

Cyprus

3rd April – 07th April 2019

This was strictly a birding trip and the attendees were Rob Robertson, Michael Heron, Kieran Lawrence, Derek Lawrence, Bob Coakley, and me. The weather was pleasant and we had timed our visit well, we managed to catch the very first part of the migration. Some of the highly desired species that we were hoping to encounter were relatively easy to see, a big miss was a weather downed Demoiselle Crane that we were unaware of during our visit that was present a few days toward the east end of the island. We found both Cyprus Wheatear and Cyprus Warbler to be relatively easy to see and when there had been a fall of birds, it was noticeable.



Cyprus Wheatear – © Andrew Kinghorn

There are several species that we had encounters with so frequently during our trip that I have chosen to omit them from the main body of text in this writeup. I did this on the basis that if someone was to go birding in Cyprus in early April, they are almost guaranteed to see the following species at most sites listed with relative ease. These species include: Hooded Crow, Magpie, Yellow-legged Gull, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Feral Pigeon, Swallow, Common Swift, Crested Lark, Corn Bunting, Sardinian Warbler, Kestrel, House Sparrow, Hoopoe, and Spanish Sparrow.



WEDNESDAY 3RD APRIL 2019 – Travel

Our first day was a day of travel. The flights were from Newcastle to Paphos, the flight landed late in the day and so the only birding we got done was naked eye at the airport whilst sorting out the hire vehicle. The most notable species on landing was a small group of **Alpine Swifts** over the terminal and wider airport complex.

THURSDAY 4TH APRIL 2019 – Paphos Headland, Anarita, Asprokremmos Dam

We started the first day's birding at Paphos Headland, as the entrance does not open until 08AM we walked on the coastal path around the outside first. Pulling into the car park we were met with singing **Nightingale**. We walked roughly half way along the entire perimeter fence and had superb numbers of **Red-throated Pipits** and **Yellow Wagtails**. A few of the group had a **Kingfisher** on the rocks and we enjoyed views of our first **Rüppell's Warbler**, soon after a **Quail** started singing from within the headland itself but typically was not seen. It wasn't long until the first wheatears of the trip rolled in consisting of **Northern Wheatear**, **Eastern Black-eared Wheatear** and **Isabelline Wheatear**. A **Wood Warbler** was feeding on the deck by the rocks before moving off to the perimeter fence to feed. Once we were inside the headland itself, we racked up some cracking species very fast, our first **Masked Shrike** was perched up nicely and it didn't take long before we clapped eyes on a male **Semi-collared Flycatcher** followed swiftly by two cracking **Collared Flycatchers**. We headed off toward the first lot of Roman ruins and were treated to views of **Black Redstart** and **Common Redstart** making the most of the early morning sun. We walked on a little further and had our first **Cyprus Wheatear** of the trip which was followed soon after by a distant **Woodchat Shrike** and a flyover **Tawny Pipit**. A single but brief **Ortolan Bunting** was a welcome distraction whilst watching **Greater Short-toed Larks**. There was some familiarity within the headland itself with flocks of **Goldfinch** and **Linnet** hanging around in the meadows whilst the bushes were occupied by **Blackcap**, **Chiffchaff**, and **Lesser Whitethroat**. We decided it was time to move on but not before adding **Red-rumped Swallow** to the trip list as at least two flew over us at the car park.

Next stop was Anarita where we had superb views of **Ortolan Bunting** whilst both **Alpine** and **Pallid Swifts** whirled around overhead. Some of the team had their first **Cyprus Warbler** of the trip but it swiftly disappeared, we added some superb birds here including no fewer than 5 **Great Spotted Cuckoos** which put on a great show! We had a distant **Long-legged Buzzard** and the place was alive with **Cyprus Wheatear** and **Eastern Black-eared Wheatear**. We had our first **Cetti's Warbler** singing and some managed flight views of **Chukar**. On the way out we had a stunning male **Whinchat** along with a **Little Owl**.

