



SAKERTOURS



Romanian Hamster in Dobrudja (Zoltán Gergely Nagy)

ROMANIA MAMMAL TOUR with **SAKERTOURS** **7th – 15th August, 2021**

Leader: Zoltán Gergely Nagy

Sakertours has been specializing in birdwatching and bird photography tours in the last 27 years. Since 2020 we have also started to offer mammal watching tours and our main tour is the Romania Mammal Tour, which was run for the second time this year. Logistics are not easy, and it is quite hard work, but this tour is special; it probably offers the biggest list of European mammals on any available mammal watching tour on our continent! It also has a long list of sought-after species and we have a chance to seeing quite a few of them! In 2022 we will have even more exciting extras on the main tour and we will be also offering a post-tour extension to look for Roach's Mouse-tailed Dormouse in Bulgaria.

The 2021 tour certainly lived-up to its expectations and delivered a list of special mammals to our clients. This year the tour was run in August and it was a great success again but with a different selection of goodies from the inaugural tour in 2020. We have seen 49 species of mammals in 9 days which included the rare Romanian Hamster and other goodies such as Wildcat, Carpathian Brown Bear, Lesser Blind Mole Rat, Kuhl's Pipistrelle as well as Brandt's and Bechstein's Bats. The total mammal list was 3 species more than last year, a new record! We fine-tuned our itinerary and had two nights inside the Danube Delta. Despite this we have not seen European Mink on this tour, as the water level of the Danube was really high following the extensive summer rains and floods in Germany and Western Europe. All that water arrived to the Danube Delta by early August – an

unforeseen circumstance. However this year we managed to find the rare Romanian Hamster which was certainly one of the highlights of the tour!

Just as last year we spent a lot of time on the field at night as most of the mammal species are nocturnal. In August the sky was even more spectacular than in September last year with the fantastic Perseid meteor shower visible on most nights. Some of the really bright shooting stars have been unforgettable! The light pollution is minimal in the region we have visited, and it is quite incredible in the Danube Delta which is part of the dark sky network in Europe. Anybody wishing to take part in such a mammal watching tour must be prepared for long nights out in the wild. Apart from our own experiences we have also used the help of local mammal experts. Most of the time we have tried to locate the mammals by sight (spotlighting at night) but we have also used some live traps and visited bat monitoring places. Our tour dates are carefully planned to coincide with such monitoring events so we can maximize our chances of seeing some interesting species and to minimize the disturbance at the same time!



Golden Jackal in the Dobrudja area (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Dobrudja and the Danube Delta

The tour has started in Bucharest Airport and we made our way to our first base near Constanta. The weather in August 2021 was perfect with hot days and still warm summery nights. We have spent two nights spotlighting near the lagoon areas of the Danube Delta, scanning the edges of wetlands and the adjacent agricultural areas on the first night, and focusing more on the dry steppe habitats during the second. Compared to last year, relatively fewer mice and small rodents were out and about on the agricultural fields, but we still managed to see 10 species of mammals on the first day. Highlights included seeing a total of 21 Golden Jackals, and also hearing their fantastic calls

throughout the night, especially when we were stopped for bat-detecting. On our first morning we got some great news from our expert friend and local guide - one of Romania's most well-regarded biologists specializing in small mammals - that two Romanian Hamsters were located and he was waiting for us to get there. It was amazing to see this rare and endangered mammal of the Dobrudja region. To make this experience even better, later that night while spotlighting, we managed to find another Romanian Hamster, just a kilometre away from the original site.



Romanian Hamster (top) was seen three times, while Long-tailed Field Mouse (left) and Common or Sibling Vole were only seen once (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

During the day we have seen a good number of European Ground Squirrels while looking for Steppe Polecats – a species that managed to remain elusive this year too, despite the fact that we knew an exact location with great activity just a few weeks earlier. Common species regularly encountered were Red Fox, European Hare, Badger, and Steppe Mouse. We had a single Northern White-

breasted Hedgehog, a Common or Sibling Vole, Long-tailed Field Mouse (Wood Mouse) and at least one detection and clear sighting of a Kuhl's Pipistrelle, as it was hunting around our parked van on the second night. We have also visited a cave where we saw about 75 Schreiber's Bent-winged Bats forming a tight colony in the hardest to reach part of the small cave system. Unfortunately, the cave has been too touristy this year to harbour any of the bigger bat species such as Greater Horseshoe bats.



