

**ORNITHOLIDAYS' TOUR TO GREECE – THE ISLAND OF LESVOS**  
*Autumn Migration Magic*

**10 - 17 September 2009**



**Leader: Roger Lawrence**

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### A Personal Diary

#### **Thursday 10 September**

Just three clients were flying from Gatwick to Mytilini, the capital of Greece's third largest island, and we were to be joined by a fourth arriving on Lesvos from Manchester. It was a very early start for those of us flying from the North Terminal as our flight was due to leave at 07.00 but departure was then delayed by over an hour as the Second Officer was late arriving.

Philip was already waiting for us once we had collected our bags at Mytilini Airport. Our very select little group complete, we were soon on our way north-west in our minibus for the 50 minute drive to Skala Kallonis on the Kalloni Gulf, our home for the next eight days. After negotiating the one-way system in the capital and roadworks, which caused some delay, it was a pleasant drive and for all but Alan and me, the first taste of this lovely island's scenic beauty. We passed groves of olive trees of which Lesvos is supposed to have 11 million. Olive oil is the island's main export, 25% of the Greek output is produced here. A warm welcome awaited us at Hotel Pasiphae and we were soon sitting down in the shade on the terrace by the swimming pool eating a very late lunch. Greek salad and delicious bread were exactly what we needed and all but yours truly were sampling our first locally brewed Mythos beer.

As we had all had such an early start to the day, some not having been to bed at all, we wanted an early dinner and a good night's sleep, so there was little time for much birding. Even at 5pm the temperature was 29.9°C. A short walk past the very overgrown Skala Kallonis pool to the Christou River, known to many birders as the West River saltmarshes, produced our first birds, the ubiquitous Crested Larks, both Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrikes, Hooded Crows, Yellow-legged Gulls, a Whinchat and, surprisingly, an Isabelline Shrike. We had seen a huge flock of Greater Flamingos on the Kalloni Salt pans just before we had arrived at our hotel, a modest beginning.

Dinner was a struggle but stuffed tomatoes followed by tasty lamb kebabs was too good to miss even if we were needing our beds, but we needed no persuasion to be in our rooms by 10 pm (actually only 8pm. British Summer Time!).

#### **Friday 11 September**

I awoke to a wet morning. Having arranged with the group that I would be available in the car park at 6.45am for some pre-breakfast birding I stuck to my promise but was not expecting anyone else to venture forth. Having travelled with Alan several times before I should have known better. He was already raring to go and sheltering beneath a pine tree when I arrived. I did not think that Di would also come out so Alan and I drove off down the road to the Christou marshes, returning 20 minutes later to find her on the beach, umbrella up, scoping the Gulf. A young Red-necked Grebe was just offshore, a scarce bird in Lesvos and probably the first record since 2003.

The buffet breakfast was in the hotel's main dining room. Greek yoghurt and honey, boiled eggs, ham and cheese and good coffee set us up for the morning and we all set off at 9am to start the serious birding of the day. I had decided to try for the island's main speciality first, Krüper's Nuthatch, and drove to a site where I have always seen them, spring and autumn before. This is Achleleri Forest. Leaving the slightly busy main Kalloni-Mytilini road at Mesa ("Derbyshire" to most British birdwatchers), we crawled along in second gear in the rain, stopping for almost every bird. A group of Greater Short-toed Larks, Crested Larks of course, a Whinchat and, offshore in the Kalloni Gulf, a Great Crested Grebe and a Shag kept us busy.

On arriving at Achleleri Forest I was relieved not to find the Army on manoeuvres there as entry to the

forest is prohibited if they are. By now it was not raining hard enough to prevent us from walking into the Calabrian Pines to search for this very special bird. Lesvos is the only place where this small nuthatch can be seen in Europe but, unfortunately, not by us today! Its call is very distinctive but, at this time of year it is often silent, its presence detected only by its tapping on the pine branches and boles in search of grubs. However, near the road we saw several Spotted Flycatchers and Whinchats, both quite abundant migrants in September here. There were also resident Chaffinches and a fine male Cirl Bunting. Two Common Ravens flew over croaking, a Peregrine Falcon flew rapidly past and a Sparrowhawk circled briefly overhead. A couple of European Serins also made a brief appearance.

