

Paphos 5th-19th November 2022

Trip Report

By Bob Shiret



Marsh Harrier from Ladies Mile Hide

Introduction

This was our first holiday to Paphos for four years due to the pandemic and was deferred three times with TUI. Our base as usual was the excellent Pioneer Beach Hotel where the food is really superb. Cost of the trip was around £1,200 each half board and we hired a car from Elephant Rental Cars for £256 for a small Toyota, Elephant are a very reliable company. Our holidays are walking/wildlife and architectural holidays and taking pictures of any interesting wildlife we come across. Paphos was far busier than we had ever seen and the weather was much warmer than we have ever experienced before, around 25-26 degrees most days. In general the birding was quite slow for November and this was backed up by the local bird recorder and other expert locals. As you can see below however we were very lucky at times to see some fabulous wildlife.

Paphos Headland Archeaological Site 6TH November

Our first birds of note here was a pair of **Laughing Doves**, which until a few years ago were quite rare but now are fairly common.



Laughing Doves

Also seen here were **Great Tit**, **Hooded Crow**, **Crested Lark**, **Black Redstart**, **White Wagtail**, **House Sparrow**, and **Magpie**.

Pioneer Beach Headland 6th November

This headland next to the hotel has lots of archaeological digs on the site and is good for **Meadow Pipit**, **Red Throated Pipit**, **Stonechats**, **Redstart**, **Crested Lark**, **Kestrel**, **Black Redstart** and the odd wader such as the **Common Sandpiper** pictured below. Also seen was this **Budaks Snake-eyed Skink**, a species I had not seen or heard of before!





Redstart



Common Sandpiper



Black Redstart on hotel roof



Red-throated Pipit

Also seen here whilst walking along the rocky headland was this **Mediterranean Moray Eel**, he just caught my eye as he went under a rock in about six inches of water and stayed there for some time, I believe I was very lucky to see this eel!



Paphos Sewage works 9th November

Seen here were two **Cattle Egrets**, many **White Wagtails** and **Pipits** and a **Grey Wagtail (Flava)**. There was no water in the holding tanks so not too many birds.



Cattle Egrets

Mandria 9th November

Seen here were **Cormorants**, **Kestrel**, **Red Throated** and **Meadow Pipits**, **Chiffchaff**, many **White Wagtails** and two **Sardinian Warblers**.



Sardinian Warbler

Aspro Dam 11th November

As we walked across the dam wall we were very lucky and came across a large eagle floating past and eventually disappearing out to sea, unfortunately as it had flown past I was only able to get a number of record shots. On investigation I thought it to be a **Lesser Spotted Eagle** and when I showed these shots to Jane, the Cyprus bird recorder she also thought it a probable.



Probable **Lesser Spotted Eagle** (record shots)

Amazingly half an hour after we saw the eagle we came across a hunting male **Hen Harrier** on the far bank of the dam, fortunately we got some good views until he was hounded away by **Hooded Crows**.





Male Hen Harrier

On a later visit to the dam we were lucky enough to connect with a **Bonelli's Eagle** flying across the dam into the trees on the side of the dam. Also here was a flock of **Armenian Gulls** in the middle of the reservoir and a **Grey Heron** and a **Coot**, and a Whilst walking across the dam this beautiful **Violet Dropwing** Dragonfly landed on the dam wall.



Below the dam wall were a good number of **Chukar**, a large flock of **Spanish Sparrows**, a flock of **Jackdaws**, many **feral** and **Wood pigeons** and a flock of **Linnets**.



Chukar

Ladies Mile Hide area 12TH November

On our previous visit four years ago this hide was alive with different species, but this year there was only one **Kingfisher** and a **Marsh Harrier**. Further along down Ladies Mile there were some **Black Headed** and **Armenian Gulls** loafing in the pools.



Armenian Gulls

From the two hides the other side of the reedbeds were a **Black Kite** and a flock of **Spur-winged Lapwing**.

River Bridge in Acheleia 12th November

I was alerted to this little hotspot from reading “Birds of Cyprus” by Colin Richardson and Richard Porter”, this book has lots of tips on location and identification and I can highly recommend it. On a late afternoon visit as it was just getting dark I spotted a pair of **Spotted Crakes** directly below the bridge, with the ISO set to 4,000 I managed to get a few shots.



Spotted Crake

On a later visit looking above the bridge on the canal were this **Great White Egret** and two **Little Egrets**.



On a later walk during the week walking from the bridge on the E4 path towards the sea we were lucky again to come across this female **Hen Harrier** who flew across the path.