Northern White-breasted Hedgehog (top) and Golden Jackal (right) on the agricultural areas around the steppes. Greater and Lesser Mouse-Eared bats, and Schreiber's Bent-winged bats in a cave in Dobrudja (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

On the third day of the trip we have arrived to Tulcea – the gateway of the Danube Delta – where our expert driver Romi has been waiting for us with the Sakertours' boat called 'Harrier' and we made our way deep into the delta. After arriving to our hotel we had a quick dinner and then we started our exciting spotlighting session from the boat. It was an amazing night under the starry sky of a new moon, lit up by the bright streaks of the Perseid Meteor shower and our spotlights as we observed a bat frenzy over the millions of insects flying above the lakes and channels of the Delta. Throughout the night we have managed to conclusively see 10 bat species, including Daubenton's bat, Soprano Pipistrelle, and Nathusius's Pipistrelle – the most common bat observed in the Delta. Beside the bats, we have seen a good number of Brown Rats foraging on the edges of the channels, a swimming Striped Field Mouse, and a hybrid wildcat - an unfortunate result of wildcats interbreeding with the domestic cats let loose from the villages inside the Delta.



Stone Marten (top) and Brown Rat (right) observed from the Harrier (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

During the day it was nice to catch up with some sleep, to prepare for the last night in the Delta and the second part of the trip. We still managed to do an afternoon boat ride, to observe the fascinating aquatic habitats in the vicinity of our hotel, and to plan the final night ride from the boat. Two lucky participants got a glimpse of a Lesser Blind Mole Rat after lightly moving away the freshly dug out dirt at the entrance of its burrow in the garden of the hotel, unfortunately not everybody got to see this fantastic creature. The second night of spotlighting was quite different than the first one, with a little bit more wind and less activity from bats, but we were more focused on trying to find the holy grail of European terrestrial mammals, the European Mink, which – despite a great effort from the whole group – managed to remain elusive. An unusually high-water level has made spotlighting more challenging, and could have been one of the reasons why we have missed out on the Mink. The huge quantity of water arriving from the floodings of Western Europe was very unusual in August. We did manage to see however a Raccoon Dog, a Stone Marten and a distant Otter that were new species for the trip so far, besides the more common species such as Golden Jackals.



Daubenton's bat (left) hunting just above the water, and a Striped Field Mouse (right) crossing a channel in the Danube Delta (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Next morning a Striped Field Mouse was seen. After leaving the Danube Delta we had one more afternoon looking for the rare Polecats of the region in a wonderful steppe habitat near the Danube River. We had no luck with the Polecats, only finding some more European Ground Squirrels – the main prey item of the Steppe Polecat, we had a nice dinner before crossing the Danube river and starting the second leg of our exciting mammal watching tour!

Transylvania

Our night-drive across the Carpathians was very exciting, and a sudden change of habitats as we were gaining elevation. The forests were teeming with life, we have seen at least 9 Hazel Dormouse and 3 Edible Dormouse just on the vegetation next to the road, a beautiful wildcat, two Brown Bears, plenty of Red and Roe Deer, as well as a group of around 20 Wild Boars. Mice and voles were criss-crossing in front of the car on the quiet road that we were on, and Zsolt – a member of the Sakertour team who participated as a wildlife spotter and assistant has managed to jump out of the car and catch small rodents by hand on numerous occasions. Thanks to Zsolt, we had incredibly close views of a Yellow-Necked Field Mouse and a Field Vole. In hindsight this incredible feat would have looked hilarious on video. After a long night we have arrived to the Hargita Bear Lodge at dawn.