The weather was against us so, cutting our losses we drove back to the Kalloni Saltpans where several hundred Greater Flamingos, 350 Avocets, a Black Stork and forty or so Common Ringed Plovers, two Little Ringed Plover, a couple of Ruffs, and a Spotted Redshank added a few species before lunch.

A feature of the Lesvos tours is the taverna lunches, always popular with the clients. A favourite is Taverna Enigma close to the beach at Skala Kallonis. When we pulled up outside I was surprised to see that nearly all the tables were full. A coach party had arrived. However the owner welcomed us and recognised Alan and myself from previous visits and soon found us a table. Fresh local sardines, omelettes, pork chop and a variety of other good things were on offer and we were soon tucking in to a rustic meal plus of course, the local brew. My Fanta was less inviting!

Although this tour is billed as “at leisure” no one wanted to go back to the hotel after lunch and opted to continue birding. We spent the afternoon first at Metochi Lake or the ‘inland lake’ to old hands, and then in the adjacent Potamia Valley with its relatively new reservoir. Metochi is usually practically dried up at this time of the year so I was amazed to find it completely full of water, so full that there was no muddy edge to attract waders. Was this the result of the tail end of Hurricane Bill and the heavy rain that had swept through Turkey recently (Lesvos is only five miles from the Turkish coast)?

At Metochi a Great Reed Warbler and a Common Kingfisher attested to the unusually high water level, hirundines flew overhead and, as the rain finally stopped and the sun broke through the cloud, three Short-toed Eagles appeared high in the sky and a Black Stork flew over.

The bright spell was short-lived and the rain soon returned so we drove across to the Potamia Valley. Taking advantage of another dry spell when the sun shone again, all but Howard (incapacitated by a torn Achilles tendon sustained just before the tour began) clambered up to the reservoir. There were 34 Little Grebes on the water. Another Black Stork flew over but there was little else. However we were serenaded by an inebriated shepherd who had been asleep beneath a bush surrounded by his flock of black sheep. Higher up the valley there were several Crag Martins flying around the rocky peaks. There were also several Spotted Flycatchers and Whinchats.

Despite the adverse weather, when we called the log back at the hotel before dinner, we were somewhat surprised that we had seen 62 species today.

### **Saturday 12 September**

The rain this morning when I looked out of my room at 6am was heavier and more persistent. Even Alan did not venture forth at 6.45am, the time that we had arranged to meet last evening but Di did. We drove to the Christou marshes to search for Stone-curlews from the minibus. For the last couple of autumn tours they have been a feature of these marshes, often up to 30 or so of them. The weather was awful and visibility poor so we soon aborted the search, drove back to the hotel and went back to our rooms until breakfast.

After breakfast we drove to the other main group of saltpans around the shore of Kalloni Gulf at Polichnitos. We took the track around the shore of the Gulf passing the little fishing settlement of Skala Vasilikon where three Common Sandpipers flew along the shoreline. These pans are flooded in the spring so have shallow water in the autumn after the summer’s evaporation, and are better for waders than the larger Kalloni Saltpans that have autumn flooding and deeper water now. By the time we arrived the rain had stopped and we scanned the pans from the dirt road that skirts the edge. Waders were present in some of the saltpans while others were almost devoid of birds. Little Stints were possibly the most numerous wader

with quite a few Ruff, Common and Spotted Redshanks, a few Black-winged Stilts including one juvenile (a few pairs breed here), many Pied Avocets and Common Ringed, Little Ringed and Kentish Plovers. Gulls were numerous and varied. Yellow-legged and Black-headed were the most numerous, but there were several Slender-billed and a couple of Mediterranean Gulls but the big surprise was a first winter Common Gull, only the sixth record for Lesvos, the last in August 2003! There were a few Sandwich Terns and a single Little Tern. A flock of 43 Garganey flew from one pan to the next in a restless fashion. We counted over 70 Grey Herons and over 100 Little Egrets plus at least 10 Black Storks before driving on to the little village of Skala Polichnitou for our lunch.

Our timing was perfect. No sooner had we sat down than the Heavens opened and the rain poured down for well over an hour, so lunch was a truly leisurely affair. This taverna is now run by a Belgian couple who were very pleased to have our custom on such a dreadful day. The food was excellent but, needless to say, we were the only diners. The best part of an inch of rain must have fallen during the lunch break but the afternoon brightened up and we were able to return to the salt pans and continue birding.

