



European mink with a frog it has just caught. (Zoltán Gergely Nagy)

ROMANIA MAMMAL TOUR

with **SAKERTOURS**

30th of August - 7st of September 2025

Leader: Zoltán Gergely Nagy

Assisted by: Zsolt Babos, Zsolt Hegyeli, Csaba Jére and János Oláh

In 2025 we have concluded our 6th Romania Mammal Tour, now a firmly established and consistently mammal-packed adventure for any enthusiast of Europe's wild fauna. After the absolute record of 60 species seen in 2023, we knew it would be difficult to surpass that figure again, but the tour has now proven that a remarkable 50–60 species can be found reliably each year. This time we ended up with 54 recorded species during the 9 days/8 nights of the trip, and more importantly, we saw nearly all of the key species, often with prolonged or repeated views rather than just brief glimpses. Some sightings were truly outstanding. We recorded 4 Romanian Hamsters, enjoyed encounters with 36 Brown Bears, and had three unforgettable European Mink sightings – including the individual featured on this year's cover photo, which we followed for several minutes as it hunted along the bank of a Danube Delta channel, even briefly entering the water before coming out again and catching a Common Frog. It was a rare moment of insight into the behaviour of one of Europe's most endangered mammals, and certainly one of the highlights of the entire tour. Although we missed polecats completely this year, the sheer quality and variety of other experiences once again made the tour an exciting and memorable journey. As in previous years, Zsolt Hegyeli joined us for small mammal trapping in Transylvania, contributing key species such as Northern Birch Mouse, while bat specialist Csaba Jére enabled close views of 10 bat species in the Varghis Gorge, including Geoffroy's and the rare Bechstein's Bat. Overall, the 2025 Romania Mammal Tour once again combined high diversity, rare species, and memorable field experiences.

Dobrudja and the Danube Delta

The tour began at Bucharest Airport, with our first destination the Dobrudja region near Constanța. Warm, calm weather and clear skies once again provided ideal conditions for our first night in the field. Despite a dedicated search, Marbled and Steppe Polecats remained elusive, but the night still delivered excellent encounters. We found two superb Romanian Hamsters, an adult and a young individual, feeding close together and allowing prolonged views before disappearing into their burrows—one of the highlights of our time in Dobrudja. We also recorded around 15 Steppe (Mound-building) Mice, including one briefly caught for close inspection, and later observed several others in agricultural fields near the steppes. A Lesser White-toothed Shrew, new for the tour, was also recorded. In addition, Northern White-breasted Hedgehogs were common, European Hares were frequently seen, and we recorded at least 15 Golden Jackals along with several Red Foxes, making for an exciting and diverse start to the tour.



Romanian hamster (top) and Steppe mouse (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

The next morning, after a late breakfast, we began with a team effort to locate an active area of Lesser Blind Mole-rats. Following fresh signs, we settled into position and spent a little over an hour waiting quietly for any movement. Our patience paid off: although the views were brief, we were rewarded with multiple glimpses of this elusive subterranean mammal, and in the end, everyone managed to see it - always a satisfying achievement on these tours. With this success in hand, we continued towards the Black Sea coast for a sea-watching session.

As in previous years, we had hopes of encountering the Black Sea Harbour Porpoise or, with a bit more luck, even the locally endemic Bottle-nosed Dolphin subspecies. Unfortunately, the sea remained quiet and we had no cetacean sightings this time. Still, exploring the coast offered a pleasant change of scenery and added to the diversity of habitats visited on the tour.



Lesser Mole-rat (top) Seawatching (left) and Eurasian Scops Owl at night (right) (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

On the second night of the trip, we explored a variety of open and semi-open habitats shortly after sunset, this time with a clear focus on locating polecats, which unfortunately once again remained elusive. Even so, the evening proved to be highly productive and memorable for mammal watching.

The session was dominated by canids: we encountered over 25 Golden Jackals, far more than on the first night, reflecting the slightly different habitats we were exploring. An area with exceptionally high numbers of Northern White-breasted Hedgehogs proved particularly memorable, with around 30 individuals recorded throughout the session. We also recorded two Badgers, several Common Voles, and around 10 Red Foxes. Although polecats escaped detection despite a solid effort, the diversity, frequency of encounters, and overall intensity of sightings made for a thoroughly rewarding night in the field. Mustelids are unpredictable. Though we had high hopes for European Mink as in previous tours we had more luck with European Mink when we did not see any Polecats! Strange but true.



Golden Jackal (top) Common Vole (left) and Romanian Hamster (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

The following day we visited a cave that in the past has held large numbers of overwintering Mehely's Horseshoe Bats, which always makes us look especially carefully at any horseshoe bats present. This year we found only a single individual, identified as a Greater Horseshoe Bat. Unfortunately, it was not clearly seen by all participants and it got spooked before we could obtain good pictures for documentation. As in previous years, we used the Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro to assist with identification.