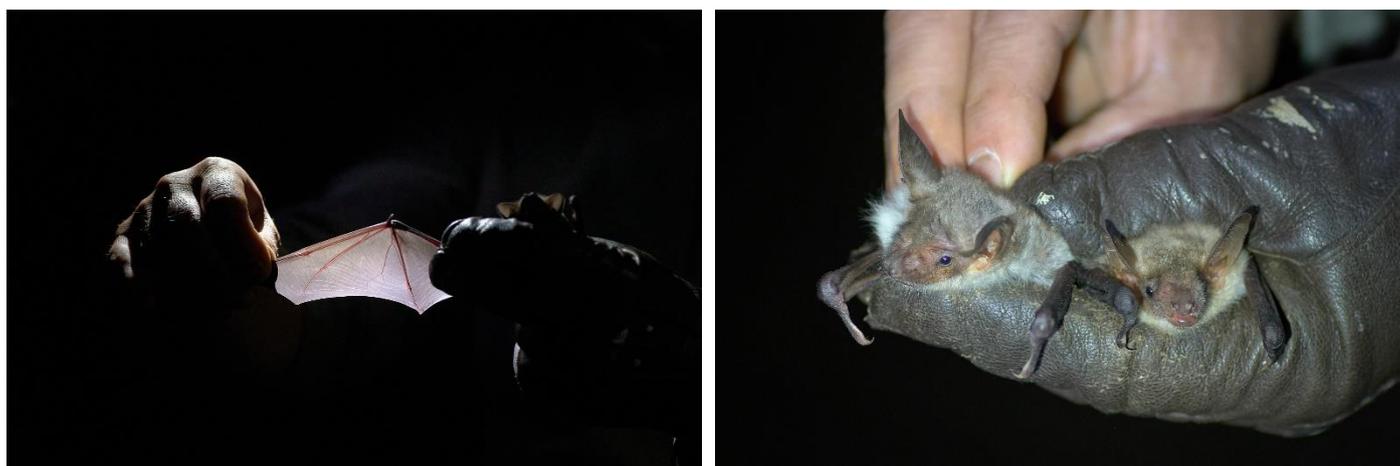
Field Vole on the road in Transylvania (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).



Hazel Dormouse (Zoltán Gergely Nagy)

Later we have visited a Sakertour photography hide in the Harghita Mountains, where we had great views of Red Squirrels and two roosting Brandt's bats. We have also visited a small abandoned mine in the hopes of seeing Lesser Horseshoe bats, but it was too early in the season to find them there.

In the evening we have joined a local bat expert in his fieldwork, netting and studying the bats of one of the most important cave systems of the Eastern Carpathians, in the Varghis Gorge. Csaba has a fantastic knowledge on the bats of Romania, and the few hours we have spent with him have gone by incredibly quickly. First the bats from the resident colonies were leaving the cave system, so we had great views of plenty of Schreiber's Bent-winged bats, as well as Lesser and Greater Mouse-eared bats, it was great to really see and learn the differences between them from up close. Later in the evening we had a pair of Alcahoie Whiskered bats, a single Geoffroy's bat, and a stunning Bechstein's bat. Over the course of 4 hours, Csaba has netted 8 species in total. On our way back to the car park, a few Red Foxes and a Wildcat were looking for a meal on the freshly cut hay-meadows, and a Eurasian Otter was swimming downstream near the main bridge – not a bad start for a night drive that we haven't even started! On the way back, we had another stunning Wildcat, some more Eurasian Badgers and Brown Bears, Red and Roe Deer, Edible and Hazel Dormouse, European Hares – with so many potential prey animals, we were really hoping to stumble into a lynx or a pack of wolves, but these animals require quite a bit of luck to be seen.



