

Trip Report

By Bob Shiret



The Ezousas Valley near Episkopi

Introduction

This was a late booked holiday with TUI staying at the excellent Pioneer Beach Hotel which cost around £850 each for flights, transfers and half board accommodation. Car hire was through Elephant Rent a Car and cost £194 for twelve days hire for a Fiesta. As the migration season was over we did not have high expectations of seeing too much but hoped to find some wintering birds and enjoy some nice walking in new locations. The weather during our stay was around 70-73 degrees f and the only rain we had was late afternoon on one day. In the evenings it was getting dark about four thirty pm so it does cut the birdwatching day down a bit. In reality we were pleasantly surprised by the number and quality of the birds seen and even kicked off a bit of a twitch on the island as detailed below.

Paphos Headland Archeaological Site 15th November

After about thirty minutes walking around the site I took some pictures of a **Meadow Pipit** and a similar looking bird (at a distance) and thought no more about it, on reviewing the images back at the hotel I realised that the other bird was not a **Pipit** but a possible **Rock Sparrow** . About an hour later we were on the edge of the amphitheatre and in the middle of the field opposite was a **Wheatear** that looked different to any I had seen before. I took some distant shots and realised it could be something out of the ordinary so got closer, to about 25 yards and the bird was quite happy and continued feeding whilst I took some shots some of which are below. That evening I contacted the Cyprus Bird Recorder to let other birders Know and next day a number of birders were able to make contact with the bird and the discussion started as to what it might be. Initial thoughts were that it might be a femail **Maghreb Wheatear**, but then some of the experts thought a femail **Finch`s**

Wheatear more likely, which is how it currently stands. Personally I am not so sure as normally **Finch`s** are so shy you cannot get near them and this bird happily fed with me a relatively short distance away. Underneath the picture below is a Male **Finch`s Wheatear** seen this year at Foinikas abandoned village for comparison.



This male **Finch`s Wheatear** shows a typical pose of the species as it “dips” very low, when viewing the female bird I did not observe this behaviour, **Finch`s** this is the only **Wheatear** to do this.



Probable **Finch's Wheatear**



Rock Sparrow (currently under evaluation by the Cyprus Bird Recorder)



Stonechat (very common)

Other birds seen here were; Tree Pipit, Sardinian Warbler, Crested Lark, Stonechat, Kestrel, Hooded Crow, Goldfinch, Black Redstart, Feral Pigeon, White Wagtail, House Sparrow, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Collard Dove, Linnet. Also seen was this nice Swallowtail.



Anarita Park 16th November



Birds seen here were **Little Owl**, **Jackdaw** and **Magpie**.



Little Owl

Ezousas Valley 17th November

This was a new walk for us, starting at **Episkopi** and walking north for a few miles, lovely scenery along the way. Birds seen here were; **Woodlark**, **Woodpigeon** and a **Purple Heron** that appeared thirty feet from us as we sat by the stream and flew off at speed! Also seen was this rather impressive **Hornet**.





Woodlark



Oriental Hornet (*Vespa Orientalis*)

Geroskipou Beach (fields behind) 17th November, late afternoon

On my previous visit here there were some **Stone Curlew**, this time there were at least thirty, they were being continually flushed by someone spraying by hand (?) in the adjacent field which allowed some reasonable pics.



Stone Curlew



As can be seen from the above picture this reservoir is very short of water, on our last visit the reservoir sides on the rh side in the picture above were full of water and fishermen were fishing from where the “tide line” is. In and around Paphos there is a massive boom in hotels being built and housebuilding and I do wonder where all the water required is going to come from!

Birds seen here were a very distant Bonelli`s Eagle, Fan-tailed Warbler, Corn Bunting, Yellow-legged Gull, Blackcap, Great Tit and Spanish Sparrow. Whilst walking in a newly watered potato crop we flushed a Jack Snipe who unsurprisingly came down again in the crop close by.



Bonelli`s Eagle



Fan-tailed Warbler

Passouri Reedbed Hide 19th November

Since our last visit a two storey hide has been completed with a couple of small ponds cut into the reeds providing good views over the whole reedbed, there is another hide further along the road but this had no water, only Cattle in view. Birds seen here were one **Marsh Harrier**, **Moorhen**, **Water Rail** and **Kingfisher**.



Kingfisher



Marsh Harrier

Paphos Headland 20th November

Birds seen on a walk around the headland were Little Egret, Whimbrel, two Greater Sand Plover, Ringed Plover, twenty Golden Plover, Common Sandpiper, Kingfisher and a dozen Linnets.



Greater Sand Plover and Golden Plover



Golden Plover and Ringed Plover

Sanctuary of Apollo Ruins 21ST November

The only birds seen here were a Robin and Blue Rock Thrush, on our exit from the site we had to brake the car to avoid running over a five foot long Black Whip Snake in the road.

