

THE AVIFAUNA OF RUSOVCE AND ENVIRONS

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Abstract

Z. Országhová, B. Molnár and D. Červeň: *The Avifauna of Rusovce and Environs*

A survey designed to observe the avifauna on the right bank of the Danube at Rusovce (South-West Slovakia) was completed shortly before the Danube was dammed and the navigation channel at Gabčíkovo opened. During the period May 1991 to March 1993, a total of 100 species, including 64 nesting birds, were found here. Forty species were residents. The greatest number of species (86) were found at the fourth locality which reaches as far as the Danube, 48 of which also nested here. The highest numbers were found in May and September (81), the lowest (47) in November.

Introduction

Rusovce had never been a region of great interest to ornithologists. References to certain bird species from this territory may be found in some earlier works by Gaál (1900), Pungur (1904). More attention was devoted to the territory of Žitný ostrov, lying on the left bank of the Danube. Among the first authors to have dealt with the avifauna of the Danube floodplain woods in the sector Bratislava – Komárno, were Balthasar (1934) and Kleiner (1940). But also Turček (1957), and Balát (1963) studied in some detail the avifauna of Žitný ostrov. The problems of migrating and Wintering bird species along the Danube below Bratislava was evaluated by Barčák (1969), and numerous valuable notes may also be found in works by Matoušek (1961, 1962, 1963). In addition, there are numerous shorter studies concerned with some particular species in Žitný ostrov, e.g. those by Brtek (1965), Jamnický (1992), et al.

Description of the Territory

Rusovce lies on the right bank of the Danube near the border with Hungary, 15 km from Bratislava. It forms part of the orographic unit 790 of the Danube Plain and figures in the field 7968 of the Databank of Slovak Fauna. Four localities were chosen on the territory under study, which was surveyed from May 1991 until the end of March 1993.

The first locality comprises the village of Rusovce and its close environs. It is made up of family houses with gardens, flower beds, vegetable patches, orchards, grassy plots and fields. At the eastern end there are old glass-houses, next to which stand two 18 meter-high chimneys of a factory furnace.

The second locality is that of an old manor park, with a young poplar and spruce wood. The park is cut by a channel which earlier had flowing water, but has been dry for 10–15 years. After the damming of the Danube, water has again appeared in it. Not far from the channel there is a gravel pit.

The third locality is formed by meadows, fields, an old apricot orchard. A seepage channel runs over one third of the territory which now contains, after the damming of the Danube, about 1 m of water. Prior to the damming, water reached here only a few times a year, with a spate in the Danube.

The fourth locality is bordered on one side by an old dyke and on the other by the left bank of the Danube. Beyond the dyke is the old arm of the Danube which used to be mostly dry, but now, with the opening of the navigation channel, has water permanently.

Results

A total of 100 birds species of 16 orders were found on the territory, 64 species being breeders and 4 probable nesters (Tab. 1). The relatively low numbers of water birds is probably related to the lack of water in the Danube arms which prevailed until November 1992. For more details regarding the various species, see *Molnár and Országková (1993)*.

The largest number of species (81) was found in May and September, the lowest (47) in November (Tab.1). During the whole nesting period there were 78–81 species present at Rusovce, making up 78–81% of the total number of bird species.

Table 1. Incidence of bird species found at Rusovce and in the environs with the earliest and latest date of observation
1. táblázat. Rusovcén (Oroszvár) és környékén előforduló madárfajok jegyzéke a legkorábbi és a legkésőbbi megfigyelések adatainak feltüntetésével

