

Lesbos/Lesvos, Greece

26th May – 02nd June 2018

By no means an intense trip, nor does a trip to Lesbos need to be if visiting for the normal array of species that people visit the island for. Most people visiting Lesbos birding hope to see Eleonora's Falcon, Olive-tree Warbler, and Krüper's Nuthatch. I found all of these (bar Olive-tree) very easy to see on the island. Though I was visiting well out of season to get good views of Olive-tree Warbler. I found Kalloni salt pans to be an excellent site to visit, it was handy for where we were staying but also seemed to get a good turnover of birds at this time of year. Rarities came in the form of Golden Eagle, which are rarer than Imperial Eagle on the island.



Rufous Bush Chat - June 2018 - © Nikola Zalas

For this trip I was with my non-birding partner Nikola Zalas. May and June are very warm in this part of the world, and like most places in the Mediterranean it is best to birdwatch at dawn and dusk to avoid the warmest periods of the day. Most of the birds within this trip report can be expected to be seen in late May with only the Golden Eagle and Mute Swan being unlikely to be encountered. Due to the time of year at which we visited, do not expect a lot of migration to be underway as it is late in the season for encountering the best migration in the Mediterranean.



SATURDAY 26TH MAY 2018 – Travel and Kalloni Saltpans

There are no direct flights from Newcastle to Lesbos and to save having to get interconnecting flights we decided it best to fly direct from Manchester to Lesbos. It's not a particularly well-known tourist destination and from Manchester itself there is only one flight a week on a Saturday, returning the following Saturday. The flight was early morning so we drove to Manchester through the night and arrived in Lesbos around about midday. We headed straight for our accommodation in Skala Kalloni, which turned out to be a bit of a hub for birders staying on the island. After dropping our stuff off it was straight out to Kalloni Saltpans. On arrival it was impossible to miss the **Greater Flamingos** that were in evidence on almost every visible salt pan whilst on the outskirts **Crested Larks** were commonplace. We drove round and stopped at the entrance to the saltpans, **Little** and **Common Terns** were in evidence and a quick scan revealed a single **White-winged Black Tern**. **Avocets** and **Black-winged Stilts** were abundant and **Kentish Plovers** were dotted about on the outer moat. At least 4 **Black Storks** appeared from the southern fields and circled up over the road, before moving to the pans to feed. **Bee-Eaters** fed over the southern fields and **Swallows** and **House Martins** were whirling around the sewage works. We moved onto the east end of the saltpans and made our way down the long track, a distant **Short-toed Eagle** was the first of the trip and the only **Steppe Buzzard** soared effortlessly to the east. Another two **White-winged Black Terns** were in clear evidence here and the **Greater Flamingos** were a lot closer. A distant **Stone Curlew** stood out in the afternoon heat haze and **Little Stints** had gathered on the islands. **Yellow Wagtails** were heard, but not seen. We decided to move on.



Little Stint - © Nikola Zalas



It is only a short journey from Kalloni Saltpans to Tsknias River Ford. After five minutes or so we were on the approach road down the eastern edge of the river. The river itself was looking dry but our first **Black-headed Bunting** of the trip was a sign of things to come; it perched up on wires singing before heading off to the fields. The road was alive with **Crested Lark** and **Corn Buntings**, the sheer number of the latter made me realise what dire straits the species is in back home here in the UK. A few **Bee-Eaters** hawked insects over the

recently cut fields and our first **Nightingales** of the trip were singing around either side of the river ford. Upon arriving at the ford, we had **Yellow Wagtails** and our first taste of **Eastern Olivaceous Warblers** singing from deep cover. A **Mallard** family were on the river and **Spanish Sparrows** were in evidence. We decided to check out the river mouth on the west side and so drove through the ford and onto the bandstand at the bottom of the road on the west side of the Tsknias river. Birds here were as expected, a **Common Tern** was fishing the river and **Little Ringed Plovers** were in evidence, we had good views of singing **Eastern Olivaceous Warblers** and **Bee-Eaters** were hawking insects over the rough ground. We headed back to the river ford and standing on the eastern bank I spied a **Rose-coloured Starling** flying upriver, I quickly made my way along the road to roughly where it had flown and to my delight there was a small flock of ten or so birds in the top of a tree. I waited around watching and photographing the birds and during this time I had a few parties of birds coming and going from all directions. It was a safe estimate that during the thirty or so minutes I watched the birds there must have been at least one hundred individuals. Content with this spectacle we called it a day. It transpired that this part of the river was well known for **Rose-coloured Starling** gatherings on passage, but I had no idea of this fact at the time so it was a pleasant surprise.



