

ORNITHOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS NEAR THE RIVERS BODROG AND TISZA

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Hungarian Institute of Ornithology — The trip of english
birdwatchers organized by Academy travel Ltd. in spring 1966.
(Received Oct. 21, 1966)

During our trip through Hungary we made a short visit on 17th May to the Bodrog river near Bodrogkeresztúr. This river is derived from the combination of many small streams which have their source in the north-eastern Carpathians. Between the Bodrog and Tisza rivers is an area known as Bodrogköz, with many marshy islands, extensive areas of inundation, and riparian woods composed of well developed *Populus*, *Salix* and *Quercus* etc. The Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) breeds here, and it is the only area in Hungary where the Thrush-Nightingale (*Luscinia luscinia*) is known to breed.

At the place where our coach stopped the Bodrog is about 100 metres wide, with woods on the southern side and marshy meadows to the north, where we were able to walk. The slightly higher ground was occupied by fields as far as the village of Bodrogkeresztúr, which has long been known as a haunt of the White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*); we counted 8 nests from the main road. At the spot where we stopped the river curves to the south to avoid the volcanic hill of Tokaj. In the meadows we saw a flock of 100+ Rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*); several Rollers (*Coracias garrulus*) came from the trees across the river, and flocks of 10—20 Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) were moving about in the fields. In some old Willows (*Salix* sp.) an Icterine Warbler (*Hippolais icterina*) was singing, also a Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*). Other species seen in these trees included numerous Tree Sparrows (*Passer montanus*), a Great Tit (*Parus major*) and a male Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*). At a water-filled dyke 3 Yellowhammers (*Emberiza citrinella*) were drinking, and a pair of Reed Buntings (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) were seen. From some long grass nearby a Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*) sang for a short time. On the marshy meadow a number of Lapwings (*Vanellus vanellus*) and a White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) were seen. A Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) hovered overhead, and Turtle Doves (*Streptopelia turtur*) frequently flew over.

The most surprising event of this visit was a pair of Lesser Kestrels (*Falco naumanni*) circling and hawking round the trees on an island in the river. Among these trees we also noted 3 or 4 Pheasants (*Phasianus*

colchicus), 3 Hooded Crows (*Corvus cornix*), a Magpie (*Pica pica*), a Cuckoo (*Cuculus carorus*), 2 or 3 Golden Orioles (*Oriolus oriolus*), and one or two (*Luscinia luscinia*) were singing.

On the western side of the road was the hill of Tokaj with vineyards on the slopes and dense bushes by the roadside. In the bushes we located 2—3 Nightingales (*Luscinia megarhyncha*), a Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*), a Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*) and a Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*). Overhead were flying 20—30 Jackdaws (*Corvus monedula*), and higher up 2 Bee-eaters (*Merops apiaster*).

We lunched at an inn by the junction of the rivers Bodrog and Tisza at Tokaj. The place was very disturbed by the movement of boats along both rivers and men on the banks. Over the rivers we saw a Roller (*Coracias garrulus*), Turtle Doves (*Streptopelia turtur*), a Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*), 5—6 Jackdaws (*Corvus monedula*) and a Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*). In the rough vegetation at the edge Goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*) searched for seeds. In the village were many nests of House Martin (*Delichon urbica*) and House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), and overhead circled a Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*).

Continuing our journey we passed through the villages of Rakamaz, Tiszaújfalú and Tiszaeszlár in all of which we saw many Collared Doves (*Streptopelia decaocto*). Our next halting place was the mouth of the Hortobágy channel near Tiszalök, where the water level of both river and channel are regulated. Nearby was a wood of *Acacia* and various shrubs with much brambles *Rubus* sp. It was not a very good spot for birds, but we recorded 3 Partridge (*Perdix perdix*), 3 Pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*), 2—3 Turtle Doves (*Streptopelia turtur*), a Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*), 2—3 Goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*) and a similar number of Tree Sparrows (*Passer montanus*). We also heard the songs of 5—6 Nightingales (*Luscinia megarhynchos*), a Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*), 2—3 Golden Orioles (*Oriolus oriolus*) and perhaps also a Thrush-Nightingale (*Luscinia luscinia*).

We were by the Tisza river again on 20th May at Szolnok. Around the hotel by the little park were many Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*), House Martins (*Delichon urbica*), Collared Doves (*Streptopelia decaocto*), a male Redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*) and 20—30 Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*). Over the town was a White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*), and by the river 3 Common Sandpipers (*Tringa hypoleucos*).

In the afternoon we visited a wood of young Poplars *Populus* with some mature Oaks (*Quercus*) situated by the river near Tiszavárkony, where Mr. I. Keymer and Dr. G. Beven saw a Grey-headed Woodpecker (*Picus canus*). We also noted the following species — 2 Lesser Grey Shrikes (*Lanius minor*), Partridge (*Perdix perdix*), 2 Garden Warblers (*Sylvia borin*), 5—6 Turtle Doves (*Streptopelia turtur*), 2 Goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*) and many House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*). In the small and reedy ditches („kubik”) at the edge of the wood we saw a Little Bitern (*Ixobrychus minutus*) and heard 5—6 Great Reed Warblers (*Acrocephalus arundinaceus*) singing.

Our time in most of these places was very short, not more than one or two hours, and we were quite lucky to see such a variety of species. Among those recorded the most notable were the Lesser Kestrel and Grey-headed Woodpecker, neither of which are common in Hungary.