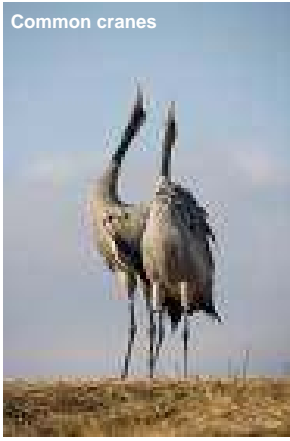


Common cranes



Rough-legged buzzard



National Park sign



Zingst harbour



Lighthouse, Zingst



IV Jahreszeiten Hotel



Caspian tern, Zingst



The Crane Migration in the Pomeranian & Müritz National Parks, Germany

Friday 02 - Monday 12 October 2015

Bird Leader: Angus Hogg Arranged by Tony & Gerda Scott

ITINERARY

Friday 02 October 2015

Glasgow to Berlin by air and coach to Zingst (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)

Meet at Glasgow International Airport (Main terminal) at 08.10 hrs to check in for the easyJet flight at 10.20 hrs to BERLIN SCHÖNEFELD. Arrive 13.40 CET. We will then be collected by luxury mini-coach for the drive north-east around Berlin and Oranienburg, the A24 and A19 Autobahnen to ROSTOCK and along the E22 to the coastal town of ZINGST and our 4* HOTEL IV JAHRESZEITEN. The distance is 348 km and driving time will be around 3 hours and 30 minutes. We should board our coach around 14.20 and, allowing a stop en-route for refreshments, should arrive at our hotel about 18.30 hrs. Check in to our rooms and have dinner about 19.45 hrs.

Saturday 03 October 2015

The heart of the Pomeranian-Boddenlandschaft National Park

After breakfast (07.30) our coach will collect us at 08.45 hrs to join a local ranger, who will guide us through parts of the protected zone of the national park which are only open to a limited number of visitors. The West-Pommersche-Boddenlandschaft is the largest nature reserve, not only around the Mecklenburger Bucht, but in the whole of the Ostsee. A landscape of steep coastlines, dunes, spits of land, saltmarsh and shallow waters, it extends from the DARSS-ZINGST PENINSULA to the west coast of the island of Rügen. The term 'Bodden' in the name of the national park refers to the shallow saltwater lagoons that are characteristic of this largely unspoilt part of Central Europe. The national park is also Europe's biggest crane roost, with around 60,000 cranes flying in on their way south each autumn. It is indeed the biggest resting area for cranes in central Europe. Other birds we should find in the general area include: black and red-throated divers, great-crested grebes, red-necked grebes, little grebes, grey herons, whooper swans and mute swans, Barnacle geese, greylags, white-fronted geese, shoveler, gadwall, wigeon, teal, garganey, pintail, goldeneye, tufted ducks, pochard, red-crested pochard, goosander, red-breasted merganser, shelduck, marsh harriers, red kites, rough-legged buzzards, common buzzards, sparrowhawks, goshawks, white-tailed eagles, osprey, hobby etc.

The area of Bodden landscape has long been known as an internationally important area. Among the 163 species of breeding birds of the park are 70 species that are on the red list of endangered breeding birds of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. 67 breeding bird species here are classified in the red list of the whole of Germany.

We will have time for a little lunch in and around the harbour of Zingst, before taking our coach for an afternoon circuit of the hides and viewing points in other parts of the national park at Prerow, Darsser Ort and overlooking the protected islands of KIRR and OIE. Birds in the area around Darss and the islands of Kirr and Oie and the Darsser-Ort woodlands include:- white-tailed eagle, osprey, black, great-spotted and lesser-spotted woodpeckers, as well as many woodland birds including nuthatch and tree creeper. The two islands hold mute, whooper and Bewick's swans, Bean, white-fronted and greylag geese, wigeon, mallard, teal, long-tailed duck, red-crested pochard, common crane, little gull, Mediterranean gull, common tern, avocet and more.

A few words about our hotel, the IV JAHRESZEITEN in Zingst. It was built in 2004 and lies on the edge of this small harbour town - directly on the border of the national park. There are 95 spacious bedrooms with en-suite facilities, and with hair dryers and bathrobes. There is a TV, telephone, radio, easy chairs and a desk in each room. There are three restaurants, a cafe-bistro, lift to all floors and a garden with terrace. There is also an indoor swimming pool and a wellness area with sauna, steam baths and a fitness room. Wi-Fi is available in the hotel. Dinner at our hotel around 19.30 hrs.

