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CYPRUS

Spring Migration on Aphrodite's Isle



Rüppell's Warbler – one of the highlights of our trip to Cyprus © Gary Elton

CYPRUS

Spring Migration on Aphrodite's Isle

27 March – 3 April 2023

Leader: Gary Elton

Trip Diary

27 March

After a staggered arrival by the group participants, we assembled after checking in to our rooms for a couple of hours local birding to 'whet our appetites' for the days ahead.

With the headland footpath closed this year, we headed to the nearby Tomb of the Kings to bird there instead. Arriving with only 45 minutes of the day remaining, the lady at Reception allowed us in, with Gary explaining to her we would exit onto the coastal path through the turnstile at the end of the day, giving us the opportunity to extend the 45 minutes to a degree!

With the time of day against us and the site clearly popular with people, birds were initially hard to find. Species such as Crested Lark, Swallow and House Martin were amongst the first seen, followed shortly after by our first Northern Wheatear, one of half a dozen we eventually saw during the afternoon.

A large mixed flock of Greenfinches and Spanish Sparrows were appreciated, though understandably not to the same degree as the Hoopoe that appeared next! That said the next bird, a Wryneck, was arguably the bird of the afternoon, sitting quietly on the edge of a bush allowing us all nice views of it through the scope. Single Sardinian Warbler and Common Whitethroat were both noted prior to us exiting the gate, with a Blue-headed *flava* Yellow Wagtail our last bird of the day as we arrived back at the hotel. Dinner gave us a chance to get to know each other a bit more, followed by an early night which was very welcome, after a long tiring travel day.

28 March

After breakfast, we headed east along the coast to the area around the town of Mandria, largely to get a measure on any migration that might have happened during the night. Things were seemingly quiet, so we decided to head inland to the river valley at Agia Vavara.

The attraction of this area is a series of large water tanks with vegetated edges, which can be good for species such as crakes. There had been several recent reports of a Baillon's and up to three Little Crakes so we knew where to look but finding them wasn't going to be easy, and a degree of patience would definitely be required.

We were, however, handsomely rewarded with two female Little Crakes and the Baillon's found around one of the pools, with one of the Little Crakes showing particularly well.



Baillon's Crake © Gary Elton

Vocal Great Spotted Cuckoo and Cetti's Warbler were also noted and at least one Sedge Warbler appeared periodically around a large clump of reeds. Large numbers of hirundines overhead were largely Swallows and House Martins, with a single Red-rumped Swallow and two Alpine Swifts.

We walked round to view some other tanks where the levels ranged from completely dry to full. The second pool which had largely dried out still had several large pools of water with a solitary Little Ringed Plover and two Green Sandpipers making use of this. Several White Wagtails were on the shallower edges accompanied by a stunning male Citrine Wagtail, a real treat for us all!



Citrine Wagtail © Gary Elton

We checked the last tank adding Ruff to the day list before retracing our steps and heading on to view the last remaining set of tanks at the furthest end of the site. Once again diligent searching and a degree of patience paid off with another Little Crake, this time a male. We

watched the bird for ten minutes or so and as we turned to leave, Cliff said he had seen another bird in the other corner of the tank! The first bird had disappeared but we didn't feel it was possible for our bird to have got to the other corner so quickly, so it had to be a second individual!

A short walk proved successful, with a nice male Woodchat Shrike found perched in typically obvious fashion on top of some dead vegetation. Lunch was now beckoning so we boarded the bus to head towards a local hotel where we were due to eat. A sharp-eyed Kathy noted two distant raptors over the hillside just as we were leaving, a Long-legged and Common Buzzard circling round together, a useful and instructive comparison.

After lunch, we headed back to Pathos and the archaeological site where we spent the afternoon. As we walked through the gate, a smart male Common Redstart greeted us, which was a nice start. We chose to take a route along the path that runs just inside the perimeter fence, which gave us our first Red-throated Pipit. Views couldn't have been better or closer, with the bird also sporting a pinkie-red flush around the throat and face. Others followed as we walked round, largely in the company of a small flock of Yellow Wagtails, mainly black-headed *feldegg* birds but also other subspecies such as *thunbergi* and *flava*.

The remainder of the walk proved harder work from a birding perspective than we might have hoped though in the end it was a case of 'quality over quantity'. 'Padder' species included several vocal Nightingales, at least three Northern Wheatears and single Stonechat, Baltic Gull and Red-rumped Swallow. We paused for a quick look at the mosaics and as the afternoon started to draw to a close, our first Rüppell's Warbler was found, a smart male, followed a few hundred yards later by a second individual; things were definitely looking up!

We checked several areas to no avail until we reached the last, where a small black and white bird flashing across in front of us as we entered the clearing, a Collared Flycatcher and a smart full adult male. Initially the bird was only seen well by Gary and glimpsed by Kathy which meant a tense ten minutes as we tried to relocate it. To our relief, it reappeared and seemed relatively settled, allowing us all some great views over the next five minutes or so. Eventually it disappeared, which we took as the signal for us to head back to the hotel for a welcome and well-earned shower and dinner.

