

BIRDING TRIP REPORT – CYPRUS

29th March – 2nd April 2023

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The dramatic landscape was a common sight throughout Cyprus – pictured here is Anarita Park

The Trip:

In the spring of 2023, myself and Dan McGibbon visited the migrant hotspot of Cyprus, between 29th March-2nd April, with the goal being to see the endemic birdlife the island has to offer, as well as experiencing some exciting spring migration in action.

There are plenty of options for flying into Cyprus, being able to fly into Paphos or Larnaca from most major UK airports. We flew direct to Paphos from Newcastle with Jet2 Holidays, including a car hire, staying at the Hilltop Gardens Hotel Apartments in Paphos. Only a 20-minute drive from the airport, it was a great location to base ourselves. We were given a Toyota Auris, which did the job without any problems. We returned home on the afternoon of the 2nd April at 17:35.

I must admit, I went on the trip expecting the temperatures to be low-mid 20s for the week, it was not. I had only taken two pairs of trousers and a small coat, and at times it was very cold and windy – my shorts were never used! For the first few days, a strong westerly wind dominated, which was not so bad inland, but it was cold at the coast, as well as patchy periods of rainfall. The last day was much calmer, and a lot warmer with the temperature reaching the mid-20s.

Trip Itinerary:

29th March – Arrived at Paphos Airport at 15:45, checked into our hotel then birded Agia Varvara and Episkopi.

30th March – Drove east, and birded Cape Greco, Paralimni Lake and Oroklini Marsh.

31st March – Birded local sites – Paphos Headland, Mavro Dam, Aspro Dam, Anarita Park, Aphrodite's Rock, Episkopi.

1st April – Mandria, Kensington Cliffs, Apollo Hylates, Troodos, Akrotiri Marsh and Agia Varvara.

2nd April – Cape Depradum, Paphos Headland, Timi Forest before flying back to Newcastle in the evening.

DAY-BY-DAY ACCOUNT (lifers shown in **red**)

Day 1 – 29th March

We arrived at Paphos Airport at 15:45, and following a smooth transition through customs, we were soon picking up our car (Toyota Auris) as organised by Jet2 Holidays. We drove the short 20-minute drive to our hotel, checked in and dropped off our bags before heading back out to our first birding site of Agia Varvara. Upon leaving the hotel, we noted our only **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** of the trip flying overhead. Several common species were encountered on our journey such as **Common Kestrel**, **Collared Dove**, **Woodpigeon**, **White Wagtail**, **Hooded Crow**, **House Sparrow**, **Jackdaw**, **Magpie**, **Greenfinch** and **Goldfinch**. These species were present in almost all areas, and seen commonly. Upon arriving at Agia Varvara, we drove over a small bridge over the stream, and parked our car up (34.755034, 32.506796). Getting out the car, we were immediately in the presence of hundreds of hirundines, mainly **Barn Swallows**, but a good number of **Red-rumped Swallows**, as well as smaller numbers of **Sand Martins** and **House Martins**. A single **Common Swift** was hawking over the pools too. The main target of this stop was to try and connect with some Crakes, as this location is famed for hosting both Little and Baillon's Crakes in the spring. We made our way to the first of three small pools (34.756310, 32.508122), and joined a few other birders with the same idea. Almost immediately, we clapped eyes on a male **Little Crake** which was showing very well on the edge of one of the pools. Whilst photographing the first of our target species, our second target appeared, although it was far more elusive and secretive – a stunning **Baillon's Crake** was on show for around 30 seconds, feeding in the far corner of the same pool, before disappearing into the vegetation. We continued to watch the male **Little Crake** for a while longer, before it was joined by an elusive female. Three Crakes of two species in the bag within minutes of arriving – terrific!



Male Little Crake



A very brief Baillon's Crake!

After a while, we left the Crakes and explored the area further, picking up a few more species around the pools including **Common Snipe**, **Great Spotted Cuckoo** and **Kingfisher**, and we also noted five **Common Starlings** overhead, which were our only ones of the trip. **Zitting Cisticola**, **Sardinian Warbler** and **Cetti's Warbler** were all first heard and seen here, three very commonly encountered species throughout the trip. With the light starting to fade, we decided to move on, and head just a short drive up into the hills to a village called Episkopi which we had heard was a good location for Cyprus Scops Owl, one of our endemic targets. Working our way up the twisty mountain roads, we came across another new bird hovering at the side of the road just before dusk – the first **Long-legged Buzzard** of the trip. We arrived at Episkopi Environmental Centre (34.791452, 32.522577) just as it was getting dark, and listened intently from the car. With no Owls evident, we got out and walked around the gardens of the centre in the hope of picking up a roosting bird at last light. Here, I accidentally flushed another lifer, as a **Chukar** came up from the path, flying

across the valley. This was the first of many of this species, found in a wide variety of habitats. We gave it a further half an hour, but we did not hear any Owls on this occasion, and we decided to call it a day. As we made the drive back to Paphos, a very unexpected **Long-eared Owl** flew across the road in front of our car, the final bird of day 1.



Red-rumped Swallow amongst Barn Swallows



The ever-present Sardinian Warbler

Day 2 – 30th March

When planning this trip months in advance, it had been my initial intention to stay largely around the Paphos area however, in the week leading up to our trip, a real Western Palearctic mega was found on the far east of the island at Paralimni Lake in the form of a Diederik Cuckoo. The bird stayed put, and on news that it had been there the day before, we decided that we would give it a go. Strangely though, the peak time for seeing the highly elusive bird was mid-afternoon, so we decided that we would drive to the south-eastern tip of the island, and do some birding around the migrant hotspot of Cape Greco, before attempting the Cuckoo in the afternoon.