Rose-coloured Starlings - © Andrew Kinghorn



SUNDAY 27TH MAY 2018 – Kalloni Saltpans, Ipsilou Monastery, and “Scop’s Copse” (in Kalloni)
Up and out eager to explore Kalloni Saltpans further was the name of the game. The moat held **Black-winged Stilts**, **Curlew Sandpipers**, and singles of **Kentish Plover**, both of which afforded breath-taking views. My views of all three species were only rivalled by past experiences in Israel. The only **Garganey** of the trip was on one of the pans, as fortune would have it a stunning drake. The fields around the pans held **Bee-Eater** and **Crested Larks** and a walk along the track to the west of the sewage works proved productive, an **Eleonora’s Falcon** flew south west and a **Hobby** at the same time headed off west. A distant **Kestrel** was observed, but views were interrupted by no fewer than 4 **Short-toed Eagles**, which were later joined by **Black Storks**. Passerines came in the form of a **Great Reed Warbler** singing from a patch of rather unimpressive reeds off the track, whilst **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** was seemingly ever present. A glance over a walled garden revealed a stunning male **Black-headed Bunting** singing, we were rewarded with some stunning views of this simply beautiful species. We headed on over to the eastern edge of the saltpans and walked down the long track that led south. Along here we had excellent views of **Greater Flamingo** once again and **Yellow Wagtails** buzzed about. **Ruddy Shelducks** were clearly on the move and there were what seemed like hundreds, with pairs buzzing about between the pans. A **Woodchat Shrike** was on the fields to the east and **Common Buzzard** was present, a good interaction came in the form of the Shrike attacking the Buzzard. Some of our only **Greenshanks** of the trip went over, this time as a flock of four. We decided to move on and a last-minute decision was made to take a look around Ipsilou Monastery.

We had no sooner left Kalloni when I spotted my first lifer of the trip, a stunning **Middle Spotted Woodpecker** perched up on a telegraph pole just outside of Kalloni itself. Sadly, it headed off into a wooded area and that was that. A short pitstop en-route to Ipsilou Monastery provided us with our first **Black-Eared Wheatear** of the trip and they were as stunning as I had remembered. On arriving at the Monastery, itself we headed up to the top and parked just outside of the military base. We then walked slowly down the road that takes you down from the Monastery. The road was lifting with birds, **Western Rock Nuthatch** were common and vocal here and it was not long until we were watching our first **Cinereous Buntings** of the trip, some cracking views of singing males and of birds feeding recently fledged young. We had our first **Red-rumped Swallows** of the trip here as they buzzed about above and below us. A **Short-toed Eagle** hunted the area and recently fledged **Woodlarks** were in attendance not far south of the Monastery. **Black-Eared Wheatear** were common here and they too were busy feeding quite well grown young. The other star songster here was definitely the **Cirl Buntings**, being from the north of England these are quite a treat as I have only seen the Devon birds on a few occasions. We headed off to take a look in the Monastery itself and we inadvertently flushed a **Chuckar**, whilst unfortunate it was a trip tick! A cracking **Blue Rock Thrush** was signing and doing its song flight around the tops of the Monastery and after a look around we decided to head off back to Kalloni. Our final stop of the day was “Scops Copse” the famous site on the island for **Scop’s Owl**. There was a heaving market on and just as we were about to leave after a fruitless search a bird



let out its call, it took a good five minutes or so but I eventually located the bird. A good end to the day!

