

# Indicator birds of the **Hight Nature Value landscape** of Transylvania



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## Introduction

In the first part of this publication we present an overview of avifauna of the Sighișoara-Târnava Mare area, a Natura 2000 Site (SCI, Site of European Community Interest, designated under the EU Habitats Directive); the factors that threaten the populations of nesting, migratory and wintering species of birds; and general protection measures which should be taken.

In the second part we have selected some representative species that every visitor has the chance to see; many are locally common but rare elsewhere in Europe. With this guide we hope to provide the opportunity for interested visitors to make acquaintance with the rich avifauna of the area.

## General description of the avifauna

The Sighișoara-Târnava Mare site is located in southern Transylvania, between the Târnava Mare and Hârtibaciu river valleys, an area of 850 km<sup>2</sup>. The area has a population of about 25,000 people scattered in 30 small villages. The area is a haven of biodiversity of European importance. These kinds of traditional mixed farming landscapes, where man and nature are still in ecological balance, have disappeared in most of Europe.

The landscape is characterised by a wide variety of habitats: hilly areas with deciduous forests, scrub, pasture, haymeadows, arable patches, orchards and villages. The mosaic of habitats, and the continued practice of traditional agriculture with small-scale holdings and low human impact, make this one of the most varied and richest areas for nesting birds in Europe.

## Forest habitats

Most forests are of hornbeam and pedunculate and sessile oak, but in the north of the area there are also mixed forests of beech, so we can meet the species characteristic of both habitats. The middle spotted woodpecker is a species characteristic of oak forests, while the white-backed woodpecker and collared flycatcher are encountered, especially, in beech forests or in forests mixed with beech. Other common species found in forests include the collared dove, tawny owl, great spotted woodpecker, robin, songthrush, blackbird, blackcap, chiffchaff, great tit, blue tit, marsh tit, nuthatch, jay, chaffinch. In older forests nest diurnal raptors, and ural owl, stock dove, grey-headed woodpecker and black woodpecker. At dusk, at the forest edge, the continuous song of the nightjar is audible from a great distance.

Raptors such as the common buzzard, lesser spotted eagle and honey buzzard nest in the forest, but do not depend only on this type of habitat, because they seek prey in open areas: meadow, pasture or extensive arable land. The lesser spotted eagle has an important population in the Sighișoara-Târnava

Mare area, the density of nesting pairs being one of the highest in the country. Remarkably, in some places one can see 10 individuals flying at one time.

### **Grassland habitats**

Above the meadows and the pastures sing skylarks. Woodlarks nest on isolated grasslands and scrub. Scrub also provides nesting places for the red-backed shrike, garden warbler, lesser whitethroat, corn bunting, yellowhammer, and the thrush nightingale whose melodic, pleasant song can be heard both day and night. The stonechat and whinchat are characteristic of the area, the former preferring dryer grassland, the latter preferring damper meadows. From late May, at night in wet grassland you can hear the grating call of the corncrake - an endangered species worldwide. Less demanding in terms of habitat, quail can be heard even from cereal fields, but unfortunately their "pit-patak" call is increasingly rare.

Wood pasture serves as a resting place for domestic animals and is an important habitat for many species of birds - the hobby and kestrel, who lay their eggs in the nests of the hooded crow or magpie, the scops owl whose repeated hoot can be heard in the nights of May and June and which nest in the hollows of older trees, and the hoopoe. The green woodpecker and other woodpecker species are also commonly seen. Among the songbirds characteristic of this habitat are the tree pipit, woodlark and golden oriole. The great grey shrike and lesser grey shrike also nest in this habitat, and in orchards and the avenues of trees along roads.

### **Arable land**

The percentage of ploughed land in Sighișoara-Târnava Mare area is very low and tends to be managed with the traditional methods. Thus many species nest in these man-made habitats, such as quail and partridge, whose population in Transylvania has fallen in the last 15 years; the skylark, tawny pipit, or, rare but present in cereal crops, the corncrake. Other species, such as birds of prey, white stork, wood pigeon and stock dove, yellowhammer, corn bunting and corvids seek their food in agricultural crops.

### **Villages**

Villages also have their characteristic species. Although, currently, they do not seem threatened in many countries of western and central Europe, the numbers of white storks, little owl, jackdaw and both species of sparrows have declined dramatically in recent decades. In this region storks still use the roofs of buildings as nesting places. Other species characteristic of villages include collared dove, Syrian woodpecker, swallow, house martin, white wagtail, black redstart and great tit.

## Lakes

The lakes neighbouring Brădeni village in the south of the area are important nesting sites for pond-dwelling species. Migratory species use the lakes as a place of rest and feeding. A colony of grey heron nests in the cluster of pine trees near the lakes. Reeds provide shelter for nests of great bittern, little bittern, purple heron, reed warbler, great reed warbler and other reed-dwelling species. In each nesting season several families of ferruginous duck, a globally-threatened species, can be observed. Great crested grebe, little grebe and red-necked grebe all nest regularly in the lakes. In recent years mute swan have also been seen, this being is one of the few lakes in Transylvania where the swan nests. In daylight, when it is quite quiet, we can see black stork feeding near the lakes.

