

Limosa

CYPRUS: SPRING MIGRATION ON APHRODITE'S ISLE TRIP REPORT AND SYSTEMATIC LIST



Cyprus Warbler © Gary Elton, March 2026

CYPRUS: SPRING MIGRATION ON APHRODITE'S ISLE

19–26 March 2026

Leader: Gary Elton

Day 1 – Thursday 19th March

Weather: 17°C, Cloudy with occasional heavy showers

We landed on time in Larnaca and within an hour had cleared passport control, collected our luggage and our vehicle, and we were on the road.

Leaving the airport, we headed to our first destination, Oroklini, and a large tamarisk and reed-fringed lake complete with two hides. We spent an hour or so here, visiting both hides – a welcome respite from travelling.

Our first Greater Flamingos of the trip appeared, around a dozen, along with a fine selection of wildfowl. The most numerous species were Shoveler, Teal and Garganey, the latter numbering close to forty birds. Ferruginous Duck, Pintail, Gadwall and Little Grebe were present in lesser numbers, while the high-water levels restricted waders to Spur-winged Lapwing and Black-winged Stilt.

There was plenty of activity in the nearby tamarisks, with Chiffchaffs actively feeding and fly-catching, and a smart male Eastern Subalpine Warbler was found among them.

Our visit proved an enjoyable and productive break, and we set off along the coast to Paphos and the Damon Hotel Apartments, our base for the trip.

Day 2 – Friday 20th March

Weather: 17°C, fine start, clouding over late morning with heavy rain at times during the afternoon

After the long travel day, today was planned as a more leisurely, travel-free one, spending time initially at Paphos Headland before moving to the nearby archaeological site.

Setting off from the harbour, we followed the coastal path around to the headland, sandwiched between the archaeological site and the sea. Yellow-legged and Baltic Gulls were present in small numbers offshore, and the rocky shoreline hosted a Common Sandpiper. Our first Northern and Isabelline Wheatears were found, with several Red-throated Pipits and Crested Larks disturbed from the narrow band of adjacent grassland.

We headed back and spent the remainder of the morning in the archaeological site, which proved highly productive. Highlights included a pair of Great Spotted Cuckoos, at least ten Rüppell's Warblers (all males bar one female), at least two Woodlarks, two male Blue Rock Thrush and five Eastern Black-eared Wheatears.



Great Spotted Cuckoo © Gary Elton, March 2026

We saved the best until last, with a stunning male Caspian Stonechat, although as we were watching it, another bird appeared which was an equally impressive male Finsch's Wheatear. This species winters in Cyprus in small numbers, with the occasional late bird like this still being found at this time of year.

Hoopoes were clearly present in good numbers, with one sheltered area revealing a feeding group of at least eight birds.

Lunch at a local taverna was excellent, although this coincided with the weather deteriorating. We managed to work round the worst of it, returning to the site for the afternoon and adding two Eastern Bonelli's Warblers, a flock of ten Short-toed Larks, a confiding male Cretzschmar's Bunting and a Masked Shrike to our list.



Masked Shrike © Gary Elton, March 2026

Day 3 – Saturday 21st March

Weather: 15°C, cloudy with heavy showers in the morning, largely dry but breezy in the afternoon

A wet night was followed by an equally wet start, and we peered out watching the rain as we ate breakfast. We set off hoping for improvement, which fortunately arrived soon after, although this proved to be a short respite.

Making the most of the conditions, we headed first to a set of irrigation pools on the edge of an industrial estate – it was not the most salubrious of settings, but the birds didn't seem to mind. Large numbers of hirundines swooped over the reed-edged pools, several Sedge Warblers appeared periodically on the reed bases, and vocal Cetti's Warblers called nearby. Three Common Snipe were found as a consolation for no crakes.

Our next stop was the agricultural fields around the village of Mandria. Working along small lanes towards the western end, we found Northern Wheatears, Crested Larks and White Wagtails in the adjacent fields, before the more exciting species appeared.

A Wryneck perched out long enough for everyone to see it well before disappearing, and a male Woodchat Shrike then showed on top of a small tree. A brief Eastern Subalpine Warbler followed.

Moving down towards the beach, Gary's casual mention of a Bluethroat seen at a small reedbed the previous year prompted a quick check and sure enough a bird flew up and perched briefly in the reeds. Unfortunately, it couldn't be relocated, so it remained a 'leader only' bird. A Glossy Ibis was then found feeding in a small orange grove.