Deeper inside the cave we once again encountered large numbers of Schreiber's Bent-winged Bats, estimating roughly 100 individuals, most of which will likely use the cave as an overwintering site later in the year. Interestingly, we did not record any Lesser or Greater Mouse-eared Bats on this visit, unlike in previous editions of the tour.



Eurasian Ground Squirrel or Suslik (top) and a Schreiber's Bent-winged Bat (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

After leaving the steppes behind, we made our way to the port of Tulcea, where we boarded our floating hotel, which would be our home for the next two nights. Slowly cruising into the Danube Delta towards our pre-planned location, wildlife sightings began almost immediately, setting the tone for the days ahead.

During the first evening session we recorded a good selection of mammals. We saw a few Golden Jackals, two Raccoon Dogs, two Eurasian Harvest Mice and a Stone Marten, along with large numbers of Muskrats and Brown Rats. Later in the evening we had a superb Wildcat sighting, a real highlight in itself, and as we were finishing up for the night, we encountered a fantastic European Mink. The encounter lasted for several minutes, as we followed the individual along its hunting patrol—an exceptionally rare and intimate experience with one of Europe’s most endangered mammals, and quite simply the stuff mammal-watching dreams are made of.



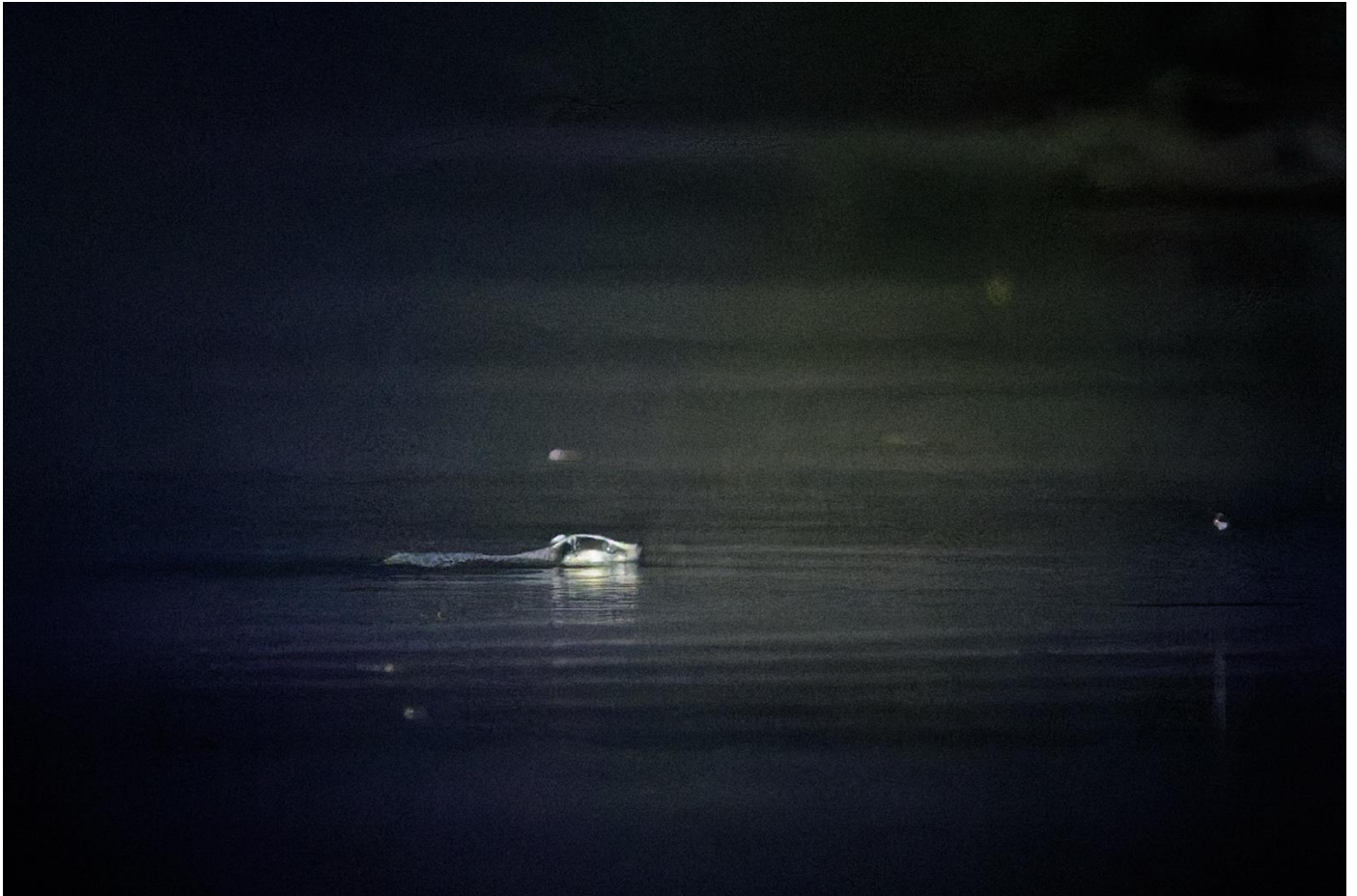
European Mink (top, János Oláh), swimming Common Muskrat (left) and our nature watching boat (right, (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).