## Threats

By far the most important threat to the avifauna of the Sighișoara Târnavă-Mare site is the disappearance of traditional agricultural practices. The EU's Common Agricultural Policy does not favour traditional livestock systems, with small flocks/herds, and thus we can see a reduction in the number of domestic animals in the area, especially of cows. This trend leads to the abandonment of grasslands, especially of haymeadows, which, without cleaning, gradually turn into scrub and woodland. Furthermore, farming small arable plots of land is no longer profitable either. Establishment of large monocultures will lead to decreased numbers of many species.

Another threat is infrastructure development (construction of roads, highways, development, etc.). This leads both to direct habitat loss, and also to indirect damage to populations by disturbance both during and after completion of construction.

Many forest-dwelling bird species need old or even dead trees for nesting or feeding, and so are threatened by excessive deforestation or early felling of forests. Also, the felling of solitary trees and of avenues of trees along roads has a negative impact on several species, such as the great grey shrike, lesser grey shrike, and kestrel.

Wood pasture, a rare habitat, is also in danger of disappearance on the one hand because of the cutting of trees, and on the other hand, because of ageing and dying of trees in these habitats - their regeneration being prevented by grazing.

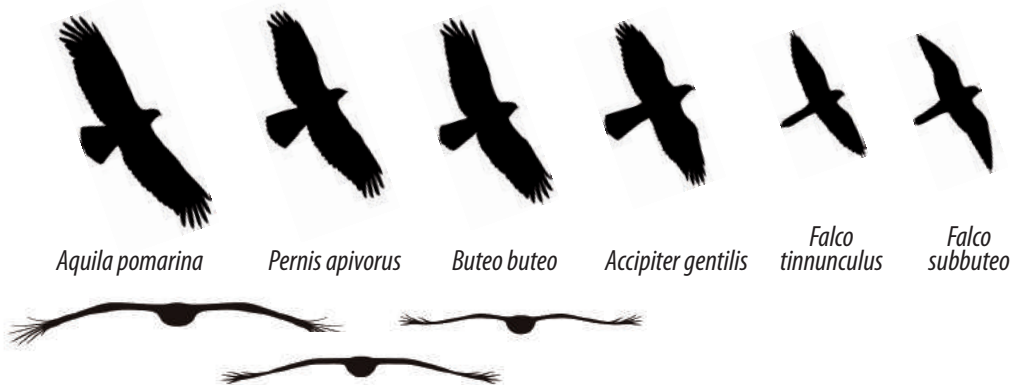
Another threat is electrocution of birds on medium voltage electricity pylons, a phenomenon by which dozens of white stork, diurnal raptors and corvids die each year. Poaching, poisoning or robbing of nests can be important threats to certain species also.

## Protection

Although there were several small reserves within the Sighișoara-Târnava Mare site, these could not ensure the protection of bird species of high conservation importance. Thus a Special (Avifaunistic) Protection Area (SPA, Natura 2000 site designated under the EU Wild Birds Directive) was created in 2008 with an area of over 246,000 ha, which includes most of Sighișoara-Târnava Mare site. Key species for conservation under the SPA are the ferruginous duck, lesser spotted eagle, honey buzzard, hen harrier, corncrake, nightjar, Ural owl, grey-headed woodpecker, Syrian woodpecker, middle spotted woodpecker, woodlark, and all aquatic bird species during migration periods. A list of all species found in the area which are included in protected under the Wild Birds Directive is found in the table at end of this booklet. The next step for the effective protection of the important avifauna of the area is the development of a management plan, though which negative effects can be controlled and mitigated.

## Birds of prey

One of the most fascinating groups of birds that we can meet in the area are the raptors. Six of the most frequently observed species are presented on pages 7-12: to help identify them, we show on this page their silhouettes in flight, to allow direct comparison.



Species protected under Annex 1 of the EU Wild Birds Directive



Im.

Adult

## Lesser spotted eagle

(*Aquila pomarina*)

Acvilă țipătoare mică

Body length 60-65 cm

Wingspan 134-159 cm



The lesser spotted eagle is a species widely distributed in Central and Eastern Europe, as far as to Greece and Turkey in the south. It nests in both deciduous forests, and in lowland evergreen trees, from lowlands to low mountains.

It hunts in open habitats: haymeadows, pastures, extensive arable land.

It is relatively common in the Sighișoara-Târnava Mare area. Their diet is made up mainly of small rodents, but it also preys on amphibians and insects. It builds its nest in old trees. It lays 1-2 eggs in May, from which the chicks hatch after 38-40 days of incubation. If two eggs hatch, in almost all cases one dies because of the aggressiveness of its sibling. The chick leaves the nest after 55-57 days, after which it is still fed by its parents for several weeks.

It is a migratory species, leaving its nesting areas in September. It overwinters in East Africa, from where it returns in April. It is threatened by loss of feeding habitats and of trees suitable for nest building.







*Juvenile fem.*



*Adult mas.*

## **Honey buzzard** (*Pernis apivorus*)

### **Viespar**

*Body length 52-60 cm*

*Wingspan 135-150 cm*



The honey buzzard is widespread in Europe, missing only from the most northern areas. It is found in lowland and unland/mountain forests. Although it is quite common, the fact that it leads a secluded life and its similarity with the common buzzard makes detection more difficult.

Its diet is very specialised, feeding on the nests of hornets and bumble bees at ground level. It often also catches reptiles, insects, and sometimes small birds. It seeks food at the edges of forests and meadows, and it nests in old forest trees. Nesting is generally complete in late May or early June, and consists of 2, rarely 1 or 3, eggs, which hatch after 33-34 days of incubation. The chicks leave the nest at the age of 6 weeks.

