



Traventuria Ltd.
Address: 45 Veslets Str., 1202 Sofia, BULGARIA

Web: www.traventuria.com
Phone: 00359 2 4890884

E-mail: info@traventuria.com
Fax: 00359 2 4917352

Травентурия ООД
Адрес: ул. Веслец 45, 1202 София, БЪЛГАРИЯ

Уеб: www.pytuvane.com
Тел.: 00359 2 4890883

Ел. поща: info@pytuvane.com
Факс: 00359 2 4917352

Winter birding tour along the Black Sea, Bulgaria (February, 2006)

In the middle of February 2006 with several friends and colleagues, working for nature conservation NGO-s in Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences we made a trip along the wetlands on the Black Sea Coast. The situation there seemed rather interesting as most of the inland water basins were frozen for about 10 days and on the other hand alarming news for waterfowl suffering from Avian Flu has already been received from the places we planned to visit en-route.

The tour included visits to all wetland between the Bulgarian-Romanian border and the city of Bourgas. The most appropriate marine areas were also investigated. Shabla, Dourankoulak, and bigger parts of Pomoriisko, Atanasovsko, Bourgas and Mandra lakes were still frozen (excluding small "eyes" where hundreds of ducks, geese, dabbling ducks and other waterfowl were concentrated). Many birds were observed in small bays and also most of the geese used to spend the night in the open sea rather than on the ice of the lakes.

However the information for many dead birds this winter (compared to other severe winters) was true. We found more than 20 Red-breasted Geese with strange symptoms and behavior, allowing people to approach them at a distance of 5 m before taking off (although not all of those were in condition to fly at all). Dead Coots and Mute Swans were found on each of the wetlands visited.

As part of the most interesting information regarding this expedition will be officially published, I will mention here just the highlights without further details.

1. **Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*)** – just several birds by the lakes of Bourgas
2. **Pygmy Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pygmeus*)** – about 100 starting to gather for spending the night on a roosting site in Bourgas Lake.
3. **Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*)** – small groups of 1-7 birds among grazing Whooper Swans (*Cygnus cygnus*) in the fields.
4. **Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis*)** – one of the highlights of the tour. We observed a single bird in mixed flock of Graylag Geese (*Anser anser*), White-fronted Geese (*Anser albifrons*) and Red-breasted Geese (*Branta ruficollis*) just 150 m from the road.
5. **Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)** – the other highlight of special interest for us as the species has just a couple of records in the country known so far. It was registered in a huge flock of about 5,000 White-fronted Geese in a field in the inland eastern parts of the country.
6. **Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*)** – less than 15 000 birds for the whole tour.
7. **Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*)** – few birds in Mandra Lake by Bourgas.
8. **Scaup (*Aythya marila*)** – unusual concentrations in the sea of more than 50 birds at one place (together with Tufted Ducks (*Aythya fuligula*) in most of the cases).
9. **White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*)** – less than 100 birds in the wetlands around Bourgas.
10. **Velvet Scoter (*Melanitta fusca*)** – 2 birds by Bourgas.
11. **Smew (*Mergus albellus*)** – groups of 10-50 birds in not frozen "eyes" in most of the wetlands.
12. **Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)** – unusually high numbers of wintering birds, may be due to abundant prey comprising dying and dead waterfowl.
13. **White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*)** – 3-4 birds in different parts of Mandra Lake by Bourgas (eating dead waterfowl on the ice).
14. **Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)** – rather interesting observation of one wintering bird by Bourgas.
15. **Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)** – one bird in a lagoon by Bourgas.