The afternoon took us east towards Akrotiri. A Green Sandpiper and two Common Snipe at one stop, and shorebirds along Lady's Mile including Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers, Kentish Plovers and around fifteen Little Stint.

Our last stop at a large pool near a monastery produced four Ferruginous Ducks, a male Northern Shoveler, two Common Sandpipers, and an area seemingly alive with Eastern Bonelli's Warblers in double figures.

To cap the day, a Peregrine appeared overhead, a male Blue Rock Thrush landed on a trailer and a Common Redstart and a calling Woodlark were also found.



Eastern Bonelli's Warbler © Gary Elton, March 2026

Day 4 – Sunday 22nd March

Weather: 18°C, largely fine and sunny with occasional showers

This morning we made a short drive to scan the cliff face of the Archaeological site from the coastal path boundary, targeting a Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush which had been reported to be frequenting the area. A careful search first produced an Isabelline Shrike

perched in bushes, followed by an Eastern Orphean Warbler on a small bush preening in the sun, its large size emphasised by the adjacent Northern Wheatear. After a tense wait, the Rock Thrush finally appeared – a cracking male and well worth the effort.

We headed west to Mavrokolympos Dam, noting our first Cyprus Wheatears on the approach road. Setting off on foot, the rain returned briefly but soon cleared, bringing the birds out with it. Several Eastern Bonelli's Warblers and Chiffchaffs were active in nearby scrub, before the distinctive song of a Cyprus Warbler was heard and the bird gave lovely views singing from the top of a bush. An Eastern Subalpine Warbler and a soaring Long-legged Buzzard followed.

Continuing along the Agamas Peninsula, we stopped at the Baths of Aphrodite, although the small campsite with its scattered trees proved disappointingly quiet, with only sub-singing Blackcaps to note. Further up the hillside, a soaring bird initially thought to be a Sparrowhawk was confirmed as a Northern Goshawk on closer inspection.



Cyprus Warbler © Gary Elton, March 2026

After lunch, we headed down to the irrigation pools at Agia Vavara, where two Little Crakes were found sitting cooperatively in vegetation on the opposite bank, a male also appearing briefly. Other birds included a pair of noisy Great Spotted Cuckoos, a Common Snipe and a calling Quail.

Day 5 – Monday 23rd March

Weather: Coast: 17°C, fine and dry after a wet start. Troodos: 4°C, largely cloudy and wet with some sleet and low cloud

We started at the coast with a revisit to Mandria, where the male Woodchat Shrike was presumably still in residence at the western end of the track. Moving down to the beach, a Greater Sand Plover had been found earlier in the day. Initially we feared it had gone, but it was still present, hidden amazingly well on the shingle below us.

We then headed towards the Troodos Mountains, stopping at a traditional roosting site for Cyprus Scops Owl. We were in luck, finding one bird present, although tucked deep in vegetation.

Continuing towards Platres, a singing Coal Tit drew us to a roadside tree, giving us good views of this distinctive Cypriot subspecies (*'cypriotes'*), with its smaller white cheek patches and more extensive black bib.

Arriving at Troodos, we were pleased to find the sun out, although the temperature was only 4°C. We managed good views of the local Jays (*'glaszneri'* subspecies, with a redder forehead and more distinct moustachial stripe) before the weather deteriorated completely.



Eurasian Hoopoe © Gary Elton, March 2026

We retreated to the Botanical Gardens at a lower elevation, finding our target Short-toed Treecreeper ('Dorothy's' subspecies, '*dorotheae*') singing in a small picnic area. The garden itself was quiet in the rain and fog.

Our last stop was the small woodland at Asprokremnos Dam, alive with at least ten Eastern Bonelli's Warblers constantly calling and feeding around us. Six Hoopoes were also present, and the resident Great Spotted Cuckoos called noisily from nearby trees.

Day 6 – Tuesday 24th March

Weather: 19°C, fine and sunny with one heavy shower late in the afternoon

We set off west along the coast towards Cape Drepanum, hearing an Eastern Olivaceous Warbler singing from scrub on our arrival but failing to see it despite patient waiting. A nearby singing Eastern Subalpine Warbler gave a glimpsed view.