Our next port of call was Asprokremmos Dam. When we arrived, the car park which contained a **Collared Flycatcher** and heading onto the dam we had a bit of a raptor fest with **Long-legged Buzzard**, **Marsh Harrier**, **Peregrine**, and **Steppe Buzzard** all within minutes of each other. We drove to the other side of the dam and had a walk about; we added our first **Zitting Cisticola** of



the trip and on the water, there was a flock of Yellow-legged Gulls that contained a single **Baltic Gull**. Around the edge of the dam itself we added some cracking herons in the form of **Purple Heron**, **Squacco Heron**, and **Night Heron**. The only real sense of familiarity here came in the form of **Moorhen**. The bushes contained the real interest here and we were soon treated to some awesome views of **Cyprus Warbler** followed soon after by **Eastern Bonelli's Warbler**. A **Rüppell's Warbler** was welcome and a high-flying **Alpine Swift** was notable, a **Wryneck** but in a brief appearance as did one of very few **Spectacled Warblers** seen. Everyone finally connected with some perched **Chukar** which were accompanied by a **Purple Heron** sitting in a field, soon after we moved on.



Collared Flycatcher - © Andrew Kinghorn

Despite there being little chance of Demoiselle Crane we decided we would at least check Akrotiri Lake. We had some time to spare first and headed off to Phasouri Reedbed, the most notable sighting here was a flock of eight **Purple Herons** which were clearly migrants as they called each other up out of the reedbed before departing. Here we also added our only **Little Grebe** and **Coots** of the trip. **Sedge Warbler**, **Cetti's Warbler**, and **Reed Warbler** were singing and we had some of our only **Cattle Egrets** of the trip. We moved on based on a tip off about Little Crane, pulling up at the new spot we heard a distant **Black Francolin** and the bird inevitably set off another male which sounded much more accessible, we made our way along and sure enough



found the male perched up. Here we also had a flock of **Glossy Ibis** and some Mallards. As the evening was getting on it wasn't long before we had views of **Little Crane**, the bird showed really well and was one of the star birds of the trip for many.

As we were losing light fast, we headed onto the viewpoint to look for the cranes, alas no sign. We had some cracking birds non the less with further views of **Black Francolin** and our only **Greater Flamingo** of the trip. The scope was essential here but we managed to add **Black-winged Stilt**, **Greenshank**, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Ruff**, and **Wood Sandpiper** to the trip list and on the gull front we had **Slender-billed Gulls** with a lone **Black-headed Gull** amongst them. A **Great Crested Grebe** was the only one seen on the trip and a distant flock of back on flying egrets could not be pin pinned down to species level.

FRIDAY 5TH APRIL 2019 – Pools of Aphrodite, Polis, Kdrepanum, Asprokremmos Dam, Mandria, and Paphos Sewage Works

First port of call was the Pools of Aphrodite, which was surprisingly quiet. Migration appeared to be somewhat lacking with only a few **Lesser Whitethroat** and **Tree Pipits** in attendance. Our only other **Masked Shrikes** of the trip were here and we had some superb views of **Cyprus Wheatear**. A flyover **Peregrine** was carrying prey and some distant **Chukar** were perhaps just that bit too far off to enjoy fully. We headed on back to the hotel for some breakfast but took in a small pool in Polis on the way, it held our first and only - **winged Plover** of the trip which was alongside a roadside **Wood Sandpiper**. After breakfast we were back on the road and just outside of Polis, we had a flyby **Bonelli's Eagle** and getting out for some prolonged views produced our only **Common Cuckoo** of the trip.

Arriving at Cape Depranom we had high hopes and it did not disappoint, there was a sizable flock of **Greater Short-toed Larks** and a flyover **Peregrine** was our second of the day. A **Wryneck** perched up nicely and the bushes held a handful of **Eastern Subalpine Warblers** and a single **Eastern Orphean Warbler**, the latter being the only one seen on the trip. The higher areas held **Cyprus** and **Northern Wheatears** and singles of **Ortolan Bunting**.