Noctule (left) and Lesser and Greater Mouse Eared Bats in Transylvania (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Next morning our traps have caught a Bank Vole, and a Yellow-Necked Field Mouse, and after brunch we made our way to the Bicaz Gorge. The plan was to try to find the Carpathian Chamois, the elegant symbol of the alpine areas in the Carpathian Mountains. With a bit of perseverance, we had spotted six Chamois. They were not on the closest cliffs to us, but we still managed to have nice views. In the evening we have visited one of the bear hides operated by Sakertours in the area, where we have seen 5 bears in total, including a nice male bear, already starting to fatten up for the long cold season ahead. During the night drive first we have visited an area close to some remote villages, in the hopes of surprising a wolf pack out hunting, not too far from where we saw wolves on the trip last year. Later we drove to a mature old forest with vast trees – the place of numerous lynx sightings by the locals earlier this year. Unfortunately we couldn't locate the two large carnivores, but seen many of the usual candidates like Hazel and Edible Dormouse, Red and Roe Deer, Hares, Hedgehogs, and Foxes.



Carpathian Chamois on a ridge (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).



A male Carpathian Brown Bear in front of a Sakertours hide (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

During the last full day of the trip we have visited a small but important wetland area, hoping to see a few more new mammals for the tour, such as a Stoat (Ermine) or Least Weasel, but they never showed up while we were scanning the lakes, dykes and all the different flocks of birds. Nevertheless, we were determined to find some new species, so after a tip from a bat specialist, we had a change in our plan for the afternoon, and visited a quiet, secluded traditional Szekler village with an impressive church, hoping to find Lesser Horseshoe bats. What followed was a brilliant example of Transylvanian hospitality, as the local caretaker not only opened the church for our unannounced visit, he gave us detailed information on finding the bats, and sure enough soon we were high up in the church tower, marbling at the sight of at least 10 Lesser Horseshoe bats offering great views!



Lesser horseshoe bat (left) and its churchtower habitat (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).



Eurasian Badger (left) and Red Deer in Transylvania (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

On our last evening we went in search of Eurasian Beavers, a reintroduced species that should have been easy to find. Unfortunately, we have not seen the beavers, and it was clear that the beaver dams were destroyed or washed away, unclear if from flooding or human activity, as this area is very close to a village. Near the stream we have detected and seen some more Daubenton's Bats, and also two Whiskered Bats – for the first time on the trip. The real highlight of the evening came in the form of a stunning Eurasian Harvest Mouse feeding on a small bush. With an early start planned for the next morning, a drive back to Bucharest Airport, we have decided to call it a night, celebrate the new species of the day, and the whole exciting trip in the hot salty water of a traditional Szekler 'jacuzzi'.

On the next day, before crossing the Carpathians on our way towards Bucharest, Szabi – one of our colleagues at Sakertours, was waiting for us with one more catch in the traps: a Common Hamster. We had great views of the second hamster species of the tour (none were seen on our tour last year) and after we let it go back to its burrow, we continued on towards Bucharest, to close our 2021 Romania Mammal Tour.



Common Hamster running back to its burrow in southern Transylvania (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

All in all, the tour has been a very memorable adventure for everybody on the trip, lots of lifers, lots of adrenaline while searching for mammals, and lots of opportunities for learning, both from one-another as well as from Zsolt and Csaba, the very knowledgeable biologists. After drawing the line on the last day, we have seen 49 species of wild mammals on the trip. Going forward, 50 species would seem like a target that we could beat in the future, considering that we haven't seen any species of shrews for example this year. The combination of Dobrudja and Transylvania provide uniquely varied opportunities for Mammal watching in Europe, and the sheer number of 'mega' species possible means that chances are high that at least one or two of them will be seen every year on this tour. This year the uncontested mammal of the tour has been the very rarely seen Romanian Hamster.

This tour might have just ended, but we are already looking forward to what we can improve and fine-tune for 2022!

After summarizing the points from all the participants, the TOP5 mammals of the trip were:

1. Romanian Hamster
2. Wildcat
3. Eurasian Harvest Mouse
4. Northern White-breasted Hedgehog
5. Bechstein's Bat

A special thank you to the whole Sakertours team for the help and support before and during the trip, especially to János Oláh for bringing it all together, Szabolcs Kovács for managing the traps, Zsolt Babos for his amazing spotting (and snatching) skills, the brilliant experts we have collaborated with: Zsolt Hegyeli and Csaba Jére, and the hospitality of the Hargita Bear Lodge.