Following a 2-hour drive from Paphos, we arrived on site at around 8am. Upon turning off the E307, birds started to become evident, and it was obvious there had been a fall of migrants. Several familiar species such as **Hoopoe** and **Common Stonechat** were seen along the first stretch of road, but the numbers really picked up when we reached a downhill part in the road, heading down to the headland (34.969555, 34.074427). We pulled over here, and the bushes were full of migrants such as **Lesser Whitethroat**, and we soon clapped eyes on a target of ours, a cracking male **Rüppell's Warbler**. More **Hoopoes** were seen here, and two **Nightingales** were heard singing from deep cover. The evidence of a migrant fall was exciting, and we felt that we could be in for a cracking morning! We drove on further, and the landscape levelled out with short grass fields on either side of the road. Again, we pulled over here and got out the car, immediately to be greeted with the sound of hundreds of **Black-headed Wagtails** calling and flying around feeding on flies. It was an amazing sight to behold, and we got great looks at some of the birds as they perched up on small bushes on the roadside. Scanning through the birds, I soon picked up another lifer in the form of **Red-throated Pipit**, which once tuned into the call, was frequently heard in amongst wagtail flocks throughout the trip. Our first **Crested Larks** were also picked up here, and showed nicely on the track running along the field.



Crested Lark



Cracking male Black-headed Wagtail

Once we had enjoyed our views of these species, we drove on a little way further until the road entered some rocky habitat. A particularly showy **Chukar** right at the side of the road stopped us in our tracks here, and posed nicely for photos. It was a fortuitous stop too, as our first **Cyprus Wheatears** of the trip were found here, one of which was a stunning male that showed very nicely beside the car. We were pleased to get such good views of one of our big target species, and so early in the trip too. We carried on down the road, finally reaching the car parking area at the far east end of the road (34.963380, 34.081405). Unfortunately, the gate to the peninsula itself was locked, which was a shame because the habitat inside the compound looked excellent for migrants. A **Common Redstart** was seen here, feeding along the fence line, and several more **Lesser Whitethroats** were in the coastal bushes. We left the car, and wandered over the rocks near the car park, in the hope of finding a few waders, before Dan got his eye on what was surely to be a contender for bird of the trip – it was a male **Finsch's Wheatear**! Despite this species wintering in Cyprus, we thought we would be too late for them, so we were delighted to connect with this lifer, presumably a late migrant. We watched the bird for around 5 minutes, it was very skittish and unapproachable, but by sitting still on the rocks, we ended up getting some brilliant views of it. A great start!



The male Finsch's Wheatear – an unexpected bonus bird, and even better to stumble upon it ourselves!

The Finsch's Wheatear did not hang around long however, and soon flew around the corner of the headland and we did not see it again. Walking around the area further, the bushes seemed to be quieter than the ones we had encountered earlier, and we did not come across many migrants here, other than our first **Eastern Subalpine Warbler** and **Blackcap** of the trip. At this point, we decided to focus our time back where we started, and parked up in a layby near the grass fields (34.966763, 34.076656). Immediately after getting out the car, it was clear we were back in amongst the migrants. At least 4 **Cyprus Wheatears** were present on the coastal rocks, along with singles of **Isabelline Wheatear**, **Black Redstart** and **Blue Rock Thrush**. Sylvia warblers were especially evident, as two more male **Rüppell's Warblers** were seen feeding in the coastal bushes, along with two male **Spectacled Warblers** and a singing **Common Whitethroat**. We searched closely through the birds, hoping to pick up a Cyprus Warbler, but on this occasion, there did not appear to be any. We had heard that this sought-after species had declined in recent years, and was not as easy to find as it had previously been, so we were keen to catch up with it as soon as possible. We continued our way back up the road, with the intention of birding the vegetation-covered hillside, when we were stopped in our tracks by a stunning **Masked Shrike** sitting on the edge of a nearby bush, which posed nicely for photos. This was a lifer for Dan which made it even more special, and it was the only one we saw on the trip.



Masked Shrike



Chukar

Walking back up the hill, we again encountered the large flock of Wagtails, most of which were **Black-headed Wagtail** (*feldegg*), but we also saw smaller numbers of **Grey-headed** (*thunbergi*) and **Blue-headed** (*flava*) in the flock. **Red-throated Pipits** were also present, but more often heard than seen here. We then got our eyes on a lovely male **Eastern Black-eared Wheatear** feeding right on the edge of the field, another lifer for me that I was hopeful we would connect with. We pressed on, and started birding the hillside where we had stopped earlier on, and the fall of migrants was still very much evident. More **Rüppell's Warblers** and **Lesser Whitethroats** were seen here, a single **Song Thrush**, several **Nightingales** were heard singing and we had more good views of **Cyprus Wheatear**. Upon reaching the crest of the hill (approx. 34.969109, 34.071136), we came across a pair of Sylvia warblers, which were proving very elusive and skittish, unlike the Rüppell's Warblers we had been watching. After waiting a little while, the male worked his way to the top of the bush, and bingo – **Cyprus Warbler**! We were delighted to have finally connected with this target species, and despite not getting great views, it was evident this was a breeding pair, so we quickly left them in peace. After birding a further hour with not much else new to show for it, and the heat of the sun intensifying, we decided to move on with the knowledge that we needed to be at the Diederik Cuckoo site for mid-afternoon to stand the best chance. Cape Greco was superb, and the fall of migrants we experienced was very exciting – if visiting the island, definitely pay this place a visit!



Elusive pair of Cyprus Warblers that eventually showed well with some patience!



View of Cape Greco headland from the top of the hill

Our next stop was Cape Greco pines, an area of habitat just off the main road that is also famed for being a migrant hotspot. Parking up at 34.970873, 34.069764, we followed an obvious track west into the pines. We had only taken a few steps along the path when Dan got his eyes on a superb male **Collared Flycatcher** in one of the pine trees, which we both got our bins on before it quickly vanished, not to be seen again. We picked up our first **Chiffchaff** and **Linnets** of the trip here, and there was again an obvious covering of migrants. More **Lesser Whitethroats** and **Blackcaps** were in the bushes, and a **Wryneck** was a welcome addition to the trip list, which showed well at the top of a nearby bush. We continued for another half hour, but as the heat of the day had picked up, it seemed the activity of the passerines had slowed. We headed back to the car, but not before getting great views of a male **Rüppell's Warbler** and a **Tree Pipit** in the pines.