It is a migratory species, spending winter in sub-Saharan Africa. It is the raptor species that spends the least time in the area, leaving its nesting places in August - early September, and returning only in May. It is threatened by the disappearance of its habitat and diet, and of old trees suitable for nesting.







Juvenile

Adult

## Common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)

### Șorecar comun

Body length 51-57 cm

Wingspan 113-128 cm



The common buzzard is the most common bird of prey in Europe. It is widespread across Romania, from lowlands to mountains.

It nests in forests or smaller clumps smaller of trees. The nest is built on old or mature trees. The nesting period varies according to altitude and weather conditions, but generally a nest with a clutch of 2-3 (more rarely, 1 or 4) eggs is completed in late March to early April. Brooding lasts 33-34 days, and the chicks leave the nest after 45 days. The buzzard hunts in open areas such as grassland, arable land, forest glades. Diet is quite varied, but usually mostly consists of small mammals, lizards or insects. It also consumes carrion, especially in winter.

It is a partially migratory species, but most individuals in Romania are sedentary. It is not threatened.





*Juvenile*



*Adult*

## **Goshawk** (*Accipiter gentilis*)

### **Uliu porumbar**

*Body length 48-62 cm*

*Wingspan 135-165 cm*



The goshawk is a relatively common species of hill and mountain forests, being quite rare in lowland forests. It prefers large forests for nesting.

The goshawk nests in old trees. A nest can be used several times, so may reach the height and diameter of 1 m. A clutch of 2-5 eggs is laid in late March or in April, and brooding lasts 35-38 days. The chicks leave the nest at 38-40 days old. The goshawk feeds mainly with medium-sized birds, like pigeons, thrush, starling and owl or other species of diurnal raptors. It quite often also preys on mammals, from the size of small rodents up to polecat size. It mainly hunts within forests.

It is a sedentary species. It is primarily threatened by poaching, and by intensive forestry.



## Common kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

### Vânturel roșu

Body length 32-35 cm

Wingspan 50-60 cm



Juvenile

Adult fem.

Adult mas.

After the common buzzard, the kestrel is the most common diurnal raptor in Europe. In Romania it is widespread and common in all habitats from open plains to the low mountains, and can also be encountered in Alpine areas.

It nests in clumps or lines of trees, isolated trees, electricity poles, tall buildings, cliffs and ravines. It usually occupies the nests of crows or burrows in trees, or holes in cliffs and ravines, often in small colonies in combination with other species (for example in rook colonies). The clutch is composed of 4-6, rarely 3 or 7 eggs. Brooding takes on average 29 days, and the chicks leave the nest after 25 days. The kestrel catches its prey in open land such as grassland or arable land. It hunts especially small mammals and insects, but can also catch lizards or sometimes small birds.

It is a partially migratory species, most individuals leaving Transylvania in Winter. It is threatened primarily by the disappearance of nesting sites (for example the felling of avenues of trees down roadsides), and may also be indirectly affected by crow control.





## **Hobby** (*Falco subbuteo*)

### **Șoimul rândunelelor**

*Body length 30-36 cm*

*Wingspan 82-92 cm*



The hobby nests throughout Europe except in the most northern areas. It is a species characteristic of open and semi-open areas of the plains and hill. It avoids extensive forests and high mountains.

It often nests near wetlands, where it hunts dragonflies and swallows with a flight so rapid that it is able to capture swallows in the air. It does not build its own nests, but rather takes over the nests of corvids in trees or high-tension electricity pylons. Because it only starts to nest in late May, it often happens that a nest is used in the same year by a crow and a hobby. The clutch is composed of 2-4 eggs, and brooding takes on average 28 days. The chicks leave the nest after 5 weeks. Food consists of insects and small birds caught in flight. They sometimes prey on bats also.



The hobby is a long-distance migratory species, spending the winter in tropical Africa. The first individuals return to Romania in the second part of April, and most leave the country in September.

## White stork (*Ciconia ciconia*)

Barză albă

Body length 100-115 cm

Wingspan 155-165 cm



Storks nest, in small numbers, in several localities in the area. They seek food (insects, frogs, rodents, fish) in wet meadows, lakes and arable land. It is a migratory species, leaving nest sites at the end of August. They spend the winter in South Africa, from where they return at the end of March. Storks are threatened with extinction by loss of feeding habitat, and by electrocution on medium-tension electricity pylons.

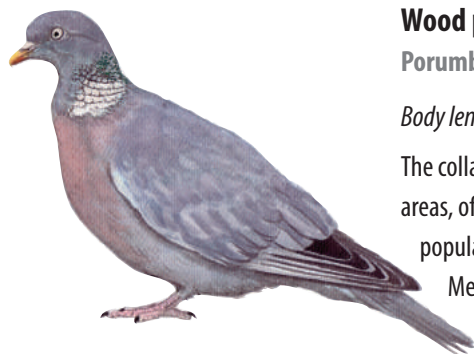
## Corncrake (*Crex crex*)

Cristel de camp

Body length 27-30 cm



The corncrake usually nests in damp wet haymeadows, but can also be encountered in damp pastures or cereal crops. It is a difficult species to see, but during the night from May to June you can hear their distinctive call. It is a long-distance migratory species, spending the winter in tropical Africa. They leave their nest sites in September, and the first males may be heard in May after their return. It is threatened by disappearance and degradation of habitat, for example the transformation of haymeadow into arable land, intensive grazing, abandonment of haymeadows, infrastructure development, etc.