MAMMALS –list of mammal species seen on the 2021 tour

European Hare *Lepus europaeus*

A commonly encountered species on the tour. We saw a total of 28 during the week. There were 18 in the Dobrudja area and a further 10 in Transylvania. It is also known as Brown Hare and it is among the largest hare species in the World which adapted to temperate, open country.

Northern White-breasted Hedgehog *Erinaceus roumanicus*

Usually a commonly encountered species, but this year we only saw a total of 3 on the tour. There were numerous road kills in Dobrudja, where we only saw one live one and a further 2 in Transylvania. It is interesting that all individuals seen in Dobrudja were rather dark individuals. Taxonomically, it was for a time considered to be a subspecies of *E. europaeus*, and later a subspecies of *E. concolor*. Since the 1990s, it has been considered a separate species in its own right



European Hare and Northern White-breasted Hedgehog (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Romanian Hamster *Mesocricetus newtoni*

One of the true highlights of the tour, 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 where suitable within its range, but it is very localized. We were very fortunate to have had the help of a biologist with experience regarding this protected species, and he showed us two individuals on the first morning of the trip. What made for an even better experience, was finding one more Romanian Hamster during the second night drive in the area, not too far from the spot the first two were seen. In total 3 individuals have been seen, and we hope that with the knowledge gained in this experience we will be able to see it again in some future tours.

Common Hamster *Cricetus cricetus*

The last new mammal species of the tour was trapped and released in southern Transylvania, as we were driving to the airport. Szabolcs Kovács has caught 9 individuals, but only waited for the group with one still in the trap. This hamster species is much larger than the Romanian Hamster, and also much more common.



Romanian Hamster found while spotlighting (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Field (Short-tailed) Vole *Microtus agrestis*

A single individual was caught by Zsolt on the road across the Carpathians.

Common Vole *Microtus arvalis* / **Sibling Vole** *Microtus rossiaemeridionalis*

We had caught one with the traps in Dobrudja, but without DNA analysis they are impossible to tell apart.

Bank Vole *Clethrionomys glareolus*

A total of 3 individuals were trapped and released in Transylvania.

Edible Dormouse *Glis glis*

A total of 7 were identified in Transylvania on the night sessions but several got away which were most likely to be this species. It was common in various forest habitat but most often in mixed beech and spruce woodland. The edible dormouse was farmed and eaten by the ancient Romans (usually as a snack), hence the word edible in its name. The Romans would catch dormice from the wild in autumn when they were fattest. The dormice were kept and raised either in large pits or (in less spacious urban surroundings) in terra cotta containers, the 'gliraria'. They fed these captive dormice walnuts, chestnuts, and acorns for fattening. The dormice were served by either roasting them and dipping them in honey or stuffing them with a mixture of pork, pine nuts, and other flavourings



Edible Dormouse in Transylvania (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Hazel Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*

The forests in some places were teeming with these small creatures. A total of 22 were seen on the night sessions in Transylvania. It was one of the most common mammal species at night. 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 from October.

Striped Field Mouse *Apodemus agrarius*

A total of 4 individuals were seen on the tour, 1 in Transylvania and 3 in Dobrudja, where one of them was swimming across a channel in the Danube Delta. 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.

Long-tailed Field Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*

Two individuals were trapped and released on the tour, one in Dobrudja and one in Transylvania.

Yellow-necked mouse *Apodemus flavicollis*

In total 4 individuals of this species have been seen on the tour, 3 caught with the traps in Transylvania and one individual masterfully caught by Zsolt Babos on the road as we were crossing the Carpathians at night.

Eurasian Harvest Mouse *Micromys minutus*

A single individual was seen at night in Transylvania. It was probably seen in the Danube Delta too, but we couldn't get good enough views for a definitive identification. One of the smallest mammal species in Europe.



Eurasian Harvest Mouse feeding on a bush in Transylvania (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

House Mouse *Mus musculus*

A total of 2 individuals were seen, one of them swimming across a channel in the Danube Delta, and the second one near a shed in Transylvania.