Our next stop was back at Asprokremmos Dam with the intention of enjoying **Cyprus Warbler** again, we were not disappointed. New herons were added in the form of **Grey Heron** and whilst there was no sign of the Squacco the **Night Heron** had remained and the **Purple Herons** were in abundance once again. The bushes held much the same passerines as the day before other than the addition of a **Wood Warbler**. We headed off to Mandria for some lunch and on arriving a small dove that upon inspection turned out to be a **Laughing Dove**, it was our only one of the trip! After lunch we walked down to the costal fields where a calling **Black Francolin** was quickly located and a walk around the fields produced an array of races of **Yellow Wagtails**. Also present a female **Citrine Wagtail**. Here we had a cracking field full of larks and wheatears, on offer we had **Eastern Black-eared Wheatear** and of course both **Northern** and **Cyprus Wheatears** were in



attendance. On the lark front it was mainly **Greater Short-toed Lark** but a surprise came in the form of three **Skylarks!** The rest of the walk produced a distant **Marsh Harrier** and a brief distant **Black Francolin** along a well-worn farm track.

Next stop was Paphos Sewage Works where we managed to locate our only **Turtle Dove** of the trip but it was soon up and off, down toward the sea we had a **Little Crake** and a **Baltic Gull** on the sea. The crake was brief and rather obscured but clearly a male. After this we headed onto the **Cyprus Scops Owl** site and we were not disappointed with at least three birds seen/heard and perhaps as many as four. Back at our apartment there was another distant **Cyprus Scops Owl** calling – clearly the species is widespread on the island. The species was recently split by IOC.



Purple Heron - © Andrew Kinghorn

SATURDAY 6TH APRIL 2019 - Agiavarvara, Troodos, Paphos, and Polis,
Today was focused around getting views of some of non-split Cypriot endemics. However, en-route we called into Agiavarvara where we had singing **Quail**, some perched up **Black Francolin**, a flyover **Snipe** and some of our only **Greenfinches** of the trip. But sadly, we did not connect with the Little Crakes on our visit but others were more successful the following day (per Twitter). En-route a female type **Pallid Harrier** was seen and so we quickly pulled over to try and connect, we were not successful but a **Marsh Harrier** got pulses racing at one point! However, we did hear



Stone-Curlew which was a new bird for the trip, some had a few **Chukar** do a fly-past and some signing male **Cyprus Warblers**. Strangest sighting here was a **Purple Heron** sitting motionless in a farmer's field.

On the approach to Troodos, we had a cracking **Grey Wagtail** right by the vehicle and it proved to be the only one of the trip, though more welcome for most were the **Cyprus Coal Tits** (*Parus ater cypriotes*) and **Cyprus Jays** (*Garrulus glandarius glaszneri*). Arriving at Troodos itself we realised we were not suitably dressed for the occasion but we pressed on regardless. Our only **Blackbirds** of the trip were here and I was surprised to see the **Cyprus Wheatears** could not be deterred from singing in the unseasonal cold weather. We soon had some flyover **Crossbills** and the first **Cyprus Short-toed Treecreepers** (*Certhia brachydactyla dorotheae*) were heard and then soon after seen. Around Troodos itself the **Cyprus Jay** and **Cyprus Coal Tit** were relatively easy to see. The colony of **Pallid Swifts** were impressive and they were calling overhead with some **Common Swifts** thrown in for good measure. On our way down back toward Paphos the only notable sighting was two stunning **Long-legged Buzzards** which afforded some great views.