Part of the Darss-Zingst peninsula



Darss-Zingst





Steam train 'Molli' in Bad Doberan



...and at Heiligendamm



Bearded reedling, Conventer See



Conventer See



Our group at Nonnensee, 2010



Karen Wiktor & John Rogers
Spycker See, 2010

Sunday 04 October 2015

Bad Doberan, the steam train 'MOLLI' & a walk around the nature reserve of CONVENTER SEE at Heiligendamm

After breakfast at 07.15, our coach will collect us at 08.30. Today we are heading west, but first to nearby Barth and the E22 which takes from Löbnitz through Ribnitz-Damngarten to ROSTOCK and on coastwards to the spa town of BAD DOBERAN. **This is the inland terminus of the much-loved steam railway known as 'MOLLI'**. The journey starts normally enough in a traditional railway station, but the line then takes us out into the main street as we steam past all the shoppers, holidaymakers, cars and cyclists! Definitely worth a photograph or two! We then take to the fields and the woodlands as we continue our journey through unspoilt nature to reach the famous resort of HEILIGENDAMM, where Angela Merkel hosted a G8 conference at the 5* Kempinski Grand Hotel a few years ago. **We continue to the coastal terminus of KÜHLUNGSBORN, where we have time to explore before lunch.**

The distance to Bad Doberan from Zingst is 81 km and we expect to arrive around 09.45. **Our steam train departs at 10.36 and we arrive in Kühlungsborn for 11.15. After a light lunch, we join our coach for HEILIGENDAMM and the nature reserve of CONVENTER SEE which we reach by footpath. We stay in this protected area from 13.30 to 17.00 hrs.** The lake and surrounding area is a magnet for a variety of bird species during the autumn migration period. These include great-crested grebe, cormorant, grey heron, white stork, mute, whooper and Bewick's swans, bean, white-fronted, greylag and Canada geese, shelduck, wigeon, gadwall, teal, mallard, long-tailed duck, garganey, shoveler, pochard, tufted duck, scaup, goldeneye, red-breasted merganser, goosander, osprey, common crane, coot, lapwing, golden plover, snipe, curlew, spotted redshank, common redshank, wood sandpiper, ruff, herring, common and black-headed gull. Breeding / resident birds include little grebe, bittern, marsh harrier, water rail, moorhen, lapwing, ringed and little ringed plovers, lesser-spotted woodpecker, red-backed shrike, Savi's warbler, river warbler, grasshopper warbler, sedge warbler, marsh warbler, great reed warbler, thrush-nightingale, whinchat, bearded reedling and penduline tit. **We will have ample time to explore the fringes of the lake and visit the hide and viewing tower. We return to our hotel in Zingst for around 18.30 and dinner will be at 19.30 hrs.**



Monday 05 October 2015

The islands of RÜGEN and UMMANZ

Breakfast at 07.15 and depart on our coach at 08.30. Driving via Bart and then heading east to the town of STRALSUND, where we cross the Sound of Stralsund by the new bridge to the island of RÜGEN.

At the town of BERGEN, we have arranged to meet a local ornithologist, Frau Kirsten Wiktor in the Lidl car park at 10.00. Kirsten will be with us for the rest of the day as we do a circular tour and birdwatch of the islands, which includes UMMANZ and across the WITOWER FERRY to the WIEKER BODDEN. We will of course, be guided by Kirsten who will have up-to-date knowledge of where the cranes and other species may be at this time. **One area we are more or less guaranteed to see large groups of cranes feeding, will be at the SPYCKER SEE, a lake just to the east of the GROSSER JASMUNDER BODDEN. First of all though, we will visit the NONNENSEE just outside Bergen. We had great sightings of white-tailed eagle here on our last visit in 2010.**

RÜGEN and the WESTRÜGENSCHE BODDEN LANDSCAPE holds a variety of birds at this time and includes all the swans, geese and duck species seen elsewhere, but also a few others such as great skua and little stint. This should prove to be a most interesting and exciting day of great landscapes and bird sightings. LUNCH will be at a small fish restaurant near the Jasmunder Bodden. **We will say goodbye to Kirsten back in Bergen around 17.15 hrs, and we return to our hotel in Zingst for around 18.45. Dinner at 19.45 hrs.**