Wryneck



Tree Pipit

It was now 12:30pm, so we made our way towards Paralimni Lake, with the intention of birding the area for the afternoon to give us the best chance of connecting with the Diederik Cuckoo. We stopped at Lidl to pick up some lunch about 15 minutes later, and as we pulled up, Dan spotted two small passerines in the bushes beside the car park (35.048471, 33.975815). They turned out to be **Eastern Bonelli's Warblers**, another target of ours, but not a location we would have expected to pick it up! We spent a few minutes with the birds, before buying lunch and heading off to work out the site. We soon arrived at the spot where the Cuckoo had been frequenting in the afternoons, and there were already several birders present. The bird had been visiting a few gardens backing onto derelict buildings, all of which were accessible. Several of the gardens had areas of wetland, which we found to host **Green Sandpipers** and **Wood Sandpipers** commonly. With still a couple of hours until 'peak-time,' and confident that should the bird appear, news would go out straight away, we decided to have a look at the lake first. We pulled up in a layby at 35.049113, 33.974296, which overlooked the large lake and began scanning with the scope. As this was our first significant water body we had looked at, we picked up lots of familiar trip ticks here such as **Little Grebe**, **Coot**, **Moorhen**, **Teal**, **Mallard**, **Shoveler** and **Red-crested Pochard** all in good numbers, but also three **Eurasian Wigeon**, and a single drake **Ferruginous Duck**. All three Egret species (**Cattle**, **Little** and **Great White**) were all seen commonly too on the edge of the lake, as well as small numbers of **Purple Herons**. Good numbers of **Black-winged Stilts** were visible here too, and four **Marsh Harriers** patrolled over the reeds. Other notable species here were lots of both **Reed** and **Sedge Warblers** singing, a **Kingfisher** gave us a fly past, and our first **Pallid Swifts** of the trip circled overhead.



Eastern Bonelli's Warbler



Wood Sandpiper

Around 2pm, we decided to give it our best shot at the Cuckoo, and headed back to where it had frequented most often, a small area of wasteland at 35.043167, 33.973179. A small group of birders were now gathered, watching the area of bushes that the bird had been using most often. We were joined by avid WP twitcher Pierre-Andre Crochet, who had flown in specially to try and catch up with this regional mega. However, time marched on, 3pm came and went, and the Cuckoo appeared to be gone. The group began to split up and cover as much ground as possible – as our optimism began to drop, Pierre-Andre excitedly waved us over, which we presumed meant he had located the bird. He informed us that he had not located the Diederik Cuckoo, but had just found a female **Menetries's Warbler**, which after a few seconds showed well right in front of us. It soon vanished back into cover, but we were delighted to connect with it as, not only was it a lifer for both of us, but it was only the 6th record for Cyprus, so totally unexpected! Unfortunately however, despite another two hours of searching from several birders, the Diederik Cuckoo was a no show. Several **Spanish Sparrows** were our first of the trip, as were a handful of **Laughing Doves** that kept us entertained while we waited.



Laughing Dove



Hoopoe

With patience wearing thin, we decided to have an explore of the area, especially the wetland areas that surrounded the wasteland. We had been watching and hearing both **Green** and **Wood Sandpipers** flying backwards and forwards overhead whilst waiting for the Cuckoo, and just north of where we had been standing, we found an area of flooded wasteland that was packed with waders (35.044217, 33.974138). The first bird we noticed was a species that I had always wanted to see, and was very high up on my wanted list for the trip – **Spur-winged Lapwing**. There was a good number of these birds around the pool, generally quite flighty and skittish, but we did get some fabulous views of one individual that was relaxed about our presence. Scanning the pool further revealed 10+ **Green** and **Wood Sandpipers**, several **Ruff**, **Little Ringed Plovers** and **Black-winged Stilts**, and singles of both **Common Greenshank** and **Marsh Sandpiper**. We enjoyed a further hour watching and photographing the waders, with a high turnover evident as birds came and went from the pool. After we'd had our fill, with the light slowly dropping and the knowledge of a two-hour drive still to come, we opted for one more stop before calling it a day, at Oroklini Marsh on the way home.



Spur-winged Lapwing



Common Greenshank

Arriving at Oroklini Marsh, we headed straight to the hide on the north side (34.970723, 33.654687). Immediately evident was a key target species here – a group of 30+ **Greater Flamingos** showing just in front of the hide, as well as an impressive roost of 100+ **Cattle Egrets** and a single **Glossy Ibis** on the island. A drake **Gadwall** amongst a host of commoner ducks was notable here too as it was our only sighting of this species of the trip. We did not see a great deal else here really, and other than the Flamingos, it was pretty similar to Paralimni Lake in terms of birdlife. We called it a day with the light cutting in, and made our way back west to Paphos. A large flock of 50+ **Alpine Swifts** were seen from the car as we made our way back west.