### **Wood pigeon** (*Columba palumbus*)

**Porumbel gulerat**

*Body length 40-42 cm*

The collared dove nests in woods, but, mostly, feeds in open areas, often on arable land. Diet is totally vegetarian. Romanian populations are migratory, spending the winter in the Mediterranean area. It is a common species. Not threatened.



### **Turtle dove** (*Streptopelia turtur*)

**Tuturică**

*Body length 26-28 cm*

The turtle dove is a species of mosaic of habitats, open or semi-open. It nests in trees or tall bushes. It is a seed-eater, a migratory species that winters in tropical Africa. The population in Western Europe has fallen by more than 50% in the last two decades because of the intensification of agriculture. This is a threat in Romania also. Another problem is the shooting of the species in Mediterranean countries, during migration period.



### **Collared dove** (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

**Guguștiuc**

*Body length 31-33 cm*

Common in towns. The species has spread into Europe relatively recently, the expansion began in early 20th century. It builds its nest on trees or buildings. A sedentary species. Not threatened.





### **Cuckoo** (*Cuculus canorus*)

**Cuc**

*Body length 32-34 cm*

A common species of forests and semi-open habitats. It is the only species in the country which lays its eggs in the nests of other species, which rear its chicks. The most usual host species are robins, in forests, and great reed warblers in damp habitats. It is a long-distance migratory species, which winters in tropical Africa. It returns to its nesting sites in April, and Autumn migration takes place in August-September. Not threatened in this area.



### **Little owl** (*Athene noctua*)

**Cucuvea**

*Body length 21-23 cm*

A small species of owl. It is sedentary, pervasive in all localities in lowland and hilly regions. It nests in hollows and abandoned buildings. Diet consists of small rodents, insects, and more rarely small birds that it captures at evening or twilight. It has a characteristic call from which it gets its Romanian name. There are many myths about this species, which is one of the best known bird species in Romania.



### **Ural owl** (*Strix uralensis*)

**Huhurez mare**

*Body length 60-62 cm*



A large-size species of owl. Originally a species characteristic of mountainous regions and high hilly areas, it has expanded its distribution to lowland regions. Sedentary, it nests in deciduous and mixed forests, closely associated with beech woods. It feeds on small and medium-sized mammals, birds and, rarely, insects. It nests in large hollows and abandoned raptor nests.





## **Nightjar** (*Caprimulgus europaeus*)



### **Caprimulg**

*Body length 26-28 cm*

A relatively common but localized species, preferring old deciduous forests, but also found in coniferous forests. It is active at night and at dusk, when it emerges to hunt insects in flight. It has a characteristic sonorous voice, which can be heard over long distances. A migratory species, it spends the cold months in western and southeastern Africa.



## **Bee eater** (*Merops apiaster*)

### **Prigorie**

*Body length 27-29 cm*

A common species of open areas of hill and lowland. It nests usually in colonies, in galleries dug in steep banks or cliffs. These galleries can sometimes reach a length of 1 metre, at the end of which is the nest proper. It feeds on flying insects, preferring bees, from which it draws its name. It is a migratory species, which migrates early, in large groups, spending the winter in southern Africa, from where it only returns in May.



## **Hoopoe** (*Upupa epops*)

### **Pupăză**

*Body length 26-28 cm.*

A well-known species, common in groups of trees, old orchards and also in the vicinity of cultivated and grazed areas. It nests in hollows in old trees, cracks and holes in walls. It walks a great deal on the ground in order to capture insects and worms, which it extracts with its long, fine forceps-shaped beak. It is a migratory bird which arrives in Romania at the end of March, and departs in September to wintering areas in central Africa.



### **Black woodpecker** (*Dryocopus martius*)



#### **Ciocănițoare neagră**

*Body length 45-47 cm*

A fairly common species in coniferous and mixed forests, which has come in the last few decades to nest in deciduous woods in hill and lowland regions. It hollows out its own nest holes in the trunks of trees. It is a sedentary species, remaining in the area for nesting and also during the winter. It seeks food in logs and tree trunks, from where it excavates the larvae and pupae of various insects.

### **Grey-headed woodpecker** (*Picus canus*)



#### **Ghionoaie sură**

*Body length 25-26 cm*

A widespread but sporadic species, preferring groves of beech and oak. It may be found in larger parks and softwood forests near watercourses. It is a sedentary species, like other woodpecker species, and in winter it may withdraw into lowland areas and near villages. It finds its food within or under the bark of trees, sometimes on the ground. It nests in hollows in trees.

### **Green Woodpecker** (*Picus viridis*)

#### **Ghionoaie verde**

*Body length 31-33 cm*

A species related to the grey-headed woodpecker. It prefers groves of trees, old orchards with hollow trees, lighter forests and clumps of trees. Unlike the grey-headed woodpecker, it does not reach mountainous regions. It can often be seen on the ground, searching for ants' nests. In addition to ants it also consumes larvae of various species, which it extracts from the trunks of trees. Like other woodpeckers, it hollows out its own nest holes in tree trunks. It is a sedentary bird, remaining in its nesting area.



