

Cyprus, Greece

30th May – 5th June 2022

By Simon Pearce

Introduction

A last minute break was incorporated as part of the Queens Jubilee long bank holiday weekend, and we decided on Cyprus. While the main birding season was over in Cyprus, it would still give us the chance to catch up with some of the resident endemic and migrant breeding species and subspecies. Namely Cyprus Warbler, Cyprus Wheatear, the recently split Cyprus Scops Owl, Black Francolin, Eleonora's Falcon and Masked Shrike, as well as the subspecies of Short-toed Treecreeper, Jay and Coal Tit.



Itinerary

Sunday 29th May: Our early evening TUI flight from Manchester T2 to Paphos was scheduled to depart at 17:30. At 21:00 we were made aware that the flight was delayed until 12:00 tomorrow. As there were no local hotels available due to a number of other flight delays and cancellations, we were advised to go home and come back in the morning! With the car parked in meet and greet this wasn't an option, so we booked into the Holiday Inn at Stockport using IHG points. We were however then still unable to leave the airport as our luggage was loaded on the plane and they couldn't guarantee that we would be on the same plane tomorrow. To add to the misery the airport had completely run out of food and the only drinks available were the water fountains. At midnight the airport staff finally decided that they had no ground staff to remove the luggage so directed us out of the airport via arrivals, where we had to go through passport control even though we hadn't left Manchester! A short taxi journey later we were finally checking into our hotel at 1am. After a pizza we headed off to bed. Overnight at Holiday Inn Stockport, UK.

Monday 30th May: The flight eventually left Manchester around 13:15 and we touched down in Paphos in the late evening, just before dark. The only birds seen were Hooded Crows and House Sparrows around the airport. Coach journey to our hotel. Overnight at Azia Hotel, Paphos.

Tuesday 31st May: The day was spent exploring the hotel and grounds and just generally chilling out, with an afternoon walk along the main road outside and along a side road to view the fields at Eletherias, where the highlights were a Eurasian Hoopoe, several Spanish Sparrows and Laughing Doves. Overnight at Azia Hotel, Paphos.



Seafront at Azia Hotel



Eletherias Fields

Wednesday 1st June: After sorting our hire car we headed off to the fields around Mandria to search for Black Francolin and anything else we could chance upon. There was a lot of military presence here and they stopped us driving along the coastal track, so we took several other roads through the surrounding fields to reach the coastal track. Other than a fly-over Spur-winged Lapwing, a Greater Short-toed Lark, several Crested Larks and Spanish Sparrows, there wasn't much else of note. We then drove the short distance to Asprokremmos Reservoir to look for Cyprus Warbler. We initially parked by the dam wall and explored the wooded area in the south west corner and had good views of Eurasian Hoopoe, a Garden Warbler and a couple of Sardinian Warblers. We then drove over the dam and parked at the other side where we saw more Sardinian Warblers, but none with spots on their front. We then checked out the reservoir itself and other than Yellow-legged Gulls, a Great Crested Grebe and a Little Egret, it was pretty devoid of life, but that was probably due to the high afternoon temperatures. Then out of nowhere, a falcon appeared overhead and upon closer investigation it turned out to be a dark-morph Eleonora's Falcon. On the road leading away from the reservoir we stopped to check roadside scrub and had brief views of a Zitting Cisticola. We then drove along a track below the dam and had a walk around the dry river bed, but saw nothing of note. We returned to Asprokremmos Reservoir at dusk to look and listen for Cyprus Scops Owl. A quick check of the area before dark reviled several calling Eurasian Stone-curlew in a nearby field. The only owl action was a calling Little Owl, but we did see some large Bat sp. that we suspect were Egyptian Fruit Bats. Overnight at Azia Hotel, Paphos.