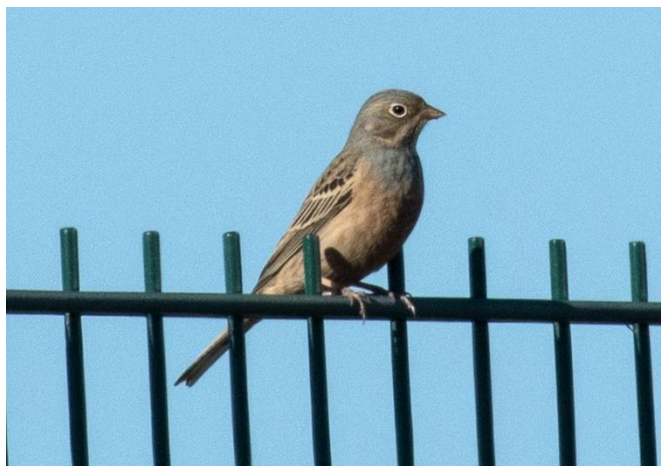
Greater Flamingo



Roost of Cattle Egrets

Day 3 – 31st March

After a lot of travelling the first two days, on day 3 we opted to bird around some of the sites around Paphos, starting at the famous migrant site of Paphos Headland. We arrived at the archaeological site around 8:30am, and although we had heard that they sometimes let birders in for free, we had to pay €4 each entry, but did not have to pay again on subsequent visits. A mixed flock of **Common** and **Pallid Swifts** were hawking over the visitor centre upon arrival, and we had our first **Great Tits** of the trip in the trees as we entered the site. We followed the coastal path along the south side of the headland, and soon discovered a large flock of **Black-headed Wagtails**, with **Crested Larks** and both **Meadow** and **Red-throated Pipits** mixed in, all very vocal but tough to get good views of in the long grass. **Yellow-legged Gulls** were visible overhead and offshore here, and several **Northern Wheatears** were feeding along the coastal path. Carrying on round, we reached an area of scrubland right on the coast at 34.754720, 32.405640, that played host to a handful of **Lesser Whitethroats** and a male **Rüppell's Warbler** which proceeded to show very nicely. The familiar song of **Corn Bunting** was a common feature here too with several perched up on the bushes, and a much hoped for lifer here in the form of **Cretzschmar's Bunting** appeared on the coastal railings briefly before flying into the long grass and vanishing. A further hour of migrant hunting was thin on the ground – a Hume's Warbler was found whilst we were there, but despite looking for it with several other birders, it could not be refound. Whilst searching, we recorded singles of **Common Redstart**, **Wryneck**, **Eastern Bonelli's Warbler**, and the surprisingly scarce **Common Blackbird**, but as the heat of the sun strengthened as the morning went on, the passerines became less active and we made the decision to move on to the next site at around 11am.



Cretzschmar's Bunting



Rüppell's Warbler

The next site on our list was Mavrokolympos (Mavro) Reservoir, with the best spot for birding at the dam (34.857202, 32.405399). The road along to the dam was a spectacular one, with stunning scenery across the valley, and the heat of the sun had got some raptors up by now, and we had good views of both **Long-legged Buzzard** and **Steppe Buzzard** on our way to the dam. Exploring the vicinity around the parking area did not produce a great deal of birds, but two male **Common Redstarts** added some colour, and several **Chukars** were flushed from the side of the road as we walked along. The reservoir itself did not have a single bird on the water, but our only **Common Sandpiper** of the trip was vocal along the near edge. A further 10-15 minutes did not produce much other than a male **Rüppell's Warbler** in the scrub beside the road, so we headed back to the car. We were stopped in our tracks by a cracking pair of **Cyprus Wheatears**, of which the male proceeded to show very nicely at the side of the road. With not much else on offer, we headed off for lunch at Timi Forest picnic site (34.706696, 32.496308). A good stop off point to have our sandwiches as it turned out, as a stunning male **Eastern Black-eared Wheatear** was showing amazingly well on the fenceposts next to the picnic benches. A single **Willow Warbler** and several **Hoopoes** were the only other birds of note here however.



Cyprus Wheatear

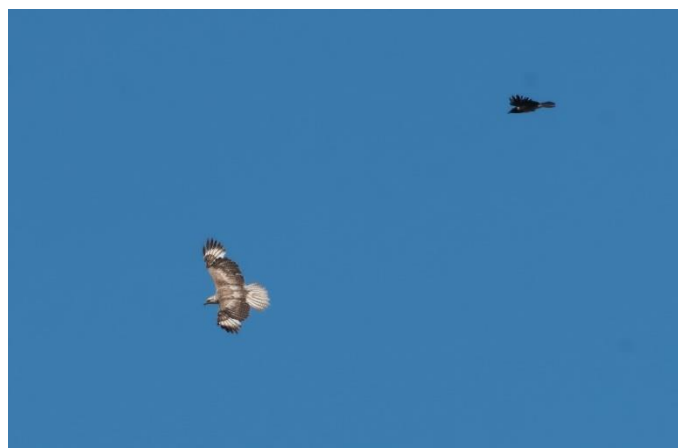


Eastern Black-eared Wheatear

Making our way slowly east, our next stop was Anarita Park, a very large area that is the main wintering location for seeing Finsch's Wheatear. We felt we were too late in the year for any wintering birds to be still here, and it turned out we were correct as we did not locate any however, a high density of **Cyprus Wheatears** was worth seeing, with no less than four males along a relatively short stretch of road around about 34.760606, 32.536664. The area was generally very quiet, with very few birds seen other than a single **Tree Pipit** and a pair of **Long-legged Buzzards** to keep a bit of interest. We did not hang around here long, and made our way to our next destination of Asprokremmos (Aspro) Dam. Parking up at 34.727714, 32.552509, we walked east along the path to view the reservoir. It was evident straight away that there were more birds here than at Mavro Dam, as 30+ **Yellow-legged Gulls** were bathing in the middle. A scan through them did not reveal anything more exciting, but scanning the water produced the only **Great Crested Grebe** of the trip, as well as a **Grey Heron** on the far edge. A large mixed flock of **Alpine, Common** and **Pallid Swifts** were overhead here which was great to see, as well as all four hirundine species. A check of the trees to the north of the parking area was quiet, although a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** flew past us, and a **European Serin** was heard calling as it flew overhead.



The view from the Mavrokolympos Dam parking area



Long-legged Buzzard being mobbed by a Hooded Crow

With the day marching on, we decided to give it another go for coastal migrants before the light failed us, and we settled on trying a new spot at the tourist destination of Aphrodite's Rock along the island's south coast. Parking in the car park at 34.665805, 32.627969, we headed north up into the hills where the bushes looked inviting for migrants arriving off the sea. We were met with familiar scenes, with **Lesser Whitethroats** and **Sardinian Warblers** seen first, the latter very vocal as always. Walking on, we heard a scratchy song that we did not feel was right for Sardinian. We waited a few seconds, before being presented with a male **Cyprus Warbler**, singing in full view on a nearby bush. The bird kept returning to the same branch, affording tremendous views several times over the next 15 minutes. By the end, there were at least three singing males in the area, and were seen chasing each other, fighting for territory. We were delighted to get such good looks at this species after the brief encounter at Cape Greco, and positive to see several singing males in one area. We left the birds in peace, and continued walking up the path. It was pretty quiet as you might expect for late-afternoon, although a singing **Nightingale** was typically heard but not seen. A scan of the sea on the way out revealed a couple of new species for the trip – a handful of **European Shags** were fishing offshore, and a surprise flock of c.20 **Great Cormorants** flew west along the coast. A migrating group of six **Purple Herons** circled around the rock for a few minutes before carrying on west, and several **Yellow-legged Gulls** were present just offshore.