### **Middle spotted woodpecker** (*Dendrocopos medius*)

#### **Ciocănitore de stejar**

*Body length 20-22 cm*



A species characteristic of hilly deciduous forests, preferring those of oak and hornbeam. Among the species of woodpecker with variegated plumage, it is medium-sized. It excavates its own nest hole in rotten wood. Its diet consists of insect larvae and pupae. It is a sedentary species; during the winter it can be seen around villages.



### **Syrian woodpecker** (*Dendrocopos syriacus*)

#### **Ciocănitore de grădini**

*Body length 22-23 cm*



A species with restricted range in Europe, nesting only in the southeast of the continent. It prefers open areas, parks, orchards, galleries and avenues of trees along roads. In this area, it is commonly seen in villages also. Like other woodpecker species, it feeds on insect larvae and pupae that live under the bark of trees and in tree trunks. It nests in the hole which it excavates in tree trunks.



### **Greater spotted woodpecker** (*Dendrocopos major*)

#### **Ciocănitore pestriță mare**

*Body length 22-23 cm*

The most common and widespread species of woodpecker in the area. It nests in different habitats, from towns and villages in lowlands to mountain coniferous forests. It is present in gardens and city parks. Sedentary. It starts to drum at the end of February. It has a very strong and fast drumming action, that suddenly stops. Its nesting and feeding characteristics are identical to those of the other woodpecker species, but it is more aggressive than the other species. In winter it feeds on pine cones seeds.



### **Skylark** (*Alauda arvensis*)

#### **Ciocârlie de câmp**

*Body length 18-19 cm*

A well-known and common species. It is found in open areas, cultivated arable land, natural grasslands, pastures, etc. The song is very distinctive, continuous, made up of high notes, repeated in long series, sometimes with imitations. The bird starts singing on the ground, continuing the air, rising higher and higher, and can sing without interruption for 15 minutes. It feeds on the ground, on various insects and larvae. In late autumn it migrates in flocks, to the Mediterranean sea coast, from where it returns early, in February-March. Some individuals remain in the area in milder winters.



### **Woodlark** (*Lullula arborea*)

#### **Ciocârlie de pădure**

*Body length 15 cm*

A lark species characteristic of hilly areas, where it is most often encountered in grassland dotted with bushes, trees, etc. The natural afforestation of grasslands – in the absence of grazing and mowing – reduces its habitat. It migrates to southern Europe, but is among the first visitors of spring. It usually sings while flying in circles above its territory, or sitting in bushes, trees or electricity cables.





### **Swallow** (*Hirundo rustica*)

#### **Rândunica**

*Body length 17-19 cm*

Probably the best known and loved bird species in Romania – competing only with the White Stork for this title. It makes its nest with mud and straw, mostly within stables and barns, but also in other human constructions. It winters in Africa, from where it returns in April. During the autumn migration (August-September), if the weather is cold and if it rains several days in succession, many of them die from hunger.



### **House martin** (*Delichon urbica*)

#### **Lăstun de casă**

*Body length 12.5 cm*

As widespread as the swallow, this species nests near human buildings, and its nest is closed with only a small entry hole and is located on the outside of buildings, under eaves or in the corners of windows. It can have up to three broods in a nesting season. It forms colonies on large buildings (hotels, hospitals, etc.). It winters in Africa, and returns in April.



### **Tree pipit** (*Anthus trivialis*)

#### **Fâsă de pădure**

*Body length 15 cm*

A species widespread throughout Transylvania, it nests in open areas on forest edges, within more open forest, or forest clearings. It begins its characteristic song flying up from the top of a tree, and then lands in a characteristic posture (with stretched wings, and with a dangling leg) and ends its courtship song on another tree. It migrates to Africa, from where it returns in April.



## **White wagtail** (*Motacilla alba*)

**Codobatură albă**

*Body length 18 cm*

A common species, which can be encountered in many types of habitat, from areas of lowland farmland, to rocky areas in high mountains. It also nests in built-up areas, especially in villages, where it is often found near water. It often seeks its food on the bank of rivers. It migrates to Africa, from where it returns early in spring.



## **Wren** (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

**Ochiuboului**

*Body length 9.5 cm*

The wren is one of the smallest bird species of Romania. It nests in forests and scrub, and in winter can be met outside these habitats, in weeds and reedy areas. Its presence, in most cases, is betrayed by its singing voice which is relatively strong, since it has quite reserved behaviour. It is an insectivore. Nesting individuals in Romanian are sedentary.



## **Robin** (*Erithacus rubecula*)

**Măcăleandru**

*Body length 14 cm*

A common species in all types of forest, and can also be encountered in parks and gardens if there is enough vegetation. It nests in holes and cracks, and under tree roots, at ground level. We can hear its characteristic song up to and even after sunset, until total darkness. It migrates to southern Europe, but some individuals over-winter in Romania.



### **Black redstart** (*Phoenicurus ochruros*)

**Codroș de munte**

*Body length 14.5 cm*

The black redstart may be found in lowland and hilly areas, and in mountains up to 2,000 metres. It prefers rocky areas. It can be found in many villages in Romania, where it spends much of life on the roofs of houses. It nests in cracks of buildings and beams of barns. In spring it begins to sing even before sunrise, even in the dark. It migrates in winter to southern Europe.