A Black Tern flew past and the large flock of Common Ringed Plovers on the mud just before the village had been replaced by an equally large number of Kentish Plovers. Di spotted a fine male Black-eared Wheatear in the fields behind the pans and Alan found a female nearby. As the weather improved we drove back via Achleleri Forest to try once more for the nuthatch but met with no more success than on yesterday's visit. We had learned that they had definitely bred here this spring and they often hold their breeding territory throughout the year so it was worth another attempt. Apart from a few Spotted Flycatchers, a couple of Chaffinches and a single Blue Tit the trees were apparently birdless. While the rest of us were searching in vain, Howard was photographing a fine male Cirl Bunting close to the minibus.

It had been rather a frustrating day, this amount of rain being extremely unusual at this time of the year, but we had still added 16 species to our list. At least the rain had stopped at the appropriate times to enable us to get out of the minibus and set up our telescopes and we had seen some nice waders and gulls.

### **Sunday 13 September**

At last a dry morning at dawn and it continued to become our first typical hot, almost cloudless Lesvos autumn day. Di, Philip, Alan and I walked down to the marshes at the mouth of the Christou River at 6.45am. In the autumn, even after the unusually abundant rainfall, all the rivers flowing into the Kalloni Gulf are dry, but their estuaries hold salt water. We were about to return for breakfast at just before 8am when Alan spotted a group of 12 Stone-curlews fly in and land among the saltmarsh vegetation in clear view but this morning was to be our only sighting of this species. At least they stayed long enough for us to return after breakfast with Howard for him to see them.

We spent the day at the western end of the island stopping briefly just outside Kalloni at a small eucalyptus grove where a pair of Scops Owls sometimes roost and can sometimes be found. Their usual site was not occupied this autumn.

The drive via Dafia, where Alan spotted a Little Owl on a rock close to the road, past the monastery at Limonos and through the rugged countryside of rocky mountain slopes, tiny villages with narrow, often cobbled streets, clinging to the hillsides, sharp hairpin bends, empty roads and fabulous views on such a lovely day, was magical. Two Golden Orioles flew across the road as we drove along, but unfortunately not everyone saw them. Just before reaching the impressive site of Ipsilou Monastery, perched on top of an igneous cone-shaped intrusion, we stopped at the junction with the road to Eresos to look for Isabelline Wheatears as this is a breeding site. We saw just one remaining bird.

We drove up to the monastery and parked just below it. As we got out of the vehicle a Western Rock Nuthatch was calling incessantly from a rock pinnacle just below us, and a Sombre Tit was preening in a bush close by it. A Blue Rock-Thrush appeared on a more distant pinnacle. Briefly, a Persian Squirrel clambered among the rocks. (Lesvos is the only site in Europe for this species.) The western side of the rocky outcrop faced a stiff breeze but on the other side it was calm and much warmer in the sunshine. Spotted Flycatchers seemed to be on every tree and bush and Red-backed Shrikes, almost all young birds, were numerous too. Another Blue Rock-Thrush flew from one of the windowsills of the monastery above us

and Willow Warblers and Whinchats searched for insects in the thistles below us. More Western Rock Nuthatches were on this side too. Unmistakeable liquid ‘quill, quill’ calls announced the arrival of about 40 European Bee-eaters below us and, as they moved through they rose up to be at eye-level. This was migration magic indeed! Barn Swallows swept past our lofty perch from where we had spectacular views of this part of the island this being the highest point of the western end of Lesvos. The Turkish coast was also clear from this vantage point across the Aegean Sea and a reminder of the strained relations between Greece and Turkey was the presence of the military post on the other peak of the intrusion just below us. Howard had remained close to our vehicle and had superb views of a couple of migrating Short-toed Eagles, one of which proved to be most photogenic. On the rocks there were also strange-looking Starred Agama lizards.

Eventually we left Ipsilou and drove on and down towards the little fishing port of Sigri. On the way we stopped by the roadside to watch a pair of Woodlarks. The male was singing sweetly from an overhead wire and was giving good views but Howard found a second bird much closer and photographed it. One or two more Short-toed Eagles were coming inland as we completed the last part of the drive.