29 March

Our first stop today was once again Mandria, with a Black-bellied Sandgrouse the target bird. With overnight rain potentially making the tracks too muddy for the bus, coupled with a gale force wind, our hopes of success weren't high.....

Access to area was, however, easier than we had anticipated and we parked up and started to walk the various tracks along the field edges. A familiar 'chipping' call could be heard from

a nearby hedgerow and glimpsed views of a small warbler soon confirmed the bird as an Eastern Bonelli's Warbler, a great start.

We retraced our steps back to the bus, with several of the group choosing to add more layers, before we set off again along another track. We rounded a bend, glancing up an adjacent track and suddenly were looking at our target bird! We all got on it and had decent views, although the sandgrouse was clearly aware of our presence and headed away. At this point, a hare appeared, flushing the sandgrouse but, fortunately, it didn't fly far, landing in a nearby field where we enjoyed some nice, prolonged views.



Black-bellied Sandgrouse © Gary Elton

Our next destination was the Asprokemmos Dam, with a brief stop on the way to admire our first, albeit distant, Little Owl. The woodland area at the dam was clearly being affected by the wind, so we didn't stay long. That said, we still saw two more Eastern Bonelli's Warblers, one of which showed nicely even in the wind, plus several Great Crested Grebes and a Great Egret on the reservoir itself, making the stop very worthwhile.

Our main destination today, however, was the Troodos mountains and whilst the conditions weren't going to be ideal, either of the options around the coast were potentially even less appealing. The journey was straightforward, with birds along the way that included a Woodchat Shrike, Hoopoe and two much appreciated Cyprus Wheatears, our first Cyprus endemic of the trip.

As we approached the town of Troodos, we were enveloped in fog, so the decision was made to head to a picnic spot lower down on the northeast slope. Although the fog had cleared and the sun was out, the wind was stronger than expected but being a hardy UK birding group, we decided to look around the area as lunch was being prepared by Yiannis, our driver.

The general area was in many ways unsurprisingly quiet, although we did manage nice views of a Coal Tit, one of the hoped for endemic Cyprus subspecies present in the area.

Lunch followed, taken largely in the bus, in an attempt to stay warm, after which we headed back to the town to walk along one of the trails leading off from the main car park. We set off along the track but conditions were clearly deteriorating again, with sleet now starting to fall! As a result, the decision was taken that 'enough was enough' and coffee and a warm fire were needed, for so we reboarded the bus and headed back down the mountain to the town of Platres. A welcome half hour in the warm and a hot drink, coupled with the sun appearing, revitalised us before we headed out along one of the local trails to see what we could find.

As we set off, a flock of birds were noted feeding high in the tree canopy over the path. Initially, we struggled to make out what the birds were as they were largely silhouetted against the sun. A 'subconscious' suggestion was made by a percentage of the group that we view the bird from a different angle, so we walked on and then looked back. Their identity then quickly became apparent, Siskins, a flock of around twenty birds, with the males looking particularly smart.

We took two trails in the end, the first was somewhat on the quiet side, although we did manage several 'heards', in the form of Mistle Thrush and Wren, plus both Great and Coal Tit. Our luck changed on the second trail, however, where again Coal Tits were heard, but the appearance of both Short-toed Treecreeper and Jay were both unexpected bonuses. As we returned to the bus, a Blackbird was noted feeding amongst the leaf litter in the company of a nightingale species. The bird's strange behaviour and somewhat drabber than expected appearance initially caused us some confusion, but we came to the conclusion it was indeed a Common Nightingale.

One last return visit to the Asprokremmos Dam on the way back to the hotel produced several new additions for the trip, namely Black-winged Stilt, Common Sandpiper and Little Egret, although a reported Semi-collared Flycatcher eluded us, meaning a return visit was deemed our first priority for the following morning.....

30 March

As planned, the first stop of the day was at the Asprokremmos Dam to search again for the flycatcher. Unfortunately, there was no sign of it but we still saw two Eastern Bonelli's Warblers along with our first sightings of several singing Serins.

Our main destination for the day was the Akrotiri Peninsula, although one more stop was planned along the way which involved pulling off the road and onto a track and then walking down to a large expansive cliff face. Our hoped-for target here was Griffon Vulture, with a small colony breeding in the area. The clear blue skies and bright sunshine had seemingly encouraged the birds to leave the site early and initially there was no sign. We then picked up a soaring bird, high up and a long way off. Several of the group managed to get on the bird, but it quickly disappeared, leaving the rest disappointed.