### **Thrush nightingale** (*Luscinia luscinia*)

**Privighetoare de zăvoi**

*Body length 16.5 cm*

A species common in bushes and stream-edges in Transylvania. Although it is quite difficult to see, its presence is indicated by its melancholic and pleasant song, which can be heard both day and night in May and June. It is a long-distance migratory species, which returns from Africa in the second half of April. Its autumn migration takes place in August-September. An insectivore species.



### **Stonechat** (*Saxicola torquata*)

**Mărăcinar negru**

*Body length 12.5 cm*

The stonechat is found in open plains, sunny with little vegetation. It likes to sit on top of high bushes or plants. It nests on the ground, on the banks of ditches, usually laying two clutches per year. It arrives early in spring, in March, from its wintering sites in southern Europe. An insectivore species.





### **Whinchat** (*Saxicola rubetra*)

**Mărăcinar mare**

*Body length 12.5 cm*

The whinchat is related to the stonechat, and also prefers open areas, but it is found usually in damp meadows, along the edges of canals, etc. It also nests on the ground. It migrates to Africa, from where it arrives later than the stonechat.



### **Songthrush** (*Turdus philomelos*)

**Sturz cântător**

*Body length 22-23 cm*

One of the most common species of birds in the woods, though in most cases one cannot see it, only hear it singing. It has a strong voice and a distinctive song, with many repetitions. It migrates to the Mediterranean, but some individuals may overwinter in Romania, in mixed flocks with fieldfares and redwings.



### **Fieldfare** (*Turdus pilaris*)

**Cocoșar**

*Body length 25-26 cm*

It prefers humid areas, where it finds food in abundance, and needs older trees for nesting. It nests in scattered colonies, which can be found along valleys, where the avenues of trees have not been cut along the road, and in tree-lines on streams. In winter large flocks arrive from the north.



## **Blackbird** (*Turdus merula*)

### **Mierlă**

*Body length 24-25 cm*

A widespread species, which can be found throughout forest areas. It also nests in villages and towns, in parks, and even in big cities. It nests in bushes and trees, usually of low height. Most forest-dwelling blackbirds migrate to Southern Europe - the Romanian population probably to Greece – while most of those nesting in cities remain over winter.



## **Blackcap** (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

### **Silvie cu cap negru**

*Body length 14 cm*

The most common bird species of forests in Romania (and Europe as a whole). It can be found in forests, scrub, and forest galleries, along streams from lowland to mountain areas, and is common also in towns, in parks and gardens. It over-winters in southern Europe and northern Africa, from where it returns in April.



## **Lesser whitethroat** (*Sylvia curruca*)

### **Silvie mică**

*Body length 13.5 cm*

A species widespread in Romania, nesting from lowlands to subalpine areas. It prefers dense scrub, and can often be found within town areas, in parks and gardens. It feeds on various insects and spiders. It overwinters in tropical Africa, leaving their nesting sites in August-September, and the first singing individuals can usually be heard in early April.



### **Common Whitethroat** (*Sylvia communis*)

#### **Silvie de camp**

*Body length 14 cm*

A species widespread in Europe, a frequent nester in Romania also. It prefers open habitats with scrub and scattered vegetation. It can be observed in vegetation along rivers, on the southern slopes of hills, in cemeteries, and in lines of scrub between arable fields. Its diet is composed of various species of insects and spiders. It is a long-distance migratory species, reaching its nest sites in April, and autumn migration begins in September.



### **Chiffchaff** (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

#### **Pitulice mică**

*Body length 11 cm*

A very common summer visitor. It nests in open forests, scrub, parks, etc. It is very active within vegetation, recognized by its characteristic chiff-chaff call. It eats insects, preferring various species of flies and other very small invertebrates. It is one latest species to leave for its over-wintering areas, and one of the earliest to return to its nesting sites.



### **Collared flycatcher** (*Ficedula albicollis*)

#### **Muscari gulerat**

*Body length 12.5 cm*

A relatively common species of flycatcher. It nests in less dense deciduous forests, especially beech. It also often nests in parks. It often nests in the hollows made by woodpeckers. Food consists of various species of invertebrates, particularly flies, which it spots while sitting on an observation point and then catches in flight.





### **Great tit** (*Parus major*)

**Pițigoi mare**

*Body length 14 cm*

This is one of the most common species in the area. It can be seen in deciduous forests, parks, gardens and other habitats with trees. It nests in natural hollows, and often will also nest in artificial hollows. Its summer diet is composed of various invertebrates, and in winter it also eats seeds. A sedentary species. Outside the nesting season it is gregarious, joining mixed groups of tits. During the winter it is a frequent sight on bird feeders.



### **Blue tit** (*Parus caeruleus*)

**Pițigoi albastru**

*Body length 11.5 cm*

A little smaller than the largest tit species, the great tit. It nests in hollows in deciduous forests, parks, gardens, orchards, and tree lines along rivers and streams. It often nests in nest boxes placed by bird lovers. Its diet consists of various invertebrates, particularly insects, insect larvae, caterpillars, etc. A sedentary species, in winter it creates smaller groups, which can often be seen at bird tables.