No.	Species	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			13.03.93									09.12.91
2	<i>Podiceps ruficollis</i>			14.03.93									
3	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>										31.10.91		
4	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>												
5	<i>Egretta alba</i>			15.03.93	07.04.93								
6	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>			20.03.92							15.10.92		
7	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>			28.03.93	01.04.93				12-27.08.91				
8	<i>Cygnus olor</i>												
9	<i>Anser albifrons</i>												
10	<i>Anser fabalis</i>	10.01.93									30.10.-01.11.91		
11	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>												20.12.92
12	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	08.01.93			13.04.93								
13	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	20.01.93		13.03.93									
14	<i>Mergus albellus</i>			02-05.03.93									
15	<i>Mergus mergamster</i>												
16	<i>Milvus migrans</i>		25.02.92										
17	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>				02.04.92					15.09.92			
18	<i>Buteo buteo</i>			04.03.93									09.12.92
19	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>			24.03.92									
20	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>												27.12.91
21	<i>Perdix perdix</i>												
22	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>												
23	<i>Fulica atra</i>				01.04.93								
24	<i>Otis tarda</i>												22.12.91
25	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		15.02.92								15.10.92		

No.	Species	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
26	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>			23.03.92						10.09.92			
27	<i>Tringa totanus</i>			29.03.92									
28	<i>Larus canus</i>												
29	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>												
30	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>					23.05.92							
31	<i>Columba palumbus</i>			24.03.92							28.10.92		
32	<i>Columba livia l. dom.</i>												
33	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>				12.04.92						10.10.92		
34	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>												
35	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>				24.04.92					10.09.92			
36	<i>Athene noctua</i>												
37	<i>Apus apus</i>					01.05.92				10.09.92			
38	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>												
39	<i>Upupa epops</i>						03.06.91	12.07.92					
40	<i>Picus viridis</i>												
41	<i>Dryocopus major</i>												
42	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>												
43	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>												
44	<i>Galerida cristata</i>												
45	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>			15.03.92						13.09.92			
46	<i>Riparia riparia</i>				18.04.92						13.10.92		
47	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>				02.04.92						30.10.91		
48	<i>Delichon urbica</i>				14.04.92						14.10.92		
49	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>			23.03.93						24.09.92			
50	<i>Motacilla flava</i>							03.07.92		15.09.92			
51	<i>Motacilla alba</i>												
52	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>												
53	<i>Prunella modularis</i>			29.03.92							10.10.92		
54	<i>Eritacus rubecula</i>												
55	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>				13.04.92					10.09.92			
56	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>			21.03.93							05.10.92		
57	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>			20.03.93							05.10.92		
58	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>			22.03.92							13.10.92		
59	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>			25.03.92						15.09.92			
60	<i>Turdus merula</i>												
61	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>												
62	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>					13.05.92				03.09.92			
63	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>					10.05.91				16.09.92			
64	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>				10.04.91						05.10.92		
65	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			24.03.92							05.10.92		
66	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>				03.04.92					16.09.92			
67	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			20.03.92							15.10.92		
68	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>			29.03.92							05.10.92		
69	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	10.01.92	13.02.92	20.03.92							15.10.91		
70	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>					14.04.92				05.09.92			
71	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>					14.04.92				05.09.92			
72	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>												
73	<i>Parus palustris</i>												
74	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>												
75	<i>Parus major</i>												
76	<i>Sitta europaea</i>												
77	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>				18.04.92				10.08.92				
78	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>			18.03.92						20.09.92			
79	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>					14.05.92				10.09.92			
80	<i>Lanius collurio</i>					14.05.92				24.09.92			
81	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>			13.03.93								02.11.92	
82	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>												
83	<i>Fica pica</i>												
84	<i>Corvus monedula</i>												
85	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>												
86	<i>Corvus corone cornix</i>												
87	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>			03.03.92							13.11.92		
88	<i>Passer domesticus</i>												
89	<i>Passer montanus</i>												
90	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>												
91	<i>Serinus serinus</i>			13.03.92							23.10.92		
92	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>												
93	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>												
94	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>				14.04.92	18.05.92		13.07.92		14.09.91	15.10.92		
95	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>			13.03.92								15.11.92	
96	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			15.03.92									09.12.91
97	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>												
98	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>												
99	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>				02.04.93								
100	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>			18.03.92							28.10.92		

Explanations: — regular incidence
 --- irregular incidence

The lowest number of species (52) was found at the first locality, 20 of which (38%) were nesters (Tabl. 2). They also included a pair of Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) nesting on the church roof. During the course of the whole year, gulls (*Larus ridibundus* and *Larus canus*) occasionally fly into the village in search of food and also Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*) occurs although it does not nest here.