Exploring the area produced a male Rüppell's Warbler, Eastern Black-eared, Isabelline and Northern Wheatears, and our first Chukar Partridges. Four European Shags were picked out on rocks around the offshore island of Yeronissos. A nearby small archaeological site produced a Wryneck and a Black Redstart.



Cretzschmar's Bunting © Gary Elton, March 2026

Returning south and east to Anarita Mast, a Little Owl was found absorbing the sun on the track. The area around the mast produced another male Rüppell's Warbler, three

Hoopoes, two Eastern Black-eared Wheatears and a male Marsh Harrier. Lunch at Anarita Park was followed by exploration of a nearby derelict farm and scrub area, which yielded another Rüppell's Warbler, a pair of Cretzschmar's Buntings, Blackcap, Willow Warbler and Common Whitethroat. The farm itself held a male Blue Rock Thrush and a Black Redstart.

A revisit to Agia Vavara produced another Wryneck and good views of the resident Great Spotted Cuckoos. Our final stop at Timi beach, although complicated by a heavy shower that softened the ground, added two Stone Curlews, two Eastern Bonelli's Warblers and a Common Redstart.

Day 7 – Wednesday 25th March

Weather: 17°C, fine dry morning, heavy rain early afternoon, clearing later

We revisited Paphos Headland and the archaeological site. A Black Redstart near the car park was our first bird, with a Common Sandpiper on the coastal rocks, a bathing Isabelline Wheatear and several Northernns close by. Then a male Blue Rock Thrush appeared, quickly overshadowed by the arrival of a pristine male Desert Wheatear – a fine bird that performed well.

In the archaeological site, the Isabelline Shrike from a few days before was found again, this time with much better views, although its red tail remained surprisingly difficult to appreciate.

Several Black Redstarts followed, plus two late Common Starlings – a winter visitor to Cyprus – perched on nearby railings. An adult Mediterranean Gull was an unexpected sighting, trailing something from one leg as it flew along the headland. Cretzschmar's Buntings performed well with at least five birds seen, as did both Rüppell's and Eastern Bonelli's Warblers. A small arrival of Common Redstarts and Nightingales had clearly occurred, and a singing Willow Warbler was a welcome addition.

The outstanding bird of the day came last: a male Collared Flycatcher. Initially the views could have been better, but persistence eventually paid off and everyone enjoyed satisfying views.

After lunch, we returned to the Cyprus Scops Owl site, and despite the bird not initially being in its favoured spot, it started calling and we tracked it down to the base of a small bush for the improved views we had been hoping for.

Rain returned mid-afternoon, but we made productive use of the later clearing, visiting Asprokremnos Dam where the small wood held at least fifteen Eastern Bonelli's Warblers. A Tree Pipit was a welcome addition, as was a hepatic Common Cuckoo, and

then a Semi-collared Flycatcher appeared and eventually showed well after some effort. An overhead mixed hirundine and swift flock also included several Alpine Swifts.

Day 8 – Thursday 26th March

Weather: 20°C, fine and dry

Our last morning in Cyprus, and after a prompt start, we headed towards Larnaca. Arriving in the agricultural area of Perivolía, a Black Francolin was heard calling but true to form stayed hidden. A pair of Chukars on a nearby mound provided some consolation.

Lark activity was minimal as no fields had yet been harvested, and three more Francolins which were heard also remained invisible.

We cut our losses and moved towards the salt lakes and the water treatment area, stopping several times to view large numbers of Greater Flamingos. One stop produced what appeared to be a small group of Stone Curlews, which then took off to reveal at least a dozen birds.

The entrance track to the hide produced a Spectacled Warbler, which performed in a brief display flight before landing on low vegetation for good views.

From the hide, Shoveler, Garganey and Teal were present in their hundreds, along with around fifty Ferruginous Ducks, a male Gadwall and six Black-necked Grebes.

Driving further round to view a large coastal lagoon, we found twenty Ruff, six Marsh Sandpipers, Kentish Plovers, Black-winged Stilts and Little Stints, with the final bird of the trip a Common Shelduck. We then headed to the airport, refuelled, returned our vehicle and checked in for our flights home.

Systematic List

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* A single bird seen at the coastal lagoon near the water treatment works at Larnaca on our final day.

Gadwall *Mareca strepera* Singles at Oroklini Lake and the Larnaca water treatment lagoons.

