

Winter Birding Tour



Dalmatian Pelican



Wild Cat



Pygmy Cormorant



Durankulak Lake

This tour will take you to the Bulgarian Black Sea coast to explore two of the most important European wetlands for wintering geese. Every year hundreds of thousands of wild geese, among which almost the whole population of the globally threatened Red-breasted Goose, choose the northern Bulgarian lakes of Shabla and Durankulak as their wintering grounds. The less severe climate on the southern Bulgarian Black Sea coast allows us to enjoy wintering Dalmatian and White Pelicans, various species of ducks, shorebirds, gulls, raptors and many more.

Bulgaria's "Geeseland" – this is the northernmost part of the Black Sea coast near the Romanian border, where the main roosts of the geese, the lakes of Shabla and Durankulak, are located. The lakes occupy former river estuaries, winding through hilly plains down to the coastal sand dunes and beaches. Watching the early morning "take off" of hundreds of thousands of wild geese flying inland to feed in the winter crop fields is truly spectacular! The numerous flocks of White-fronted Geese feature astonishing numbers of Red-breasted Geese (usually between 10000 and 50000).

While enjoying the Red-breasted Geese, we will also search for the Lesser White-fronted Goose. Usually checking the huge flocks of White-fronted Geese is very productive and the Lesser White-fronted Goose can be spotted and identified.

The White-tailed Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, Rough-legged Buzzard, Peregrin and Merlin, as well as the Great Bittern are common winter residents here. There are also good chances for viewing Greater Spotted Eagle, Saker and Pallas's Gull at the lakes.

Offshore we can expect to see Black-throated and Red-throated Divers, Great, Black-necked, Red-necked, Slavonian and Little Grebes, Red-breasted Merganser and Greater Scaup. There are very good chances for viewing Greater Spotted Eagle, Saker and Pallas's Gull at the lakes.

One of these days we will also explore cape Kaliakra – sheer cliffs towering up to 100 m above the seawater. There we can expect to see the Mediterranean subspecies of the European Shag, Eagle Owl, possibly Wallcreeper, and various sea waterfowl. The adjacent steppe area hosts wintering Calandra Larks, Merlins, Long-legged Buzzards, etc. Rough-legged Buzzard, Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl and Syrian Woodpecker can also be easily observed around.

Mid-January – February

The second part of the tour is focused on the wetlands around the city of Bourgas that form one of Europe's richest bird areas. One of the biggest attractions of the Bourgas wetlands in winter however, are the flocks of Pygmy Cormorants, Dalmatian Pelicans and White Pelicans resident there, and the hundreds of White-headed Ducks wintering almost every winter on Vaya Lake. Some of the other species expected there are White-tailed Eagle, Bearded Tit, Slender-billed Gull, Mediterranean Gull and other more common wintering water birds.

This tour gives very good opportunities to see the elusive Wild Cat and European Otter.

We will also visit the Poda lagoon and the Poda Visitor Centre managed by the BSPB and Neophron Tours.



Red-breasted Goose

Itinerary:



- Day 1
Arrival at Varna Airport and drive north to Coastal Dobrudzha
- Days 2, 3 & 4
Exploring Coastal Dobrudzha for Red-breasted Geese and other wintering birds
- Day 5
Drive to Bourgas with stops at the Batova and Kamchia riverine forests
- Days 6 & 7
Birding in the wetlands around Bourgas
- Day 8
Drive back north through the Eastern Balkan range and departure from Varna

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10 Red-breasted Geese



Great Bittern