

Rijeka 19 – 22 June 2015

TRIP REPORT



Figure 1: Yellow-legged Gull

INTRODUCTION

Between the 19th and 22nd of June 2015, me and four friends visited the city of Rijeka as part of an impulsive decision of booking a last minute ticket to Rijeka. Because most of the weekend would be spent as a time to party, I wasn't thinking this trip would still hold one of Europe's most sought-after birds: the elusive and never easy Rock Partridge. This very short trip report is mainly an introduction to what seems to me an even more accessible and easy place to find this species, compared to the classic sites.

The year before I went to the classic and best known site: the mountains of Veliko Runjo, near Starigrad. This much more southerly located area has long been the most visited site in Europe and a lot of listers saw their first Rock Partridges right here. For a complete report about this place and tips and tricks, please consult my other report at the following link:

http://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/BERTRANDS_Croatia_08_2014.pdf

It doesn't have to be said how excited I was after finding three birds at another location, less than a year later. What surprised me was how easy I found them (the year before I spent a whole day climbing on lethal rocks to find them) and in what kind of flat terrain the birds were living. Because of the small land bridge between the peninsula and the rest of the island of Krk, it seems there is a barrier which the birds will not often cross. Therefore I guess they are quite isolated and thus quite easy to locate. A short introduction about this potentially easy location should be written, I considered.

REPORT

After a few days of drinking and partying in Rijeka, I decided, after I had only seen a Shag, Yellow-legged Gulls and Alpine Swifts, that a short visit to do some decent birdwatching, was necessary. On Monday 22nd of June, I woke up around 5:00 AM to take the bus from Rijeka to the airport, located on the island of Krk. I had seen on Observation.org that two people had seen Rock Partridge there, a few years earlier. I woke up, ordered a coffee and a slice of pizza and a few moments later I was on the bus to the airport.

At 6:30 PM I arrived and started walking to the peninsula that seemed quite interesting on Googlemaps. It had the same aerial view as the mountains of Veliko Runjo, which I had visited ten months earlier, and I thought that I would have a good chance of finding some nice birds, right before our plane would leave around 2:00 PM.

The first birds along the road included **Cirl Bunting**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Eurasian Golden Oriole**, **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** and **Yellow-legged Gull**. I walked down the mountain and crossed the small landbridge between the island of Krk and its peninsula.