Garganey *Spatula querquedula* Excellent numbers at Oroklini Lake (close to forty birds) and again at the Larnaca treatment lagoons.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* Present in their hundreds at the Larnaca water treatment lagoons on our final morning, with a male also found at the monastery pool near Akrotiri.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* Good numbers at the Larnaca water treatment lagoons.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* Three at Oroklini Lake on day one.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* Seen well on several occasions: four at the monastery pool, and around fifty at the Larnaca lagoons on our last day.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* Six birds at the Larnaca water treatment lagoons.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Noted at Oroklini Lake on arrival.

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus* Heard on several occasions around Perivolia and Agia Vavara but frustratingly never seen.

Chukar Partridge *Alectoris chukar* A pair at Cape Drepanum and another pair at Perivolia.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* A calling bird heard at Agia Vavara on Day 4.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* Around a dozen at Oroklini Lake on arrival, with large numbers at the Larnaca Salt Lake and water treatment area on our final day.

Common Swift *Apus apus* Noted in the mixed hirundine and swift flocks.

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* Several birds in the mixed overhead flock at Asprokremnos Dam on Day 7.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* Singles seen along the coast at Paphos.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Excellent numbers throughout, with a group of at least eight in one sheltered area of the archaeological site, and six at Asprokremnos Dam wood.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* Singles on three occasions: Mandria, Cape Drepanum and Agia Vavara.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* A hepatic female at Asprokremnos Dam on Day 7.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* A pair in the archaeological site on Day 2, with the resident pair at Asprokremnos Dam and Agia Vavara encountered on multiple visits.

Cyprus Scops Owl *Otus cyprius* Found on two visits, initially with poor views, then calling and tracked down to give much better views.

Little Owl *Athene noctua lilith* One sat absorbing the sun on the track up to Anarita Mast.

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus* Two at Timi beach on Day 6, and at least twelve hunkered in sparse vegetation near the Larnaca salt lake on our last day.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* A single bird found and seen well on the shingle beach at Mandria.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* Present alongside Ringed Plovers along Lady's Mile.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* Noted along Lady's Mile.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* Seen along Lady's Mile and at the Larnaca lagoons.



Spur-winged Lapwing © Gary Elton, March 2026

Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* Noted at Oroklini Lake and the Larnaca area.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Noted at Oroklini Lake and in the Larnaca area.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* At least fifteen along Lady's Mile and more at the Larnaca lagoons.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* Three at the Mandria irrigation pools and further birds at Lady's Mile.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Six birds at the coastal lagoon near Larnaca on our final morning.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* One at the Akrotiri irrigation pools on Day 3.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax* Twenty at the Larnaca coastal lagoon on our final day.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* Small numbers offshore at Paphos Headland.

Baltic Gull *Larus fuscus fuscus* Small numbers offshore at Paphos Headland.

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus* An adult noted flying along Paphos Headland on Day 7.

European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* Four seen on rocks around the island of Yeronissos at Cape Drepanum.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* A single bird found feeding in a small orange grove near Mandria.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* One at Oroklini Lake.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* Noted at Oroklini Lake.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Seen at coastal wetland sites.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* Two soaring birds around Mavrokolympus Dam on Day 4.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* A soaring bird identified by its wing beats above the road heading into the Agamas Peninsula hills.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* A male at Anarita Mast on Day 6.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* One overhead at the monastery near Akrotiri on Day 3.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* An excellent find at the archaeological site, seen on two occasions with much better views on the second visit.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* The Mandria male was seen on two consecutive visits, with another at the derelict farm near Anarita.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* One in the archaeological site on Day 2.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius glaszneri* The endemic Cypriot subspecies seen well at Troodos village.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix sharpii* Common and seen daily.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater cypriotes* The endemic subspecies found singing at a roadside tree near Platres on our Troodos day.

Great Tit *Parus major aphrodite* Common and seen daily.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla dorotheae* The endemic 'Dorothy's' subspecies found singing in a picnic area below the Botanical Gardens in the Troodos.

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* A flock of ten in the archaeological site on Day 2, with birds also at Mandria and the Larnaca area.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata cypriaca* Common and seen daily.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* Noted in hirundine flocks.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Common and easily seen.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* Noted in hirundine flocks.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti orientalis* Heard at the Mandria irrigation pools and other wetland areas.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* A regular sight and sound throughout.

Spectacled Warbler *Curruca conspicillata* Excellent views of a bird in display flight at the Larnaca water treatment entrance on our last day.