Arrival at Vitte, Hiddensee



Migrating swallows, Vitte



Dunlin, from the bund near Vitte



An alfresco snack in Kloster

John scanning from the bund



Kranich Ranger



At the crane feeding area



Tuesday 06 October 2015

A CRUISE from ZINGST to the ISLAND OF HIDDENSEE

After breakfast (07.00), time to walk down to the nearby harbour at ZINGST for our 09.00 hrs departure by ship to the island of HIDDENSEE. The cruise takes us along the Zingst Peninsula and passes the island of BOCK, reaching an area of shallow water known as VIERENDEHL GRUND. We then turn north with Hiddensee to port and the island of RÜGEN to starboard. Reaching the VITTER BODDEN, we will soon arrive at the small harbour of VITTE (Capital of Hiddensee) where we go ashore at around 11.30.

Hiddensee has a population of 1300 and is known as the 'Pearl of the Baltic'. It lies to the west of Rügen and the island is 18 kilometres long but only 300 metres at its most narrow point. It is virtually car free and is well known for its protected natural landscape, flora and fauna. The thatched buildings give a homely feeling to "Dat söte Länneken" (The sweet little land) - a name the locals give to Hiddensee. The soft hills of the north rise to just 70 metres above sea level - but the chalk cliffs here still manage to impress. The landscape is given character by the many stands of sea buckthorn, elderberry, brambles and broom. There are large areas of sheltered reeds and marshes - ideal habitat for waders and for common cranes too of course. The almost unbroken line of the west coast has fine, long sandy beaches. The island is part of the NATIONALPARK VORPOMMERSCHE BODDEN LANDSCHAFT. **Birds we should find here include:** black and red-throated divers, great-crested grebes, red-necked grebes, little grebes, grey herons, whooper swans and mute swans, Barnacle geese, greylags, white-fronted geese, shoveler, gadwall, wigeon, teal, garganey, pintail, goldeneye, tufted ducks, pochard, red-crested pochard, goosander, red-breasted merganser, shelduck, marsh harriers, red kites, rough-legged buzzards, common buzzards, sparrowhawks, goshawks, white-tailed eagles, osprey, hobby etc.

On arrival in VITTE, we will walk through the village the short distance to the **National Park Centre to check what is about, then on along the raised bund with excellent views to both sides of the island and the short and relaxed walk to the next village of KLOSTER (2 km)**. On the way, we will take the path along the raised bund, allowing us excellent views of both sides of this narrow island. Here we will have extensive views of waders and gulls on the sea to the left, and to the right, the fields and saltmarsh which usually contain numerous goose species, including Barnacle. In the village of Kloster we can buy a roll with freshly smoked fish fillets from one of the smokehouses with tables outside. Quite rustic but great, simple food served along with a 'helles' Bier or whatever else takes your fancy. Great cakes and soups as well. KLOSTER is well worth exploring, and the Heimat Museum is in the old lifeboat station, and apart from describing life as it used to be on the island, the most precious possession is the 'Hiddenseer Gold', a piece of Viking jewellery crafted in the 10th century and found on Hiddensee in 1872.

We will all meet up again at 14.45 for our walk back to VITTE where our ship departs again at 16.00 hrs. The dune heaths around Vitte also provide opportunities to see skylarks, corn buntings, northern wheatear, tawny pipit (during the relevant seasons), and now there should be views of marsh harrier, avocet and whimbrel around the reeds and pools, as well as migrating barn swallows - last time there were large flocks of them near Vitte. On the way back to Zingst, the vessel cruises close to land all the way, hopefully allowing good views of cranes coming in to roost as dusk draws ever closer. **We expect to be back at the hotel shortly after 19.00 hrs with dinner at 20.00 hrs tonight.**

Wednesday 07 October 2015

CRANES, RAPTORS & SEABIRDS at the Crane Centre in Gross Mohrdorf, plus an evening cruise to the CRANE ROOST AT PRAMORT

Breakfast from 07.30 and a departure by coach at 09.00. We leave again via Barth, then through Neu Bartelshagen and along a series of country roads via Günz, to the village of GROSS-MOHRDORF where the Crane Information Centre is located (arriving at 10.00).