Mandria fields



Asprokremmos Reservoir

Thursday 2nd June: We headed out before breakfast to the fields around Mandria for another shot at Black Francolin, however, although hearing a distant calling bird we were again unsuccessful. The area did hold a few more species than seen previously, with several Eurasian Stone-curlew showing well in the less vegetated fields and a number of Alpine Swifts over the fields around the coast. A Zitting Cisticola showed well singing its zit-zit song while hanging in the air over the fields. At the far west end of the area in the Zseros valley a couple of European Bee-eaters were catching insects over a reedbed. We then headed back to our hotel for a late breakfast. Afterwards we drove the short distance to Mavrokolympos Reservoir and before reaching the dam we saw a couple of Cyprus Wheatears on the rocks above the road. Parking by the road, we followed the track around the side of the reservoir and saw several Sardinian Warblers, before eventually finding a male Cyprus Warbler. Another Cyprus Wheatear showed well by the parking area at the dam. We then headed towards Polis on the north coast, with a brief stop at a picnic site in Peyia. At Polis we went to the campsite, again to search for Black Francolin, but to no avail. We did however get good views of a Eurasian Reed Warbler in a small reedbed. On leaving the campsite we took a wrong turning but decided to continue and while driving alongside a small Olive grove we spotted two male Black Francolins under the trees. The birds gave great views from the car. Our quarry in the bag, we then headed back towards Paphos, stopping along a side road in the Kathikas Hills where we had views of a couple of Eastern Olivaceous Warblers. Overnight at Azia Hotel, Paphos.



Mavrokolympos Reservoir



Kathikas Hills

Friday 3rd June: Pre-breakfast was spent at Mavrokolympos Reservoir again searching for better views of Cyprus Warbler, but we couldn't locate any on this visit. We did see a family of Cyprus Wheatears as consolation however. After breakfast we headed towards the Troodos Mountains and along the way we saw a European Roller on roadside wires near Pachna. Parking in the centre of Troodos village we were surprised to find the temperature to still be in the high 20's. A walk around the children's playground produced several Eurasian Jay of the Cyprus subspecies *glaszneri* which showed really well. Lots of Pallid Swifts were screaming overhead and a Coal Tit of the Cyprus subspecies *cypristes* showed briefly. We then had a short walk in the nearby forest where a couple of

local race Short-toed Treecreepers of Cyprus subspecies *dorotheae* showed well, along with close views of three local race Coal Tits. After lunch in a local restaurant we headed back towards the coast. While driving down the winding roads we noticed a bird on the wires so we stopped at the Gerokaminia Viewpoint and which upon closer investigation turned out to be a Red-rumped Swallow, which was shortly joined by two more. We also chanced on a singing Corn Bunting at the same roadside stop. Then a short way further down along the F616 near Agios Nikolaos Dawn noticed a Masked Shrike sat on a road sign. Another roadside stop gave great views of the shrike and while watching it Dawn then noticed 3 birds fly onto a soil banking by the roadside. Closer inspection revealed them to be Cretzschmar's Buntings. We then went to Vasili's Nikoklis Inn as this had been a regular site for Cyprus Scops Owl, however a wedding was taking place so we quickly moved on after short search. Just a short way along the road I thought I saw a partridge sp. in a roadside field. A quick stop and a search of the fields revealed 4 Chukar Partridge. Overnight at Azia Hotel, Paphos.



Troodos Mountains



View from Gerokaminia Viewpoint

Saturday 4th June: Today we headed to the Akrotiri peninsular, first calling at the Akrotiri Marshes. We slowly drove along the track alongside the marshes, stopping in various spots. Birds seen here included Glossy Ibis and several Heron species, including a Squacco Heron and a brief Purple Heron for Dawn only. However, the highlights here were two adult and a juvenile pale-morph Eleonora's Falcons hawking insects over a field, as well as a brief singing male Cyprus Warbler. Next we headed to the Akrotiri Salt Lake, where there were lots of Black-winged Stilts and still plenty of Greater Flamingos, including one with a completely black body, but normal pink head and neck. We then drove to the east side of the peninsular along Lady's Mile where we saw a Kentish Plover before visiting the hide overlooking the overgrown Zakaki Marshes, which held a Eurasian Coot and a Little Egret. The afternoon was then spent visiting the Kourion Archaeological Site. Although it was incredibly hot, we did manage to see a few birds including a female Cyprus Warbler feeding 2 fledged youngsters by the side of the path. After another quick stop at an ancient Roman stadium, then at the Sanctuary of Apollo Hylates, we headed back to our hotel. While having dinner by the seafront a pale-morph Eleonora's Falcon flew over. We then headed back to Mavrokolympo Reservoir at dusk for a last try for Cyprus Scops Owl. While we managed to hear 2 calling birds we didn't actually see any. Although a Little Owl perched on roadside wires give us a false hope for a little while. Overnight at Azia Hotel, Paphos.