### **Marsh tit** (*Parus palustris*)

#### **Pițigoi sur**

*Body length 11.5 cm*

A sedentary species, widespread in the area. It nests in burrows. It prefers deciduous forests, and is also present in less well-maintained gardens. It moves vigilantly among the lower branches of trees, and often can be seen shaking a branch with just one leg. Diet consists of insects, spiders, larvae, caterpillar, etc.



### **Long-tailed tit** (*Aegithalos caudatus*)

#### **Pițiguș codat**

*Body length 14 cm*

A sedentary species, common, it nests in deciduous, mixed and coniferous forests, and in parks. Its nest, almost spherical, is camouflaged with lichen and moss, using also spiders' webs. The nest may be built in trees or bushes. The relationship between adult pairs and chicks is very close, they can be seen looking for food together even in winter.



### **Nuthatch** (*Sitta europaea*)

#### **Țiclean**

*Body length 14 cm*

A sedentary, widespread species, common in Romania. It nests in deciduous forests, gardens, old orchards and parks. It builds its nests in abandoned woodpecker nests. If the entrance hole is too large, it reduces the size by stopping it up with mud. While searching for food it can often be observed upside down on trunks and branches of trees. Diet is composed, primarily, of various invertebrates (insects, spiders, larvae), but it often also feeds on seeds.



### **Great grey shrike** (*Lanius excubitor*)

**Sfrâncioc mare**

*Body length 24 cm*

The only species of shrike in Romania that can be seen during winter. The number of nesting pairs of this species is increasing in the country. It builds its nests in avenues or groups of trees and shrubs in the more open habitats. It likes to sit on high points from which it can view its feeding areas. Diet consists of insects, rodents, lizards and small songbirds. During the winter it may be seen solitary.



### **Lesser grey shrike** (*Lanius minor*)

**Sfrâncioc cu frunte neagră**

*Body length 20 cm*

Similar in colour to the great grey shrike, but of smaller size and with a more pronounced black face. It nests in open habitats, in scrub and bushes, and often in colonies within lines of poplars along roads. Its numbers have decreased significantly in recent years, most probably due to reduction of nesting habitat. It hunts insects, lizards, and various species of small birds. It is migratory, wintering in Africa.



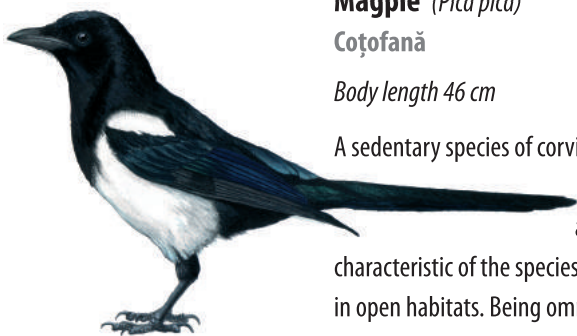
### **Red-backed shrike** (*Lanius collurio*)

**Sfrâncioc roșiatic**

*Body length 17-18 cm*

The most common species of shrike in the Romania. It can be found almost anywhere in open habitats which offer nesting opportunities (bushes, shrubs). Like other species of shrike, it often sticks its prey on thorns. It feeds on various invertebrates, lizards and small birds. It is migratory, leaving for its wintering sites in September and returning in early May.





### **Magpie** (*Pica pica*)

**Coțofană**

*Body length 46 cm*

A sedentary species of corvid, widespread and common in Romania. Its nests are large and almost spherical, with a roof, characteristic of the species, which it builds in bushes and trees in open habitats. Being omnivorous, its diet is made up of invertebrates, lizards, bird chicks and eggs, etc. In winter they can often be seen gathered in groups of several individuals.



### **Jay** (*Garrulus glandarius*)

**Gaiță**

*Body length 34 cm*

A sedentary species, common, it nests in deciduous and mixed forests. It can often be seen in human settlements. Its nest is usually built at low altitudes, in trees. Its diet is very diverse, consisting of invertebrates, lizards, birds' eggs, mice, etc. It is famous for its habit of imitating the songs and calls of other species. It has a characteristic undulating flight.



### **Jackdaw** (*Corvus monedula*)

**Stâncuță**

*Body length 33 cm*

An urban-dwelling species which nests in particular on high buildings and in hollows in older trees. It feeds both on agricultural cultivations and in towns. In times of migration and in winter, the Romanian population is supplemented by individuals of northern origin, which usually, with crows, form huge flocks of several thousand individuals.





### **Hooded crow** (*Corvus cornix*)

**Cioară grivă**

*Body length 47 cm*

A common species which nests in groups or rows of trees along water courses, and in parks inside villages. In diet it is a true opportunist, feeding on household waste, bird chicks, carrion and any type of food. It is not a threatened species.



### **Raven** (*Corvus corax*)

**Corb**

*Body length 47 cm*

A relatively common species, which nests in deciduous or coniferous forests, in larger parks, in cemeteries with groups of conifers, and in cliffs. The species suffered much as a result of the practice of poisoning in the 1950s and '60s, but has recovered spectacularly in recent decades. It was one of the first species (and is still the most common) to nest on high tension electricity pylons.



### **Starling** (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

**Gaur**

*Body length 21.5 cm*

An exceedingly common and abundant species, which often nests in scattered colonies, in groups of old trees with many hollows, on the edges of forests, in parks, orchards, etc. In autumn the individuals gather in large flocks (sometimes huge, thousands of individuals) and visit orchards and vineyards where they feed on fruit. On such occasions this species can cause significant crop damage. It is a short-distance migrant, some groups wintering even in Dobrogea (southeast Romania).