Mound-building Mouse (Steppe Mouse) *Mus spicilegus*

A very common species in the steppe area of Dobrudja but this year there were less of them active on the agricultural fields in Dobrudja. We managed to get good views of 3 individuals on the night sessions. It is found in grasslands and other open areas from Austria eastwards.

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*

It was common in the Danube Delta on the night session, we counted minimum 10 individuals. They were all along the edge of channels as well as in the more forested areas too.

European Ground Squirrel (Souslik) *Spermophilus citellus*

The most widespread ground squirrel species in Europe is very common in the Dobrudja steppes. We had seen 10 individuals on the tour at numerous locations.

Eurasian Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

Still common in the forests of Transylvania, we had great views of an individual visiting a feeder in Transylvania at a forest photography hide.



A darkly colored Eurasian Red Squirrel feeding in front of a Sakertours hide (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Lesser Blind Mole Rat *Nannospalax leucodon*

An extremely difficult species to see as it spends its entire life under the ground. They are rather common in Dobrudja as we saw many fresh Mole-rat mounds in steppe and agricultural habitat. Two participants of the tour got very lucky as they moved the freshly dug out dirt at the entrance of a Mole Rat tunnel and had a brief glimpse of an individual as it quickly closed the entrance back up.

Golden Jackal *Canis aureus*

A locally common species in Dobrudja, were a total of 28 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.

Raccoon Dog *Nyctereutes procyonoides* (introduced)

An introduced mammal in Romania whose main stronghold is in the Danube Delta. On our night session we spotlighted one individual. 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.



Raccoon Dog along one of the channels in the Danube Delta (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

A commonly encountered species on the tour. We saw a total of 40 individuals on the tour. There were 11 in the Dobrudja area and a further 29 in Transylvania.

European Wildcat *Felis silvestris*

After seeing only a possible hybrid wildcat in the Danube Delta, we were delighted to see a superb individual on our night ride across the Carpathians, and 2 more individuals the next day in Transylvania.

Eurasian Otter *Lutra lutra*

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

They are widespread in Romania in all sorts of habitats but difficult to observe in riverine habitat and somehow in the Danube Delta they tend to be very shy. The best bet to connect with one is on the large fishpond systems scattered around the country.

Stone (Beech) Marten *Martes foina*

One individual was observed on the tour, on one of 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.

Eurasian Badger *Meles meles*

A total of 5 individuals were seen, 2 in Dobrudja and 3 in Transylvania at night of this charismatic mammal. 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 9 individuals in total, 5 at our special bear hide in full daylight and there were four more sightings at night, all in Transylvania.



Carpathian Brown Bear feeding in front of a Sakertours hide (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

(Northern) Chamois *Rupicapra rupicapra*

We made a visit to the scenic Bicz Gorge where we managed to see 6 individuals on the cliffs. This is the *carpatica* race in Romania, a possible future split.

European Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

This species was observed along the motorway after leaving Bucharest on the first day, and later it was abundant in Transylvania. In total we have observed 43 individuals. One of the most common mammals 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 at dawn. They are the main prey item for Eurasian Lynx in the Carpathians.

Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*

The Red Deer were preparing for their autumn rut, and despite not hearing them at all on the tour, we could see that their antlers have fully grown and they are ready for the mating season to start. In total we saw 39 individuals, all of them in Transylvania.

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*

Since the African swine fever virus has decimated the wild boar populations in the past few year, numbers started to recover recently, and despite only seeing this species once on the tour, it was in the form of a very impressive group, counting at least 20 individuals.

Lesser Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

It was still possible to see them at their nursery colony, in the tower of an old church in Transylvania. In total at least 10 different individuals were seen.

Schreiber's Bent-winged Bat *Miniopterus schreibersii*

It was the most numerous bat species on the tour. We observed 75+ in the cave in Dobrudja and another 30+ were seen in the Varghis Gorge area. We also trapped several. This species is a fast flyer (60-80km/hour) and has got very long wings.

