maybe some other species too. **Back at our hotel for dinner around 20h00 and overnight.**

Photos from top down:

- 1 - View from Schneeberg (TS)
- 2 - Hochschneeberghaus (TS)
- 3 - There have to be cowbells! (TS)
- 4 - The "Feuersalamander" train (JR)
- 5 - Naturpark Hohe Wand (TS)
- 6 - Nuthatch (JR)
- 7 - Our coach from Blaguss Reisen (TS)



Wednesday 12 May 2010

THE SUMMIT OF SCHNEEBERG & HOHE WAND

Breakfast at 06.30 today and leave at 07.45. A complete change of landscape today as we drive into the foothills of the Alps. We take the road around the Neusiedlersee and skirt the town of Eisenstadt - associated with the composer Josef Haydn who was employed by the Esterhazy family for most of his life. We soon move out of Burgenland and into **Niederösterreich (Lower Austria)** near Wiener Neustadt. We soon start to climb into the hills and the village of **Puchberg-am-Schneeberg** where we leave our coach to take the mountain railway to the summit of **SCHNEEBERG** - this 2,000 metre-high mountain. We will have time for a coffee (and maybe some Apfelstrudel) at the lakeside café here.

May is the best time to see alpine birds, so we should be quite successful in our search today. There are several trails from the top station and we are also likely to see some birds from the train, as it travels at about 15kph through the spruce forests and out into the wilder area above the tree line. **After lunch at the summit restaurant (Hochschneeberghaus)**, we can set out along some of the easier paths radiating from here. **Resident species include:** golden eagle, peregrine falcon, ptarmigan, black woodpecker, grey wagtail, alpine accentor, dipper, crested tit, willow tit, wallcreeper, alpine chough, common raven, nutcracker, snow finch, common redpoll, common crossbill, rock bunting. **In summer:** water pipit, ring ouzel, western Bonelli's warbler, firecrest.

On our return to the village of Puchberg, we will drive the short distance to the **NATURPARK HOHE WAND** and its viewing platform, giving superb views of the valleys and the surrounding mountains - but most importantly, close-up views of the sheer rock face where wallcreeper have been seen, although are very thinly distributed. We should also have another chance to pick up on some of the woodland species including nutcracker and crested tit. **We will return to our hotel in Illmitz for around 19.15 and dinner at 20h00.**

Thursday 13 May 2010

LAINZER TIERGARTEN & THE VIENNA WOODS

Breakfast at 07.00 and depart 08.15. We will take the direct route (Autobahn) into the city and expect to arrive at HÜTTELDORF around 09.15. Like all former imperial cities, Vienna's rulers ensured that large tracts of forest near the city were preserved for hunting. The LAINZER TIERGARTEN is a forest park which is part of the well-known WIENERWALD (Vienna Woods) which extend across the western suburbs of the city. Happily for the deer and wild boar, this park is now a nature reserve and it supports a rich birdlife. It offers an opportunity to sample the full range of woodland species which are typical of the lowland deciduous and mixed forests of central Europe. **Resident species include:** northern goshawk, sparrowhawk, stock dove, grey-headed woodpecker, black woodpecker, lesser spotted woodpecker, nuthatch, mistle thrush, long-tailed tit, hawfinch.

In summer: honey buzzard, turtle dove, wryneck, cuckoo, tree pipit, nightingale, Icterine warbler, firecrest, collared flycatcher, red-breasted flycatcher, golden oriole, red-backed shrike amongst other species.

We will be here until about 11.45, when we will drive to KAHLENBERG, a summit of around 500 metres at the north eastern edge of the Vienna woods. From here there is a marvellous panorama over the city and its environs. **We will have lunch at the summit café (12.15 - 13.30)** where we can also admire views from the terrace, of the Donau (Danube) and the distant Alps. **We intend to walk downhill from here passing through woods and vineyards to the wine village of NUSSDORF**, where we will have time once again to sample some of the local wines at **Mayer-am-Pfarrpaltz** Heuriger which serves drinks in a shady courtyard. Beethoven stayed here in 1817 while working on his ninth symphony, and there is even a memorial to the composer which dates from 1863. His name and other associations with him turn up in a few places here, the street called Beethoven-gang will lead us into the village and we then turn into Eroicagasse (named after Beethoven's third symphony) before entering Nussdorf from the Kahlenberger Strasse. All in all, this should be a pleasant afternoon walk - both for birds and other general interest. **We will be in Nussdorf from around 15.30 to 17.15 - before returning by coach to Illmitz for dinner at 19h30.**

Photos from top down:

- 1 - Bee-eaters, Neusiedlersee (JR)
- 2 - White stork nest at Rust (TS)
- 3 - A courtyard restaurant, Rust (GS)
- 4 - Neusiedler fish specialities (JR)
- 5 - Longhorn sheep in Hungary (JR)
- 6 - Great egret, Neusiedlersee (JR)
- 7 - Modern ÖBB unit in Wien (TS)