MONDAY 28TH MAY 2018 –Mauria, Platania, Sigri, and Faneromeni

On the way to our first stop I had a **Chukar** on the road briefly before it ran for cover. However, things went bad after this, I foolishly took us the wrong way somewhere north of Mauria. However, on this thirty-minute wrong turn we did see **Woodchat Shrike**, a cracking **Middle Spotted Woodpecker** and a handsome male **Cirl Bunting**. Nikola also found a **Buzzard** nest and watched one of the adults take a snake back to the nest. Once I had got my act together, we took the long walk down into the Napi Valley. The place was alive with birds and no sooner had we set off than we saw our first **Western Rock Nuthatches** of the walk, soon after we were treated to a singing **Eastern Orphean Warbler** that showed well as it sang atop of a tree for us. Then we had our first **Sombre Tits** of the trip along with some **Great Tits** for comparison. We came across a farm complex which was alive with **Cirl Buntings** and it was great to see these glorious birds benefiting from the farmyard itself. We had a **Hoopoe** on the track and a few **Woodchat Shrikes** added some variety. We arrived at the site famed on Lesbos for Olive-Tree Warbler, it is the cattle grid site outlined in Steve Dudley's book. Not a sound of one. We had **Sombre Tits** and some cracking views of **Masked Shrike** feeding young but not a peep or movement from Olive-Tree Warbler. We decided to head back west toward Sigri, I had been given some site information for Olive-Tree Warblers that were in high density in an olive grove around Faneromeni in early May so decided to give it a go. We arrived in Sigri and were treated almost immediately with views of **Red-rumped Swallow**, **Lesser Kestrel**, and **Alpine Swifts** wheeling over the town. In the harbour itself I was delighted to find a moulting **Whiskered Tern** pottering about its business. We headed off next to Faneromeni, to the site where I had been tipped off about Olive-Tree Warbler. En-route we had **Stonechat** and another **Lesser Kestrel** but little else. At the site itself, it was immediately obvious the evening bird song had started up and the first songster came in the form of **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler**. Down the olive grove I managed some awesome views of **Black-headed Bunting** and a pair of **Red-backed Shrikes** were feeding around some reeds and bushes on the other side of a field. In the olive grove itself there was a stunning **Masked Shrike** going about its business feeding. It took a while but eventually the **Olive-Tree Warbler** started up singing. As expected, it was hard work to try and get a perched view, but in the end, I was treated to a brief but excellent view of a bird in a dead section of a bush before it moved off into a small olive tree to feed, shortly after it flew again to the base of a different bare tree and again, I had some good views before I lost it. Whilst waiting to see the bird we had **Ravens** over, our first **Long-legged Buzzard** and two different **Eleonora's Falcons**. One was an absolutely stunning dark morph and was a contender for bird of the trip for me. I was really happy to have seen **Olive-Tree Warbler** and it was one of the birds I had been looking forward to seeing the most since we first booked the trip.



TUESDAY 29TH MAY 2018 – Kavaki, Skala Sikaminas, Platania, and Kalloni

A much more relaxed day planned, we made our way to our first stop which was Kavaki, the site is well known as one of the only sites on the island for Ruppel's Warbler. On this visit we were not successful, though on arrival we were greeted by **Turtle Dove** and it wasn't long until we were watching **Black-eared Wheatear**, along with good views of **Eastern Subalpine Warbler** alongside a single **Eastern Orphean Warbler**. A **Shag** was the only notable bird on the sea and a **Blue Rock Thrush** was heard singing. The highlight of the visit was a **Middle Spotted Woodpecker** buzzing around and it showed well a few times but only in flight. Our next stop was Molivas Castle, the castle itself is worth a visit and from inside we had **Black-eared Wheatear** flying around the castle and its surrounds. We had good views of **Red-rumped Swallows** and at least six **Alpine Swifts**. From here we drove on down to Skala Sikaminas, it was a rather unfruitful area for birds if truth be told. We had **Eastern Subalpine Warbler**, a single **Grey Heron** and a few **Red-rumped Swallows**, though a trip tick came in the form of a brief **Peregrine**. We decided to spend the evening at Platania (Napi valley), I had in the back of my mind that we had perhaps failed to see Olive-Tree Warbler because we had visited at a bad time of the day. The walk there and back was superb, we had **Turtle Doves** feeding in the farm itself and **Cirl Bunting** were common in this area. There was a fair few shows from **Common Buzzard** and a **Short-toed Eagle** was hunting the valley. We arrived at the renowned cattle grid to absolute radio silence from Olive-Tree Warbler, though the family of **Masked Shrikes** still put on a show. The walk back had produced a few **Woodchat Shrikes** and we had superb views of **Western Rock Nuthatch**. Our final call of the day was Kalloni Salt pans. It was a productive visit with **Wood Sandpiper** being the highlight and an accompanying **Ruff**. It was good to see **Kentish Plover** and **Black-winged Stilts** with tiny young. **Black** and **White Stork** were also present, we did visit in the morning and on that visit, I had a single and my only **Pallid Swift** of the entire trip.