Geoffroy's Bat *Myotis emarginatus*

A single individual was trapped and seen in Varghis Gorge in Transylvania.



Geoffroy's Bat (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Alcathoe Whiskered Bat *Myotis alcathoe*

In total we have seen 5 individuals of this fairly recently described species. Three were detected and spotted hunting in the Danube Delta, and two were caught by Csaba in the Varghis Gorge, so we had some really close views.

It was first described in 2001 and was only known from Greece and Hungary. Nowadays its known distribution has expanded to Romania, Spain, England, Sweden, and Azerbaijan, among other countries.

Bechstein's Bat *Myotis bechsteinii*

We have trapped and seen one individual 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.



Bechstein's bat, arguably the most stunning bat species of the tour (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Brandt's Bat *Myotis brandtii*

A rather hard to come by species. They prefer forest habitat and rarely visit caves. We saw two individuals roosting under the roof of our forest photography hide. It is a supposedly rather rare in Romania but ID problems and roosting habitats could cause this status. So I would rather say it is data deficient.

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 are usually whiter below, have a pale spot on the top of the head, the ears are slimmer

and the top of the tragus is usually not dark. We trapped and saw 5 individuals in Varghis Gorge. It is classified as Near Threatened.

Greater Mouse-eared Bat *Myotis myotis*

A large and common bat species. We have trapped 8 individuals in the Varghis Gorge.

Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentonii*

The second most common bat species seen in the Danube Delta, we could see them hunt all around our boat, and we have later seen a few individuals above streams in Transylvania too. In total we had seen at least 35 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.

Whiskered Bat *Myotis mystacinus*

This short bodied small bat had been detected and seen at a small clearing next to a forest and close to a stream in Transylvania, where we had 2 individuals. Identified with the help of the Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro.

Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*

These large bats are often seen flying at dusk, and were observed in Dobrudja and Transylvani too. We had at least 10 individuals in the Danube Delta, 3 in Transylvania, flying in the garden of the Harghita Bear Lodge, and one individual was caught by Csaba in the Varghis Gorge.



Noctule in front of the moon in Transylvania (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Lesser Noctule *Nyctalus leisleri*

Observed on three different nights, we had seen at least 6 individuals of this medium sized bat, only in Dobrudja. Identified with the help of the Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro.

Serotine Bat *Eptesicus serotinus*

Observed mostly in the Danube Delta, and only in Dobrudja during the tour. In total we had seen at least 6 individuals. Identified with the help of the Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro.

Northern Bat *Eptesicus nilssonii*

Present mostly in some alpine and mountainous environments of Romania, it was detected and seen once in Transylvania, with some inconclusive detections in the Danube Delta too, that had been most probably Serotine Bats – a close relative with similar ultrasound pattern when hunting. Identified with the help of the Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro.

Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

More common in the Danube Delta, but we have also observed a few individuals in Transylvania. At least 13 individuals have been seen on the tour, and one individual was caught in the Varghis Gorge.



Alcahoie Whiskered Bat (left) in Transylvania and Schreiber's Bent-winged Bats in Dobrudja (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