With the light cutting in, we called it a day and headed back to Paphos for dinner, with the intention of going back out after dark to try for Owls, which is exactly what we did. Under the cover of darkness, around 9:30pm we headed to the village of Episkopi just NE of Paphos. We had been told that the environmental centre at Episkopi was the best place to try so we started there, but with no sounds after 15 minutes, we drove further down the road to a lane with trees on both sides, at approximately 34.796651, 32.529081, and tried again. Immediately after getting out the car, we heard the distinctive call of a **Cyprus Scops Owl**. It sounded fairly distant, but after a few minutes, it became evident that there were numerous birds calling, and before too much longer, we had no less than six birds calling, including some seemingly right in front of our faces, but totally invisible in the trees! We put the car headlights on, which lit up a nearby telegraph pole, and waited. The Owls seemed to be calling to one another, and moving around frequently, and after a little while, it was mission accomplished as one of the birds landed on the telegraph pole, affording good but difficult views – word of advice, take a torch! The photo below shows the bird a great deal better than what we could see through the binoculars, but nevertheless, a great experience and seemingly there must be a very healthy population on the island as we estimated we could hear at least 10 individuals calling around the village.



Male Cyprus Warbler



Cyprus Scops Owl

Day 4 – 1st April

Our last full day, and we opted for a day checking out a few sites that we had not yet visited, both along the south coast of the island, and up in the hills. We started the day with a specific target in mind, as this species was the last remaining resident lifer that we had not yet connected with. For this, we went to the small town of Mandria, and drove out via the farm roads to some crop fields at around 34.704914, 32.540729. Stepping out the car, we heard the call we were hoping for – that of **Black Francolin**. There were at least two birds calling at this point, and we narrowed down one of the calls to the field north of the co-ordinates mentioned above – invisible at first, the bird worked its way towards the road on the east side, and walked into full view for a mere few seconds before flying into nearby cover. Mission accomplished on that front, and pleasing to connect! Other than **Zitting Cisticola** and **Sardinian Warbler**, we did not see much else here, so we moved on our next site.

The next stop as we travelling east was Kensington Cliffs – parking up at 34.667689, 32.861743, this is the best site on the island for Eleonora's Falcon in the summer (we were too early for these), and **Griffon Vulture** which we did see. A single bird was present on the cliffs to the west of the parking area, with soon lifted and started circling overhead on the thermals. This area is meant to be good for Alpine Swifts too, but we did not see any. The scrubby zone to the east of the parking area looked really good for migrants, so we searched the bushes for new arrivals, but it was quiet. At least three singing male **Cyprus Warblers** were great to see again though, despite not showing very well amongst several aggressive **Sardinian Warblers**. Just over the road from Kensington Cliffs is an archaeological site called The Sanctuary of Apollo Hylates, which we had read is a good site for seeing **Cretzschmar's Buntings**, so as we had only seen one briefly on the trip so far, we pulled in and parked up at 34.672770, 32.864810. Immediately on leaving the car, Dan spotted a singing male at the top of a nearby tree, and we eventually saw three birds, including a really showy male at the entrance to the site. A male **Rüppell's Warbler** was in the bushes around the car park here too, and several **Hoopoes** added some colour.



Cretzschmar's Bunting



Hooded Crow – very common!

We decided to head inland up into the hills, and have our lunch at the village of Troodos, a popular location for visiting birders to pick up several endemic sub-species. We arrived, and parked at the lower car park at 34.921697, 32.877638. We trip-ticked a whole host of species here, the first of which were several **Chaffinches** singing, soon followed by flocks of **Siskin** flying overhead. A single **Serin** was also heard around the car park, and our first endemic sub-species was seen easily around the buildings in the form of **Coal Tit** (*cypriotes*), as well as hordes of **Great Tits**. We had our lunch here, then moved up the top car park at 34.922398, 32.879731, where we had the remaining three endemics without too much trouble – **Short-toed Treecreeper** (*dorotheae*), **Eurasian Jay** (*glaszneri*) and **Red Crossbill** (*guillemardi*). Other notable species here were a singing **Wren**, and both **Song Thrush** and **Mistle Thrush**.



'Cyprus' Eurasian Jay



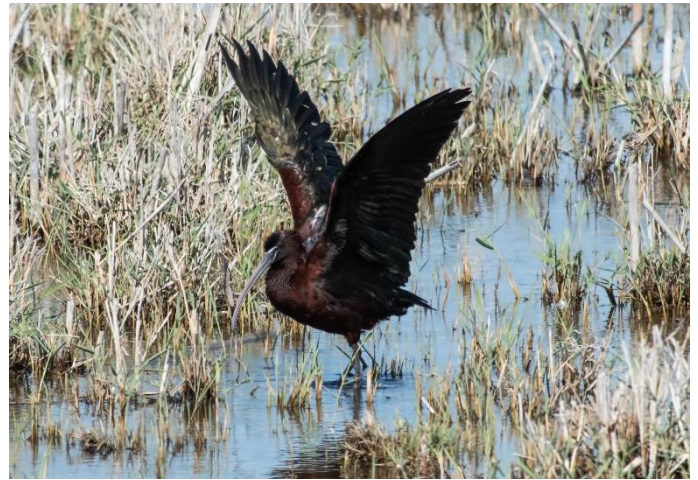
'Cyprus' Short-toed Treecreeper

Akrotiri Marsh was a site we were excited to visit based off previous trip reports that we had read, so we dedicated the lion's share of the afternoon to this area of the south coast. There are several sites to cover on the headland, and we started at the marsh itself, in the westernmost hide at 34.631856, 32.933301. Parking up and walking to the hide, we had a number of pipits and wagtails in the flooded fields, including at least two **Water Pipits** which were new for the trip, as well as a single **Meadow Pipit** amongst **Black-headed Wagtails** and **Red-throated Pipits**. A handful of

Spur-winged Lapwings were on the floods here too, as well as a large flock of **Ruff** which was an impressive sight, we estimated around 50 birds were present. The hide overlooked a small, vegetated pool where we immediately located the regular three **Egret** species, as well as our only **Eurasian Spoonbills** of the trip, with three present alongside a **Glossy Ibis**. A welcome sight was picked up by Dan – a female **Little Crane** was seen a handful of times in front of the hide, but remained very elusive and soon vanished. **Western Marsh Harrier** and **Purple Heron** was also seen here, both of which were a common sight in wetland areas.