Taverna Australia in Sigri was our lunch venue. Greeted like old friends by the owner’s son we sat at a table in the shade and I had the best fresh sardines I have ever eaten. Philip’s pork chop was huge and Howard declared his meatballs utterly delicious and it was all accompanied by far the best Greek salad so far.

A slow drive along the beach road toward Faneromeni produced another Golden Oriole, more Red-backed Shrikes, at least two Lesser Grey Shrikes, Whinchats, Northern Wheatears and Spotted Flycatchers. We went first to the beach in the hope of seeing a shearwater or two, but it was too calm and probably not the best time of the day. At the mouth of the little river there was a Little Stint and three Western Yellow Wagtails of indeterminate race and inland, at the ford (now completely dry) there was nothing of note.

We set off for Skala Kalliois, pausing at the foot of the magma dome below Ipsilou Monastery to scan the surrounding countryside for any new birds. Perched on a derelict farm building right by the side of the road Howard noticed a superb male Black-eared Wheatear posing for photographs. The drive back to Skala Kallionis took us on the route through Eresos, where a parked coach hid our turn and we ended up in the town square where an all male group of drinkers outside a bar regarded us with surprise but directed us back on the right road. Di fancied an ice cream so we made a stop at a likely shop only to find it closed. However we fulfilled her wish in Mesotopos before driving on through Agra (surely we hadn’t taken another wrong turn?!) and eventually dropped down via innumerable hairpin bends to the coast of the Kalloni Gulf with spectacular views across to the Kalloni Saltpan and the pile of salt gleaming in the evening sunshine. A second Little Owl perched, like the first one this morning, on a roadside rock watched us pass without moving.

It was not quite hot enough to eat out on the hotel terrace. Plenty of local house wine accompanied the evening meal and the conversation flowed equally freely.

### **Monday 14 September**

We all assembled at the hotel’s car park at 6.20am with only the faintest hint of dawn over the eastern horizon and set off for the short drive to Metochi Lake. There was just enough light to begin birding as we arrived. A very friendly little farm dog joined us, rolling onto its back at our feet for its belly to be rubbed. We soon added some new species – at least two European Reed Warblers, a Sedge Warbler and a Cetti’s Warbler showed well. Groups of hirundines flew over, some swooping down almost to the algae-green water to catch insects. As well as Barn Swallows there were about 40 Red-rumped Swallows. By scanning the water’s edge with our telescopes we found a Water Rail feeding beneath overhanging tamarisks and a Black Stork flew over. As we got back into the minibus, our friendly dog trotted off home, shuffled under the fence and went into the sheepfold.

We returned to the hotel for breakfast at just after 8am and then drove to the Napi Valley in search of migrants. However, it was soon quite obvious that, with clear skies last night birds had left the island and had not been replaced. There were just a few Spotted Flycatchers, Whinchats and Red-backed Shrikes but a Short-toed Eagle and a European Honey Buzzard drifted up the valley and two Common Ravens flew up to join them briefly.

We stopped on the road wherever a convenient pull-off allowed us to get out of the minibus and were able to get good views of Sombre Tits and a Lesser Grey Shrike but passerine migrants were thin on the ground this morning.

Lunch back at Taverna Enigma seemed like a good idea so we started back towards Skala Kallonis but first turned down the road along the side of the salt pans. Eventually we found four Greenshanks and a few Common Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers, mundane perhaps but the Greater Flamingos were quite spectacular and distant Pied Avocets flew up, always lovely birds to see. On a dried mud field there were probably 100 Western Yellow Wagtails of probably three sub-species.

The taverna was much quieter today and we settled down for yet another tasty meal. Replete, we drove north through Kalloni and up to the island's main tourist resorts of Petra and Molivos (or Mithymna as it is alternatively known). We pulled in to a lay-by on the cliff top just before reaching Molivos, a location affording an excellent view of the sea and any migrants passing over. Alan almost immediately drew our attention to a dark falcon flying swiftly away. It was an Eleonora's Falcon, the first of three we were to see on the tour. Not to be outdone, Philip spotted a group of Yelkouan Shearwaters quite close inshore, a better view than I have ever had before on Lesbos, and this was one of five species he had hoped to see on the island. Always nice to find your own 'lifer'!