We spent the remainder of the day back at Paphos Headland. We split as a group this time with some doing the outside and others doing the inside of the headland, this worked well and we managed to feed each other some information over the phone allowing for everyone to connect with everything if it was a flyover/flypast. Inside of the headland we had our first **Cretzschmar's Buntings** of the trip and a beauty male **Ortolan Bunting** joined in the mix briefly. We had excellent views of **Tawny Pipit** that was going about its business feasting on the spectacular Painted Lady butterfly migration. The **Cyprus Wheatears** were seemingly ever present with a few **Northern Wheatears** thrown in for good measure.

Migration was clearly in action with new **Redstarts**, **Red-throated Pipits**, **Pied Flycatcher**, **Nightingales**, and a two **Rüppell's Warblers**. Offshore a flock of seven **Gull-billed Terns** flew past and these were our only birds of the trip, it later transpired they were seen elsewhere on the island so they were clearly coasting. Only a single **Red-rumped Swallow** was seen on this particular visit. A walk back to the vehicle saw a single **Stone-Curlew** fly over and head out to sea, only to decide better of it and return back minutes later.

Undoubtedly one of the highlights for many on this day was a cracking male **Pallid Harrier** that we had briefly near Chrysochou. We had good but all too brief views, whilst trying to relocate the bird we had a **Long-legged Buzzard** sitting in a field which got pulses racing. **Cretzschmar's Bunting** and **Chukar** were seen in an attempt to relocate the harrier but as already outlined we



were not successful. A quick check of the roadside pool in Polis produced much the same as the previous days with **Spur-winged Plover**, **Moorhen**, and **White Wagtail** noted. Close by we had a brief **Stone-Curlew** flying away back on, our second of the day. I had a look for the **Cyprus Scops Owl** around where we were staying, heard but not seen. However, in the process **Barn Owl** was added to the list and a flock of migrating **Night Herons** put on an entertaining show.



Spur-winged Plover - © Andrew Kinghorn

SUNDAY 7TH April 2019 - Polis, Paphos, and Travel

A check of the pool at Polis in the first hour of light did not produce much of note, both **Sedge** and **Reed Warblers** were only the second of the trip. Though **Green Sandpiper** was a trip tick! We decided to spend the last few hours at Paphos Headland, on the way a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** flew over the vehicle in Paphos! On arrival we split up, first notable bird was a female **Pallid Harrier** that had clearly fresh in. Soon after we had some high **Grey Herons** that were followed by a flock of offshore **Glossy Ibis** moving. On the rocks **Turnstone** was added to the trip list and offshore we had two separate flocks of **Garganey**. As in previous days **Yellow Wagtails** of a variety of races were welcome and some of the crew had our second **Citrine Wagtail** of the trip. A **Wryneck** amongst the ruins was a nice surprise and the **Greater Short-toed Larks** were welcome "hangers-on". There had clearly been some movement with **Isabelline Wheatear** present amongst fewer **Northern Wheatears**. We settled down for some lunch and had a few flocks of **Glossy Ibis** going north offshore. We headed back to the airport and there was just enough time for us to take in a **Spoonbill** that flew along beside our moving vehicle.