We decided to continue our journey, arriving on the edge of Akrotiri with our first stop, some large roadside pools. Another group of birders had arrived at the site at the same time as us, so we joined forces, with the view of minimising disturbance for each other and to the birds. This worked well and the first pool produced a flock of 30 egrets, which were predominantly Cattle, with the odd Little in amongst them, two Glossy Ibis and an elusive Purple Heron. The most impressive sight though was a bare tree on the far bank, which had dozens of Yellow Wagtails perched in it, making it look like a decorated Christmas tree!

Good numbers of hirundines were over the water too and both Red-rumped Swallow and Sand Martin were picked out amongst their commoner cousins. We walked down to some of the further pools which again proved productive, with two Green and one Marsh Sandpiper and a Squacco Heron soon added to our list.

Our next stop was a small hide overlooking a largely overgrown reedbed which, unfortunately, only had one bird on it, a Coot! There was consolation to come though, as a scan of the area behind the hide revealed a calling Black Francolin sitting out in the open. This is never an easy bird, so we quickly trained the scope on it and all managed to get nice views.

We returned to the bus, with one last bird, a flyover Squacco Heron, concluding the visit before we set off for our next stop, the series of salt pools running along the side the beach road known as Lady's Mile.

Arriving at the first pool, we found our first Greater Flamingos, ten in total, plus some large gulls. The gulls were all immature birds of varying stages and the identity of the youngest individuals was open to debate, but at least two of the older ones, 3CY and 4CY birds, had dark eyes and black bands on their bills which confirmed their identities as Armenian Gulls.

We continued along the beach road stopping occasionally to view the pools, which produced two Little Ringed and half a dozen Kentish Plovers along with ten or so Little Stints. Lunch was our next priority and we headed on to a small chapel, complete with a picnic area, near the area known as Akrotiri Gravel Pit.

Unfortunately, the wind had picked up again and although conditions weren't unpleasant, thoughts of birding in the area had to be shelved, with a leader only Eastern Subalpine Warbler and a couple of Sardinian Warblers all that could be found.

After lunch, we drove through the large dry sandy expanse of the gravel pit area towards our next destination Akrotiri Marsh. The drive produced three more Kentish Plovers on a small pool then things got more exciting, as a male Pallid Harrier drifted by giving us a great view!

As we approached the start of the wetland area, a flock of around 20 Spur-winged Plovers flew into view, settling on a flooded area near the road. We enjoyed watching them with the birds then joined by four Marsh Sandpipers.

The main area of marsh here is viewed from the road so we drove along making several stops. Birds seen included four Garganey (three males), five Spoonbills, 20+ Glossy Ibis and single Black-tailed Godwit and Common Snipe. A large flock of Ruff were present too, around 70 birds, with several of the males already acquiring a degree of breeding colour.

One last place we wanted to visit was the tower hide that overlooks the back of the marsh and with access difficult for the bus, we parked and walked a short distance. Vocal Reed and Cetti's Warblers could be heard around us, although both remained hidden in the dense reeds.

As we looked out from the hide, Aileen spotted a Kingfisher perched in amongst the reeds and the bird staying long enough to be seen by the rest of the group. Other sightings included both Squacco and Purple Herons and as we walked back to the bus, a loud 'che-wit' call above us signalled the presence of a Spotted Redshank which was closely followed by a second individual.

With time ticking by, we headed back towards the hotel making one brief stop along the way. This was a small area of scrub by the road and as we stopped, a Cyprus Wheatear appeared in view. The area of scrub clearly had a few warblers in it, including several vocal Sardinian Warblers, before our hoped-for target bird, Cyprus Warbler, appeared. Views could have been better, but over the next ten minutes, we all managed half decent views of a male bird which was constantly singing but choosing to do this whilst largely hidden from view!

31 March

A change of approach today saw us heading west along the coast from our hotel, with our first stop the Mavrokolympos Dam. The weather was perfect, a nice temperature with no wind and the birds we saw weren't too shabby either!

Things started well before we had even got out of the bus with a Cyprus Wheatear along the approach road. As we pulled to a stop to park, several buntings could be seen on a nearby bank, with a closer look confirming them as Cretschmar's. Two flew off but, fortunately, two remained for long enough for us all to see them. A Common Redstart was spotted as we climbed down from the bus and a further pair of Cyprus Wheatears appeared too. A heron picked up in flight crossing over the reservoir proved to be a Purple, with a Grey also seen a short while later.

We took the track that ran alongside the reservoir stopping regularly to look at birds. Lesser Whitethroats and Sardinian Warblers were seemingly the commonest warblers, although we also managed to see single Eastern Bonelli's and Rüppell's Warblers. Pride of place though went to Cyprus Warbler, with a male bird choosing to spend a few minutes preening and singing at the top of a bush in the morning sun, which was a real treat. A close second,

however, was our first Eastern Subalpine Warbler which hopped around on the ground at the base of a bush giving us nice views.



Cyprus Warbler © Gary Elton

Chukar Partridge was a species we had not encountered yet, and the morning was to be the forerunner for a good day for the species, with us disturbing four birds at one stage, several of which we managed to find again to see properly once they had landed.