Ladies Mile Hide

This hide is a few hundred yards on the right before you get to the Ladies Mile Beach, it has two story's and the reeds had been cut just before our visit which helped in seeing a good selection of birds.

Birds seen in our one hour visit were; Moustached Warbler (lifer), Cetti's Warbler, Chiffchaff, Bluethroat, Water Pipit, Water Rail, Mallard, Shoveler, Gadwall, Coot, one Widgeon a Snipe and around a hundred Black-headed Gulls .



Water Pipit



Moustached Warbler



Cetti's Warbler



Water Rail



Bluethroat



Snipe



Chiffchaff (very brown!)



Foinikas abandoned village is on the rh side of this picture, a couple of years ago people were fishing from here in the reservoir.

Visiting here we hoped to catch up with some **Finch`s Wheatear** which I had heard occasionally winter here, after telling my wife these are fairly rare birds we actually saw six in and around the ruins along with a **Blue Rock Thrush** and around a hundred **Jackdaws**.





Finch's Wheatear

Mandria 23rd November

Birds seen here were; Skylarks, Linnets and a Black Frankolin.



Only when viewing this picture did I realise how large the Black Frankolin's feet are!

Mavrokolympos Dam 24th November

The water levels on this dam were again very low and birds seen were **Grey Heron**, **Great Egret**, five **Little Grebes**, three **Cormorants** and a **Ring-tailed Harrier** that flew briefly over.



This **Great Egret** was constantly being chased off by the Grey Heron

Paphos Sewage Works 24th November

In the field adjacent to the works were some very confiding **Cattle Egrets** and some not so confiding **Spur-winged Plovers**.



Cattle Egret



Spur-winged Plover

Pioneer Beach Headland 25th November

This site has been heavily trashed by the local hotels/builders and very little of the original scrub remains. On the rocks however a hovering **Kingfisher** fished daily and a **Dunlin** was there most evenings. About thirty **Skylarks** and **Meadow Pipits** roosted here in the evening.



Dunlin

Coral Bay and Avakas Gorge 26th November

Walking from Coral Bay a Grey Wagtail was seen and near the entrance to Avakas Gorge a Sparrowhawk appeared from nowhere over our heads.



Sparrowhawk

Hills above Paphos 27th November

Just above where the Paphos Shooting Club resides was the place where we saw the most Chukar, which to say the least is ironic! I have included the picture below to show the rampant dumping of building rubbish that has now reached epidemic proportions around Paphos, this type of scene is repeated everywhere with impunity by the dumpers.



Chukar

Reptiles seen



Snake eyed Lizard



Troodos Lizard



Cyprus Starred Agama

Summary

Considering that this was primarily a walking holiday with some sunshine thrown in we were pleasantly surprised with the number and quality of birds seen. I must stress however that it is not the same as birding in spring and I think we were fairly lucky at times to just happen to be in the right place at the right time. I have highlighted some of the environmental issues facing Cyprus (not all) and would recommend if contemplating a visit to join the Cyprus Birdlife organisation as you will gain lots of info and help their fight for the environment.

Many thanks to Jane Stylianou from Cyprus Birdlife and Mike King (The GlosterBirder) for help with id`s.



Sunset over Paphos Harbour



Limassol Docks behind Gull roost pictured from Ladies Mile

Species List

Skylark	Collard Dove	Spur-winged Plover
Woodlark	Great Tit	Ringed Plover
Crested Lark	Sardinian Warbler	Greater Sand Plover
House Sparrow	Fan-tailed Warbler	Golden Plover
Spanish Sparrow	Moustached Warbler	Cattle Egret
Rock Sparrow	Blackcap	Little Egret
Corn Bunting	Chiffchaff	Great Egret
Linnet	Cetti`s Warbler	Grey Heron
Chaffinch	Black Frankolin	Purple Heron
Goldfinch	Chukar	Water Rail
Greenfinch	Kingfisher	Moorhen
Meadow Pipit	Kestrel	Coot
Tree Pipit	Marsh Harrier	Shoveler
Water Pipit	Ring-tailed Harrier	Gadwall
White Wagtail	Sparrowhawk	Mallard
Grey Wagtail	Bonelli`s Eagle	Widgeon
Stonechat	Little Owl	Little Grebe
Black Redstart	Magpie	Cormorant
Finch`s Wheatear	Jackdaw	Snipe
Blue Rock Thrush	Hooded Crow	Jack Snipe
Bluethroat	Stone Curlew	Yellow-legged Gull
Robin	Whimbrel	Black-headed Gull
Feral Pigeon	Common Sandpiper	
Woodpigeon	Dunlin	

Total=70