Akrotiri Marshes



Akrotiri Salt Lake



Zakaki Marshes



View from Kourion Archaeological Site

Sunday 5th June: No birding today as this was our last day and the car had to be returned. The day was spent chilling around the hotel, before we needed to leave for the airport after dinner. The return flight back to the UK was as expected, delayed. Our flight finally took off at around 4 am the following morning and we arrived back in the UK just in time for rush hour traffic.

Birds

The species report below covers the species seen by myself and Dawn. Species highlighted in red text are world lifers. The species list conforms to the order of the IOC World Bird List: Version 12.1.

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos*) – 2 birds were seen at the Akrotiri Marshes on 4th June.



Black Francolin (*Francolinus francolinus francolinus*) – One was heard calling in the fields south of Mandria on the morning of 2nd June, and 2 males were seen in an olive grove near the campsite at Polis in the afternoon on 2nd June.



Chukar Partridge (*Alectoris chukar cypriotes*) – 4 were seen in hay fields off the F616 near Nikokleia on 3rd June.



Alpine Swift (*Tachymarptis melba melba*) – Several were hawking over the coastal fields south of Mandria on 2nd June, with others seen along the coastal cliffs at the Kourion Archaeological Site on 4th June.

Common Swift (*Apus apus apus*) – Seen while travelling along the A6 north of Pahos on 1st, 2nd and 4th June.

Pallid Swift (*Apus pallidus brehmorum*) – Lots over Troodos village on 3rd June.



Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon (*Columba livia livia*) – Fairly common and seen every day. First seen around the hotel on 31st May.

Common Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus palumbus*) – Very common and seen every day. First seen around the hotel on 31st May.



Eurasian Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Fairly common and seen most days. First seen around the hotel on 31st May.

Laughing Dove (*Spilopelia senegalensis phoenicophila / aegyptiaca*) – Fairly common around lowland habitation and seen every day. First seen around the hotel on 31st May.



Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus chloropus*) – The only sighting was of one at Akrotiri Marshes on 4th June.



Eurasian Coot (*Fulica atra atra*) – One was seen at Akrotiri Marshes and one with 2 young was on the small patch of water in front of the hide at Zakaki Marshes on 4th June.



Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus cristatus*) – One was on Asprokremmos Reservoir on 1st June.



Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) – Several flocks were at the Akrotiri Salt Lake on 4th June, including a bird with a black body, and a pink head and neck.



Eurasian Stone-curlew (*Burhinus oedichnemus saharae*) – First seen at dusk on 1st June when several were calling in a field by Asprokremmos Reservoir. Several were also seen in the fields around Mandria on 2nd June.



Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) – Several were along the shore line of the Akrotiri Salt Lake on 4th June.



Spur-winged Lapwing (*Vanellus spinosus*) – One flying south over the fields at Mandria on 1st June was the first seen, with others seen at Akrotiri Marshes on 4th June.



Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus alexandrinus*) – A female was on the dried saltpan area of Lady's Mile on 4th June.



Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis michahellis*) – A fairly common species, seen around the coast and on large water bodies. First seen at the hotel on 31st May.

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – Common at Akrotiri Marshes on 4th June.



Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*) – One showed well at Akrotiri Marshes on 4th June.



Western Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Several were at the Akrotiri Marshes on 4th June.



Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea cinerea*) – One was seen flying along the shore off the hotel on 31st May.

Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea purpurea*) – One was seen by Dawn briefly in flight at the Akrotiri Marshes on 4th June.

Great Egret (*Ardea alba alba*) – One was seen at the Akrotiri Marshes on 4th June.

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta garzetta*) – One was roosting in trees at Asprokremmos Reservoir on 1st June, with others seen at the Akrotiri Marshes and Zakaki Marshes on 4th June.



Little Owl (*Athene noctua lilith*) – One was heard calling by the dam at Asprokremmos Reservoir on the evening of 1st June and one was seen on roadside wires along the access road to Mavrokolympo Reservoir after dark on 4th June.