Also of interest is the nesting of White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*), which is a frequent species in the Danube villages on the left bank, nesting on chimney tops of houses, or electrical posts. At Rusovce, the White Stork has for the past 10 years nested solely atop the 18 meter-high chimney of the glass-house boiler-room. Although the birds occur frequently in the environs of Rusovce (13 specimens stayed in the field of the third locality in the summer of 1992; from June to September 1991 five specimens were regularly present here), they do not nest at any other site in the village.

During May and September 1992, 5 specimens of Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) haunted the fields of the first locality (Tab. 1). This species had previously not been seen here for several years.

Table 2. List of species observed with indication of nesters
2. táblázat. A megfigyelt fajok jegyzéke a fészkelő fajok megjelölésével

	Species	Localities			
		1	2	3	4
1	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	-	-	-	+
2	<i>Podiceps ruficollis</i>	-	-	-	+
3	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	-	-	-	+
4	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	-	-	+	+
5	<i>Egretta alba</i>	-	-	-	+
6	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	N	-	+	+
7	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	-	-	-	+
8	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	-	-	-	+
9	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	-	-	-	+
10	<i>Anser fabalis</i>	+	+	+	+
11	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	-	-	+	+
12	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	-	-	-	+
13	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	-	-	-	+
14	<i>Mergus albellus</i>	-	-	-	+
15	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	-	-	-	+
16	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	-	-	-	(N)
17	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	-	-	+	+
18	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	+	+	+	N
19	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	-	-	+	+
20	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	N	+	+	N
21	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	+	-	N	+

	Species	Localities			
		1	2	3	4
22	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	(N)	-	N	N
23	<i>Fulica atra</i>	-	-	-	+
24	<i>Otis tarda</i>	+	-	-	-
25	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	+	-	+	-
26	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	-	-	-	N
27	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	-	-	-	+
28	<i>Larus canus</i>	+	+	+	+
29	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	+	+	+	+
30	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	-	-	-	+
31	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	-	N	-	-
32	<i>Columba livia f. dom.</i>	N	-	+	-
33	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	-	+	N	+
34	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	N	+	-	-
35	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	-	N	-	N
36	<i>Athene noctua</i>	+	N	N	-
37	<i>Apus apus</i>	+	+	-	+
38	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	-	-	-	(N)
39	<i>Upupa epops</i>	+	-	+	-
40	<i>Picus viridis</i>	+	N	+	N
41	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	+	N	+	N
42	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	N	N	+	N
43	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	(N)	N	+	N
44	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	+	+	N	N
45	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	(N)	-	N	N
46	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	-	-	-	N
47	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	N	+	+	+
48	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	N	+	+	+
49	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	-	-	N	-
50	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	N	N	N	N
51	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	-	-	+	+
52	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	+	N	+	N
53	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	-	-	(N)	N
54	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	+	N	+	N
55	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	(N)	N	N	N
56	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	N	+	-	-
57	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	-	N	-	N
58	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	-	-	N	N
59	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	-	-	N	N
60	<i>Turdus merula</i>	N	N	+	N
61	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	N	N	+	N
62	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	-	-	-	N
63	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>	-	N	-	N