Our next stop of the morning was at Cape Drepanum which overlooks the island of Yeronissos. The island has a colony of Yellow-legged Gulls nesting on it, plus several pairs of Mediterranean Shags, five of which were sat out on the rocks and included a pale-chested immature bird.

Vocal Zitting Cisticolas announced their presence in the area and several Yellow Wagtails on the path proved to be *feldegg* and *flavas*, giving us a nice comparison. With little else seemingly happening, we made our way back to the bus and as we did so, a flock of seven Spur-winged Plovers flew past heading west.

We were just about to board the bus when a white fronted male Stonechat appeared on top of the scrub nearby. As it bird flew over us, it appeared to have lots of white in its plumage, especially on the rump, and closer inspection confirmed its identity as an Eastern Stonechat.

One last stop before lunch took us to the western side of the north coast and the small hillside woodland near the Baths of Aphrodites. We spent an hour or so at the site, walking various routes through the trees with some nice birds being seen. These included at least three Eastern Bonelli's Warblers, a species we were now becoming very familiar with, a flyover Sparrowhawk, several vocal Blackcaps, Cyprus Wheatear and a Tree Pipit.

A break with the norm today, saw us heading to a local taverna for lunch, with a distant soaring Long-legged Buzzard briefly interrupting the journey.

After lunch, we made our way south to our next destination the Arodes Valley. With a choice of which side of the valley to explore first, the plan was to walk one side and then the other but as always time was to get the better of us! A pair of Eastern Black-eared Wheatears were new for the trip, the male being of the 'pale-throated' form. Serins and Linnets were noted in the field edges along with two Chaffinches and the inevitable Eastern Bonelli's Warbler. Two pairs of Chukars were also seen, though neither was particularly keen to show well.

Cyprus Scops Owl © Gary Elton

With time having slipped by, we returned to the bus, with one last stop left to conclude the day. Our destination followed a tip-off about a pair of roosting Cyprus Scops Owls; they had apparently been present early in the morning and the hope was that they hadn't been disturbed and were still there. We arrived at the



site and initially things didn't look too promising but with a little of perseverance an owl was soon found. It was amazingly cryptic in amongst the leaves and branches and eventually the second bird was also located nearby. A fantastic finale to the day and the last of the Cyprus endemics bird species in the bag!

1 April

Today would be our longest travel day as we headed east along the coast after breakfast towards our main destination, Larnaca. Another attempt for the Griffon Vultures seemed a sensible idea but as we looked out over the cliffs, we wondered if we had got it wrong. We needn't have worried, however, as ten minutes of searching the extensive rock face revealed two birds, with one crouched down, seemingly on a nest. We watched them, until one took off and disappeared over the top of the rockface, with it or another individual then appearing a short while later over another section of the cliffs.

We continued our journey, diverting to visit a reservoir near the town of Kiti. This had, as expected, dried out, but our main reason for visiting was to explore a small patch of woodland adjacent to the dam. As we got out of the bus, a Great Spotted Cuckoo could be heard calling, which was certainly an encouraging start, and as we started to walk along the main track, we

disturbed two cuckoos and a Black-crowned Night Heron, the latter clearly having been roosting in the treetops.

We climbed the steps to the top of the dam, which gave us an elevated view over the area and this proved to be a good move, with one of the cuckoos flying past and perching out in the open in a bush in the dry reservoir bed. Two Spur-winged Plovers were also noted nearby, but there was no sign of any other waterbirds.

We retraced our steps and decided to explore the nearby scrub and woodland with a Lesser Whitethroat and Blackcap the best we could manage until Cliff spotted a flycatcher, which promptly disappeared. We searched, to no avail, and had just turned to walk back to the bus, when the bird promptly reappeared. Despite some good views, its identity proved somewhat challenging, as it was a worn female/2CY type bird. Eventually, we concluded it was indeed a Semi-collared, with extensive white in the tail and a faint median covert wing bar helping to confirm the identification.

Our next destination was the agricultural area around Periviola, with some freshly cut and ploughed areas hopefully having the potential for birds. This was to prove the case with half a dozen Northern Wheatears and a female Eastern Black-eared Wheatear frequenting the first cut field we stopped at. Several Black Francolins were calling, one out in the open, with a second, a female, seen a short while later out in the centre of the field along with several Chukar Partridges. Singing larks above us proved to be Calandras, their size and distinct flight easily seen, with around four birds in total. A small flock of four Short-toed Larks was also found and we watched these climbing in and out of the furrows on a recently ploughed field.

We finally arrived at the salt lakes on the outskirts of Larnaca and soon saw the expected flamingos, plus Shoveler, Coot, Black-winged Stilts and Little Ringed Plover.