We will be met by a 'Kranich Ranger' (Kranich is German for crane), **who will give us a short introductory talk before heading out to the crane feeding areas around the PROHNER reservoir, BARHOFFTER KLIFF and (if time allows), KIMMSBACKER HAGEN.** We will arrange for a quick snack stop around 12.30 - 13.00 hrs. On our last visit to the crane feeding areas, we saw flocks of between 500 and 1500 cranes, as well as numerous raptors, including common kestrels, over 50 common buzzards (!!), eight red kites and four white-tailed eagles. We also had great views of white-fronted, greylag and Barnacle geese. Flocks of around 300 lapwings were seen in the area as well as over 400 golden plover and ringed plover. **We return to ZINGST for 15.00 hrs and have a little time before boarding our ship. MS "Schapode", for the EVENING CRUISE to view the crane roosts out at PRAMORT.**

All aboard the crane cruise



We should reach the first roost within 90 minutes of departure. This is a truly wonderful experience, with huge numbers of cranes flying in and giving their evocative calls. Around 17,000 common cranes were at the final roost when we visited in 2010. En route we also saw little grebe, great-crested grebe, cormorant, great egret, grey heron, mute swans in vast numbers (at least 6,000!), Canada and greylag geese, wigeon, tufted duck, goldeneye, red-breasted merganser, marsh harrier, common snipe, common, black-headed, yellow-legged, lesser and great black-backed gulls, common tern, Caspian tern and more.

Island of Vilm



Dinner will be served on board as we return from the crane roosts at PRAMORT to the harbour of ZINGST. We should be back at our hotel around 21.00 hrs.

Thursday 08 October 2015

The Island of VILM and the MÖNCHGUT PENINSULA on Rügen

Breakfast at 07.00 and depart at 08.00 hrs. We take the same route via STRALSUND to the Island of Rügen once again. This time, we intend to take the southerly island route along what is known as the 'Deutsche Alleenstrasse' (The German tree-lined avenue route). This directs us through the villages of GUSTOW, POSERITZ and GARZ and through the 'White Town' of PUTTBUS to the harbour of LAUTERBACH for around 09.30.

Lines of cormorants and gulls, Vilm



From here we board the motor vessel "Julchen" to the ISLAND OF VILM at 10.00 hrs. If we wish, we have a wildlife guide who will take us on a circular walk of the island lasting just under two hours. Alternatively, our group can opt to birdwatch on our own. We return to Lauterbach at 12.35 - arriving 13.00 hrs.

Lesser-spotted woodpecker, Vilm



The island was declared a nature reserve in 1936 and since October 1990, has been part of the BIOSPHERE RESERVE OF SOUTH-EAST RÜGEN. It is 2.5 km in length and around 94 hectares in overall size. Its highest point is merely 37.8 metres above sea level. The island is mainly wooded and the beech woods of the north end (Der Große Vilm) are some of the oldest and important natural woodlands in north-eastern Germany. Birdlife is rich, with all five species of woodpecker present and they use the many holes and hollow trees to nest and roost. They have some quite odd neighbours, as the red-breasted mergansers also use the hollow trees as roosts. The steep (but not high) coastal areas offer nesting opportunities to sand martins and shelducks. White-tailed eagles are seen here and both cormorants and grey herons fish the waters. Gulls and terns abound and the area is a breeding place for Caspian terns, which can also be seen on passage. A full range of woodland birds may be seen and we should most certainly get glimpses of many of them including short-toed tree creeper and nuthatch.

Ferry to Vilm



In Lauterbach, there are a number of opportunities for a snack lunch, before driving around to the MÖNCHGUT PENINSULA, for a walk around the headland at KLEIN ZICKER. Our route is via SELLIN and down the coast to LOBBE, THIESSOW and KLEIN ZICKER for around 14.30.

Klein Zicker



The ZICKERSCHEN HILLS are full of wild flowers in spring and summer - and now, the autumn colours invite us to tread the grassy paths with their panoramic views across this beautiful part of Rügen. The neat whitewashed cottages of Klein and Gross Zicker are mainly thatched and their gardens attract many birds - as do the woodlands beyond. What may we see here? Skylarks, woodlarks, shore (or horned) larks; crested larks are present throughout the year; sand martins and barn swallows may well have gone south, but a few migratory birds may pass through - house martins too. Wagtails (grey, pied and yellow), tawny pipits, tree, meadow, rock and water pipits; red-backed and great grey shrikes, dunnocks, black redstarts, stonechats, fieldfares, song and mistle thrushes, lesser and common whitethroats, sedge warblers, reed warblers, grasshopper warblers, marsh warblers, Icterine warblers, garden warblers, chiffchaffs - all these may well be on passage at this time. Goldcrests will be around, as will firecrests, great, coal, blue, crested, willow and marsh tits, long-tailed tits, penduline tits, nuthatches, short-toed tree creepers, jays, jackdaws, ravens, tree sparrows, redpolls, linnets, goldfinches, siskins, bullfinches, hawfinches - and all this before we even start on waders, ducks and seabirds!