	Species	Localities			
		1	2	3	4
64	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	+	N	N	N
65	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	+	N	N	N
66	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	-	N	-	(N)
67	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	+	N	+	N
68	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	-	+	-	-
69	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	-	+	-	-
70	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	N	N	N	N
71	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>	-	N	-	N
72	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	-	N	-	N
73	<i>Parus palustris</i>	+	N	+	N
74	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	N	N	N	N
75	<i>Parus major</i>	N	N	N	N
76	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	(N)	N	N	N
77	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	-	+	-	(N)
78	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	-	-	-	N
79	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	-	N	-	N
80	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	-	N	N	N
81	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	-	-	+	+
82	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	-	+	-	-
83	<i>Pica pica</i>	(N)	+	+	-
84	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	+	N	+	N
85	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	+	N	+	+
86	<i>Corvus corone cornix</i>	+	+	+	N
87	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	N	N	+	N
88	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	N	N	-	-
89	<i>Passer montanus</i>	+	N	N	N
90	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	+	N	N	N
91	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	N	+	N	+
92	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	N	N	N	N
93	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	N	N	N	N
94	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	+	+	+	+
95	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	N	(N)	N	N
96	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	-	+	-	+
97	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	-	+	-	N
98	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	+	N	N	N
99	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	-	-	-	+
100	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	-	-	N	-

+ - presence of species -- absence of species N - nester (N) - probable nester

In general, synanthropic and hemisynanthropic bird species (*Ciconia ciconia*, *Falco tinnunculus*, *Columba livia f. dom.*, *Streptopelia decaocto*, *Apus apus*, *Galerida cristata*, *Hirundo rustica*, *Delichon urbica*, *Phoenicurus ochruros*, *Turdus merula* etc.), typical of human dwellings, prevail in the village.

In contrast to the first, the second locality has an evident park-line character. In this locality we observed 60 bird species, 38 (63%) of which were nesting. In addition we also found here Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) which nests in horse-chestnut and maple trees of the park, Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*), Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*), and Black Woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*), etc.

From the remaining species, mention should also be made of Short-toed Treecreeper (*Certhia brachydactyla*) which was only present here from May 10th to 25th, 1992, but did not nest. And during the winter Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*), which nests at higher elevations in Slovakia, was seen at this locality.

The park-like character of this locality also became manifest in a clearly higher number of breeding birds (38) – as many as 18 species – against that in the first locality (20 sp.). It attracted the species noted above which, as a rule, avoid human habitations.

In the third locality, we observed 61 bird species, 26 (42%) of which were breeding. The species composition is affected by the presence of the seepage channel which even before the damming of the Danube had water to a height of 50 cm with a high water level in the mainstream.

Among others, Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*), and Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) stayed here throughout the year, Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis*) and Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) during the winter, but also White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) occasionally occurs.

The presence of fields, ruderal sites about the channel and the untended apricot orchard create favourable nesting sites for such species as, e.g. Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), Corn Bunting (*Emberiza calandra*), Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*), Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*), Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*).

The overall character of the locality, however, results in a lower number of breeding birds (12) than in the second locality, although the total numbers of species found hardly differs (60 in the second, 61 in the third).

The fourth locality, by the mainstream of the Danube, had 86 bird species and here we also observed the highest number of species throughout the year (Fig. 1). Of this number, 48 (56%) were breeding. Naturally, this locality was the haunt of the greatest number of species bound to an aquatic environment.

During the period August 12 through 27, 1991 we observed here Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*). Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*) stayed here during the whole year and in the winter period Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis*), White-Fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*), Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*), Smew (*Mergus albellus*) and Goosander (*Mergus merganser*) occurred. And although White-tailed Eagle does not nest in the vicinity of Rusovce, it nevertheless flies in to hunt during the winter.

