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ONE-DAY BIRDING TOUR AROUND SOFIA (September 9th, 2006)

Participants in this tour were Ivailo Nikolov from and the UK birder Harry Ridley.

Weather: in the morning cold with very strong wind, clear skies, warm around noon and during the rest of the day.

A trip to Dragoman Marsh and the surrounding areas seemed to be the best option for one-day tour around Sofia during this late summer period (e.g. much better than a mountain trip to Vitosha Mountains). After making a roundtrip of the marsh on foot (for about 4 hours) we continued further on to check some other wetlands in the area (small lakes and fishponds full with Moorhens, Little Grebes, Coots and other more common waterfowl).

Dragoman Marsh is probably the best hotspot by Sofia during spring and early summer with incredibly varied bird list. Although coming right after the strongest autumn migration, we were still lucky enough to enjoy some really interesting birds thanks to the observation tower mostly, overlooking the western parts of Dragoman Marsh.

DRAGOMAN MARSH

(just the most interesting species are mentioned below)

1. **Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)** - 1 juv (very close look of foraging bird above the "Three Ears" hills)
2. **Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)** - 1 (one of the surprises of the tour - a perching bird in the middle of the marsh, spotted from the observation tower)
3. **Short-toed Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*)** - 2 (local birds)
4. **Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)** - 2-3
5. **Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)** - 12
6. **Red-footed Falcon (*Falco tinnunculus*)** - 5-6 (small flock foraging over the fields)
7. **Long-legged Buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*)** - 1-2 (local birds)
8. **Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*)** - 5 (migrants, resting on "Three Ears" hills)
9. **Black Woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*)** - 1 (surprisingly flying over the Karst and un-wooded "Three Ears" hills)
10. **Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)** - 2
11. **Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*)** - 6-7
12. **Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)** - 1
13. **Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)** - 15
14. **Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*)** - 1 (beautiful look from the observation tower of hunting bird some 40 m away)
15. **Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*)** - 3-4 (flying birds spotted from the tower)
16. **Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)** - 25 (migrating individuals everywhere)
17. **Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*)** - 15 (most of them young birds, only 2 adult males)
18. **Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*)** - 7-8
19. **Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)** - 200+ (huge migration, the nets of the local bird ringers were full with them when we arrived in the morning)
20. **Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)** - 500+