Common Whitethroat *Curruca communis* One in the scrub near Anarita Park.

Lesser Whitethroat *Curruca curruca* Noted in the archaeological site.

Eastern Orphean Warbler *Curruca crassirostris* A large individual found preening beside a Northern Wheatear near the archaeological site on Day 4.

Rüppell's Warbler *Curruca ruppeli* An outstanding species this year, with at least ten in the archaeological site on Day 2 and further birds at Cape Drepanum and Anarita. One of the trip's highlights.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* Seen on several dates.

Sardinian Warbler *Curruca melanocephala* Seen daily at most suitable sites.

Cyprus Warbler *Sylvia melanothorax* Excellent views of a singing male at Mavrokolympos Dam, with the bird singing from the top of a bush.

Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus orientalis* The species of the trip. Found in impressive numbers at the monastery near Akrotiri (double figures), Asprokremnos Dam wood (10-15 birds), and the archaeological site. This species put on an outstanding show throughout the week.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* Singles at Anarita and in the archaeological site on Day 7.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* Common at Oroklini on arrival and noted at several other sites.

Eastern Subalpine Warbler *Curruca cantillans* Males found at Oroklini on arrival, Mandria and Cape Drepanum.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida* A singing bird at Cape Drepanum, elusive but clearly present.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* Several at the Mandria irrigation pools.

Little Crane *Zapornia parva* Two females and a brief male at Agia Vavara on Day 4.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Noted at the Mandria irrigation pools.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* Noted at the Mandria irrigation pools.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* On the coastal rocks at Paphos and at the monastery pool near Akrotiri.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* At least two individuals: one at the Akrotiri area on Day 3, another in the archaeological site on Day 7.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* Several birds around the archaeological site and Cape Drepanum.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* One at Mandria (leader only), flushed from a small reedbed on Day 3.

Caspian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus variegatus* A stunning male found in the archaeological site on Day 2.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* Multiple sightings: two males in the archaeological site, one on a trailer near Akrotiri, another at the derelict farm near Anarita, and a male on the headland on Day 7.

Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* A cracking male eventually found on the cliff face visible from the archaeological site boundary on Day 4, well worth the wait.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* A pristine male on the coastal path at Paphos Headland on Day 7 – one of the birds of the trip.

Finsch's Wheatear *Oenanthe finschii* A late-lingering male in the archaeological site on Day 2. A species that winters in Cyprus and breeds further north, with occasional birds like this one found at this time of year.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* Several individuals at various sites including the headland and archaeological site.



Eastern Black-eared Wheatear © Gary Elton, March 2026

Eastern Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe melanoleuca* Five in the archaeological site on Day 2, with further birds at Cape Drepanum and Anarita.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* Recorded at most sites throughout the week.

Cyprus Wheatear *Oenanthe cypriaca* At least three birds at Mavrokolympus Dam on Day 4.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* A male in the archaeological site on Day 7, showing well after patient observation.

Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata* Eventually seen well at Asprokremnos Dam on Day 7 after some effort.

Eurasian Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* A small arrival in the archaeological site on Day 7.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Common and seen daily.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* Noted at several sites.

Crested Lark (Cyprus) *Galerida cristata cypriaca* Common and seen daily.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* Common in the Mandria fields.

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* Noted around Mandria and coastal areas.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* One at Mandria on Day 3.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* A singing bird at Asprokremnos Dam on Day 7, with further calling birds at other sites.



Red-throated Pipit © Gary Elton, March 2026

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* Several at Paphos Headland on Day 2.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* Two late winter visitors seen in the archaeological site on Day 7.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* Common and noted daily.

European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* Noted daily.

European Serin *Serinus serinus* Several around the Troodos lunch stop.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* Seen in the Troodos.

Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia* Seen on two days: a confiding male in the archaeological site on Day 2, plus five birds at Anarita Park and two at the derelict farm nearby.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* A possible individual.

Other Wildlife Noted

Reptiles

Starred Agama *Stellagama stellio* – Several adults and juveniles basking on rocks and walls throughout the week.

Wall Lizard – Common at rocky sites.

Butterflies

Common Swallowtail, Cleopatra, Clouded Yellow, Painted Lady, Red Admiral, various Blues.

Other Insects

Carpenter Bee *Xylocopa violacea*



Starred Agama *Stellagama stellio* © Gary Elton, March 2026