European Wildcat (top) and Eurasian Harvest Mouse (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

During the day we explored the Danube Delta by boat, taking in its mosaic of lakes, channels, and reedbeds and gaining a valuable daytime perspective on European Mink habitat. In the evening we moved to a different area of the Delta and enjoyed an exceptional night session, seeing two European Minks well - an outstanding achievement given the rarity of the species - along with a swimming European Badger, three Otters, four Stone Martens, and two Raccoon Dogs.

We also had time for bat detecting: two Noctules and two Lesser Noctules at dusk, followed by tens of Daubenton's Bats around the boat later on, plus Nathusius' Pipistrelles and a few Serotine Bats, rounding off another superb and diverse night in one of Europe's most remarkable ecosystems.



Eurasian Badger (top) Great White Pelicans (left) and a Noctule in the Danube Delta (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Transylvania

Late on the fifth day we returned to Tulcea and headed to a forested area with nest boxes for Forest Dormice. Thanks to pre-tour checks, several boxes were in use and we quickly saw two individuals, offering close views of this charming species. We then explored a nearby steppe grassland and successfully located five European Ground Squirrels (Susliks).

After lunch we began our long journey north into Transylvania. As in previous years, the transition brought further highlights, including sightings of Hazel Dormice and Edible Dormice later the same day. Crossing the Carpathians after dark once again proved highly productive, with 14 Brown Bears recorded alongside tens of Roe and Red Deer, as well as Hares, Badgers, and Foxes. We reached Zetea at night, ready to begin the Transylvanian part of the tour the following day.



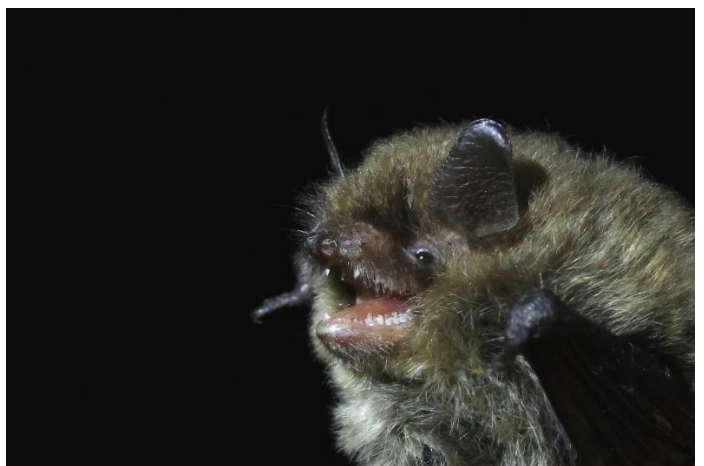
Brown bear near a village (top) and Western Red Deer (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).



Eurasian Forest Dormouse (top) and Hazel Dormouse (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

The following morning, after breakfast, we headed out to meet Zsolt Hegyeli, a biologist and mammal expert from Romania. We visited him in a nearby valley where he had set a series of traps the previous day and planned to continue his work for several more days. During the morning check of the traps, we were able to observe and release three species of small mammals caught overnight.

These included Striped Field Mouse, Common Shrew, and Eurasian Pygmy Shrew, all released at the exact locations where they had been trapped.



Eurasian Pygmy Shrew (top) Striped Field Mouse (left) and the Alcaethoe Whiskered Myotis (Zoltán Gergely Nagy)

In the afternoon we headed towards the Varghis (Vargyas) Gorge and its spectacular cave system, where we met Csaba Jére, a biologist and bat specialist who has been monitoring the bats of the gorge

for many years. This year we were rewarded with excellent conditions for bat activity, with warm, clear weather that remained stable throughout the session.

Thanks to these favourable conditions and Csaba's expertise, we managed to net and closely observe a total of 10 bat species. Particularly notable was the capture of five Lesser Horseshoe Bats, a species renowned for its exceptional ability to detect and avoid mist nets. Among the highlights were six Bechstein's Bats, one Geoffroy's Bat, and one Alcaho Whiskered Bat.