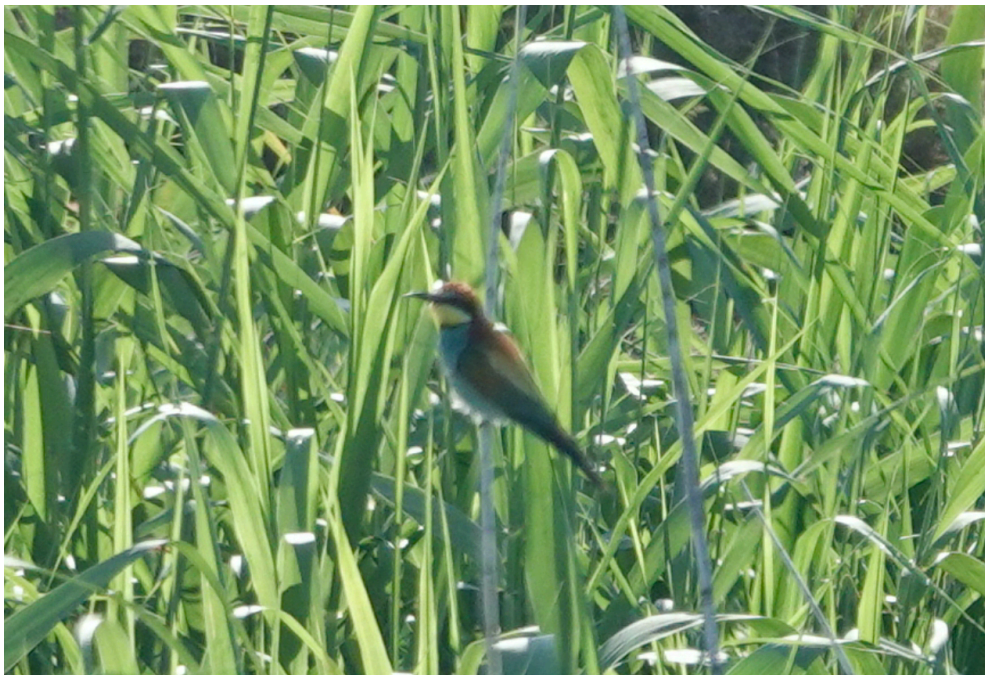
Cyprus Scops Owl (*Otus cyprius*) [E] – Two birds were heard calling at Mavrokolympo Reservoir after dark on 4th June.

Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops epops*) – First seen flying across the road in the fields at Eletherias, just outside our hotel, on 31st May, with another seen in the wooded area by Asprokremmos Reservoir on 1st June and one seen in flight from the A6 on 4th June.

European Roller (*Coracias garrulus garrulus*) – One showed well by the road near Pachna on 3rd June.



European Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*) – Two birds were catching insects over a reedbed in the Zseros valley east of Mandria on 2nd June.



Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus tinnunculus*) – Fairly common and seen most days in a variety of habitats. First seen near our hotel on 31st May.

Eleonora's Falcon (*Falco eleonora*) – First seen from the dam at Asprokremmos Reservoir on 1st June when a dark-morph appeared overhead. Two adults and a juvenile pale morph were watched hawking insects over a field by the Akrotiri Marshes on 4th June, with another pale morph over our hotel on the evening of 4th June.



Dark-morph



Pale-morph

Masked Shrike (*Lanius nubicus*) – A male was by the road near Agios Nikolaos on 3rd June.



(Cyprus) Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glandarius glasznery*) – Several showed well around Troodos village on 3rd June.



Eurasian Magpie (*Pica pica pica*) – Seen regularly, with the first seen from the car near the hotel on 1st June.



Western Jackdaw (*Coloeus monedula soemmerringii*) – Never common, but seen occasionally. Seen on 2nd, 3rd and 4th June.

Hooded Crow (*Corvus cornix cornix*) – Very common and seen every day in a variety of habitats. First seen from the plane as we landed at Paphos airport.



(Cyprus) Coal Tit (*Periparus ater cypriotes*) – 4 birds of this distinctive subspecies were seen around Troodos village on 3rd June.



(Southern European) Great Tit (*Parus major aphrodite*) – First seen at Asprokremmos Reservoir on 1st June, with others seen on 2nd and 4th June.

(Cyprus) Crested Lark (*Galerida cristata cypriaca*) – Fairly common and first seen by our hotel on 31st May, with others seen on 1st, 2nd and 4th June.



Greater Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella brachydactyla brachydactyla*) – One was seen at 'Lark Corner' in the fields at Mandria on 1st and 2nd June.



Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia riparia*) – One was with a hirundine flock over fields at Mandria on 1st June.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica rustica*) – Very common, with birds nesting above the entrance to the hotel. First seen around the hotel on 31st May, and seen every day thereafter.