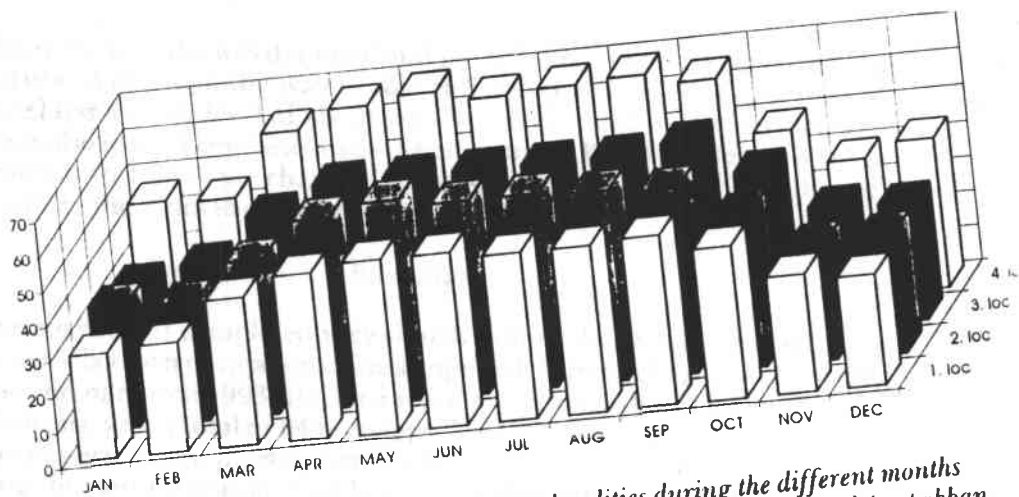


Fig 1. Number of species at the various localities during the different months
 1. ábra. A madárfajok száma az egyes megfigyelési helyeken az egyes hónapokban

From the remaining species, mention should also be made of the occurrence of White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) during the 1991/1992 winter; it was not observed in the other localities. Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) was seen only on March 29, 1992. These were specimens that stopped here during their migration over the Danube and its arms.

As to numbers of species and breeders the most abundant was the fourth locality whose proximity to the Danube is also affected by its species composition.

Discussion

The relatively small territory of Rusovce and its environs lying on the right bank of the Danube, accounted for the presence of 100 bird species, which represents over one-third of the avifauna of the entire Žitný ostrov area. Balthasar (1934) records 248, Balát (1963) 251 and Kleiner (1940) 256 species on this territory.

The first two authors consider Black Woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*) to be rare, while Kleiner (1940) and Turček (1957) do not record it at all. The authors of the present study, similarly as Jamnický (1992), found this species nesting in the Rusovce park. At present, it is probably a common species across the territory of Žitný ostrov (We also observed it near the village of Klúčovec on August 17, 1992).

Balát (1963) likewise does not consider Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) to be a member of Žitný ostrov's avifauna. Today, it currently inhabits the environs of Rusovce, but also nests in Žitný ostrov (we observed 3 specimens e.g. on September 2, 1993 in the seepage channel near Dobrohošť, and one pair with 5 young in the Lion arm near Čičov on August 8, 1993).

However, we failed to find Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*), which was recorded by Brtek, L. (1967) and Balát (1963) in Žitný ostrov.

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Rusovce (Oroszvár) és környéke madárfaunája

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A munka anyagát közvetlenül a Duna eltérítése és a gabčíkovi (bósi) csatorna vízzel való feltöltése előtt gyűjtöttük. Az 1991 májusa és 1993 március vége közötti időszakban Oroszváron és környékén 100 madárfajt jegyeztünk fel, amelyek közül 64 faj ezen a területen fészkel.

Fészkelési időszakban 78–81 madárfaj fordult elő havonként a vizsgált területen. A legmagasabb fajsámot (81) májusban és szeptemberben, a legalacsonyabbat (47) novemberben észleltük.

A téli időszakban a vizsgált területen tartózkodott a búbos vöcsök (*Podiceps cristatus*), kis vöcsök (*Podiceps ruficollis*), vetési lúd (*Anser fabalis*), nagy lilik (*Anser albifrons*), kontyos réce (*Aythya fuligula*), kerceréce (*Bucephala clangula*), nagy bukó (*Mergus merganser*), réti sas (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), de a nagy őrgébics (*Lanius excubitor*), süvöltő (*Pyrhula pyrrhula*) és más fajok is.

1991/1992 telén a barázdabillegető (*Motacilla alba*) áttelelését figyeltük meg. Megállapítottuk, hogy napjainkban a bütykös hattyú (*Cynus olor*) és fekete harkály (*Dryocopus martius*) Oroszvár és környékének gyakori fajai.

A legtöbb madárfajt (86) a negyedik megfigyelési helyen észleltük; ezek közül 48 volt az itt fészkelő. E megfigyelési hely fajgazdagságát közvetlenül befolyásolja a Duna és annak mellékágai.