We also recorded five Schreiber's Bent-winged Bats, several Greater and Lesser Mouse-eared Bats, three Common Pipistrelles, and, somewhat surprisingly, around 15 Noctules, making for a truly outstanding and informative bat session in one of Romania's most impressive karst landscapes.



Lesser Horseshoe Bat (top), measuring Alcaho Whiskered Myotis (left) and netting in the Varghis Gorge (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

On our way back from the Varghis Gorge to the Harghita Bear Lodge, we were treated to a memorable encounter with a Brown Bear, seen on foot as it ran off into the distance. After returning to the lodge, Zsolt Hegyeli was already waiting for us with fresh results from his traps, including one of the most eagerly anticipated species of the tour: the Northern Birch Mouse. YES! Family collectors we made it again this year (3 years in a row)! We can only hope that Zsolt is successful in getting this special mammal for us. He only missed it one year when we had extremely wet conditions and not suitable for trapping. He is getting a lot of valuable information on this relict population, and he is very keen to continue studying them! The Northern Birch Mouse, with its characteristically long tail, is extremely localised in Romania and notoriously difficult to catch, making this a major highlight of our trapping efforts.



Northern Birch Mouse (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

We left Zsolt Hegyeli behind as he began collecting and packing up his traps and continued on to the spectacular Bicaz Gorge. After a focused scan of the surrounding cliffs, we were finally rewarded with a sighting of a Northern Chamois of the *carpatica* race, endemic to the Carpathian Mountains, as it moved out from tree cover and crossed an alpine meadow. Views were somewhat distant, but watching it feed and traverse the steep slopes was a real highlight.

After a short rest and an afternoon meal, we set out once again into the Harghita Mountains for a night session that perfectly captured what hard, rewarding mammal watching in Transylvania is all about. We recorded seven Brown Bears, three Hazel Dormice, large numbers of Roe and Red Deer, and even a Yellow-necked Field Mouse high up in the mountains. Earlier in the afternoon Zsolt Babos had set traps for European Mole, and later we were delighted to catch and release a fine individual.



Yellow-necked Field Mouse (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Late in the evening, Zsolt led us to a known site near a village where a Wild Boar often emerges from the forest to feed on a meadow. To have a chance of seeing it, we approached without torches, moving slowly and in complete silence, carefully crossing a small bridge so as not to give ourselves away. It was proper, old-school mammal watching - and it worked. The boar was still there, and although a Bear with two cubs was also present nearby, it was the successful sighting of this large, wary Wild Boar - a species recently much reduced by African swine fever - that truly crowned an awesome and hard-earned Transylvanian night.



Walking back over a bridge (left), big group of Wild Boar (right) (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).



Brown Bear (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

On the final full day of the tour, we began the morning by visiting a forest bird feeding station, a place where Pine Martens sometimes appear. Sadly, none showed themselves this time, but we were still rewarded with a Red Squirrel sighting on the way in, and we spent several hours exploring the rich and varied forest habitats of the Carpathian Mountains.

In the afternoon we returned to a bear hide, where we observed eight Brown Bears over the course of the session. After leaving the hide, we continued straight into an evening excursion, which once again proved highly productive. We recorded six additional Bears in the surrounding mountains and forests not far from the Hargita Bear Lodge, along with a wealth of other mammals. These included a Northern White-breasted Hedgehog, an Edible Dormouse, three more Hazel Dormice, a Wildcat, several Red Foxes, and numerous Red and Roe Deer.

One of the most surprising encounters of the evening came when we encountered a large family group of around ten Wild Boars at very close range from the car—an impressive and unexpected finale to the day. Although Wolves and Lynx are certainly present in the area, they remained elusive throughout the tour. Even so, the sheer diversity of sightings made for another exceptional and highly satisfying night session, perfectly rounding off the final full day in Transylvania. We have seen Lynx in the area several times before (even in September) but still has not been seen on the Romania Mammal Tour. Hopefully next year!

On the final day of the tour, on our way back towards Bucharest, we made time to look for the European (Common) Hamster. This year Zsolt Hegyeli travelled down to the hamster habitats the night before and, with the help of traps, successfully caught an individual.

When we met him, we were able to observe the hamster at close range before its release. After being released, the animal quickly ran back into its burrow, offering excellent views and a memorable encounter with the second hamster species of the tour.



Common Hamster (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

After the secret vote of the participants, the TOP5 mammals of the tour were:

- 1) European Mink
- 2) Romanian Hamster
- 3) Forest Dormouse
- 4) European Wildcat
- 5) Northern Birch Mouse

Romania once again proved to be an outstanding destination for dedicated mammal watching, with its diverse and highly valuable, biodiverse habitats supporting an exceptional variety of wildlife. The combination of Dobrudja, the Danube Delta, and Transylvania offers uniquely varied mammal-watching opportunities within Europe, spanning steppe, wetland, forest, and mountain ecosystems. With so many potential 'mega' species present, every edition of the tour holds the promise of truly special encounters. And yes we had very special encounters in 2025 as well!