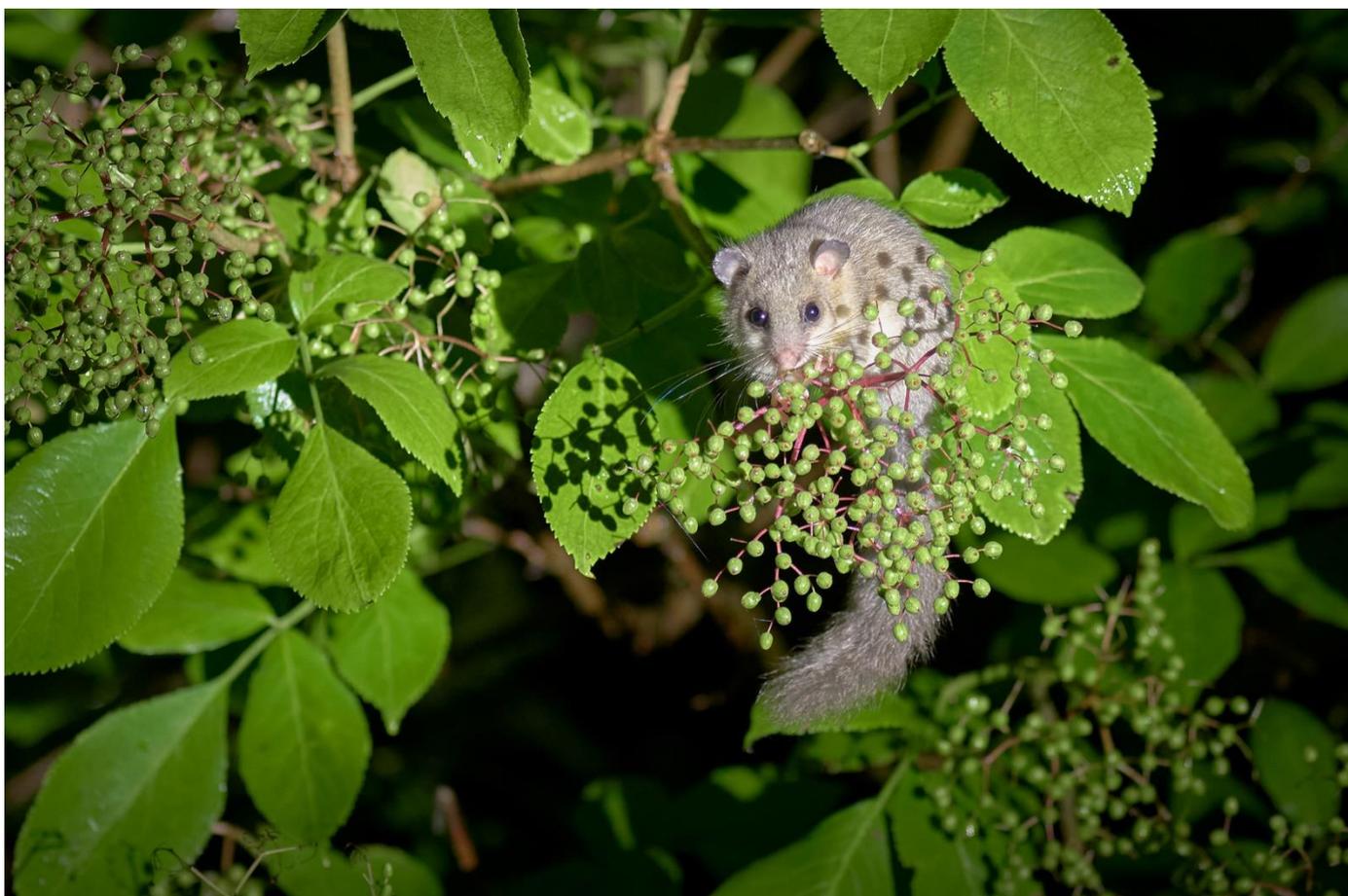
The third most common bat detected in the Danube Delta, with at least 40 individuals seen hunting. Identified with the help of the Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro.

Kuhl's Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus kuhlii*

One individual detected and clearly identified as it hunted around our van in Dobrudja. It was detected several times in the Danube Delta too, but it was not seen clearly. Identified with the help of the Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro.

Nathusius's Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*

This small bat was widespread in Dobrudja, and it was the most common bat species seen in the Danube Delta, with over 100 individuals seen. Interestingly we have not seen or detected it in Transylvania. Identified with the help of the Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro.



Edible Dormouse feeding on a bush in Transylvania (Zoltán Gergely Nagy).

Next tour dates:

2022: 26 August – 3 September (1890 euro/person; SRS 200 euro/person): **availability and updates on our website:**
<http://www.sakertour.com/romania-mammal-tours.php#romania-mammal-tour>

2022 extension: 3 – 7 September (price TBA)

The extension will target Roach's Mouse-tailed Dormouse in Bulgaria with overland border crossing



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