CROATIA

September 6th to 16th 2019

Bill Simpson
bill-simpson@live.co.uk
**TEAM** Bill & Helen Simpson  

**Croatian Kuna** HRK 8.2 = £1

**AIRPORT PARKING** £64.79 Stansted Airport Official Long Stay Car Park, via Skypark secure for 10 days.

**FLIGHTS** RYANAIR. £238.00 in total for the two of us.
We paid for one seat including 30 kilos baggage at £160.50 and one seat without any baggage allowance at £77.50.
We also used the Ryanair app to check in 48 hours before departure which also saved fees.

6th Sept STN 06.25 - 09.40 RJK ** This flight diverted to Trieste in Italy due to strong winds at Rijeka.
16th Sept RJK 10.55 - 12.10 STN

**CAR HIRE** SIXT at Rijeka Airport through [www.moneysavingexpert.com](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com) was £78 for 10 days.
We had read about the many scams in Croatia from car rental companies and were ready for them!
However, this company at this airport were fine and even had to give us an upgrade as the smaller car that we had booked was unavailable.
Check the internet reviews before booking and get an excess car hire policy for a fraction of the price of the car hire company excess insurance payments on the internet.
We use [www.insurance4carhire.com](http://www.insurance4carhire.com)

**LITERATURE**
Internet Trip reports.
ebird

**SOUND RECORDINGS**
Collins bird Guide app and on Xeno canto

**EQUIPMENT**

**OPTICS.**
LEICA 10x32 BN
KOWA TSN-883 Scope
TE-17W 30X Wide angle lens.

**CAMERAS / LENSES ETC.**
SONY CYBERSHOT 10.1 megapixel DSC-N2.
CANON EOS 5D Mk III.
CANON 400mm EF f5.6 L USM
CANON extender EF 1.4X II
B+W 77mm MRC Clear UV Haze (010) Filter
Remote Control RC-201
MANFROTTO R190 CX4 PRO tripod with fluid head.

**Trip in general**
We wanted a cheap, hot weather holiday for the wife (and a little something for myself in the form of Rock Partridge).
After talking to Brian Gee & Fay Enright, who had been to Pag Island the year before, it sounded like one of the easiest places to connect with Rock Partridge as it was at sea level. A quick confirmation with ebird showed several good spots to check on Pag island and another one right by Rijeka Airport. The weather was hot and sunny for the most part, with only a few showers and light winds...a perfect place for the other half!
We travelled around to Pag and back along the coastal road which was in very good condition with plenty of viewpoints and a few nice towns to stop and eat.
We booked two night stays at five locations using Booking.com which worked out well as out of season the places were getting cheaper. Most of our bookings were self-contained apartments which we made good use of, cooking our own meals. The local restaurants were very expensive with little choice (often junk or fast food) and not always good quality. The birding was pretty poor, and although this was essentially a holiday for the wife I was surprised at the lack of birds when wandering the countryside. Migration was hardly noticeable and common birds worryingly sparse. Photography was also difficult as the birds were incredibly wary. Maybe spring is a better time to visit Croatia?
Still, this worked out to be a very nice, wife-friendly holiday and I managed a difficult Western Palearctic endemic.
Itinerary

Sept 6th Flight left on time but couldn't land at Rijeka and touched down at Trieste in Italy. We then had to wait nearly four hours for a coach to arrive to take us the 3 hours to Rijeka Airport. Luckily the SIXT car hire there was fast and efficient and we were soon away to our apartment in Jadranovo at the Apartment Vives £85 /2 nights.

7th Up early, driving the short distance to the Voz peninsular on the north side of Krk Island over the toll bridge (39 HRK paid one way only going onto the island). Walked around the eastern two-thirds of the area all morning only getting flushed flight views of 2 Rock Partridges. Rest of the day with the wife.

8th Up early and set off in the car to Pag to stay at the Apartments Feniks £52/ 2 nights.

Took a leisurely drive down the coastal road checking out Malo Blato and Veliko as we neared Pag.