Lunch was taken in the rather salubrious surroundings of the sewage water treatment pools, although a combination of the breeze that was now blowing and the midday sun, made viewing from the elevated hide somewhat challenging.

The commonest ducks were Mallard and Teal, along with a few Shoveler and a single Pintail. A small group of gulls in amongst the Teal turned out to be a Slender-billed, accompanied by at least two Black-headed Gulls and a flock of around 30 Glossy Ibises flew over just as we finished lunch.

We then made the short drive back along the entrance track to search for one last bird, Spectacled Warbler. Luck was certainly on our side as we didn't have to wait long for one to appear and we all got some nice views.

We continued around the coast, stopping to look at one last pool in the area where more flamingos were on view, plus a nice selection of shorebirds, namely Avocet, Greenshank,

Black-tailed Godwit, Marsh Sandpiper, Ruff, Little Stint and both Kentish and Little Ringed Plovers.

With a long journey back to the hotel, we had just enough time to visit one more site, the wetland reserve at Oroklini. This site has two elevated hides and we spent time in both, adding a nice selection of birds to the day's tally. Highlights included five Red-crested Pochard, four Purple Herons, three Ferruginous Ducks, a 'showy' Black-crowned Night Heron, Kingfisher and several fly through Turtle Doves which were the first for the trip.

2 April

The day started a bit differently, with a pre-breakfast walk west along the coastal path and being optional, and the last full day, some of the group took the option of having a lie-in. We set off, with the first birds of the morning seen along the shoreline, namely a Whimbrel and then a Kingfisher, with a second Whimbrel seen much closer a little while later.

Our walk was briefly curtailed by a temporary fence across the path, due to the works being carried out in the area. Whilst we watched a Nightingale, a fisherman appeared who decided this obstruction wasn't going to stop him fishing, so we duly followed and continued our walk. This proved a good move, as we disturbed a Wryneck from the path edge and noted several Northern Wheatears, forerunners for the good number we would see later in the day.

As it was our last full day with a slightly earlier finish planned, we decided to stay relatively local, with our first stop thirty minutes west along the coast near the airport, a small, wooded picnic area at Timi Beach. This proved a particularly good move and whilst it was slow to start with, we certainly finished with a flourish!

The first 'goodie', was a male Masked Shrike, sat out on the top of a dead bush, with the bird giving us some great views. Almost at the same time, some Hooded Crows had become noisy and clearly agitated above us causing us to look up to find them chasing a Short-eared Owl!



Masked Shrike © Gary Elton

There was lots of general bird activity too, with flycatching Lesser Whitethroats and Blackcaps, plus at least ten Hoopoes, a male Rüppell's Warbler and three Nightingales, one of which periodically flew across the path in front of us.

As we stood watching, the distinctive wailing call of Stone Curlew erupted a short distance in front of us, although in true fashion, the birds were well hidden from view. Gradually they started appearing, initially giving us brief glimpses as they moved across the open area ahead of us, before finally allowing some nice 'complete' views.

We returned to the bus, enjoying the spectacle of a large number of swallows perched on a bare dead tree, which was not only an impressive sight but also a good opportunity to compare Red-rumped and Barn together. A nearby ploughed field contained half a dozen Northern Wheatears plus two Red-throated Pipits, nicely rounding off our visit.

Our next stop was Mandria where again Northern Wheatears featured heavily. We counted 16 birds in total and searching through these revealed an Isabelline Wheatear. Despite a nearby quadbike, we managed nice views of the bird, with a second individual also found.

Moving on, we made a brief visit to the small wood at the Asprokremmos Dam where three circling Black-crowned Night Herons greeted us, and as we walked through the avenue of trees, we quickly added Eastern Bonelli's Warbler to the day list. The bird was singing and accompanied by another bird, a Willow Warbler, which periodically sang too.

Our lunch stop was in a large quarry area near Anarita where our first bird was a Little Owl, which gave us some great views perched up alongside the main track into the site.

After lunch, we went for a walk along several of the tracks in the area, with four Eastern Black-eared Wheatears (a mixture of pale and dark throated forms), three Long-legged Buzzards, including a rather tatty adult bird, and a pair of Cyprus Wheatears being the highlights.

Our last destination of the day was one of the sites visited at the start of the trip, Agia Vavara, where we spent a couple of hours revisiting the various pools. The water levels had changed somewhat and a nice selection of birds were seen including a male Little Crake, Baillon's Crake, Woodchat Shrike and a male Collared Flycatcher, with us wrapping up the day when we realised we had run out of birds and found ourselves admiring the Marsh Frogs through the telescopes!

3 April

After a slightly later breakfast, we were collected by the minibus for a final visit to the archaeological site on the headland. We enjoyed a nice relaxing time with this also being a 'leg stretch' prior to the flight home. Birds seen included a good number of Hoopoes and Northern Wheatears, two Rüppell's Warblers and a new bird for the trip, a Black Redstart.