## **Golden Oriole** (*Oriolus oriolus*)

**Grangur**

*Body length 24 cm*

A common species, in some places even abundant, which nests in groups or lines of trees, or in deciduous forests, preferring places with a warmer climate or micro-climate. Despite its bright plumage, it can be surprisingly well-hidden amongst dense foliage, but its distinctive, flute-like, whistling song often reveals its location. It is a long-distance migrant, wintering in sub-Saharan Africa. In Romania it can be seen during April to September.



## **House sparrow** (*Passer domesticus*)

**Vrabie de casă**

*Body length 14.5 cm*

A common species that nests almost exclusively in built-up areas, from big cities to isolated farms. It is present in every village in the region. It nests in hollows, cracks, swallows' nests, etc. It is one of Romania's most common species, but is in pronounced decline in some countries in Western Europe, mainly due to the disappearance of its insect diet and reduced nesting sites in cities. A sedentary species.



## **Tree sparrow** (*Passer montanus*)

**Vrabie de câmp**

*Body length 14 cm*

A common species of open areas, preferring habitats with bushes and secondary vegetation on the periphery of human settlements, but also present in unpopulated areas. It nests in hollows. It is threatened in Europe, especially because of the intensification of agriculture. It is a sedentary species, which may form winter flocks of hundreds of individuals.



### **Chaffinch** (*Fringilla coelebs*)

#### **Cinteză**

*Body length 15 cm*

The most common species in woodland habitats, nesting in deciduous and coniferous forests. In migration periods it can be observed in scattered groups in all habitat types. A partially migratory species, part of the population (mainly females) migrates to southern Europe, while a smaller part of the population winters in our area.



### **Goldfinch** (*Carduelis carduelis*)

#### **Sticlete**

*Body length 12 cm*

A common species, frequenting especially open secondary habitats with groups or lines of trees, orchards and parks, and occasionally nesting in the edges of forests. It nests in trees, preferring the tree canopy, building the nest between thin twigs. It is sedentary, wintering in large flocks in open areas with many weeds, often associated with other finch species.



### **Greenfinch** (*Carduelis chloris*)

#### **Florinte**

*Body length 14.5 cm*

A common species of open areas with trees and bushes, in deciduous forests in the plains and hills, and in villages and towns where it can nest in parks, gardens or trees lining streets. It builds its nest in trees or dense bushes. Its diet is mainly of plant origin, but it also eats various insects. A sedentary species, in winter it often joins flocks of mixed finch species.



### **Linnet** (*Carduelis canabina*)

#### **Cânepar**

*Body length 13.5 cm*

A common but localized species. It nests in open habitats with groups or rows of bushes, along the edge of forests, etc. It generally builds its nests in bushes, and occasionally in tall grassy vegetation. A sedentary species, wintering in large flocks in open areas, usually in combination with other finch species.



### **Hawfinch** (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*)

#### **Botgros**

*Body length 18 cm*

A common species in deciduous forests. It nests in forests, building the nest high in the tree canopy among relatively thin branches. It is specialized in the consumption of seeds with very thick shells. A sedentary species. Occasionally large invasions of thousands of individuals of Nordic origin can be observed in areas with high concentrations of food (e.g. beech nut).



### **Yellowhammer** (*Emberiza citrinella*)

#### **Presură galbenă**

*Body length 16.5 cm*

A common species, typical in open areas with bushes and scattered trees, lines of bushes, or forest edges. Occasionally it nests and more open forests. It nests on the ground, hiding the nest in grassy vegetation. A sedentary species, wintering in flocks, often associated with other bunting and finch species. In winter it regularly visits farms and courtyards in villages in search of food.

## SPECIES INCLUDED IN ANNEXES OF THE EU WILD BIRDS DIRECTIVE

Sighișoara-Târnava Mare Natura 2000 site no. 227

	Annex 1 species	Sedentary	Summer visitor	Winter visitor	In migration
1	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>				
2	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>				
3	<i>Nyctycorax nyctycorax</i>				
4	<i>Egretta alba</i>				
5	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>				
6	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>				
7	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>				
8	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>				
9	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>				
10	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>				
11	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>				
12	<i>Crex crex</i>				
13	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>				
14	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>				
15	<i>Tringa glareola</i>				
16	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>				
17	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>				
18	<i>Bubo bubo</i>				
19	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>				
20	<i>Picus canus</i>				
21	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>				
22	<i>Dendrocopos leucotos</i>				
23	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>				
24	<i>Lullula arborea</i>				
25	<i>Anthus campestris</i>				
26	<i>Lanius minor</i>				
27	<i>Lanius collurio</i>				





The **Milvus Group Association** is a non-profit NGO dedicated to protecting birds and nature, working in conservation, environmental education, research and consultancy, with the aim of making Romania a better place for birds, nature and people.

**[www.milvus.ro](http://www.milvus.ro)**



**Fundația ADEPT** is a non-profit NGO dedicated to protecting the remarkable biodiversity of Transylvania's High Nature Value farmed landscapes, and supporting the small-scale farming communities who have created these landscapes over hundreds of years, and who maintain them today.

**[www.fundatia-adept.org](http://www.fundatia-adept.org)**



**Fundația  
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PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN  
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



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