We took the very scenic north coast route back to our hotel in order to see a bit more of this beautiful Aegean island. At Mandamados we turned into the head of the Napi Valley once again then went on to the Tsiknias River, the so-called East River of old, now totally dry of course. By driving down the dirt road to its mouth, where it enters the Kalloni Gulf, there is salt water and on a shingle bar with Yellow-legged Gulls and a lone Sandwich Tern was our only Eurasian Curlew of the trip. Di got into conversation with two other birders who told her that they had seen a Krüper's Nuthatch on Friday at a road junction beyond Achleleri Forest. Encouraged by this up to date information we decided that tomorrow we would make that bird our prime target.

It had been lovely weather today but that came at a price – the departure rather than arrival of migrants but that is what migration is all about! Dinner was just too much food. A tuna and mayonnaise starter, a huge piece of freshwater fish with chips and a sweet, plus of course something alcoholic to help it down, meant that none of us did justice to the meal. It had been an early start too and everyone voted to do the same again before breakfast tomorrow so another early retirement to our respective rooms resulted.

## **Tuesday 15 September**

Despite more rain, we were all in the minibus by 6.30am, keen to see whether the wet weather before dawn had grounded any new migrants. Within 15 minutes we were on the edge of Metochi Lake again and in the company of our canine companion.

Although the rain was still falling when we arrived it was quite light and we were able to bird even, using our telescopes. I spotted a juvenile Little Bittern clambering clumsily about in the reeds on the far side of the lake. Before everyone was able to get on to it the bird flew down the lake towards us but continued to the far end of the water and out of sight. All except Di managed to get some sort of a flight view. At the opposite end of the lake a Common Snipe probed the mud, our second 'trip tick' of the pre-breakfast session. Sedge Warbler, European Reed Warblers and a Great Reed Warbler were still here and several Willow Warblers moved busily through the tamarisk but it was clear that no major 'fall' of migrant passerines had occurred over night. The lake has a large population of Balkan (Stripe-necked) Terrapins, and their heads poking above the water or hauled up on fallen logs is a common sight here. However, this morning a concentration of hundreds, possibly over a thousand young ones were in a swirling mass slowly circling out in the lake, an occasional large splash suggesting that they were being predated by big fish, something I have never seen before.

After breakfast the search for the special nuthatch began. We drove beyond Achleleri Forest to the junction with the main Polichnitos to Mytilini Road. Despite extensive searching for an hour we neither heard nor saw a nuthatch. There were few birds at all in the main Calabrian Pine woods, just a few Chaffinches,

Whinchats and Blue Tits round woodland edge and we heard a European Robin sing briefly but did not succeed in seeing it. On the continent Robins are far less confiding than our British birds.

I knew of another site near to Mount Olympus, the highest mountain on Lesbos, just outside the town of Agiasos, 10 kilometres further on, so that was our next location. Third time lucky, just three kilometres south east of the town, just beyond a sanatorium, we tried again. After the breeding season these birds are less vocal so are more difficult to find than they are in the spring. We parked and walked down the road. Then I heard a tapping sound and soon located a male in the top of a nearby pine. Leaving the rest of our little party, I went back to fetch Howard so everyone managed to get a reasonable view of this diminutive, charming bird. Howard even managed to get a picture. Krüper's Nuthatch on Lesbos is only found in ancient Calabrian Pine forest with broken and rotten stumps or 'snags' providing nesting sites. Although they spend most of the time in the canopy, the nests are usually in holes three or four metres from the ground.

Agiasos's streets are narrow, steep, winding and full of parked vehicles and not easy to drive a minibus through. The only accessible taverna was closed so we decided to drive back to My Way in Skala Polichnitou for our lunch stop. With far better weather than on our last visit, we ate on their terrace next to the beach in wonderful sunshine. After yet another splendid lunch, we spent the rest of the afternoon birding the Polichnitos Salt pans. Waders were less abundant than on Saturday with no Ruff or Spotted Redshanks and far fewer Little Stints and Common Ringed Plover and Grey Heron numbers were greatly reduced. Nor could we see any Slender-billed or Mediterranean Gulls but there were 16 Black Storks standing together on one of the bunds.