Went for an evening recce along the track heading north-west from Malo Blato and found 3+ an hour before dusk.

9th Up and away by 6am back to the same Rock Partridge spot as the night before for a mornings birding.

Drove back to Pag and rest of the day with the wife.

10th Transferred to the Lokunja B&B £62/ 2 nights inc breakfast, then spent the rest of the day around the north end of Pag Island. Did an evenings walk around the Malo Blato track with Helen.

11th Malo Blato track again early morning and then rest of the day with the wife.

12th All day on a boat trip then drove on to stay at Starigrad at the Apartments Marija £53/ 2 nights.

13th At dawn I drove for an hours birding along a road to the NW of Starigrad and then collected the wife ant went in to Palenka NP and walked up the valley till it levelled out and back. Drove to Zadar town for the afternoon.

14th Drove on to Serj to stay at the Guest House Angela £44/ 2 nights.

15th All day around Serj with the wife.

16th Early morning drive back to Rijeka Airport for the 10.55 flight home.
1. **Rock Partridge** *Alectoris graeca*

   2, Sept 7th Voz in flight flushed from the rocky, grassy ridge area (see map).
   3+, Sept 8th Pag island from the track heading NW from Malo Blato (see map).
   13+, Sept 9th Pag at the same site, including at least 8 juvs feeding all morning.
   26+, Sept 10th Pag with 6+ at the same site and 20+ by the start of the track near the tarmac road.

   These birds were all very wary even when approached in the car.

   Heard calling just after dawn which was the best way of locating a bird just before they hopped up onto a wall for a few minutes. They could also disappear instantly upon dropping into the long grass.
2. *Mute Swan*  *Cygnus olor*
   2, Malo Blato.

3. *Common Pochard*  *Aythya farina*
   6, Malo Blato.

4. *Northern Shoveler*  *Spatula clypeata*
   2, Malo Blato.

5. *Mallard*  *Anas platyrhynchos*
   2, Malo Blato.

6. *Little Grebe*  *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
   1, Malo Blato.

7. *Great Crested Grebe*  *Podiceps cristatus*
   6+, Malo Blato.

8. *Rock Dove*  *Columba livia*

9. *Eurasian Collared-dove*  *Streptopelia decaocto*

10. *Alpine Swift*  *Tachymarptis melba*
    2, Krk bridge.
    1, Pag.

11. *Pallid Swift*  *Apus pallidus*
    6+ Pag
    Common in Zadar.

12. *Common Coot*  *Fulica atra*
    C20 Malo Blato.

13. *Grey Heron*  *Ardea cinerea*
    Common around Malo Blato.

14. *Great White Egret*  *Ardea alba*
    2 Malo Blato.

15. *Little Egret*  *Egretta garzetta*
    A few at Malo Blato and the Pag area.

16. *Pygmy Cormorant*  *Microcarbo pygmaeus*
    20+ Malo Blato
    1 Pag

17. *European Shag*  *Gulosus aristotelis*
    Common along coastal waters.

18. *Great Cormorant*  *Phalacrocorax carbo*
    Common along coastal waters.

19. *Whimbrel*  *Numenius phaeopus*
    Heard only at Malo Blato.

20. *Eurasian Curlew*  *Numenius arquata*
    5, Malo Blato.
21. Red Knot  Calidris canutus
   2 north of Pag.