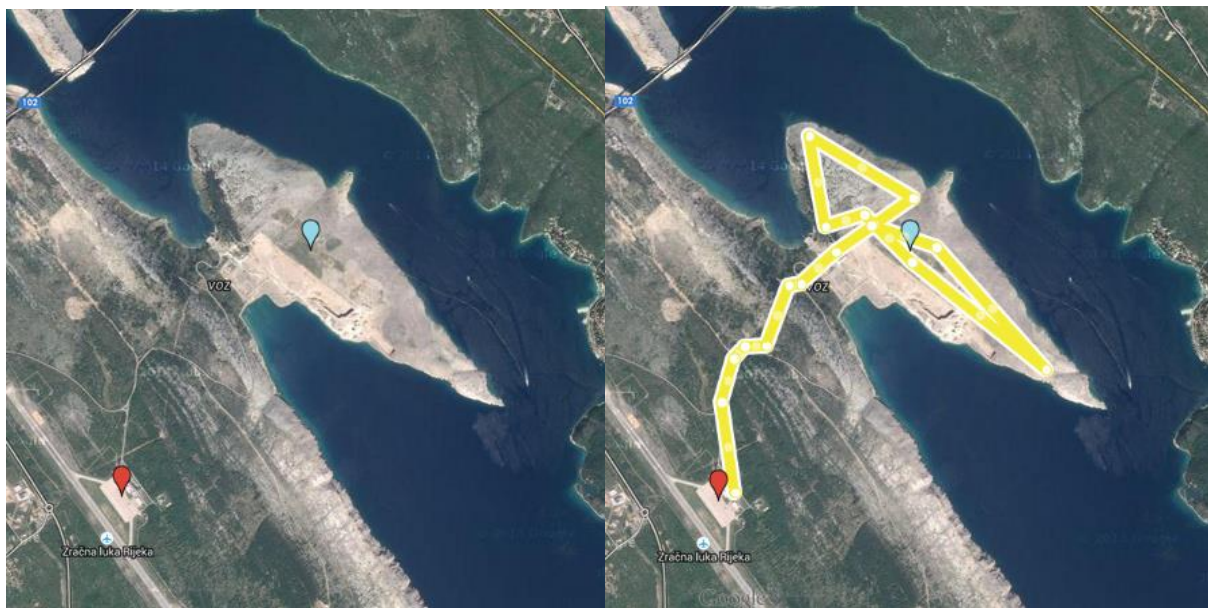


Figure 2: Aerial view from the peninsula, at the northern end of the island of Krk. The red arrow indicates the airport, the blue arrow the exact location where I found the three Rock Partridges. Figure 3: Aerial view from the peninsula, with this time the walk I made, indicated by the yellow line. Source: Googlemaps

I decided to explore the northern part of the peninsula. This was very rocky but not all too steep terrain, littered with razor sharp rocks. It looked very ideal for the birds, but I didn't succeed in finding them here. I did however find multiple breeding **Tawny Pipits**, **Eastern Black-eared Wheatears** and several **Hoopoes**.

Around 9:00 AM I paused on the main road, located almost in the middle of the peninsula, to eat and drink something. Just when I had finished my second breakfast of the day, I heard the characteristic cackling sound of **Rock Partridges**. It came from very near so I sneaked a bit further and, to my surprise, witnessed three displaying Rock Partridges. As quick as I had found them, they found me however, and flew further. They landed a bit further and I was able to locate them a second time. After that they flew north of the NW-SE-orientated ridge of the peninsula and I decided that I had seen them well enough to leave them be.

While walking back to the airport, other observations included two **Griffon Vultures**, an **Eastern Subalpine Warbler**, two **Ravens**, some **Alpine Swifts**, a **Rock Pigeon**, **Little Owl**, **Sloe Hairstreak** and a lifer in the form of three **Balkan Whip Snakes**. A very productive morning in my opinion. After this I met my friends at the airport around 1:00 PM and at 2:00 PM we left Croatia.

Because of the short period of birding during this trip, I would normally not write a report of it, but because I know how hard Rock Partridge can be, unless you're lucky, I decided that it may be of any help for birders who still miss the species on their list. My observations of this morning can be consulted using the following link:

http://observado.org/user/view/40846?q=&akt=0&g=0&from=2014-06-23&to=2015-06-23&prov=0&z=0&sp=0&gb=0&cdna=0&f=0&m=K&zeker=0&month=0&rows=20&only_hidden=0&zoe_ktext=0&tag=0&q=&zoe_ktext=0&from=2015-06-19&g=0&akt=0&to=2015-06-23&prov=0&z=0&m=K&zeker=0&rows=20&month=0&only_hidden=0



Figure 4: The peninsula. The red line is the gravel road that leads from the land bridge to the northeastern tip. It was from this road I heard the birds for the first time. The marked area is a big quarry which proved not all too interesting during my visit. A lot of Yellow-legged Gulls however, always worth checking for any other gulls. The blue arrow is the exact point where I saw the three Rock Partridges. They were calling from one of the most grass-rich parts of the whole peninsula, quite untypical in my opinion. It was very easy to walk there though, compared to the rest of the peninsula. They moved south and east, covering distances of about 200 meters at a time, while flying. They do run a lot though, so never underestimate how fast they can change positions. I guess, regarding the fact that at least one person who saw Rock Partridge at this place, saw it at the same place, that the southeastern part of the peninsula is the most promising to find the species. The whole area can be covered on foot in less than three hours however, so I guess it shouldn't be difficult...



Figure 5: Balkan Whip Snake, Figure 6: Griffon Vulture

For further questions, I can be contacted at blerafallax@gmail.com

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