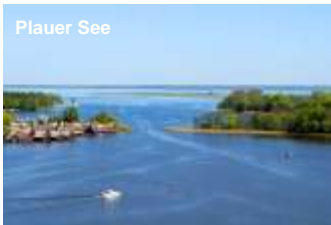
Sand martin in summer



When we were last here, there were huge drops of migrants, particularly goldcrests on the headland. It was amazing to see trees full of these tiny birds furiously eating away.....and nearby were grazing deer. A scene which remains strongly in memory. We leave Klein Zicker once again at 16.30 for our drive back to the mainland and through STRALSUND to reach our hotel, the IV JAHRESZEITEN in Zingst for about 18.45. Dinner at 19.45 hrs.

Klein Zicker headland





Plauer See



View from hotel



Hotel Harmonie



Waren



National Park images



Friday 09 October 2015

PLAUER SEE Reserve and the lakeside town of WAREN (MÜRITZ) and our new residence - the 4* HOTEL HARMONIE

Time to say goodbye to Zingst and the IV JAHRESZEITEN hotel. Breakfast today at 07.15 and depart 09.00 after check-out. Our route takes us via ROSTOCK to the A19 (E55) Autobahn and we exit at junction 16 (Malchow). It is then just a short drive along the B192 to the lake of **PLAUER SEE** - a wetland of national importance. We will park on the north shore where the best views across the reserve are possible. **At this time of the year, species which could be showing include: a variety of geese and duck species, as well as white-tailed eagle, osprey, common crane, black tern and common tern. Here from 11.00 until 12.30.**

It is then time for **LUNCH** which will be in the town of MALCHOW (12.45 to 14.15). The last leg of our drive to WAREN is just 25 km, and we should reach our **4* HOTEL HARMONIE around 14.45**. Waren has a lively harbour and marina on the MÜRITZSEE. The whole area has over 100 notable lakes and many more rivers, streams and ponds. The area to the south of Waren is a wonderful region of wooded wilderness where ospreys, white-tailed eagles and common cranes abound. In addition of course, the wide variety and numbers of waterfowl and other birds.

A word about the HOTEL HARMONIE. The historic building is in neo-Baroque style, and tastefully furnished. A family-run establishment, it has superb views across the lake (Müritzsee) and to the old town itself. There are 23 stylish bedrooms decorated in soft, warm colours. All rooms are en suite and well equipped with TV, safe, minibar and internet access. There is a breakfast room in the hotel, and a separate restaurant next door, ("Alte Tankstelle") where we will have dinner for the next three evenings. The hotel has a Wellness area with beauty parlour, special showers, whirlpool baths, Egyptian steam sauna, Finnish sauna and massage parlour. A lift gives access to all floors. **There will be ample time for a birding walk along the lake shore before dusk (or alternatively), time to explore the town itself. DINNER will be at 19.30 hrs tonight.**

Saturday 10 October 2015

A DAY IN THE MÜRITZ NATIONAL PARK

Breakfast at the Hotel Harmonie from 07.30. A ranger from the Müritz National Park will join us at 09.00 to show us the best birding spots. One of the park buses will be at our disposal for the day, as we make a tour of the woodlands, lakes and meadows which make up this extensive national park. The MÜRITZSEE - the largest lake in the region - with its glittering waters and huge forests are meshed together like parts of a jigsaw puzzle. About 12,000 years ago a thick ice shield covered this landscape. The glaciers carried masses of material along and created the morains (or hills). It also left wide lake basins, river valleys and washed-out areas of sand. This has formed the landscape we see today with its ongoing influence on the large population of birds and other wildlife here now. Bird life in the MÜRITZ can be observed from a large network of footpaths which connect with a series of hides, platforms and lookout towers.