Female Hen Harrier

Coral Bay 13th November

On a walk from Coral Bay to the café about an hours walk west from the car park we found some **Stone Curlew** in flight and in the fields, **Spanish Sparrow** and a **Herring Gull** in the sea.



Stone Curlew

Also seen on this walk were several butterflies and reptiles, along with many other species there were many **Swallowtails** about in all locations on our visit.



Swallowtail



Lang's Short-tailed Blue



Wall Brown

Avidimou Coastal Walk 14th November

When you drive down to the coast at Avidimou, park the car by the cafe at the end of the road and walk left along the path and up the top of the cliffs towards the military barracks, this is one of the quietest places we have ever visited. Whilst wending our way through the low level scrub my wife beckoned me to quickly come close, she had spotted this beautiful **Blunt-nosed Viper**. As we inspected it we both suspected it was dead as there was no sign of life at all, after about 10 minutes we decided to leave and I clapped my hands to see if there was any response, to our astonishment it took off like lightning into the bushes. I must confess that at this stage we had no idea what it was. It was around six feet long and one of the most dangerous snakes in Europe, if bitten it kills you in around forty five minutes so do not approach as we did!



Blunt-nosed Viper

Exactly three minutes after the above picture was taken I looked up in the sky to see a **Long-legged Buzzard** flying above, the area also proved good for dragonflies, Lizards and the odd butterfly amongst the low level flowers.



Record shots of Long-legged Buzzard



Red-veined Darter Dragonfly



Schreiber's Fringe Fingered Lizard

Foinikas abandoned village 18th November

After parking by the fenced farmland at the beginning of the track at the bottom of the hill we walked for an hour or so to reach the village, warning -do not take your car further than this unless you have a 4x4. On reaching the village we had a rest on an old water tap sink and spotted this **Little Owl** in his usual place! Darting from ruin to ruin we also spotted a **Blue rock Thrush** who was trying to evade my lens! On the outskirts of the village was a **Finch`s Wheatear** again very skittish on a big rock.



Little Owl



Blue Rock Thrush



Finch`s Wheatear

Walking beyond the village this **Sparrowhawk** was flying high and putting up all the corvids.



The bushes on the edge of the water were good for butterflies, dragonflies and reptiles as well as a large flock of **Goldfinch**.



Common Darter Dragonfly



Pygmy Skipper



African Grass Blue



Cyprus Starred Agama (These were seen in most locations)



Troodos Lizard (seen in many locations)

Episkopi

This village is a European nature protection area good for nesting **Bonelli's Eagle** and **Long-legged Buzzard** and in summer **Peregrine Falcons** nest on the large rock face at the entrance to the village. There is a very good walk along the river valley and a brand new information centre which is well worth a visit with videos and pictures of the wildlife of the area. Mary Beth who is the head of the centre can help with any info you might need to enhance your visit. (www.epeicentre@cytanet.comcy) tel +357-26642234

Hunting in Cyprus

Hunting with dogs is rife in Cyprus and we fell foul of this practice on three occasions, in November they are officially allowed to shoot indigenous wildlife on Sundays and Wednesdays so I would suggest if out on these days you keep to areas such as the Paphos Archaeological Site, Mandria Beach area, the abandoned village of Foinikas and the coastal area near the army barracks at Avidomou beach.

Summary

As you can see from the above we were lucky enough to see lots of interesting wildlife, but in reality the birding was generally quite slow with very few waders and migrating birds seen, and we were very lucky on a number of occasions to see what we did. It was much hotter than on our previous visits at this time of year which may account for this. Cyprus has many threats to its wildlife including hunting and trapping so it really can help if you join the Birdlife Cyprus organisation who work tirelessly to deal with the threats at government and local level.

Bird Species List

Great White Egret	Finch`s Wheatear	
Lesser Spotted Eagle	Cattle Egret	Northern Wheatear
Bonelli`s Eagle	Little Egret	Grey Wagtail (flava)
Long-legged Buzzard	Kingfisher	Spotted Crake
Hen Harrier	Meadow Pipit	House Sparrow
Marsh Harrier	Red-throated Pipit	Spanish Sparrow
Black Kite	Crested Lark	Starling
Kestrel	Linnet	Sardinian Warbler
Little Owl	Redstart	Sparrowhawk
Grey Heron	Black Redstart	Great Tit
Cormorant	Stonechat	
Coot	Hooded Crow	
Herring Gull	Magpie	
Armenian Gull	Jackdaw	
Black-headed Gull	Wood Pigeon	
Stone Curlew	Feral Pigeon	
Chukar	Collard Dove	
Common Sandpiper	Laughing Dove	
Spur-winged Lapwing	Blue Rock Thrush	

Birds seen =47 species