Common House Martin (*Delichon urbicum meridionale*) – Fairly common and seen most days. First noted over fields at Mandria on 1st June.

(Western) Red-rumped Swallow (*Cecropis daurica rufula*) – 3 birds were seen by the road in the Troodos mountains near Agios Nikolaos on 3rd June.



Cetti's Warbler (*Cettia cetti cetti*) – Several were heard at various locations, but none were seen.

Eurasian Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus scirpaceus*) – One was in a small reed bed at the back of the campsite in Polis on 2nd June, with others heard at Akrotiri Marshes on 4th June.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler (*Iduna pallida elaeica*) – Two were seen briefly in bushes at Kathikas Hills on 2nd June.

Zitting Cisticola (*Cisticola juncidis neuroticus*) – First seen near Asprokremmos Reservoir on 1st June, with others seen around the fields at Mandria on 2nd June and at the Akrotiri Marshes on 4th June.

Eurasian Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla pauluccii* / *atricapilla* / *dammholzi*) – One was seen by Dawn in the wooded area at Asprokremmos Reservoir on 1st June.

Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin borin*) – One was in the wooded area at Asprokremmos Reservoir on 1st June.

Cyprus Warbler (*Curruca melanothorax*) – A male was singing in scrub by Mavrokolympo Reservoir on 2nd June, with another male at Akrotiri Marshes and a female feeding 2 fledged youngsters by the footpath at the Kourion Archaeological Site on 4th June.



Sardinian Warbler (*Curruca melanocephala melanocephala*) – First seen in the wooded area at Asprokremmos Reservoir on 1st June, with other seen at Mandria, Mavrokolympo Reservoir and the Kathikas Hills on 2nd June, and again at Mavrokolympo Reservoir on 3rd June.



(Dorothy's) Short-toed Treecreeper (*Certhia brachydactyla dorotheae*) – At least 2 birds were seen well at the start of the Atalanti trail at Troodos village on 3rd June.



Common Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris vulgaris*) – 2 were seen briefly while driving through Trachoni on 4th June.

Common Blackbird (*Turdus merula aterrimus*) – One was seen at the start of the Atalanti trail at Troodos village on 3rd June.



Cyprus Wheatear (*Oenanthe cypriaca*) – First seen on the rocks above the access road to Mavrokolympus Reservoir on 2nd June, with others seen there and in the Troodos mountains on 3rd June, and at the Sanctuary of Apollo Hylates on 4th June.



Spanish Sparrow (*Passer hispaniolensis hispaniolensis*) – First seen in the Eleftherias Fields near our hotel on 31st May, with others seen in the fields at Mandria on 1st June.

(East Mediterranean) House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus biblicus*) – Very common, and first seen at the airport in Paphos on 30th May. Seen every day.



(Syrian) Common Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs syriaca*) – Only seen in the Troodos mountains on 3rd June.

European Greenfinch (*Chloris chloris aurantiiventris*) – First seen at the Asprokremmos Reservoir on 1st June, with others seen on 2nd and 3rd June. Also heard on 4th June.

European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis balcanica*) – Fairly common and first noted in the fields around Mandria on 1st June, with other sightings on 2nd, 3rd and 4th June.

Corn Bunting (*Emberiza calandra calandra*) – One was on wires in the Troodos mountains near Agios Nikolaos on 3rd June, with another at Akrotiri Marshes on 4th June.



Cretzschmar's Bunting (*Emberiza caesia*) – 3 birds were chanced upon while watching the Masked Shrike in the Troodos mountains near Agios Nikolaos on 3rd June.



Mammals

Egyptian Fruit Bat (*Rousettus aegyptiacus*) – Several were flying around above the trees at Asprokremmos Reservoir after dark on 1st June.

Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) – Several were flying around above the trees at Asprokremmos Reservoir after dark on 1st June.