Short-toed Eagle - © Nikola Zalas



WEDNESDAY 30TH MAY 2018 - Achladeri Forest, Kalloni Salt pans, Aghia Ioannis, Sideras, Skala Eresou, Pithariou, Meladia Valley, and Faneromeni

I was up before dawn today and made the short drive to Achladeri Forest. On arriving at the site, I was greeted with a load of **Chaffinch** and good views of singing **Nightingale**. I took the path going off right at the dry riverbed; it didn't take long for the first **Krüper's Nuthatch** to start up calling. I was then treated to a family party of three birds feeding and showing well, the male bird even sang briefly! During this time, I also managed to connect with my first **Short-toed Treecreeper** of the trip and a **Black Stork** flew overhead, it was just above the treeline so I even got to hear the air whistling through its wings. Content with awesome views of the nuthatch I went back to the hotel for breakfast. Our first stop after breakfast was Kalloni Salt pans, there were still a few **Black Storks** showing well and of course the **Greater Flamingos** were in good numbers. There were singles of **Kentish Plover** and a lone **Wood Sandpiper** along with the now expected **Avocets** and **Black-winged Stilts**. We did not hang around today. Instead, we decided to explore the southwest part of the island and so headed off to Aghia Ioannis. We arrived and made our way up the slope to the small chapel. Along the way we had a stunning male **Blue Rock Thrush** briefly and **Sombre Tit** was easy to see here, as they had recently fledged young. A **Buzzard** flew over and **Western Rock Nuthatch** were seemingly easy to see and very vocal. **Black-eared Wheatear** was of course present but not in great numbers. The star of the show here was our first **Cretzschmar's Buntings** of the trip, three in total with some stunning males belting out their beautiful song. The walk back to the car gave us good views of both **Eastern Subalpine** and **Eastern Orphean Warbler**. Next, we stopped at the roadside in the Sideras area, it was blowing a gale but no sooner had I set up the scope than I could hear the lovely song of **Cinereous Bunting**. It took a minute or two but I located a bird singing atop a rock on the slope. A scan of the fields revealed a few **Black-headed Buntings** a smattering of **Crested Larks** as well as singles of **Black-eared Wheatear** and **Cirl Bunting**. It was getting warm and so we headed off for a coffee at Skala Eresou, this is a lovely little town facing out onto the Aegean Sea. I picked up at least three groups of **Yelkouan Shearwater** numbering around fifty birds minimum. The birds were distant but the distinctive flight behaviour helped to pick them out, even Nikola managed to get onto the last group with her bins.

Next stop was Pithariou Reservoir, the approach road revealed twenty or so Ravens around what we assumed was something that had recently died! As we drove past, they all took off. The reservoir itself was a little disappointing, we had **Buzzard** overhead and **Yellow-legged Gulls** were on the reservoir, but we did have a trip tick in the form of **Common Sandpiper**. We moved onto the long winding road of the Meladia Valley, it was very productive. We had our second **Long-legged Buzzard** of the trip and at least two **Cretzschmar's Buntings** (our best views of this species of the trip), we also had a few **Western Rock Nuthatches** and **Black-eared Wheatear** were common throughout the valley. I had a frustratingly brief falcon in the bins, which I suspect was an Eleonora's but never confirmed. Near the end of the valley (toward the Sigri end) we reached the Meladia Valley Ford, we hadn't even stopped the car yet but it showed promise with



a **Ruddy Shelduck** sitting on some hardstanding calling its head off! We got out the car and inadvertently flushed a **Squacco Heron** which was feeding under a small bush in the ford! The bushes and fields were almost quite literally alive with **House Sparrow** and **Corn Buntings**, I cannot recall a time in my life when I have seen so many. We took a walk down a track and had **Crested Larks** galore, along with some **Bee-Eaters** feeding in a plantation. The same plantation held both **Woodchat** and **Masked Shrikes**. Some familiarity came in the form of small flocks of **Goldfinch** and **Linnet**, but there was a juicy bonus amongst them in the form of a single **Serin**. A sheep farmer inadvertently flushed a **Cretzschmar's Bunting** onto the fence (which was good for me) and **Western Rock Nuthatch** were vocal on the rocky areas to the west of the track. We headed off back toward Sigri and a distant backlit bird caught my attention and my suspicions were confirmed, an absolutely cracking **Roller**, a species I honestly thought we were just too late for on this visit. We continued on further and were treated to a few **Crested Lark** family parties as well as a **Chuckar** with its recently fledged young in tow.