We returned to the hotel, having left enough time for a freshen up and to complete packing. With the groups flights again spread over a selection of times depending on the destination, we said our goodbyes to those staying behind and the rest of us headed to the airport for a largely straightforward check-in and again staggered departures for our journeys back to the UK.

Systematic List

Birds

Garganey *Spatula querquedula*

Four including three males at Akrotiri Marsh on 30th.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*

At least four at Akrotiri Marsh on 30th, with larger numbers seen at various locations in the Larnaca area.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Only recorded on three dates with largest numbers at Akrotiri and Larnaca.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

A solitary male bird was found tucked away in the back of the pool at Oroklini Marsh.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

A single female at Larnaca Sewage pool on 1st.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

Largest numbers, around 60, at the Larnaca treatment pool with smaller number seen (20+) at Akrotiri Marsh. .

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

Three birds including two males, were seen from the first hide at Oroklini Marsh, Larnaca, with another pair seen from the second hide.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

At least three birds from the first hide at Oroklini Marsh, Larnaca.

Chukar Partridge *Alectoris chukar*

Seen well on three dates at various locations.

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*

Heard on five dates with at least two seen well.

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*

Several were seen on both visits to Agia Vavara and on our visits to Asprokemmos and Mavrokolympo Dams.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Noted daily at various sites.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*

We did well for this species, with birds seen or heard on five dates. Seen in flight with one nice, perched view at Kiti Dam on 1st.

Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis*

After several attempts, we finally caught up with the bird that had been seen in the Mandria area over the preceding days and it was well worth the effort!

Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Noted daily largely as feral pigeons.

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Common, noted daily.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

A surprise addition with at least three in flight at Oroklini Marsh on 1st.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common, noted daily.

Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis*

A species it seems that has spread rapidly along and across the coastal area, with birds recorded daily.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Noted at the majority of wetland sites.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Easily seen at the wetland sites we visited at Akrotiri and Larnaca.

Little Crake *Porzana parva*

We did well for this species with four birds (two males) seen during our first visit to Agia Vavara and a male on the second visit.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*

Single birds seen on both visits to Agia Vavara.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Birds were heard and seen at Akrotiri Marsh, Oroklini Marsh and Agia Vavara.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Up to three at Asprokemmos Dam and a single at the sewage pool, Larnaca.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*

Large numbers at Larnaca Salt Lakes, with smaller numbers also noted at Akrotiri.

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Up to four birds at the Timi picnic site on 2nd.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

A flock of 10 at Asprokemmos Dam on 29th, with larger numbers noted at Larnaca and Akrotiri.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

A flock of six were seen at Spiro's Pool, Larnaca



Spur-winged Plover © Gary Elton

Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus*

The largest numbers were in the Akrotiri Marsh area, c.30 birds, with smaller numbers in the Larnaca area. A flock of seven birds flew west along the coast at Cape Drepanum on 31st.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

A single at Agia Vavara was followed by others at the Asprokemmos Dam, Akrotiri, Larnaca and Mandria.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Seen at Akrotiri (nine) and Larnaca (20+).

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Two seen on the rocks offshore by our hotel on 2nd, with one on 3rd.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Singles on our visits to Akrotiri and Larnaca – the nominate subspecies here, *limosa*.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

A single at Agia Vavara on 28th, with c.70 at Akrotiri Marsh on 30th and c.90 at Larnaca on 1st.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Up to 10 in the Akrotiri area, with larger numbers (c.40) on Spiro's Pool, Larnaca on 1st.

Common Snipe *Gallinago Gallinago*

One at Akrotiri Marsh on 30th.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

A single at Asprokremnos Dam on 29th.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Seen at Agia Vavara (four), Asprokremnos Dam (three) and Akrotiri Marsh (two).

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

A total of five were seen during our time at Akrotiri, with a further two noted later in the week at Larnaca.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

Two vocal flying birds were seen at Akrotiri Marsh.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Three in the company of a single Marsh Sandpiper was a useful comparison on Spiro's Pool, Larnaca on 1st.

Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei*

At least 10 were on the Larnaca sewage pool on 1st, although the strong sunlight meant viewing conditions weren't ideal.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

At least two were found amongst the Slender-billed Gull flock at Larnaca Sewage pool.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Noted daily.

Armenian Gull *Larus armenicus*

A 4CY and probably 3CY were noted at the first pool we stopped at along Lady's Mile, Akrotiri. Several other 2CY gulls were also present with them but couldn't be positively identified to species.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

One or two on three dates.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

A poorly seen tern at Larnaca sewage pool was considered to have almost certainly been this species.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

One alongside shags on the offshore Island of Yeronissos was a useful comparison, with three more noted on Larnaca Sewage Pool.