The 2025 Romania Mammal Tour delivered a well-balanced and highly successful programme. Highlights included multiple high-quality European Mink sightings in the Danube Delta, excellent views of Romanian Hamsters, a hard-earned Northern Birch Mouse during trapping activities, an outstanding bat session in the Varghis Gorge with ten species recorded, and a series of intense and memorable bear encounters in the Harghita Mountains.

Throughout the tour we consciously aimed to strike a balance between maximising species numbers and focusing on the most sought-after species, and in the end this approach proved to be the right one.



European Mink showing it's partially webbed feet (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

After the final sightings, it was time to say goodbye in Bucharest, bringing the 2025 Romania Mammal Tour to a close. As always, we extend a sincere thank you to all participants for their enthusiasm, patience, and fieldcraft. Special thanks go to the hard-working mammal biologists: Zsolt Hegyeli and Csaba Jére! But also, for the entire Sakertours team visible to clients or not, for their invaluable support, help and hard work - especially János Oláh, Zsolt Babos, Milán Sebestyén, and Balázs Sebestyén.

MAMMALS –list of species recorded on the 2025 tour (53 species seen, 1 heard only)

European Hare *Lepus europaeus karpathorum*

A commonly encountered species on the tour. We saw a total of 63, almost the same number as last year. There were 55 in the Dobrudja area and a further 8 in Transylvania.

Northern Birch Mouse *Sicista betulina*

One individual was caught in the traps in Transylvania. A very rare and localized species in Romania. It is a rather difficult mammal family to come across because they are very secretive.

Lesser Mole-rat *Nannospalax leucodon*

Two individuals were seen in the Dobrudja area. Any mammals living permanently under ground are notoriously difficult to see but with persistence and special techniques you do have a chance to see them.



European Hare (left) Common Muskrat (right) (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Romanian Hamster *Mesocricetus newtoni*

In total four individuals were seen on the tour, all of them in the Dobrudja region. This rarely seen hamster species only lives in the Dobrudja region of Romania and in a few spots in Bulgaria. It has a mostly nocturnal lifestyle, using steppe grasslands and agricultural fields, but it is very localized. This year there were much fewer individuals on the steppes and fields where we usually see them.

Common Hamster *Cricetus cricetus*

The last new mammal species (number 54) of the tour was trapped and released in southern Transylvania, as we were driving to the airport. Zsolt Hegyeli has caught 2 individuals through the night, and we released them back to their holes. This hamster species is larger than the Romanian Hamster, and although it is more widely distributed it is an endangered mammal species nowadays.

Common Muskrat *Ondatra zibethicus* (introduced)

Seventeen individuals were seen, all of them were swimming across the channels in the Danube Delta.

Common Vole *Microtus arvalis* / **Sibling Vole** *Microtus levis*

In total 7 individuals were seen, 6 in the Dobrudja region and one was caught with the traps in Transylvania by the biologists. Without DNA analysis these two species are impossible to tell apart.

Bank Vole *Clethrionomys glareolus*

A single individual was caught in the traps in Transylvania, where it is a relatively common species in the coniferous forests.

Eurasian Harvest Mouse *Micromys minutus*

Three individuals were seen, two in the Danube Delta and one in Transylvania.



Eurasian Water Shrew (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*

It was common in the Danube Delta on the night sessions, we counted minimum over 35 individuals. They were all along the edge of channels as well as in the more forested areas too.

Yellow-necked Field Mouse *Apodemus flavicollis*

In total 2 individuals of this species have been seen on the tour, all of them in Transylvania.

Striped Field Mouse *Apodemus agrarius*

A single individual was seen on the tour, caught in the traps by the biologists in Transylvania. The striped field mouse has an extensive but disjunct distribution, split into two ranges. The first reaches from central and eastern Europe to Lake Baikal (Russia) in the north, and China in the south. The second includes parts of the Russian Far East and from there reaches from Mongolia to Japan. Its expansion across Eastern Europe appears to be relatively recent. The species is thought to have reached Austria in the 1990s.



Lesser White-toothed Shrew (top), Common Vole (left) and House Mouse (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

House Mouse *Mus musculus*

In total one individual has been seen, caught quite close to the Harghita Bear Lodge in Transylvania.

Mound-building Mouse (Steppe) *Mus spicilegus*

A very common species in the steppe area of Dobrudja, with 18 individuals seen this year. One of them has also been caught on the field and later released.

Eurasian Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

Still common in the forests of Transylvania, one individual has been seen, near a feeder in Transylvania at a forest photography hide.