Final call of the day was Faneromeni, first of all we did the beach area. A patch of reeds provided **Reed Warbler** and **Great Reed Warbler**; the latter seen only in flight but it was belting out its awesome song. Next, we moved onto Faneromeni pool where we had four **Spoonbill** at a location, we had been tipped off about, here we also had **Woodchat** and **Masked Shrike** darting around the fields and gardens all to the soundtrack of **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler**. I moved onto the **Olive-Tree Warbler** site where I had further views of the species and on this occasion, there were at least two males singing. The birds did not show as well as the last time I visited but I did get a few seconds perched view now and then, one such view pertained to a bird landing on the front of an olive tree briefly before daring in to cover, whilst the other a bit more distantly but with more prolonged views moving from left to right in the middle of a sparse section of an olive tree before darting off to the right, seeing sections of the bird at a time. Distractions came from **Red-backed Shrikes**, **Black-headed Buntings**, and **Cirl Buntings** that were showing so beautifully they could not be glossed over. The only other notable sightings came in the form of **Lesser Kestrel** flying over.

THURSDAY 31ST MAY 2018 - Kalloni, Faneromeni, Ipsilou Monastery, Perivolis Monastery, Lardia, and Tsikinas River

The day started with a visit to Kalloni Saltpans there was not a lot around in all honesty with **Kentish Plover**, **Black-winged Stilt** and **Black Storks** being the only birds of note amongst the suspected **Avocets** and **Greater Flamingos**. The surrounding fields held **Bee-Eaters** and we were afforded some of our best views of the species of the trip. We moved on from here to explore the petrified forest museum at Sigri, which was very interesting and the outside section of the museum added **Northern Wheatear** to the trip list. From here I had a quick check of Faneromeni, the four **Spoonbills** were still present at first but one bird took off and flew off high (presumably to the north). I had good views again of **Black-headed Bunting** and **Corn Buntings** were commonplace. As per the previous days the **Eastern Olivaceous Warblers** were still in full song



going about their business. Content we moved onto Ipsilou Monastery; we adopted a different approach on this visit. We parked up down at the bottom of the Monastery and walked up the road on the south side. Young **Hoopoes** were in attendance here and **Black-eared Wheatears** were feeding young. A few **Isabelline Wheatears** were darting around, often chasing Black-eared. The now expected **Western Rock Nuthatches** showed well as they went about their business and a **Buzzard** put in a brief appearance. Walking slowly further up the road we had a **Peregrine** alight, flushing most of the birds in the valley in the process! Fortune would have it that we were standing in the right place at the right time when a **Rock Sparrow** started giving its distinctive call right about our heads, frustratingly no sooner had it appeared than it was gone again. We walked further up the slope to the backdrop of **Cinerosus Buntings** singing, though every single one managed to evade detection visually. Nearing the top of the road two **Golden Eagles** alighted, they were not particularly far away, they gradually made their way down in the valley before making their way up the slope opposite, they eventually gained some height and kept disappearing over the rise until they were so distant, we left them. We were really excited by the encounter as I had not anticipated to see the species on this trip and it was Nikola's first ever **Golden Eagle**. It later transpired these birds consisted of the first ever Lesbos record of two birds together and the species is very rare on the island, presumably a vagrant from Turkey. Meanwhile we added **Blue Tit** to the day list and it was good to see **Red-rumped Swallows** in good numbers buzzing around our heads. Whilst not deliberate we seemed to have been on a tour of Monastery's and so we called in for a look at Perivolis Monastery, it was closed and locked up but a colony of **Red-rumped Swallows** were immediately apparent with lots of birds flying into the compound to their nests. A walk down to the river was productive, a **Grey Heron** flew off up river before returning a short while later, whilst a **Black Stork** departed off south and didn't return. I heard a **Bee-Eater** but did not see it as I was too busy watching **Red-rumped Swallow** collect mud from the stream to build their nests in the Monastery. Following a short drive onto Lardia valley, as soon as I got out the car, I was enjoying nice views of a male **Blue Rock Thrush**. A **Wren** was heard singing from here as was **Cinerosus Bunting** and **Chaffinch**. Some **Buzzards** alighted over the valley and a **Cirl Bunting** put in a brief appearance.

We headed back to freshen up before setting off for an evening walk along the Tsikinas River. We parked up from the ford (ensuring we were not blocking any access of course) and walked north and south along the river. It was seemingly alive with birds; the **Mallard** young were getting larger and **Nightingales** were in full song. We saw both sexes of **Black-headed Bunting**, whilst the **Eastern Olivaceous Warblers** were showing well. We were afforded good but brief views of **Cetti's Warbler** and **Bee-Eaters** went about their business on the fields on the other side of the river. **Little Ringed Plover** were in attendance along the southern section of the river, whilst the northern section held a single **Green Sandpiper**. There was a **Sand Martin** amongst the hirundines. Finches came in the form of **Goldfinch** and **Greenfinch**. There was a nice flyover **Short-toed Eagle** and five mid distance **White Storks** flew east over Kalloni. Final bird here was a **Little Owl**, which we assumed was occupying the buildings on the east side of the river ford.