Eurasian Spoonbill



Glossy Ibis

We moved on to the hide on the east side of the marsh (34.626919, 32.938137), which is raised up high and gives a good vantage point for viewing. To the right of the hide, there was a large flooded field which was rich with wading birds, we had our first **Spotted Redshank** of the trip here, as well as four **Black-tailed Godwits** which were our only sighting during our stay. A **Common Kingfisher** flew past us, and all the regular duck species were seen, plus a single drake **Ferruginous Duck**. It was great to hear so many **Black Francolins** calling here too, as we had only recorded them at Mandria earlier in the day prior to this – we didn't get any views here, but there seemed to be a significant number of birds calling around the hide. Next up was Akrotiri Lake, which was pretty disappointing really as you could not get close to the water at all therefore, viewing was difficult and distant. The only birds of note we saw here were a large flock of **Greater Flamingos** distantly in the heat haze, and we got more good views of **Long-legged Buzzard** overhead. On the east side of Akrotiri Lake, is Lady's Mile Pools, an area of wetland that you can drive along the east side of (34.616835, 33.003878). We had read that this area was good for waders, gulls, and terns, so we had high hopes of adding some species to the trip list. Driving from the south end, there appeared to be nothing on the pools at all, but as we progressed north up the pools, we came to a section that was packed with small waders. The main species here was **Little Stint**, of which there were c.100 birds present along the east shore, along with c.20 **Kentish Plovers** and a single **Dunlin** – all three of which were new species for the trip. Continuing north along the side of the pools, the road crossed over and on the northernmost pool, we encountered lots more waders, along with a few interesting gulls. Several **Yellow-legged Gulls** were in attendance here, as was a single immature **Caspian Gull** and an adult **Baltic Gull**. The waders on this northernmost pool were interesting too, the best of which were several **Marsh Sandpipers** and two **Spotted Redshanks**. The commonest wader was **Black-winged Stilt** again, and all showed well on the west side beside the road.



Marsh Sandpiper



Black-winged Stilt

After we had taken all the time we wanted photographing the waders, we picked up a message of a male Semi-collared Flycatcher at Agia Varvara, which would have been a lifer for us both, and decided to start heading back that way to catch the last of the light. Again parking the car at 34.755034, 32.506796, we got out and immediately in front of us was another star bird, our only **Woodchat Shrike** of the trip, showing well in the bushes right beside the road. The message details about the Flycatcher were vague, and it took some time to locate the particular orchard that the bird had been favouring. Once we found it, we watched for a few minutes, and there didn't seem to be any movement, so I wandered further down the lane to check some bushes in case the bird had moved. No sooner had I done so, that Dan waved me back over having just seen the **Semi-collared Flycatcher** right at the back of the orchard. Eventually, I managed to get my eye on it too, a stunning little bird if not a tad elusive! Awesome to connect with a lifer so late in the day, and a species that we had hoped we would encounter on the trip at some point. With light nearly gone, we called it a day.



Record shot of the Semi-collared Flycatcher – tough to photograph!



Woodchat Shrike

Day 5 – 2nd April

On our final day on the island, we decided to give it one last attempt at migrant hunting, starting at a site we had not yet visited – Cape Drepanum, a headland just north-west of Paphos. We had been told the site was good for Ortolan Bunting, which was a species that would have been new for me, so we opted to give it a go. Arriving at the car park at the bottom of the hill (34.902506, 32.318203), we walked west to the shoreline and worked the coastal bushes. Several **European Shags** were standing on the island offshore, and **Yellow-legged Gulls** were plentiful as always. The bushes were fairly quiet, and there didn't appear to have been an arrival of birds apart from **Northern Wheatears**, of which there were lots. We saw around 30 individuals on the coastal stretch, evidently having just arrived off the sea. Two **Wrynecks** were flushed from the bushes as we carried on searching, a pair of **Rüppell's Warblers** were actively feeding and showing well, and several male **Nightingales** were singing unsighted. A large flock of **Black-headed Wagtails** were great to see as always too. Unfortunately, no Ortolan Buntings were evident, and we got the impression we'd seen everything that was on offer.

With still plenty of time left before our flight, we gave it another go at Paphos Headland next. Again searching the archaeological site, we recorded many of the same species we had seen previously here, but got some brilliant views of **Red-throated Pipits** this time, on the south-western tip of the headland, with several birds mixed in with the Wagtail flock. Both **Yellow-legged** and **Baltic Gulls** were seen passing offshore, and the usual soundtrack of **Corn Bunting** and **Sardinian Warbler** was present as ever. More **Nightingales** sang here as we made our way back towards the middle of the archaeological site, with another **Wryneck** flushed from the vegetation, and a cracking male **Collared Flycatcher** was present. The heat of the sun was rising now, and the birding was starting to dry up. We slowly made our way back to the entrance, and we were treated to a flock of four **Black-crowned Night-herons** circling over the headland, quite low down giving some great views overhead at times – our first sighting of the species for the trip. Conscious of our flight time getting closer, we decided to have some lunch at Timi Beach picnic site, before wrapping up the trip.

It was a productive stop, with several interesting species seen. As we pulled up and started to walk along the coastal path, a **Stone-curlew** lifted from the field beside us and flew off west along the coast, and we were stopped in our tracks by a very brief but striking male **Siberian Stonechat** which very quickly vanished into the vegetation. We suspected on the brief glimpse we had that it was *maurus*, but we couldn't quite confirm it. Migration was evident

here too, as several more flocks of Herons flew west along the coast including a group of seven **Purple Herons** with a single **Grey Heron** in amongst them. Two more **Black-crowned Night-herons** lifted from the nearby trees, before too departing west towards Paphos. There had seemingly been a fall of Wheatears too, and the beach was littered with **Northern Wheatears** as well as a single male **Isabelline Wheatear**. A further half hour at the site did not reveal anything more of interest, so reluctantly we admitted we were due at the airport, so packed up our bags, and headed for home.