Hazel Dormouse (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

European Ground Squirrel (Suslik) *Spermophilus citellus*

The most widespread ground squirrel species in Europe, and it is still very common in the steppes of Dobrudja. Having said that habitat fragmentation is continuous and severely affecting the species and we are witnessing a lot of small remnant patches of grasslands being lost to agriculture. When the population gets fragmented the decline is inevitable. This also affects the raptor population both birds and mammals. Also, the Susliks in the eastern part of the country hibernate earlier compared to the Susliks in the Carpathian Basin so in early September we often struggle to find the last individuals. Therefore, we were especially happy to see 5 individuals on the tour, and we had excellent looks!

Fat (Edible) Dormouse *Glis glis*

In total 2 individuals have been seen in Transylvania on the night sessions. It is still a common species in the Carpathian Forests but somehow this year we had less encounters. Although we had a back-up place in one of our hides in case we would have missed them in the forest!

Hazel Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*

A total of 8 individuals were seen on the night sessions in Transylvania. There were most probably more that have gotten away before we could have identified them. It is the only living species of the genus and the distribution is across Europe from the UK to Russia. They make their own little nest and hibernate starting in October. They are also super cute and usually a real crowd-pleaser as well as one of the main targets in Carpathians!



Northern White-breasted Hedgehog (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Eurasian Forest Dormouse *Dryomys nitedula*

Two individuals were seen in Dobrudja while checking some nest boxes. A fantastic little creature and an Eastern European specialty.

Northern White-breasted Hedgehog *Erinaceus roumanicus*

A commonly encountered species, and this year we saw an amazing 37 on the tour. Taxonomically, it was considered to be a subspecies of *E. europaeus* for some time, and later a subspecies of *E. concolor*. Since the 1990s, it has been considered a separate species.

Common Shrew *Sorex araneus*

One individual was caught with the traps in Transylvania.

Eurasian Pygmy Shrew *Sorex minutus*

One individual was caught with the traps in Transylvania.

Lesser White-toothed Shrew *Crocidura suaveolens*

One individual was caught on the first night in Dobrudja region.

Eurasian Water Shrew *Neomys fodiens*

A large and superb looking shrew! Two individuals were caught with the traps in Transylvania.

European Mole *Talpa europea*

One individual was caught with the traps in Transylvania.



Bechstein's Myotis (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Greater Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*

One individual was seen in a cave in Dobrudja.

Lesser Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

In total we have seen 6 individuals, they have been caught in the Varghis Gorge.

Schreiber's Bent-winged Bat *Miniopterus schreibersii*

It was the most numerous bat species on the tour. We have observed 100+ in the cave in Dobrudja and another 5+ were seen in the Varghis Gorge area. We have also trapped several. This species is a fast flyer (60-80km/hour) and has got very long wings. The only species in Europe where the end of the wing folds in hence the name 'bent-winged bat'. It is classified as Near Threatened.

Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*

These large bats are often seen flying at dusk. We had seen 2 individuals in the Danube Delta and 15 were caught in a cave in the Varghis Gorge this year, an unusually large number.

Lesser Noctule *Nyctalus leisleri*

Two individuals were seen in the Danube Delta, they were ID-d with the help of the Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro.



Noctule (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

Three individuals were seen on the tour, all of them have been caught in the Varghis Gorge.

Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* – **HEARED ONLY**

At least one individual was detected with The Echo Meter Touch 2 in the Danube Delta, but unfortunately, we didn't get to see it.

Nathusius's Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*

This small bat was widespread in Dobrudja, and it was the second most common bat species seen in the Danube Delta, with over 4 individuals seen.

Eurasian Serotine *Epistecus serotine*

Two individuals were seen of this interesting bat species in the Danube Delta, the Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro made really good recordings and we could ID them well.

Western Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*

One individual has been seen on the tour; it has been caught in the Varghis Gorge.

Geoffroy's Myotis *Myotis emarginatus*

One individual was trapped and seen in the Varghis Gorge in Transylvania. It has a special ear-shape hence the Hungarian name 'Truncated' Bat.



Western Barbastelle (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Alcathoe Whiskered Myotis *Myotis alcathoe*

A single individual was trapped and seen in Varghis Gorge in Transylvania. A scarce bat in Europe and we have been lucky to see it on most of our tours.

Bechstein's Myotis *Myotis bechsteinii*

We have trapped and seen 6 individuals in the Varghis Gorge. An amazing mammal species with huge ears (only the *Plecotus* bats have larger ears) and it is severely declining and now considered as Vulnerable. We have seen this scarce species on every tour since we started the mammal tours and a top tour target.