COMPLETE TRIP LIST

| SPECIES LIST | COMMENTS |
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| Mallard | Present. |
| Garganey | Flocks flew past offshore at Paphos headland. |
| Black Francolin | Area around Akrotiri is particularly good for this species in Cyprus, species also seen at Mandria. We also saw the species at Agiavarvara and at various locations whilst driving around Cyprus. |
| Chukar | Seen at Pools of Aphrodite, Asprokremmos Dam, Chrysochou, and Agiavarvara. |
| Quail | Heard singing at Paphos headland and Agiavarvara. |
| Great Crested Grebe | Seen at Akrotiri lake. |
| Little Grebe | Seen at Akrotiri lake. |
| (Great) Cormorant | Present. |
| (Black-Crowned) Night Heron | Hard birds at Asprokremmos Dam and Polis (flyovers). |
| Squacco Heron | Birds seen at Asprokremmos Dam. |
| Cattle Egret | Only birds of the trip were noted in the reedbeds around Akrotiri. |
| Little Egret | Present. |
| Purple Heron | Seen at Agiavarvara, Asprokremmos Dam, and at Akrotiri reedbeds. |
| Grey Heron | Seen at Asprokremmos Dam and Paphos headland. |
| Glossy Ibis | Seen migrating off Paphos headland and also noted at Akrotiri Lake. |
| (Greater) Flamingo | Present in excellent numbers around Akrotiri lake. |
| Bonelli's Eagle | Good views of the species just outside of Polis. |
| (Western) Marsh Harrier | Species seen at Asprokremmos Dam and Agiavarvara. |
| Pallid Harrier | Species seen at Agiavarvara, Chrysochou, and Paphos headland. Only one adult male seen on the trip. |
| Steppe Buzzard | Seen at Asprokremmos Dam. |
| Long-legged Buzzard | Seen at Anarita, Asprokremmos Dam, Troodos, and Chrysochou. |
| (Common) Kestrel | Present. |
| Peregrine Falcon | Seen at Asprokremmos Dam, Pools of Aphrodite, and Cape Depranom. |
| Little Crake | Noted only at the pools by the reedbeds at Akrotiri. |
| Coot | Only noted on Akrotiri lake. |
| Moorhen | Roadside pools in Polis and at Asprokremmos Dam. |
| Black-winged Stilt | Seen at Akrotiri lake. |



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| Spur-winged Lapwing | Present on roadside pool at Polis. |
| Ruff | Seen at Akrotiri. |
| Marsh Sandpiper | Present at Akrotiri. |
| (Common) Snipe | Seen at Agiavarvara. |
| Stone Curlew | Heard at Agiavarvara and seen at Paphos headland. |
| Wood Sandpiper | Seen at Akrotiri lake and on the roadside pool at Polis. |
| Common Sandpiper | Present. |
| Green Sandpiper | Only noted on the roadside pool at Polis. |
| Greenshank | Seen at Akrotiri lake. |
| Turnstone | Seen at Paphos headland. |
| Black-headed Gull | Seen at Akrotiri lake. |
| Slender-billed Gull | Seen at Akrotiri lake. |
| Yellow-legged Gull | Present, easy to see at the coast. |
| (Baltic) Lesser Black-backed Gull | Present, relatively easy to see on the coast. |
| Gull-billed Tern | Flock of seven flew past Paphos headland on one of our visits, a day where the species appeared to be coasting. |
| Feral Pigeon | Present. |
| (Eurasian) Collared Dove | Present. |
| (European) Turtle Dove | A depressing stage of affairs for this species, only seen at Paphos Sewage Works. |
| Laughing Dove | Seen in the middle of Mandria centre. |
| Woodpigeon | Present. |
| (Common) Cuckoo | A single bird outside of Polis flew past whilst we were watching a Bonelli's Eagle. |
| Great Spotted Cuckoo | Seen at Paphos en-route to the headland, and we had excellent views at Anarita. |
| Little Owl | Seen at Anarita. |
| Cyprus Scops Owl | Seen and heard on the road that leads to Mavrokolympos Dam, as well as heard at Polis, where we were staying. |
| Barn Owl | Only a single bird seen at Polis where we were staying. |
| (Common) Swift | Present. |
| Pallid Swift | Birds seen at Anarita and easy to see around Troodos village when the lighting conditions allow. |
| Alpine Swift | Seen over the airport terminal at Paphos, as well as at Anarita and also at Asprokremmos Dam. |
| (Common) Kingfisher | Seen at Paphos headland. |
| (Eurasian) Hoopoe | Present. |