22. Dunlin  Calidris alpine
   1 Malo Blato
   3 north of Pag.

23. Little Stint  Calidris minuta
   Juv north of Pag.

24. Common Snipe  Gallinago gallinago
   1 flying over Voz.

25. Common Sandpiper  Actitis hypoleucos
   3 Pag.

26. Wood Sandpiper  Tringa glareola
   1 north of Pag.

27. Black-headed Gull  Larus ridibundus
   Ad Pag.

28. Yellow-legged Gull  Larus michahellis
   Common, especially at Malo Blato.

29. Little Owl  Athene noctua
   1 Malo Veliko.

30. Eurasian Eagle-owl  Bubo bubo
   1-2 heard, Sept 13th from the apartment Marija balcony at Starigrad.

31. Short-toed Snake-eagle  Circaetus gallicus
   2-3 Pag around Malo Blato and 1 from the hotel balcony at Serj.

32. Western Marsh-harrier  Circus aeruginosus
   2 at Malo Blato.

33. Montagu's Harrier  Circus pygargus
   Ad male and a juv at Malo Blato.
34. Eurasian Sparrowhawk  Accipiter nisus
    1 Pag.

35. Eurasian Buzzard  Buteo buteo
    1 Palenka.

36. Common Hoopoe  Upupa epops
    Up 10 in the Malo Blato area.

37. European Bee-eater  Merops apiaster
    Quite a few heard only but 5 seen at Malo Blato.

38. Common Kingfisher  Alcedo atthis
    3, Pag.

39. Eurasian Wryneck  Jynx torquilla
    1 north of Pag.

40. Common Kestrel  Falco tinnunculus
    Fairly common around the Malo Blato area.

41. Peregrine Falcon  Falco peregrines
    Ad at Voz.

42. Red-backed Shrike  Lanius collurio
    10+ noted in all.

43. Woodchat Shrike  Lanius senator
    Imm at Malo Blato and 3 north of Pag.

44. Eurasian Jay  Garrulus glandarius
    4+ Voz.

45. Common Raven  Corvus corax
    1, Pag.

46. Carrion Crow  Corvus corone
    Hoodies seen frequently.

47. Great Tit  Parus major
    A few at Palenka.

48. Crested Lark  Galerida cristata
    Up to 4 at Pag.

49. Northern House Martin  Delichon urbicum
    A few around Pag mainly.

50. Barn Swallow  Hirundo rustica
    Common at Pag, few elsewhere.

51. Eurasian Crag Martin  Ptyonoprogne rupestris
    A few at Palenka.

52. Collared Sand Martin  Riparia riparia
    A few at Malo Blato.
53. Willow Warbler  Phylloscopus trochilus  
C 10 in the Pag area.

54. Sardinian Warbler  Sylvia melanocephala  
Heard near Palenka.

55. Eurasian Nuthatch  Sitta europaea  
Heard at Palenka.

56. Western Rock Nuthatch  Sitta neumayer 2, Palenka.

57. Common Starling  Sturnus vulgaris  
Common around Malo Blato.

58. Eurasian Blackbird  Turdus merula  
A few in the towns.

59. Whinchat  Saxicola rubetra  
Up to 10 around Pag.

60. Northern Wheatear  Oenanthe oenanthe  
A few around Pag.

61. Black-eared Wheatear  Oenanthe hispanica  
A few in the dry areas.

62. Common Firecrest  Regulus ignicapilla  
1 at Serj.

63. House Sparrow  Passer domesticus  
Common in towns.

64. Tawny Pipit  Anthus campestris  
Quite common in the dryer areas.

65. Western Yellow Wagtail  Motacilla flava  
A few north of Pag and at Malo Blato.

66. Grey Wagtail  Motacilla cinerea  
1, Pag.

67. White Wagtail  Motacilla alba  
Several noted.

68. Common Chaffinch  Fringilla coelebs  
A few at Jadranovo.

69. Hawfinch  Coccothraustes coccothraustes  
3, Jadranovo.

70. European Greenfinch  Chloris chloris  
2, Jadranovo.

71. Common Linnet  Linaria cannabina.  
Several noted
72. Red Crossbill Loxia curvirostra
Heard Palenka.

73. European Goldfinch Carduelis carduelis
Several noted.

74. Cirl Bunting Emberiza cirlus
Noted at Voz and Serj.

**NEW SPECIES**
Species in **RED** are not currently split by HBW Alive. **BOLD UPPERCASE** are Endemics.

1. **Rock Partridge** Alectoris graeca