European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Five in total (including a very pale chested immature bird) on Yeronissos Island, Cape Drepanum on 31st.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

At least 20 were noted during our time at Akrotiri Marsh, with larger numbers (c.30) in flight over Larnaca Sewage Pool and 10 more at Oroklini Marsh.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

A flock of 21 birds were seen heading west along the coast by Peter and Kathy as they looked out from their hotel room on the afternoon we arrived.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

A flighty singleton at Kiti Dam was followed by a more co-operative bird at Oroklini Marsh, both on 1st. Three more, presumably disturbed from their roosting site at Asprokemmos Dam on 2nd.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralliodes*

Three were seen during our time in the Akrotiri area.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

At least 30 were noted at the M1 pools, Akrotiri on 30th.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

One or two on four dates.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Singles at the M1 pools and at Akrotiri Marsh, 30th, another at Mavrokolympos Dam 31st and four at Oroklini Marsh 1st.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Singles at Asprokemmos Dam on two dates, with others seen at the M1 Pools and Akrotiri Marsh.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Noted on three dates during the trip, at Asprokemmos Dam 29th, M1 Pools and Akrotiri Marsh 30th and Oroklini Marsh (four) on 1st.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*

Poor views of a high-flying bird at Kensington Cliffs on 30th, was followed by better views of at least two birds at the same site on 1st.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Singles at the Baths of Aphrodites on 31st and Larnaca sewage pool on 1st.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Noted on three dates at Agia Vavara, Asprokemmos Dam and Akrotiri Marsh.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

We enjoyed great views of a male bird that flew alongside us at Akrotiri Gravel Pit on 30th.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Singles seen at Agia Vavara and Asprokemmos Dam.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

Up to three birds at Agia Vavara, Baths of Aphrodites and Anarita Park.

Cyprus Scops Owl *Otus cyprius*

We struck lucky with this species and enjoyed fantastic views of two roosting birds on 31st.

Little Owl *Athene noctua lilith*

Three sightings this year, two were distant near Asprokemmos Dam, and a close bird at Anarita Park on 2nd. The eastern subspecies *lilith* is sometimes treated as a separate species – oddly called ‘Cucumiau’ due to its call.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Somewhat of a surprise as one flew over us at Timi Picnic Site being pursued by Hooded Crows on 2nd.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Common and seen well daily.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Seen on three dates: at Akrotiri Marsh, Oroklini Marsh and along the shoreline at Paphos near the hotel.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Two singles with both at the Tomb of the Kings on 27th and 2nd.



Wryneck at Tomb of the Kings, Cyprus © Gary Elton

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Noted daily at various sites throughout the trip.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator niloticus*

Seen on three dates, all singles, at Agia Vavara on 28th and 2nd and a roadside bird enroute to the Troodos on 29th.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus*

A very welcome addition with a male bird found at Timi Campsite on 2nd.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius glaszneri*

One seen during our afternoon at Platres on 29th.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*

Commonly seen as we travelled around and on seven dates.

Western Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula soemmerringii*

Noted on seven dates, with many birds showing a distinct white half collar and on the hind neck and seemingly paler heads than we are used to seeing.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix sharpii*

Common, noted daily.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater cypriotes*

At least six seen or heard on our visit to the Troodos and Platres area.

Great Tit *Parus major aphrodite*

Common, noted daily.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata cypriaca*

Common, easily seen.

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

A flock of four roadside birds on a recently ploughed field at Perivolias on 1st, and a single bird at Mandria on 2nd.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*

At least four birds were heard and seen well in the agricultural fields at Perivolias on 1st

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Noted on three dates in amongst the commoner hirundines.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common, easily seen.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Seen and noted daily.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

We did well for this species and noted it on seven dates.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti orientalis*

Heard daily and occasionally seen throughout our week, invariably around wetland areas or in the various valleys.

Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus orientalis*

Noted on four dates with up to three at the Asprokremmos Dam woodland, with a bird heard in song there on 2nd.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Surprisingly scarce with only one seen at the Asprokremmos Dam on 2nd..

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Noted on six dates, with often more than one bird present.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

At least two at Agia Vavara Pools.

Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

More often heard than seen, noted in expected habitat primarily around the Larnaca and Akritori areas and Agia Vavara.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

A regular sight and sound as we travelled around the countryside.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Seen on six dates, noted at various sites.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

Noted on six dates, seemingly most numerous on our walk around Timi Picnic Site.

Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia ruppeli*

Seen on four dates at Paphos headland on both visits, Mavrokolympos Dam and Timi Picnic Site.

Cyprus Warbler *Sylvia melanothorax*

Nice views of singing male birds at roadside stops near Pissouri on 30th and Mavrokolympos Dam on 31st.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*

Common, seen well and heard at numerous sites.

Eastern Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans albistriata*

A welcome addition to the list and the only one we saw was at Mavrokolympos Dam on 31st.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Surprisingly scarce with only one seen, at Paphos headland on 27th.

Spectacled warbler *Curruca conspicillata*

One seen well in the saltmarsh bushes near Larnaca sewage pool on 1st.