Friday 14 May 2010

NEUSIEDLERSEE CIRCULAR

Breakfast from 07.00 and depart at 08.30. Today we start by heading north to WEIDEN-AM-SEE where we will visit the Loess cliffs (clay and sand) just a few hundred metres from the village. This is a good area for bee-eaters and they share the cliff side with nesting kestrels, sparrows and little owls. Hoopoes, goldfinches and a variety of song birds can all be experienced here. From here we drive on through NEUSIEDL-AM-SEE pausing for a short walk out on the causeway to the lake. Between here and Weiden is an area of poplars where we hope to locate penduline tits, Bonelli's warblers, moustached and great reed warblers. We then drive on through Purbach and leave the main road to drive down to the lake side once again and to **the town of RUST, famous for its white stork nests** which are perched on many chimneys throughout the town. At this time there should be much displaying and clattering of bills as stork family life moves up into top gear. Rust has developed a stork protection programme in collaboration with WWF, as in the past, numbers tended to fluctuate greatly. **After lunch at one of the many charming inns and restaurants, we will have time to bird the lake shore** before moving on in a southerly direction. Heading up through Siegendorf we soon reach the Hungarian border again before the town of SOPRON. **We then drive along the southern shore of Neusiedlersee (known as FERTŐ here in Hungary).** Through the town of FERTÖD once again before reaching the **Hungarian National Park Centre.** We may then walk out to the south-eastern end of the lake known as SILBERSEE (EZÜST-TÓ) where there are viewing towers to help see over the water. Lake FERTŐ was declared a protected landscape area in 1977, a Biosphere Reserve in 1979, and has had World Heritage status since 2001. The lake has no natural outlet, being drained by the HANSÁG main canal. **We will spend an hour or so here before returning to Illmitz for around 19h00 and dinner at 20h00.** The bird species seen here are similar to those seen at Lange Lacke. Today we will have made a complete circle around Neusiedlersee.

Saturday 15 May 2010

DONAU-AUEN NATIONAL PARK or a CULTURAL DAY IN VIENNA

Breakfast from 07.00 and leave at 08.30. We first drive to NEUSIEDL-AM-SEE where those travelling to VIENNA for a cultural visit alight at the railway station to **take the train in to WIEN Südbahnhof.** **The birders continue with Angus to the floodplains of the River Danube (Donau)** between Vienna and Bratislava in Slovakia. Almost 40km of riverbank on either side has been preserved as a linear park extending from the eastern suburbs of Vienna to the Slovak border. There are several habitats within the park, including riparian woodland, broadleaved woodland on the higher ground, lowland wet meadows, oxbows and reedbeds. This is a very rich eco-system for woodland and aquatic breeding birds and is a tremendous natural resource right on Vienna's doorstep. **Resident birds:** Northern goshawk, common kingfisher, black, lesser spotted and middle spotted woodpeckers, long-tailed tit, Eurasian treecreeper, hawfinch, yellowhammer, reed bunting. **In summer:** white stork, honey buzzard, black kite, little ringed plover, common sandpiper, turtle dove, wryneck, cuckoo, skylark, tree pipit, nightingale, stonechat, grasshopper, Savi's, river, sedge, marsh, great reed, Icterine, barred and willow warblers, collared flycatcher, penduline tit, golden oriole, red-backed shrike. **Passage:** great egret, black stork, marsh harrier, greenshank, wood and green sandpipers, common, Caspian and black terns, meadow pipit, grey wagtail, blue-headed wagtail, whinchat, pied flycatcher. **Today we can arrange packed lunches for the birding group.** After lunch, the birding group return to the NEUSIEDLERSEE LAKES of **Oberstinkersee, Unterstinkersee, Zicklacke,** and a huge number of lakes and pools which are interlinked with footpaths and observation towers. The wooded areas around ILLMITZ hold Syrian woodpeckers. **The coach will collect the Vienna group at an agreed time** back in Neusiedl-am-See station. Both groups will meet again at 19h30 for dinner. **The Vienna group have the chance of visiting the wonderful KUNSTHISTORISCHES MUSEUM** - a treasure house of art and natural history. The LEOPOLD MUSEUM is also worth visiting - especially for a wonderful collection of paintings - the largest in the world - by the Austrian artist Egon Schiele. **We will arrange lunch at a typical Vienna 'Beisl'.** This is what the trattoria is to Italy - a simple restaurant offering local specialities in an agreeably informal atmosphere.

Photos:

- 1: Two colourful characters! Glasgow airport
- 2: Ferruginous Duck, Kapuvarer Erlen
- 3: Spotted redshank, Illmitz 4: Whinchat, Illmitz
- 5: Common sandpiper and 6: Wood sandpiper - Illmitz 7: Watching bee-eaters, Kapuvarer Erlen, Hungary 8: Seewinkel National Park
- 9: Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna
- 10: Avocets, Illmitz 11: Looking west across Neusiedlersee 12: Horse-drawn carriage, Seewinkel 13: The cultural group on a Vienna tram 14: Breakfast buffet at our hotel

Sunday 16 May 2010

SEEWINKEL & TRAVEL TO VIENNA & FLIGHTS HOME

Breakfast from 07.30. Today we have ample time for a birding experience with a difference. We can organise a **traditional horse and carriage ride through the National Park**, getting to places the coach cannot reach and this should ensure some excellent birding. **We will organise the tour to start at 09.30 and be back to the hotel for 12.30.** We should pick up on lots of interesting species again and a final chance for those (if any) which may have eluded us during the course of the week. This should be a unique way to finish our stay in Burgenland. **Lunch may be taken (13h00) at our hotel before departure to VIENNA (Schwechat) INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT at 15.15 hrs.** Our flights will be as follows: Check-in from 16.25 for the 18.25 LUFTHANSA flight LH3537 to FRANKFURT (MAIN) - arriving at 19.50 hrs. (Boeing 737 - 300). Flight Lh4944 departs again at 21.55 and **our arrival in EDINBURGH is 22.50 hrs.** Our coach will be waiting to speed us back to AYR for around 00.30 hrs.(17 May). **Please note:** Times of flights may change if we can arrange more convenient and lower priced fares nearer the time.