We drive first of all to the WARNKER SEE, one of the most important waterbird feeding and roosting areas in the MÜRITZ. After this, we call in to the National Park Centre at FEDEROW, where we can see this year's live footage of the osprey breeding successes. Following a short lunch break, we head off for TORGELOWER SEE, the GROSSER VARCHENTINER SEE, the meadows of SCHWABENDORFER WIESEN and the RITTERMANNHÄGER SEE. From the hides at all these lakes and meadows we should get sightings of white-tailed eagle, red kite, common buzzard, kingfisher and much more. The areas we will be visiting are within and around the national park, and at this time one of the most exciting for birders, with not only common crane flocks abounding, but both white-fronted and bean geese flocks, lapwings, golden plovers and more. The list of super birding places is almost endless, and our local birder will undoubtedly know what is to be seen and where at this particular time.

Finally, we return to our hotel in WAREN for dinner at 19.30 hrs.





Boarding the National Park bus



On board DS Europa



Red kite seen from the cruise



Ian gets the masses of coot in focus



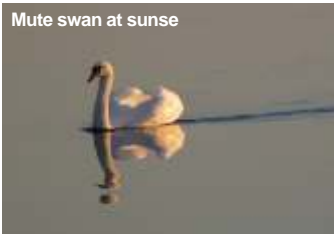
Waren



Hide at Reederangsee



In the hide



Mute swan at sunse

Sunday 11 October 2015

Sailing on the MÜRITZ LAKES and a late afternoon walk to the CRANE ROOST at REEDERANGSEE

The special thing about the Müritz National Park are its lakes. Their multitude and variety maintain habitats for innumerable plants and animals. While the bladderwort is catching tiny crayfish below the surface of the water, yellow and white waterlilies are flowering above the surface, and the burr-reed is stretching up its thorny fronds. Something is always moving whether visible to the human eye or not. In the reed bed the rare bittern (locally known as 'bog-bullock' because of its muffled calls in spring and early summer) may be glimpsed. Ospreys and white-tailed eagles both benefit from an abundance of fish in the lakes and the common cranes prefer to breed in the swampy forests and roost on the edges of the marshes and bogs. The watercourses between the lakes offer a natural habitat for beavers, otters and kingfishers. Today we will see the landscape and the bird life from the water and hopefully get sightings of both beaver and otter - as well as a variety of bird species, of course. **Breakfast at 07.30 and we'll walk down to the nearby harbour board the steamer DS EUROPA at 09.30 for the THREE-LAKE CRUISE departing at 10.00 and returning at 12.30.** Our route takes us through the idyllic waterway, the REEK-KANAL, to reach the ELDENBURGER SEE and the KÖLPINSEE. Our return journey is through the BINNENMÜRITZ (Inner Müritzsee) and the MÜRITZHALS (the neck of Lake Müritz). **From the decks of the steamer in 2010 we saw great-crested grebes, large numbers of wigeon, red-crested pochard, tufted duck, goldeneye, six white-tailed eagles, osprey, kingfisher, 3,000+ common coot on migration from Russia and much more.**

We then have ample time for lunch and a look around Waren. At 15.30 we take the National Park vehicle out to the park centre at FEDEROW once again. Here we join our ranger for a leisurely walk through the meadows and forest to the hide which overlooks the REEDERANGSEE and the crane roost. Last time we were here, we enjoyed a wonderful spectacle of large groups of common cranes flying into the reeds at sunset. We also had excellent sightings of great egret, grey heron, whooper and mute swans, white-tailed eagle, osprey and red kite - as well as the 7,000 or so common cranes.

We return on the bus to Waren and dinner at our hotel around 20.00 hrs.

Monday 12 October 2015

DRIVE TO BERLIN AND OUR FLIGHT BACK TO GLASGOW

Breakfast from 07.00 hrs and depart Waren at 08.45 to join our coach for the transfer to BERLIN Schönefeld Airport. We have around 250 kilometres to travel and our route will take us along the B192 to MALCHOW and the Autobahn A18 to WITTSTOCK from where we continue on the A24. We continue past the town of NEURUPPIN as we head south. We then take the road south-east to bypass BERLIN, circling the city to finally head north once again to the airport. **Check-in time is 12.10 for the 14.10 hrs easyJet flight to GLASGOW, where we arrive at 15.35 hrs.** There will be time for a little lunch before boarding at about 13.30 hrs.

Tour devised by Tony & Gerda Scott, Gabriele Kratzsch of Tour-Bu - the tourist authority of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in Rostock, and Angus Hogg. Photos by Tony & Gerda Scott and John Rogers (and the tourist authorities).



Common crane roost at Reederangsee



Great egret