Reptiles

Cyprus Rock Agama (*Rousettus aegyptiacus*)



Troodos Lizard (*Phoenicolacerta troodica*)

Bridled Mabuya (*Heremites vittatus*)

Eyed Skink (*Chalcides ocellatus*)



| Cyprus, Greece - 30th May - 5th June | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|--------|--------|-------------------|--------|-------------------|--------|
| World Lifers | | Cyprus Endemics | | | Regional Endemics | | Seen by Dawn only | |
| No. | Birds | 30-May | 31-May | 01-Jun | 02-Jun | 03-Jun | 04-Jun | 05-Jun |
| 1 | Mallard | | | | | | • | |
| 2 | Black Francolin | | | | • | | | |
| 3 | Chukar Partridge | | | | | • | | |
| 4 | Alpine Swift | | | | • | | • | |
| 5 | Common Swift | | | • | • | | • | |
| 6 | Pallid Swift | | | | | • | | |
| 7 | Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon | | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| 8 | Common Wood Pigeon | | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| 9 | Eurasian Collared Dove | | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 10 | Laughing Dove | | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| 11 | Common Moorhen | | | | | | • | |
| 12 | Eurasian Coot | | | | | | • | |
| 13 | Great Crested Grebe | | | • | | | | |
| 14 | Greater Flamingo | | | | | | • | |
| 15 | Eurasian Stone-curlew | | | • | • | | | |
| 16 | Black-winged Stilt | | | | | | • | |
| 17 | Spur-winged Lapwing | | | • | | | • | |
| 18 | Kentish Plover | | | | | | • | |
| 19 | Yellow-legged Gull | | • | • | • | • | | |
| 20 | Glossy Ibis | | | | | | • | |
| 21 | Squacco Heron | | | | | | • | |
| 22 | Western Cattle Egret | | | | | | • | |
| 23 | Grey Heron | | • | | | | | |
| 24 | Purple Heron | | | | | | • | |
| 25 | Great Egret | | | | | | • | |
| 26 | Little Egret | | | • | | | • | |
| 27 | Little Owl | | | H | | | • | |
| 28 | Cyprus Scops Owl | | | | | | H | |
| 29 | Eurasian Hoopoe | | • | • | | | • | |
| 30 | European Roller | | | | | • | | |
| 31 | European Bee-eater | | | | • | | | |
| 32 | Common Kestrel | | • | • | • | • | • | |
| 33 | Eleonora's Falcon | | | • | | | • | |
| 34 | Masked Shrike | | | | | • | | |
| 35 | Eurasian Jay | | | | | • | | |
| 36 | Eurasian Magpie | | | • | • | • | • | |
| 37 | Western Jackdaw | | | | • | • | • | |
| 38 | Hooded Crow | • | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| 39 | Coal Tit | | | | | • | | |
| 40 | Great Tit | | | • | • | | • | |
| 41 | Crested Lark | | • | • | • | | • | |
| 42 | Greater Short-toed Lark | | | • | • | | | |
| 43 | Sand Martin | | | • | | | | |
| 44 | Barn Swallow | | • | • | • | • | • | • |
| 45 | Common House Martin | | | • | • | • | • | |

| Cyprus, Greece - 30th May - 5th June | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|--------|--------|-------------------|--------|-------------------|--------|
| World Lifers | | Cyprus Endemics | | | Regional Endemics | | Seen by Dawn only | |
| No. | Birds | 30-May | 31-May | 01-Jun | 02-Jun | 03-Jun | 04-Jun | 05-Jun |
| 46 | Red-rumped Swallow | | | | | ● | | |
| 47 | Cetti's Warbler | | | H | H | H | H | |
| 48 | Eurasian Reed Warbler | | | | ● | | H | |
| 49 | Eastern Olivaceous Warbler | | | | ● | | | |
| 50 | Zitting Cisticola | | | ● | ● | H | ● | |
| 51 | Eurasian Blackcap | | | ● | | | | |
| 52 | Garden Warbler | | | ● | | | | |
| 53 | Cyprus Warbler | | | | ● | | ● | |
| 54 | Sardinian Warbler | | | ● | ● | ● | | |
| 55 | Short-toed Treecreeper | | | | | ● | | |
| 56 | Common Starling | | | | | | ● | |
| 57 | Common Blackbird | | | | | ● | | |
| 58 | Cyprus Wheatear | | | | ● | ● | ● | |
| 59 | House Sparrow | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| 60 | Spanish Sparrow | | ● | ● | | | | |
| 61 | Common Chaffinch | | | | | ● | | |
| 62 | European Greenfinch | | | ● | ● | ● | H | |
| 63 | European Goldfinch | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| 64 | Corn Bunting | | | | | ● | ● | |
| 65 | Cretzschmar's Bunting | | | | | ● | | |

| No. | Mammals | | | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| 1 | Egyptian Fruit Bat | | | ● | | | | |
| 2 | Common Pipistrelle | | | ● | | | | |