Daubenton's Myotis *Myotis daubentonii*

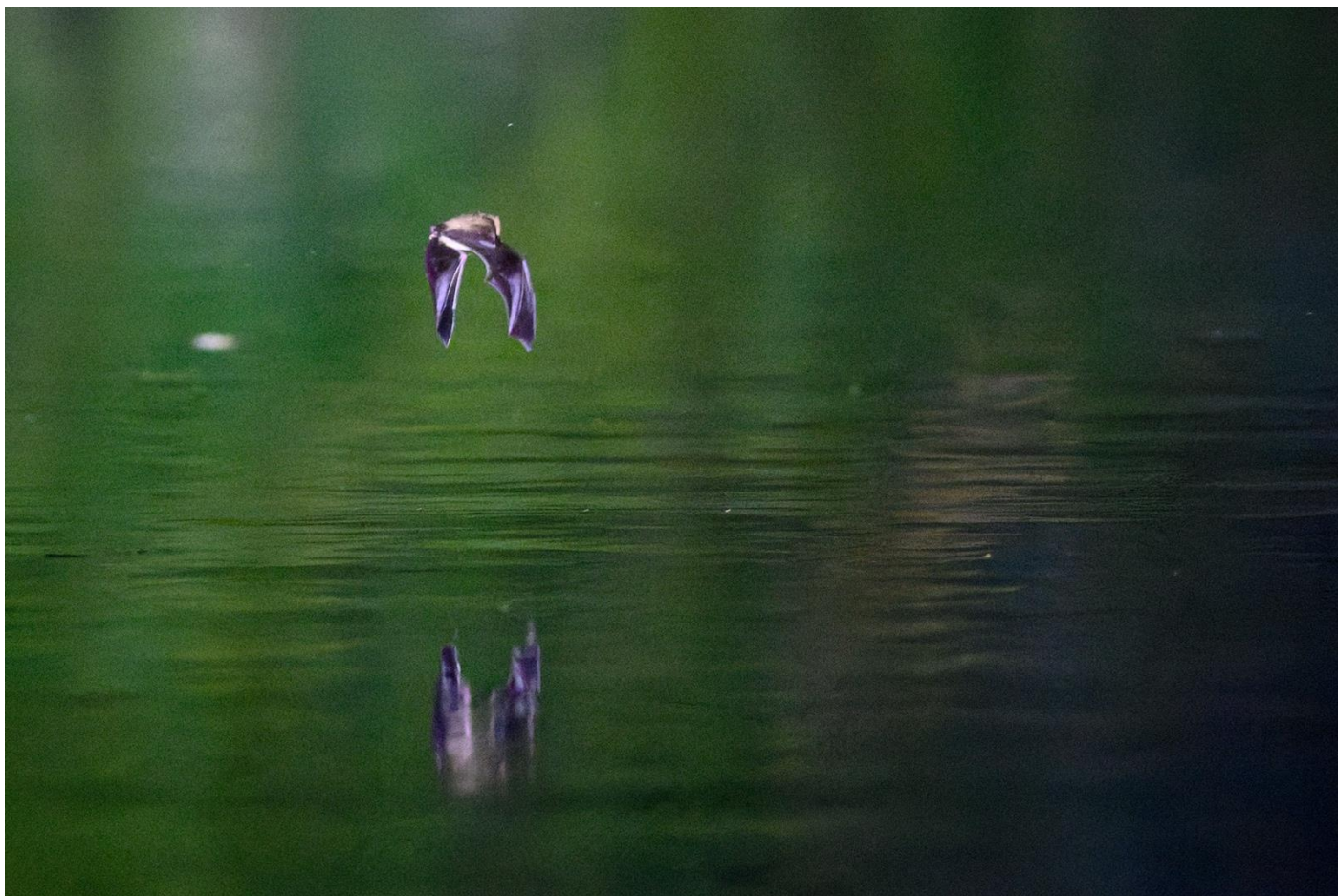
The most common bat species seen in the Danube Delta, we could see them hunt all around our boat. We saw tens of individuals on the tour. It is always associated with water and their main prey items are flies, midges and caddisflies. They roost in tree holes and there is plenty of suitable habitat for them in the delta.

Lesser (Mouse-eared) Myotis *Myotis blythii*

A large sized bat resembles the following species which is more common. It is possible to ID in the hand. They usually whiter below, have a pale spot on the top of the head, the ears are slimmer and the top of the tragus usually not dark. We have trapped and seen 5 individuals in the Varghis Gorge. It is classified as Near Threatened.

Greater (Mouse-eared) Myotis *Myotis myotis*

A large and common bat species. We have seen a total of 11 individuals, they were trapped in the Varghis Gorge.