We drove back to our hotel via Skala Vasilikon where nine Mediterranean Gulls, adults and immature birds, were roosting most obligingly on the harbour wall. This was a fine opportunity to observe the plumage subtleties of the sub-adult birds. Arriving back at the Pasiphae at 5pm, this was an earlier than usual end to the birding day, but this is supposed to be an 'at leisure' tour!

### **Wednesday 16 September**

As Di had not seen the Little Bittern, we all returned, yet again, to Metochi Lake before breakfast. It was a much brighter morning than our start to the day yesterday and, sure enough, the bird put in an early appearance, this time flying into the reeds right opposite us so that we could scope it easily. Right beneath it on the water's edge Alan spotted a Water Rail. A few Red-rumped Swallows flew over and the same warbler species were still present.

After breakfast the consensus was that we returned to the western end of the island. Ipsilou Monastery was our first stop but we could not find any new birds, but still plenty of Spotted Flycatchers, Willow Warblers. I had hoped that we might see a Chukar amidst the rocks but later, at Taverna Australia at lunch time, we learned that the 16<sup>th</sup> of September is the start of the shooting season, the partridge being the main target. Indeed, all the other diners were hunters but, at the rate at which they were knocking back the ouzo, one hoped that their aim might be vastly impaired!

There was quite a breeze blowing off the Aegean and the beach proved a little more productive. A Scopoli's Shearwater way offshore was another of Philip's 'hoped for' birds and Alan spotted a second but they were a long way away. A Shag was closer but constantly disappeared into the troughs of the waves. On the beach there were two Little Ringed Plovers but there was little else.

As we approached Ipsilou again on our return journey I noticed two Eleonora's Falcons performing graceful and agile aerial play in the company of four Common Ravens. I stopped the vehicle and we watched, enthralled, for several minutes before driving on.

We drove through Kalloni and on to the Tsiknias River, this time turning to drive up to the head of the valley. Driving as far as we could on the very rough, rocky road, we stopped and spent the rest of the early evening in this lovely tranquil spot. The wind had dropped and it was a beautiful evening. Two migrant Short-toed Eagles hung in the air and hovered laboriously above a ridge opposite our vantage point, one with a small snake in its talons. Eight Common Ravens were showing their mastery of the skies behind us, a

fitting place to end our last full day on this lovely island.

### **Thursday 17 September**

Our return flights to Gatwick and to Manchester were not until early afternoon so we did not need to leave the hotel until about 10 am. The most productive place to spend our last short session of birdwatching was probably at Metochi Lake and was the most likely place to add a new bird to our total. Howard remained behind, but the rest of us set off at 6.30am.

Three Common Kingfishers were calling and dashing about and our little dog was there to greet us as we got out of the minibus. Unfortunately little had changed as far as the bird population was concerned, although we saw only our second Lesser Whitethroat of the trip. More unusual however, was a spiralling group of 21 Common Ravens over the hills inland. They were clearly on the move to somewhere, possibly an inter-island movement of some kind?

Having had breakfast, done our final packing and said farewell to the staff at Hotel Pasiphae, the 50 minute drive to the airport and the vehicle drop-off went without incident and we arrived before the coaches from the islands hotels arrived. We were the only passengers at the check-in but the computers were not functioning as there was a power cut so we had leave our passports and wait. At least we were first when power was restored with long queues building up for both flights behind us. We said goodbye to Philip for at least the third time. The inbound Gatwick flight was 30 minutes late arriving but we were only five minutes behind schedule when we landed. At the luggage carousel we bade one another farewell and made our respective ways back home.

### **Acknowledgements**

It had been a successful tour and I wish to thank the staff at Hotel Pasiphae for helping to make it so. You, our clients, were however the main element in my enjoyment of this, my seventh tour for Ornitholidays' to Lesvos. I have travelled with you all before and I trust I will have the privilege of leading you again in the near future. Thank you for travelling with Ornitholidays and for being such excellent company; good humoured, enthusiastic, and very punctual. I would like especially to thank Howard for allowing me to use his excellent pictures in this report. Happy birding to you all!