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Two birds heard, but not seen, during our walk at Platres on 29th.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla dorotheae*

A singing bird at Platres showed brilliantly for us as it clung motionless to the side of a large pine tree.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*

One foraging through the leaf litter at Platres on 29th was the only one we saw.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Three singing birds were heard during our walk at Platres on 29th.

Common Nightingale Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Unsurprisingly more often heard than seen. Noted on three dates: at Paphos Archaeological site (three), Tomb of the Kings, Timi Picnic Site (three) and at Platres, with the latter individual foraging alongside the Blackbird in the leaf litter at Platres.

Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata*

A female flycatcher at Kiti Dam caused some debate, but was eventually identified as this species.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*

Great views with both birds being males. One at Paphos Archaeological site on 28th and the second at Agia Vavara on 2nd.



Collared Flycatcher © Gary Elton

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Our last new bird of the trip at Paphos Headland on our last morning.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Seen on three dates, at Paphos Headland on both visits and Mavrokolympus Dam.

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

A male at Paphos Headland on our first full day.

Eastern Stonechat *Saxicola maurus*

A male at Cape Drepanum was a nice find on 31st.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Seen on seven dates, most numerous on 2nd with at least 24 individuals recorded.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

Two at Mandria on the 2nd, with one seen very well, enabling all the salient points to be noted.

Eastern Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe melanoleuca*

Seen on two dates: a pair at the Arodes Valley on 31st and four at Anarita Park on 2nd.

A recent study (Schweizer *et al*, 2018) proposed that Eastern Black-eared Wheatear should be treated as a full species (ie split from Western Black-eared Wheatear) and this recommendation has now been accepted by most 'authorities'.

Cyprus Wheatear *Oenanthe cyprica*

Noted on four dates with some nice views achieved of this smart wheatear.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Common, seen daily.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

Seen daily during the tour.

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Seen daily. Birds were mainly of the black-headed *feldegg* race, with Blue-headed *flava* noted too, along with '*dombrowskii*' '*superciliaris*' and '*thunbergi*'.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Common and noted daily.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

A cracking looking male at Agia Vavara on 28th was very much appreciated.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

One on the edge of the Trout tanks, adjacent to our coffee stop at Platres on 29th.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Noted on four dates during the trip.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Nice views of a perched bird at the Baths of Aphrodites Campsite on 31st.



Red-throated Pipit © Gary Elton

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*

Only noted on three dates this year, largely due to restricted access to the headland. We did enjoy some nice views of them, especially on our visit to the headland on 28th.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs syriaca*

Two seen in the Arodes Valley on 31st.

European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris muehlei*

Noted daily at the majority of sites we visited.

Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina bella*

Noted on four dates, with some smart 'cherry chested' males seen.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis niediecki*

Noted daily.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Noted on four dates, with best views at Aspokremnos Dam on 2nd.

Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus*

A flock of around 20 birds in the tree tops near our coffee stop at Platres on our visit to the Troodos area.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

Birds were seen and heard at Anarita Park, Agai Vavara and Paphos Headland.



Corn Bunting © Gary Elton

Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia*

Once again this species proved tricky to catch up with, with the only birds seen being four at Mavrokolympos Dam on 31st.

Mammals

Cyprus Hare *Lepus europaeus cyprius*

Butterflies

Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

Small White *Pieris rapae*

Eastern Dabbled White *Euchloe ausonia*

Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea*

Paphos Blue *Glaucopsyche paphos*

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*

Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

Large wall Brown *Lasiommata maera*

Dragons and Damsels

Common Bluetail *Ischnura elegans*

Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii*

Lesser Emperor *Anax parthenope*

Reptiles and Amphibians

Cyprus Water Frog *Pelophylax cypriensis*,

Cyprus Rock Agama *Laudakia cypriaca*

Snake-eyed Lizard *Ophisops elegans*

Fringe-toed Lizard *Acanthodactylus schreiberi*

Flower list (compiled by tour participant Paul Griffin)

Garland Daisy

This flower is seen 'everywhere' in huge numbers.

Cyprus Mimosa

The yellow flowered shrub we saw everywhere.

Bermuda Buttercup

Widespread yellow flowered plant

Wild Carrot

Little Bur-clover

Pale Flax

Purple Viper's Bugloss

Buck's-horn Plantain

Giant Fennel

The giant plant with feathery leaves at Akrotiri reservoir

Sage-leaved Rockrose

Shrubby Everlasting

Dove's foot Cranesbill

Common Poppy

Branched Asphodel

Common Vetch

Hairy-yellow Vetch

Field Marigold

Purple Salsify

Wild Clary

White Hedge-Nettle

False Hawkbit

Scarlet Pimpernel

Blue Statice

Mallow Bindweed

Spiny Starwort

Naples Garlic

Garlic Chives

Hoary Rock-rose

Orchids

Anacamptis pyramidalis