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| Wryneck | Species seen at Asprokremmos Dam, Cape Depranoman, and at Paphos headland. |
| Crested Lark | Present. |
| Skylark | Flock of three noted at Mandria, which is a late date for the species to be still present on the island. |
| (Greater) Short-toed Lark | Species seen at Cape Depranom, Asprokremmos Dam, and at Paphos. |
| Barn Swallow | Present. |
| Red-rumped Swallow | Seen at Paphos headland. |
| (Common) House Martin | Present. |
| Tawny Pipit | Seen at Paphos headland. |
| Tree Pipit | Present. |
| Red-throated Pipit | Present and relatively easy to see at Paphos headland. |
| White Wagtail | Present. |
| Grey Wagtail | Seen at Troodos. |
| Yellow Wagtail | Easy to see, of varying races. Species seen the most at Paphos headland and Asprokremmos Dam. |
| Citrine Wagtail | Present at Asprokremmos Dam and Paphos headland. |
| Nightingale | Seen and heard at Paphos headland. |
| Whinchat | Seen at Anarita. |
| (Common) Redstart | Seen at Paphos Headland. |
| Black Redstart | Seen at Paphos Headland. |
| Blackbird | Present. |
| Wheatear | Seen at Cape Depranom and Paphos headland. |
| Isabelline Wheatear | Seen at Paphos headland. |
| Eastern Black-eared Wheatear | Seen at Paphos headland, Anarita, and Asprokremmos Dam. |
| Cyprus Wheatear | Seen at Cape Depranom, Paphos headland, Anarita, Asprokremmos Dam, and Pools of Aphrodite. |
| Zitting Cisticola | Easy to hear and see, but our first of the trip was at Asprokremmos Dam. |
| Blackcap | Seen at Paphos headland. |
| (Common) Whitethroat | Present. |
| Eastern Orphean Warbler | Seen at Cape Depranom. |
| Lesser Whitethroat | Present. |
| Eastern Subalpine Warbler | Seen at Cape Depranom. |
| Sardinian Warbler | Present. |
| Rüppell's Warbler | Best site on the island we found to be Paphos headland, we also saw the species at Asprokremmos |



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| | Dam. |
| Cyprus Warbler | We found a good site by the dam at Asprokremmos Dam. Not as easy to connect with this species as people may think. |
| Spectacled Warbler | Surprisingly difficult to connect with, but species seen at Asprokremmos Dam. |
| Sedge Warbler | Noted at both Polis and the reedbeds around Akrotiri. |
| Cetti's Warbler | Present, and not difficult to connect with at the right habitat. |
| Reed Warbler | Noted around the reedbeds at Akrotiri. |
| Chiffchaff | Seen at Paphos headland. |
| Wood Warbler | Noted at both Paphos headland and Asprokremmos Dam. |
| Eastern Bonelli's Warbler | Noted at Asprokremmos Dam. |
| Goldcrest | Present. |
| Pied Flycatcher | Present at Paphos headland. |
| Semi-collared Flycatcher | Only a single male noted at Paphos headland on a single date only. |
| Collared Flycatcher | Birds noted at Paphos headland and at Asprokremmos Dam. |
| Great Tit | Present. |
| (Cyprus) Coal Tit | Seen easily around Troodos. |
| Short-toed Treecreeper | Seen with relative ease around Troodos. |
| Woodchat Shrike | Seen at Paphos headland. |
| Masked Shrike | Seen at Paphos headland. |
| Magpie | Present. |
| (Eurasian) Jay | Seen with relative ease around Troodos. |
| (Western) Jackdaw | Present. |
| Hooded Crow | Present. |
| House Sparrow | Present. |
| Spanish Sparrow | Present. |
| Chaffinch | Present. |
| Linnet | Present. |
| Greenfinch | Present. |
| Goldfinch | Present. |
| Crossbill | Seen with relative ease around Troodos. |
| Cretzschmar's Bunting | Seen at Paphos headland and at Chrysochou. |
| Ortolan Bunting | Seen at Paphos headland, Anarita, and at Cape Depranom. |



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| Corn Bunting | Present and easy to see across most of the island where the habitat was suitable. |
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Corn Bunting - © Andrew Kinghorn