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September 2009

## Itinerary and Weather

- 10<sup>th</sup> September** Fly Gatwick/Manchester to Mytilini. Drive to Skala Kallonis.  
Late lunch. Late pm short walk to Christou River Saltmarshes.  
Hot & sunny. 29°C, even at 5pm.
- 11<sup>th</sup> September** Kalloni pool & Christou Marshes before breakfast.  
am Achladeri Forest & Kalloni Saltpans  
pm Metochi Lake & Potamia Valley & reservoir.  
Rain. Cleared in afternoon but overcast most of day. Sunny evening. 20-26°C
- 12<sup>th</sup> September** Too wet to bird pre-breakfast.  
am Polichnitos Saltpans  
Lunch in Skala Polichnitou.  
pm saltpans again then Achleleri Forest.  
Rain most of day, torrential midday. Cleared in early evening 20-22°C
- 13<sup>th</sup> September** Christou Marshes before breakfast.  
am Ipsilou Monastery.  
Lunch in Sigri.  
pm Faneromeni – beach & ford.  
Breezy but hot & sunny. Little cloud. 28°C
- 14<sup>th</sup> September** Metochi Lake pre-breakfast.  
am Napi Valley & Kalloni Saltpans.  
Lunch in Skala Kallonis  
pm Molivos & Tsiknias estuary.  
Hot & mainly sunny. 28-30°C.
- 15<sup>th</sup> September** Before breakfast at Metochi Lake.  
am Achleleri & Agiasos.  
pm Polichnitos Saltpans.  
Hot & sunny. 30°C.
- 16<sup>th</sup> September** Pre-breakfast at Metochi Lake.  
am & pm west end of the island.  
Evening at head of Tsiknias Valley.  
Hot & sunny all day. 32°C.
- 17<sup>th</sup> September** Metochi Lake before breakfast.  
Depart hotel, drive to airport & flights to Gatwick & Manchester.  
Sunny & hot. 30°C.

## CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING TOUR

No of days recorded	Abundance Scale
1 2h means seen on 1 day and heard on 2 other days.	1 = 1 - 4
	2 = 5 - 9
	3 = 10 - 100
	4 = 100 - 1000
	5 = > 1000

SPECIES	No of days recorded	Abundance Scale	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Little Grebe	5	3	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Great Crested Grebe	1	1	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Red-necked Grebe	4	1	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>
Scopoli's Shearwater <sup>1</sup>	1	1	<i>Calonectris (diomedea) diomedea</i>
Yelkouan Shearwater <sup>2</sup>	1	3	<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>
Great Cormorant	5	2	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
European Shag	2	1	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>
Little Egret	6	4	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Great Egret	5	1	<i>Egretta alba</i>
Little Bittern	3	1	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>
Grey Heron	7	3	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Black Stork	6	3	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>
Greater Flamingo	7	5	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>
Common Shelduck	1	2	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Mallard	1	1	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Garganey	4	3	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
European Honey-buzzard	1	1	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>
Short-toed Eagle	5	3	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
Western Marsh-harrier	1	1	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	1	1	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Common Buzzard	3	1	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Long-legged Buzzard	2	1	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>
Common Kestrel	4	1	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Eleonora's Falcon	2	1	<i>Falco eleonora</i>
Peregrine Falcon	1	1	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Water Rail	2	1	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>
Common Moorhen	5	3	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Black-winged Stilt	1	2	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Pied Avocet	4	4	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
Stone-curlew	1	3	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>
Little Ringed Plover	5	2	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Common Ringed Plover	5	3	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Kentish Plover	2	3	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Little Stint	4	4	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Dunlin	1	3	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Ruff	3	3	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Common Snipe	2	1	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Eurasian Curlew	1	1	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Spotted Redshank	2	3	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
Common Redshank	2	4	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Common Greenshank	4	3	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Common Sandpiper	3	1	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Mediterranean Gull	2	2	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>
Common Gull	1	1	<i>Larus canus</i>
Black-headed Gull	4	4	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Slender-billed Gull	1	2	<i>Larus genei</i>
Yellow-legged Gull	8	4	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>
Sandwich Tern	2	2	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>