Daubenton's Myotis (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Golden Jackal *Canis aureus moreoticus*

A locally common species in Dobrudja, where a total of 43 were seen on the tour. This species was once sporadic in Romania but since the late 1990's their numbers increased in the Dobrudja area and especially in the Danube Delta and around the lagoon system to the south where suitable reed beds (hiding places) can be found. In the lagoon system the extension of reed beds rapidly increased when the lagoons were blocked from the sea and the brackish water became increasingly less salty (almost freshwater for most lagoons nowadays). Both Wild Boar and Golden Jackal found refuge in the reed beds and their numbers started to increase.

Common Raccoon Dog *Nyctereutes procyonoides (introduced)*

An introduced mammal in Romania and the main stronghold is in the Danube Delta. On our night session we spotlighted 4 individuals this year. This species is native to Asia (Eastern Siberia, China, Vietnam, Korea and Japan) and was introduced to Europe and Russia between 1927 and 1957 by the fur-farming industry.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

A commonly encountered species on the tour. We saw a total of 33 individuals on the tour. There were 13 in the Dobrudja area and a further 20 in Transylvania.



Eurasian Otter (left) COmmon Raccoon Dog (right) (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

European Wildcat *Felis silvestris*

In total 3 individuals were seen on the tour, 2 in the Danube Delta, and 1 in Transylvania during the night sessions. Sadly, even the healthy population of Wildcat in the Danube Delta has increasing hybridization, and the second one that was seen was probably more of a hybrid unfortunately.



Wildcat 'kitten' in the Danube Delta (János Oláh).

Stone (Beech) Marten *Martes foina*

In total 5 individuals were observed on the tour, all of them on the channels in the Danube Delta at night. It is a fairly common species around villages, but they are infrequently seen due to their secretive and nocturnal habits.

European Mink *Mustela lutreola*

An incredible 3 individuals were seen in the Danube Delta, running along the channels. This exceptionally rare and elusive animal has a real stronghold in the Danube Delta, but even here it is not easy to see.

Eurasian Otter *Lutra lutra*

In total 3 individuals were seen, all of them in the Danube Delta. They are widespread in Romania in all sorts of habitat but difficult to observe in riverine habitat and somehow in the Danube Delta they tend to be very shy.

Eurasian Badger *Meles meles*

A total of 5 individual were seen, 1 in the Danube Delta and 2 in the steppe areas of Dobrudja and 2 in Transylvania at night. They are rather secretive in Eastern Europe due to hunting pressure.

Brown Bear *Ursus arctos arctos*

The nominate race occurs in the Carpathians. We saw 46 individuals in total, 8 at our special bear hide on the last afternoon and there were 38 more sightings at night, all in Transylvania. Romania has the largest population in Europe.



Stone Marten (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Northern Chamois *Rupicapra rupicapra carpatica*

We made a visit to the scenic Biczaz Gorge where we managed to see 1 individual on the cliffs. This is the *carpatica* race in Romania.

Western Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

In total we have observed 39 individuals. One of the most common mammal, and we often see them on our birdwatching tours as well. They are active at daytime as well but most of our sightings were at night and especially at dawn. They are the main prey item for Eurasian Lynx in the Carpathians.

Western Red Deer *Cervus elaphus hippelaphus*

The Red Deer were preparing for their autumn rut, in total we saw 68 individuals, all of them in Transylvania.

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*

After missing this species last year, we were happy to see a big male and a party of 10 the next day in Transylvania. In the last 3 years it was a challenge to see this due to reduced numbers due to ASF.



A truly superb mammal, the Eurasian Forest Dormouse (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Next tour dates:

2026: 22 – 30 August (2400 euro/person; SRS 240 euro/person)

2027: 4 – 12 September (2580 euro/person; SRS 280 euro/person)

For availability and updates visit our website:

<https://www.sakertour.com/mammal-watching-tours/romania-mammal-tour/#price-and-date>



Bukovia Blind Mole-rat – Spalax graecus (János Oláh).

We will be running our **Special Mole-rat Tour in Romania** again in April 2027 where we are going to target four species of Mole-rats again (we did see all four of them in 2025)!

Méhely's Blind Mole-rat – *Spalax antiquus*

Bukovina Blind Mole-rat – *Spalax graecus*

Lesser Blind Mole-rat – *Nannospalax leucodon*

Transylvanian Blind Mole-rat – *Nannospalax transsylvanicus*

This will be the second time we run this specialist tour and if you are interested to see some special mammals in Europe come and join us!

For more infos check out our website: <https://www.sakertour.com/mammal-watching-tours/special-mole-rat-romania-2025-tour/#price-and-date>



Sakertours Eastern Europe
Hungary, Slovakia and Romania birdwatching and bird photography tours

www.sakertour.com and www.ultimatesakertours.com

sakertour.office@gmail.com



Sakertours Eastern Europe: Romania Mammal Tour 2025
sakertour.com & ultimatesakertours.com