After such a productive walk we decided to give the Saltpans a whirl, it paid off with a bonus trip tick in the form of a **Mute Swan**. A bit odd! We called it a day and as we went for a walk for our evening meal, we had **Scops Owl** calling again in Skalla Kalloni.



Eurasian Scops Owl - © Nikola Zalas

FRIDAY 1ST JUNE 2018 - Achladeri Forest, Polichnitos Saltpans, Kalloni Saltpans, Kalloni, and Madaros

First stop of the day was back as Achladeri Forest, the intention was to show Nikola the Krüper's Nuthatch as she did not come with me on my crack of dawn raid earlier in the week. We arrived and were treated to a flock of **Long-tailed Tits** with a few **Blue** and **Great Tits** thrown in, they showed well but soon moved off deeper into the forest. As per the last visit both **Chaffinch** and **Greenfinch** were vocal whilst **Common Buzzard** and **Raven** occupied the airspace and canopy. It didn't take us long and we soon heard a single **Krüper's Nuthatch**, a few moments later we were watching the bird that was showing really well close to the path. Trying to find the Krüper's Nuthatch revealed at least five **Short-toed Treecreepers** buzzing around and the car park held a pair of hunting adults **Masked Shrikes**. We headed off to Polichnitos Saltpans, on arriving it was obvious that this site has a lot of potential. No sooner had we arrived than we were watching **Greater Flamingos** at close range, as per Kalloni Saltpans **Little** and **Common Terns** were buzzing about and **Black-winged Stilt** and **Avocet** were commonplace. The fields surrounding the saltpans had a smattering of **Corn Bunting** and **Crested Larks** and a single **Black-headed Bunting** was present. It was getting really warm and we decided to head off for a coffee for the heat of the day.

Mid-afternoon we headed back to Kalloni Saltpans, annoyingly we missed some **Gull-billed Terns**



that we had no idea were there as we drove past on the morning; however, I did find a nice little flock of marsh terns consisting of a single **Black Tern** and four **Whiskered Terns**. As usual **Greater Flamingo, Kentish Plover, Avocet,** and **Black-winged Stilts** were numerous around the various pans. I picked up five distant small gull species which rang alarm bells, they had positioned themselves on saltpans that were not really easily visible without mammoth walks and even then, access was a bit ropery for disturbing breeding birds. I didn't need to worry though as they were mobile, I drove down toward the main road around the moat and the gulls were nowhere to be seen. I drove back to where I had been and bingo the birds had moved and my suspicions were confirmed; five **Slender-billed Gulls**. I decided to move on and a fortune was favouring us on the way out, as the birds landed pretty close to the main road. We had decent views and got a few photos before they were off again. Passerines on this visit included the now expected **Crested Lark** as well as **European Bee-Eater** and **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler**, one rather clever pair set up on a lone bush on the other side of the moat away from birders/photographers. We met a helpful couple who informed us the Scops Owls were showing well in the copse at Kalloni. We went in for a look and had a single adult **Scops Owl** sitting on the edge of the nest hole, joined later by a youngster.

We headed back to freshen up before heading back out again for our evening walk. We had been tipped off about a Rufous Bush Chat in the Madaros area. We arrived on site and made our way along; some very confiding **Black-eared Wheatears** were a nice treat as were some vocal **Western Rock Nuthatch**. Overhead we had **Buzzard** and **Hooded Crow** and a flyover **Woodpigeon** was a trip tick! It didn't take long for the target bird to start up singing and sure enough we had some awesome views of singing and displaying **Rufous Bush Chat**, surely one of the best birds in Europe(?)! The walk back had Nikola's keen eyes spy a **Cretzschmar's Bunting** on a fence before being flushed by an approaching farm vehicle and we were serenaded by **Black-headed Bunting** and **Rufous Bush Chat**. Not far from the car we had a really confiding **Woodchat Shrike**. The **Scops Owl** kept waking me up in Skalla Kalloni during the night, but I just laughed it off, what a treat!