Black-crowned Night-heron



Red-throated Pipit

It had been a remarkable and thoroughly enjoyable trip, one that had exceeded my personal expectations – especially the morning we had with incredibly exciting ‘migrant-fall’ conditions at Cape Greco. If it had not been for the Diederik Cuckoo appearing, we would not have been over that side of the island and we would have missed out, despite dipping the target bird – everything happens for a reason!

We didn't miss much, but there was a handful of omissions that would have been lifers for me, which we had hoped to see:

- Ortolan Bunting – there were birds seen whilst we were on the island, but we did not encounter any.
- Demoiselle Crane – very much a ‘bonus bird’ when visiting Cyprus in the spring, and the lack of rainfall gave us very little chance of connecting, and none were reported during our stay. Seemingly, they are much more reliable in the autumn.
- Eastern Orphean Warbler – a scarce species, but there were a handful of singles seen during our stay by other birders. We didn't attempt to twitch any as we thought we might bump into our own, which we unfortunately did not.
- Black-headed Bunting – this is a species that arrives in April, so despite hoping we might catch an early bird returning, none were reported by the time we left.
- Blue-cheeked Bee-eater – another ‘bonus bird’ that gets seen annually in the spring, but very sporadic and unpredictable. Top of my list for rarities to see during our stay, but unfortunately none were seen during this visit.
- Pallas's Gull – a handful of birds were seen during our stay, but they were all ‘fly-bys’ so gave no chance of twitching them sadly.
- Diederik Cuckoo – last but not least, this Western Palearctic mega gave us the slip on the day we twitched it, typically being seen the day before and after our visit! You can't win them all...

All in all, a fantastic trip – I can see how birding this island can get addictive, and I'm sure we'll be returning one day!

CLASSIFIED LIST

Eurasian Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	Three at Paralimni Lake.
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	Single drake at Oroklini Marsh.
Eurasian Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	Seen regularly in wetland areas.
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Seen regularly in wetland areas.
Northern Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	Recorded in small numbers at most water bodies.
Red-crested Pochard <i>Netta rufina</i>	Small numbers seen at Paralimni Lake and Oroklini Marsh.
Ferruginous Duck <i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Single drakes seen at Paralimni Lake and Akrotiri Marsh.
Chukar <i>Alectoris chukar</i>	Seen and heard in good numbers in several locations.
Black Francolin <i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	Single bird seen at Mandria, lots of others heard around Akrotiri.
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Seen and heard at most wetland sites.
Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Single bird seen on Asprokremmos Reservoir.
Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	One flock of c.20 birds seen flying west at Aphrodite's Rock.
European Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Small numbers recorded at the coast e.g. Cape Drepanum.
Black-crowned Night-heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Four seen at Paphos Headland, and two at Timi Forest picnic site.
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Fairly common around wetland areas, large roost of 100+ birds seen at Oroklini Marsh.
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Commonly seen in wetland areas.
Great Egret <i>Casmerodius albus</i>	Commonly seen in wetland areas.
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Surprisingly few seen, single bird seen at Asprokremmos Reservoir and seen migrating with a group of Purple Herons at Timi Beach.
Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Birds seen regularly at wetland sites, as well as a few migrating flocks flying inland at the coast (Aphrodite's Rock, Timi Beach).
Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Seen at Oroklini Marsh and Akrotiri Marsh.
Eurasian Spoonbill <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	Three seen at Akrotiri Marsh.
Greater Flamingo <i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	Good numbers seen at Oroklini Marsh and Akrotiri Lake.
Eurasian Griffon Vulture <i>Gyps fulvus</i>	One seen at Kensington Cliffs.
Western Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Multiples seen at Paralimni Lake and Akrotiri Marsh.
Eurasian Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Only a single bird seen around our apartment in Paphos.
Steppe Buzzard <i>Buteo vulpinus</i>	Small numbers seen throughout the island.
Long-legged Buzzard <i>Buteo rufinus</i>	Small numbers seen throughout the island.
Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Common and widespread.
Little Crake <i>Porzana parva</i>	A pair seen at Agia Varvara, and a female seen at Akrotiri Marsh.
Baillon's Crake <i>Porzana pusilla</i>	One seen at Agia Varvara.
Common Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Common in all wetland areas.
Eurasian Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	Common in large wetland areas such as Paralimni Lake.
Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Seen commonly in wetland areas.
Stone-Curlew <i>Burhinus oediconemus</i>	One seen briefly at Timi Forest picnic site.
Little Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Small numbers recorded on freshwater marshland areas.
Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Only recorded at Lady's Mile where c.20 birds were seen.
Spur-winged Lapwing <i>Vanellus spinosus</i>	Quite common, and seen in a wide variety of habitats. Good numbers seen around Paralimni Lake.
Little Stint <i>Calidris minuta</i>	Only seen at Lady's Mile, where the species was very common.
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	Only a single bird seen, along Lady's Mile.
Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Seen at several locations, very common around Akrotiri Marsh.

Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Small numbers recorded on freshwater marshland areas.
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	Only seen at Akrotiri Marsh, where four were present.
Spotted Redshank <i>Tringa erythropus</i>	One at Akrotiri Marsh, and two at Lady's Mile.
Marsh Sandpiper <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	Single seen at Paralimni Lake and several at Lady's Mile.
Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	One at Paralimni Lake.
Green Sandpiper <i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Seen commonly in wetland habitats.
Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>	Seen commonly in wetland habitats.
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Single bird seen along shoreline at Mavrokolympos Reservoir.
(Baltic) Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus fuscus</i>	Single bird at Lady's Mile, and a handful seen passing Paphos Headland.
Yellow-legged Gull <i>Larus michahellis</i>	Easily seen at the coast, and on Asprokremmos Reservoir.
Caspian Gull <i>Larus cachinnans</i>	First-winter bird seen at Lady's Mile.
Rock Dove <i>Columba livia</i>	Common and widespread.
Common Woodpigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	Common and widespread.
Eurasian Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Common and widespread.
Laughing Dove <i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Commoner than expected – seen daily in various lowland locations.
Great Spotted Cuckoo <i>Clamator glandarius</i>	Singles seen at Agia Varvara and Asprokremmos Dam.
Cyprus Scops Owl <i>Otus cypricus</i>	One of the highlights of the trip, very numerous around Episkopi village. An estimate of c.10 birds heard calling, and at least three seen on overhead pylons and wires.
Long-eared Owl <i>Asio otus</i>	A single bird seen flying in front of the car on the evening of 29 th between Episkopi and Paphos.
Alpine Swift <i>Apus melba</i>	Large flocks recorded on several occasions throughout.
Common Swift <i>Apus</i>	Common and widespread.
Pallid Swift <i>Apus pallidus</i>	Small numbers seen throughout the island.
Common Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Singles seen at Agia Varvara, Akrotiri Marsh and Paralimni Lake.
Eurasian Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>	Seen regularly in fairly small numbers throughout.
Eurasian Wryneck <i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Five singles seen in total (Cape Greco, Cape Drepanum, Paphos Headland).
Crested Lark <i>Galerida cristata</i>	Common and widespread.
Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>	Small numbers seen, mainly at Agia Varvara.
Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Common and widespread.
Red-rumped Swallow <i>Cecropis daurica</i>	Seen regularly, good numbers at Agia Varvara especially.
Common House Martin <i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Small numbers seen, mainly at Agia Varvara.
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Single birds seen at Cape Greco pines, and Anarita Park.
Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Small numbers seen at Paphos Headland and Akrotiri Marsh.
Red-throated Pipit <i>Anthus cervinus</i>	Fairly common, especially at Paphos Headland.
Water Pipit <i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	At least two birds seen at Akrotiri Marsh.
Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>	Common around farmland, various races seen but Black-headed Wagtail (<i>feldegg</i>) was commonest.
White Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	Common and widespread.
Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Single bird heard singing at Troodos.
Common Nightingale <i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	Singing males numerous at the coast, more often heard than seen.
Black Redstart <i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	Single bird seen at Cape Greco.
Common Redstart <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Singles seen at Cape Greco and Paphos Headland, and two males seen at Mavrokolympos Dam.

Common Stonechat <i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	Single bird seen at Cape Greco.
Siberian Stonechat <i>Saxicola maurus</i>	Single bird (probably <i>maurus</i>) seen at Timi Forest picnic site.
Isabelline Wheatear <i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	Small numbers seen in various locations.
Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Seen regularly in small numbers, and a large fall of this species saw good numbers seen at Timi Beach.
Cyprus Wheatear <i>Oenanthe cypriaca</i>	Very pleased to see such good numbers of this species, seen daily in good numbers but especially numerous at Cape Greco on 30 th with 10+ males seen.
Eastern Black-eared Wheatear <i>Oenanthe melanoleuca</i>	Single birds seen at Cape Greco and Timi Forest picnic site.
Finsch's Wheatear <i>Oenanthe finschii</i>	Male seen at Cape Greco lighthouse.
Blue Rock Thrush <i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Single bird seen at Cape Greco.
Common Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>	Not common, a handful of single birds seen.
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Single birds at Cape Greco, and Troodos.
Mistle Thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	A small flock seen at Troodos.
Cetti's Warbler <i>Cettia cetti</i>	Very common, easy to hear around wetland areas.
Zitting Cisticola <i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Common and widespread.
Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	Heard singing in good numbers in wetland areas.
European Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	Heard singing in good numbers in wetland areas.
Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	A small number seen in coastal bushes on multiple days.
Lesser Whitethroat <i>Sylvia curruca</i>	The commonest migrant in coastal bushes, seen regularly.
Common Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>	A few migrant birds seen on the coast, not common.
Spectacled Warbler <i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>	Two males seen at Cape Greco.
Eastern Subalpine Warbler <i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	Scarce, but seen well on a few occasions, especially at Cape Greco.
Sardinian Warbler <i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	Common and widespread.
Menetries's Warbler <i>Sylvia mystacea</i>	Female seen at Paralimni – only the 6 th record for Cyprus.
Rüppell's Warbler <i>Sylvia rueppelli</i>	Seen in good numbers in various habitats and locations, but especially numerous at Cape Greco on 30 th .
Cyprus Warbler <i>Sylvia melanothorax</i>	Not an easy species to see, and numbers have dropped dramatically in recent years. We had great views of a pair at Cape Greco, as well as numerous singing males at Aphrodite's Rock, and Kensington Cliffs.
Eastern Bonelli's Warbler <i>Phylloscopus orientalis</i>	Two seen at Paralimni, and a single at Paphos Headland.
Common Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Seen regularly on the coast in several locations.
Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Single bird seen at Timi Forest picnic site.
Semi-collared Flycatcher <i>Ficedula semitorquata</i>	Single male seen at Agia Varvara.
Collared Flycatcher <i>Ficedula albicollis</i>	Single males seen at Cape Greco pines and Paphos Headland.
(Cyprus) Coal Tit <i>Parus ater cypriotes</i>	Commonly seen around Troodos village.
Great Tit <i>Parus major</i>	Mainly seen at Paphos Headland, also Troodos village.
(Cyprus) Short-toed Treecreeper <i>Certhia brachydactyla dorotheae</i>	Commonly seen around Troodos village.
Woodchat Shrike <i>Lanius senator</i>	Single bird seen at Agia Varvara.
Masked Shrike <i>Lanius nubicus</i>	Single bird seen at Cape Greco.
(Cyprus) Eurasian Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius glaszneryi</i>	Commonly seen around Troodos village.
Common Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>	Common and widespread.
Western Jackdaw <i>Corvus monedula</i>	Common and widespread.

Hooded Crow <i>Corvus cornix</i>	Common and widespread.
Common Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	This species was only seen once, a group of five at Agia Varvara.
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	Common and widespread.
Spanish Sparrow <i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	Not as common as House Sparrow, but seen regularly.
Common Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Commonly heard and seen around Troodos village.
European Serin <i>Serinus serinus</i>	Singles heard at Asprokremmos Dam and Troodos village.
European Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Common and widespread.
European Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Common and widespread.
European Siskin <i>Carduelis spinus</i>	Several heard around Troodos village.
Common Linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Seen in small numbers at several coastal locations.
(Cyprus) Red Crossbill <i>Loxia curvirostra guillemardi</i>	Single flock seen flying overhead at Troodos village.
Cretzschmar's Bunting <i>Emberiza caesia</i>	Single seen at Paphos Headland, and three at the Sanctuary of Apollo Hylates.
Corn Bunting <i>Emberiza calandra</i>	Numerous, easy to hear singing in most habitats.