

## **Spring Natural History Tour 19 – 26 May 2012**

(Tour Code: SNH)

**Leaders: Peter Carty and Vladimir Trifonov**

**Price: £950**

(Based on a group of eight or more. A smaller group will incur a supplement).

We felt it was time to reintroduce a natural history tour into the programme, but the format is quite different. It is not a long journey all over Bulgaria, but a week in one place exploring at walking pace with plenty of time to observe flowers, birds and butterflies in one of Bulgaria's richest areas for nature. We have arranged to use a no frills airline on this occasion to make use of the new airport at Plovdiv, about a two hour drive from your hotel for the week.

Peter Carty is the National Trust's Countryside, Parkland and Garden Manager in South Shropshire. He worked as a warden for 26 years, in a variety of different areas including the Sefton Coast in Merseyside, Sandscale Haws in Cumbria, Aride Island in the Seychelles and Egilsay in Orkney. He is a keen birder and enthusiastic observer of plants, reptiles, amphibians, dragonflies, butterflies and mammals.

Vladimir Trifonov has a Master's Degree and his thesis was in the field of Botany and Conservation of the Environment. During the last 10 years he has taken part in monitoring plant species in the Eastern Rodopi, the mapping of sites in Natura 2000 zones, research, conservation and monitoring of Griffon Vulture and Imperial Eagle. He has been an enthusiastic leader of natural history tours since 2009.

Our butterfly tour leader, Nick Greatorex-Davies has kindly suggested possible butterflies for this new tour. There should be Swallowtail, Scarce Swallowtail, Southern Festoon (should still be out), Eastern Festoon (will be fresh), Little Tiger

Blue (in hot rocky valleys and hillsides with Christ's Thorn – *Paliurus spina-christi*), Freyer's Purple Emperor (should be coming out unless it is a late season) Southern White Admiral and Lesser Spotted Fritillary. Other possibilities include Eastern Dappled White, Krueper's Small White (especially around Studen Kladenets), Black-veined White, Berger's Clouded Yellow, Green Underside Blue, Large Tortoiseshell, Marbled, Queen of Spain, Spotted, Knapweed, Glanville and Marsh Fritillaries. Small Bath White, Grecian Copper and Camberwell Beauty might be seen.

Bulgaria's beautiful scenery, friendly people and excellent wine and food are additional highlights. The BBFS offers you the benefits of over thirty-five years' experience of organising tours to Bulgaria and excellent value. The accommodation is comfortable (and conveniently situated!) but not luxurious. The holiday is on a Half-Board basis. For your financial protection our tour operators, Balkania Travel Ltd. are licensed by the UK Civil Aviation Authority and bonded both by the CAA, ATOL 4465 and IATA, number 91-2 7839. Our tour price includes a donation to the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds or other conservation organisation in Bulgaria.

Final details will be sent to participants with their tickets approximately two weeks before departure.

**Projected Itinerary** (which may be subject to adjustment)

- Saturday 19 May** Early morning flight from Stansted to Plovdiv. Drive southeast to Dolno Cherkovishte for a seven night stay.
- Sunday 20 May** Explore the area around Studen Kladenets reservoir for *Haberlea rhodopensis*, a Balkan endemic species. Visit to the BSPB activities area for observation of vulture feeding and to see conservation work in the protected areas

- of the region. Afternoon visit to see *Orchis laxiflora*. Possible birds are Griffon, Egyptian and Black Vultures, Black Kite, Short-toed Eagle.
- Monday 21 May** Walking in the protected areas around Madzharovo, looking for *Verbascum rorripifolium*, *Verbascum humile*, *Alyssoides bulgarica*, *Genista rumelica*, *Salix xanthicola* and birds such as Hoopoe, wheatears, warblers, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon.
- Tuesday 22 May** Visit the ancient town of Perperikon and explore the protected area Oreshari for *Adiantum capillus*, *Inula aschersoniana*, *Trachelium rumelianum* and Alpine Swift, Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Black Stork, Roller.
- Wednesday 23 May** Visit the only locality in Bulgaria for *Orchis provincialis* in Kirkovo region and *Quercus coccifera* (*Kermes Oak*) near Kayaloba. Birds today might include Short-toed Eagle, Raven, Booted Eagle, shrikes and wheatears.
- Thursday 24 May** Visit to Ivailovgrad, the protected area of Dupkata, for *Hymantoglossum caprinum*, *Ophrys mammosa*, *Ophrys cornuta*. Also the protected area Likana, the only known locality in Bulgaria for *Cephalanthera epipactoides* and *Eriolobus trilobata*. The Ivailovgrad dam protected area is home to otters, tortoises, Hobby, shrikes and Egyptian Vulture.
- Friday 25 May** Visit to Raven village and Tatul, a Thracian tomb and sanctuary, and explore a "Petrified Forest".

**Saturday 26 May** Drive to Plovdiv, with one or two observation stops along the way. Return flight to Stansted,

**OUR PRICE INCLUDES:**

- Return Ryan Air flights from Stansted to Plovdiv. We shall arrange your usual allowance of 20kg checked in baggage. See separate Note about Flights.
- Half Board.
- Accommodation in a small (family-run) hotel with en suite facilities on a twin bedded shared occupancy basis.
- Airport Taxes.
- Coach for transfers and excursions.
- Specialist British and Bulgarian leaders.
- Donation to Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds or other conservation organisation.
- All reserve entrance fees.

**NOT INCLUDED:**

- Lunches (about £4 - 5).
- Travel Insurance (compulsory). Balkania Travel can advise.
- Drinks and personal expenses such as gratuities.
- Single room supplement (£70).

Published August 2011.

Please note that from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011, Balkania Travel Ltd. will have a new address: Office 3.08 Avanta Harrow, 79 College Road, Harrow, Middlesex. HA1 1BD. The phone numbers will remain the same.