SATURDAY 2ND JUNE 2018 – Airport

It was time for home. There was a massive queue out of the airport for my flight and Nikola kindly kept our space in the queue whilst I sea watched from the shade under a tree by a chapel opposite the airport. I had not been watching long before I had a **Scopoli's Shearwater** lazily feeding offshore, I had a second one not long after as well as a flock of 10 **Yelkouan Shearwaters** and a single **Grey Heron**. Perfect little sea watch to end a superb trip.



COMPLETE TRIP LIST

SPECIES LIST	COMMENTS
Mute Swan	A single bird seen flying over the sea from Kalloni salt pans. This is an unusual bird here for the time of year.
(Common) Shelduck	Present.
Ruddy Shelduck	A bird noted on concrete hardstanding at Meladia Valley Ford.
Mallard	Present.
Garganey	A single bird on Kalloni Salt pans on one date only.
Chukar	Roadside near Mauria and at various locations across the island. Likely to be encountered at some point on most trips.
Little Grebe	Present.
Yelkouan Shearwater	Offshore at Skala Eresou and also on the sea opposite the airport. Can be encountered over the sea in most places on the island.
Scopoli's Shearwater	Seen over the sea opposite the airport.
(Great) Cormorant	Present.
(European) Shag	Present.
Squacco Heron	A single bird noted feeding at Meladia Valley Ford.
Little Egret	Present.
Grey Heron	Present.
White Stork	Present.
Black Stork	Low flying birds at Achladeri Forest were particularly memorable, the birds nest here. Noted on the river at Perivolis Monastery.
(Eurasian) Spoonbill	Four noted at a pool at Faneromeni.
(Greater) Flamingo	Ever present at Kalloni salt pans.
Golden Eagle	A rare vagrant, the first ever record of two birds together on the island. They were observed on the slopes of Ipsilou Monastery.
Short-toed Eagle	Seen in fields around Kalloni salt pans, with four together at once noted on one day. Birds also seen around Ipsilou Monastery, not a difficult species to connect with on the island and it was seen on numerous occasions traveling between popular birding spots.
Long-legged Buzzard	Seen at Faneromeni and in the Meladia Valley, where the species was easy to locate.
Steppe Buzzard	Present.
Common Buzzard	Present.
(Common) Kestrel	Seen in fields around Kalloni salt pans.



Lesser Kestrel	Birds seen at Sigri and at Faneromeni.
Hobby	A single bird noted on a single date in the fields around Kalloni salt pans.
Eleonora's Falcon	Seen at several locations across the island, but most notably at Kalloni salt pans and Faneromeni.
Peregrine Falcon	Noted at Molivas Castle.
(Pied) Avocet	Numerous and easy to see at Kalloni salt pans.
Black-winged Stilt	Numerous and easy to see at Kalloni salt pans.
Stone Curlew	Seen at Kalloni salt pans.
Little Ringed Plover	Noted at Tsikinas River.
Kentish Plover	Very easy to see at Kalloni salt pans.
Ruff	A single bird noted on a single date at Kalloni salt pans.
Curlew Sandpiper	Birds seen at Kalloni salt pans.
Little Stint	Birds seen at Kalloni salt pans.
Wood Sandpiper	Birds seen at Kalloni salt pans.
Green Sandpiper	Seen on the Tsikinas River.
Common Sandpiper	Only a single bird noted on the entire trip, this was at Pithariou Reservoir.
Greenshank	Noted at Kalloni salt pans, but by no means numerous on the dates we were present on the island.
Slender-billed Gull	A flock of five birds were noted at Kalloni salt pans.
Yellow-legged Gull	Present and easy to see in most places on the island where some water is present, whether that be sea or freshwater.
Little Tern	Present at Kalloni salt pans.
Common Tern	Seen at Tsikinas river and Kalloni salt pans.
Black Tern	A single bird amongst a mixed flock of White winged Black Terns on a single date.
White-winged Tern	Seen at Kalloni salt pans, but not common at the time of year I visited.
Whiskered Tern	Seen in the harbour at Sigri, also a flock of four in a mixed flock at Kalloni salt pans on a single date.
Rock Dove	Present.
Woodpigeon	A flyover at Madaros was a new bird for the trip list.
(Eurasian) Collared Dove	Present.
(European) Turtle Dove	Excellent views at Kavaki and also seen in the Napi valley.
Little Owl	Seen on buildings around Tsikinas River.
(Eurasian) Scops Owl	Easy to see around "Scops Copse", which is a famous location in which to see the species in the island. Also heard calling at Skalla Kalloni fairly frequently on an evening.