Little Tern	2		1	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
Black Tern	1		1	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
Rock (feral) Dove	8		3	<i>Columba livia</i>
Common Wood-pigeon	1		1	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Eurasian Collared-dove	8		3	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Eurasian Turtle-dove	3		1	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
Little Owl	1		1	<i>Athene noctua</i>
Common Kingfisher	6		1	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
European Bee-eater	2		3	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
Eurasian Hoopoe	1		1	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Middle Spotted Woodpecker	4		1	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>
Short-toed Lark	1		2	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
Crested Lark	8		3	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
Woodlark	2	1h	1	<i>Lullula arborea</i>
Bank Swallow (Sand Martin)	4		3	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
Eurasian Crag-martin	2		3	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>
Barn Swallow	8		4	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Red-rumped Swallow	6		3	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>
House Martin	6		3	<i>Delichon urbica</i>
Western Yellow Wagtail <sup>3</sup>	6		3	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Black-headed Wagtail <sup>3</sup>	1		1	<i>Motacilla flava feldegg</i>
Grey-headed Wagtail <sup>3</sup>	1		1	<i>Motacilla flava thunbergi</i>
White Wagtail	2		1	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
European Robin	-	1h	1	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Common Redstart	1		1	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Whinchat	8		3	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
Isabelline Wheatear	4		1	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>
Northern Wheatear	6		3	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Black-eared Wheatear	5		1	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>
Blue Rock-thrush	4		2	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>
Eurasian Blackbird	2		1	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Cetti's Warbler	4	1h	1	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
Great Reed Warbler	2		1	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
Sedge Warbler	4		1	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>
Eurasian Reed Warbler	4		1	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	2		1	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
Greater Whitethroat	3		1	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
Willow Warbler	7		3	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Spotted Flycatcher	7		3	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Sombre Tit	4		1	<i>Poecile lugubris</i>
Eurasian Blue Tit	6		2	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Great Tit	6		3	<i>Parus major</i>
Krüper's Nuthatch	1		1	<i>Sitta krüperi</i>
Western Rock Nuthatch	3		2	<i>Sitta neumayer</i>
Red-backed Shrike	8		3	<i>Lanius collurio</i>
Lesser Grey Shrike	7		3	<i>Lanius minor</i>
Golden Oriole	1		1	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
Eurasian Jay	7		1	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Hooded Crow	8		3	<i>Corvus cornix</i>
Common Raven	6		3	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Eurasian Jackdaw	2		3	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
House Sparrow	8		3	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Chaffinch	5		2	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
European Serin	1		1	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
European Goldfinch	5		3	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Common Linnet	3		1	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
Cirl Bunting	4		2	<i>Emberiza cirrus</i>
Corn Bunting	3		3	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>

Taxonomic notes :

- 1 Previously three races of “Cory’s Shearwater were recognised. These *Calonectris* shearwaters are now considered to be three separate species. The birds breeding in the Mediterranean Basin (Scopoli’s) are separated from those breeding in the Atlantic and Cape Verde Islands.
- 2 Likewise, the Mediterranean (*Puffinus*) shearwaters are split into Balearic (Western Mediterranean) and Yelkouan (Eastern Mediterranean breeders).
- 3 In the autumn the Yellow Wagtails are not always ascribable to a specific race of which six occur in Lesvos. It is safest to consider most birds, especially the first winter birds, as just Western Yellow Wagtails. We saw two definite races however, Black-headed Wagtail (*Motacilla flava feldegg*) considered by some a distinct species and Grey-headed Wagtail (*Motacilla flava thunbergi*).

**MAMMALS**

			<b>SCIENTIFIC NAME</b>
Eastern Hedgehog (road kills only)	1	1	<i>Erinaceus concolor</i>
Brown Rat	1	1	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>
Persian Squirrel	2	1	<i>Sciurus anomalus</i>

**OTHER WILDLIFE**

Balkan (Stripe-necked) Terrapin	4	5	<i>Mauremys rivulata</i>
Starred Agama Lizard	2	1	<i>Agama stellio</i>
Marsh Frog	4	3	<i>Pelophylax ridibunda</i>

This list represents those birds and other animals seen by party members of this tour.



**Sombre Tit**



**Western Rock Nuthatch**



**Lesser Grey Shrike**



**Yellow Wagtail**



**Black Stork**



**Greater Flamingos**



**Black-eared Wheatear**



**Woodlark**



**Spotted Flycatcher**



**Red-backed Shrike**



**Willow Warbler**



**Pied Avocet**



**Mediterranean Gull**



**Persian Squirrel**



**Taverna lunch at Skala Polichnitou**



**Octopus tentacles drying, Sigri**  
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