

Trip report Crete 2012 (by Leo Tukker).

From 11 to 18 May I went with my wife to Crete. She had been here 27 years ago, but for me it was the first time on this island.

We had booked a hotel in Ano Vouves, a small village in Western Crete. We stayed at Hotel Eliá.

At 05:20 we took off from Schiphol Airport (Amsterdam) and after dropping some passengers at Irakleion Airport, we landed on Chania Airport at about eleven o'clock.

After picking up our hired car we drove to our hotel and arrived there at 12:30. Near the hotel we saw a lot of **Italian Sparrows**, a lifer for me.

Birds we saw every day were **Barn Swallow, Hooded Crow, Common Buzzard, Italian Sparrow** and **Collared Dove**. I shall not mention these species any more in this report.



After checking in I went for a walk in the area near the hotel.

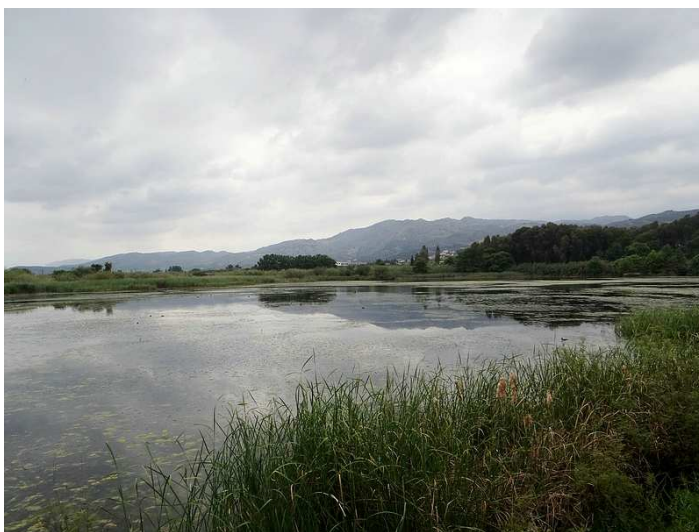
Besides the everyday birds I saw **Great Tit, Goldfinch, Woodchat Shrike, Chaffinch** and **Turtle Dove**.

In the evening we heard the **Scops Owl** calling.

Italian Sparrow

The next morning we left Ano Vouves to go to Agia Lake. Just outside the village of Agia Triada, a **Hoopoe** was sitting on the road and flew off.

At Agia Lake we stayed for a couple of hours and saw: **Blackbird, Common Coot, Common Swift, Great Tit, Grey Heron, Little Bittern, Little Egret, Little Grebe, Mallard, Moorhen, Purple Heron, Squacco Heron, Wood Sandpiper** and **Yellow-legged Gull**.



Agia Lake

We also saw an **American Bullfrog** and a **Balkan Green Lizard** at Agia Lake.



American Bullfrog

We then drove on to the Omalos Plateau and to the entrance of the Samaria Gorge.

In the mountains it was very cloudy and cold. After passing the beautiful town of Lakki I suddenly saw a group of **Griffon Vultures** sitting on a ridge.



Griffon Vultures

Ten minutes later a juvenile **Lammergeier** flew by (my second lifer this trip). At the entrance of the Gorge I saw my third lifer, **Red-billed Chough**.

Our intention was to go to the taverna at the entrance of the gorge and stay there for a while, but the taverna was still closed. While it was so very cold, we moved on.

In the mountains and on the Omalos Plateau we saw: **Black-eared Wheatear, Chaffinch, Common Sandpiper, Eurasian Jay, European Bee-eater, European Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Griffon Vulture, Linnet, Long-legged Buzzard, Rock Dove, Turtle Dove and Whinchat.**

We then drove to Tavronitis and we did some birding near the river. There I saw two more lifers i.e. **Moustached Warbler** and **Sardinian Warbler**.

We also saw: **Little-ringed Plover, Little Stint, Sand Martin, and Temminck's Stint**.

On Sunday we went for a walk in the Mesávlia Gorge (a.k.a. Delianá Gorge). It was beautiful. We saw a lot of **Griffon Vultures**. We also saw: **Blackbird, Blue Rock Thrush, Chaffinch, Common Raven, Common Stonechat, Crag Martin, European Greenfinch, two Golden Eagles, Goldfinch, Great Tit, Long-legged Buzzard, Rock Dove, and Wren**.

Before we drove back to the hotel we visited Tavronitis River again, where we saw: **Little Egret, Little-ringed Plover, Moorhen, Sand Martin, Yellow-legged Gull and Yellow Wagtail**.

When we were back at the hotel, sitting on the terrace with a cold beer, a **Black Kite** flew by. Before dinner I took a walk in the area round the hotel and saw **Sardinian Warbler**.

On Monday we went to the Polirrinía Gorge. Again a beautiful walk. We saw **Blackbird, Blue Rock Thrush, Common Kestrel, Common Raven, Common Stonechat, Crag Martin, European Greenfinch, House Martin, Goldfinch, Great Tit, Griffon Vulture, Rock Dove, Spanish Sparrow, and Wren**.

After the gorge we went to Falasarna, where we only saw **Yellow-legged Gulls**.

Back at the hotel I saw a dark-morphed **Booted Eagle** (a lifer) and **European Bee-eaters**.

On Tuesday we went to Chania. In the afternoon we went again to Agia Lake for the birds. We there met an English birder, who lives a couple of months a year on the island and we met Manos Papadomanolakis, who has a website with beautiful photos of the birds of Crete.

We saw: **Blackbird, Chaffinch, Common Coot, Common Raven, Goldfinch, Great Tit, Grey Heron, Little Bittern, Little Crake, Little Egret, Little Grebe, Marsh Harrier, Mallard, Moorhen, Night-heron, Purple Heron, Ruff, Squacco Heron, Whiskered Tern, Wood Sandpiper and Yellow-legged Gull**.



Little Crake

On Wednesday we went to Elafonissi, where we saw **Crested Lark, Eleonora's Falcon and Yellow-legged Gull**. After an hour on the beach, we drove through the mountains to Paleochora.

Suddenly my wife saw a couple of Common Buzzards that were attacking a large eagle. They were flying in our direction, so I jumped out of the car, got my telescope and had beautiful views on the birds and the eagle turned out to be a **Bonelli's Eagle** (again a lifer).

Near Paleochora we saw some **Griffon Vultures** and a dark-morphed **Booted Eagle**.

Near the hotel we saw: **Blackbird, Black Kite and Goldfinch.**

On Thursday we went to Rethymnon, because my wife had been there 27 years ago. On the way back to the west we drove along Lake Kournas and for the last time we went to Agia Lake.



Agia Lake

There we met Colin and Sue Turvey from the 'Crete Birding' website. Also Manos showed up again. I was able to take some nice pictures of **Little Crake, Squacco Heron and Wood Sandpiper.**



Wood Sandpiper

We saw: **Alpine Swift, Black-headed Wagtail, Common Coot, Common Redshank, Grey Heron, House Martin, Little Crake, Little Egret, Little Grebe, Mallard, Marsh Harrier, Moorhen, Ruff, Sand Martin, Squacco Heron, Whiskered Tern, Wood Sandpiper and Yellow-legged Gull.**



Squacco Heron



On Friday we had to fly home again and left the hotel at 08:00. We were at home at 17:15.

We had a great vacation, the weather was fine, we met a lot of very friendly people and with 7 lifers in one week it was a good week for birding.

For more pictures you can go to www.pbase.com/tukkl00

Leo Tukker