(Common) Swift	Present.
Pallid Swift	Only a single bird noted at Kalloni salt pans But I did not really focus on looking for this species on the trip.
Alpine Swift	Seen well at Molivas Castle and at Sigri.
(European) Bee-eater	The species is quite easy to see in suitable habitat around the island, as is classic for this species it is best to learn the call and listen out for it whilst going about birding the island.
(European) Roller	A single noted on the outskirts of Sigri, my visit was late on in the season for this species. So, it was a delight to connect with Roller on this trip.
(Eurasian) Hoopoe	Not a difficult species to connect with on the island, though views typically of birds flying past.
Middle Spotted Woodpecker	Seen on the outskirts of Kalloni, and Mauria. Also seen quite well at the Ruppell's Warbler site at Kavaki.
Crested Lark	Present and easy to see across the islands.
Woodlark	Family party noted around Ipsilou Monastery.
(Common) Sand Martin	Present.
Barn Swallow	Present
Red-rumped Swallow	Quite easy to see across the island, but always a delight.
(Common) House Martin	Present.
White / Pied Wagtail	Present.
Yellow Wagtail	Seen at Kalloni salt pans.
Wren	Present.
Nightingale	Good views had at Achladeri Forest of a singing bird, also easy to hear in the fields around Kalloni salt pans.
Rufous Bush Chat	A singing bird seen in the Madaros area, showing well.
Stonechat	Species seen en-route to Faneromeni.
Blackbird	Present.
Blue Rock Thrush	Noted at Lardia valley, Ipsilou Monastery, Kavaki, and Aghia Ioannis.
Wheatear	Seen at petrified forest museum at Sigri.
Isabelline Wheatear	Noted around Ipsilou Monastery.
Black-eared Wheatear	By far the commonest wheatear on the island, quite easy to connect with in appropriate habitat across the island.
Eastern Orphean Warbler	Noted in the Napi Valley, Kavaki, and at Aghia Ioannis.
Eastern Subalpine Warbler	Good views had at Kavaki and also noted at Skala Sikaminas.
Cetti's Warbler	Noted around Tsikinas River.
Reed Warbler	Present.
Great Reed Warbler	Seen and heard at reedbed areas on both Kalloni salt pans and



	also at Faneromeni.
Olive-tree Warbler	Due to being late in the season it was a struggle to connect with this species, the only birds I encountered where at Faneromeni.
Easter Olivaceous Warbler	An easy species to connect with across the island where there are enough suitable bushes to hold birds.
Great Tit	Present.
(European) Blue Tit	Present.
Sombre Tit	Noted in the Napi Valley and easy to see around the chapel at Aghia Ioannis.
Long-tailed Tit	Seen in the car park at Achladeri Forest.
Krüper's Nuthatch	Seen well in Achladeri Forest, an excellent and well-known site for the species.
(Western) Rock Nuthatch	Seen very well in the Napi valley and also easy to see around Aghia Ioannis. Also noted in the area surrounding Meladia Valley Ford. Species also noted around Madaros.
Short-toed Treecreeper	Seen and heard at Achladeri Forest, the species was easy to connect with here.
Red-backed Shrike	Seen at Faneromeni.
Woodchat Shrike	Easy to connect with around the island in favourable habitat.
Masked Shrike	Easy to connect with around the island in favourable habitat.
(Eurasian) Jay	Present.
(Western) Jackdaw	Present.
Hooded Crow	Present.
Raven	Seen well at Achladeri Forest and over Faneromeni.
Starling	Present.
Rose-coloured Starling	Flocks noted at Tsknias River Ford, there are favoured bushes along this stretch of river which the species favours.
House Sparrow	Present.
Spanish Sparrow	Present.
Rock Sparrow	Surprisingly, only a single bird noted throughout the trip at Ipsilou Monastery.
Chaffinch	Present.
Linnet	Present.
Goldfinch	Present.
Greenfinch	Present.
Serin	Amongst a flock of Linnet at Meladia Valley Ford.
Cretzschmar's Bunting	Seen well in the Meladia Valley and around Meladia Valley Ford. Birds also easy to encounter around the chapel at Aghia



	Ioannis.
Cirl Bunting	Present and easy to see in most places on the island where the habitat is favourable.
Cinereous Bunting	Easy to see and hear around Ipsilou Monastery, also noted at Lardia valley. Easy to see and hear in Sideras, despite blustery conditions.
Black-headed Bunting	Quite widespread amongst the island where the habitat was suitable, its fairly easy to connect with this species across the island.
Corn Bunting	Present and easy to see in most places on the island where the habitat is favourable.

