

Holiday Highlights

Cyprus

25 March – 1 April 2023

Guides: Roy and Jane Atkins

Guests: Sara and Roy Cowley, Penny and Keith Chantler, Ruth Assal and Bob Gerwin, Carol and David Gover, Jane Moore, Marilyn Davidson, Joyce and Tony Sawford

Day 1: Apart from a slight delay once on the plane, everything goes well and we arrive in Paphos about an hour late. We sort out the vehicles and get on our way to the hotel, spotting our first birds along the way - Hooded Crow, Magpie, Collared Doves and Wood Pigeons but not much else.

We have a lovely welcome from Christina at the hotel and a refreshing drink of lemonade before settling into our rooms for an hour or so. We meet up at around 18:30 to see whether we can hear any Cyprus Scops Owls. The conditions seem perfect, calm and pleasantly warm, but all we can hear are lots of noisy Cyprus Water Frogs. We'll have to try another night.

After a delicious and very filling evening meal we chat a bit about the week to come and hope the birds seen recently might still be around in the morning.

Day 2: After a leisurely breakfast we stay local and start at the coast just down the road. As we drive through the village of Mandria we notice a Laughing Dove - a species that has only colonised the island relatively recently but is spreading fast. Down nearer the coast we pause when we hear a Zitting Cisticola calling and soon spot it 'bouncing' in the distance. We then find a few Crested Larks and discover a very dull looking Whitethroat in some Giant Reed. Later research suggests it might be of the Turkish race. We get much better views of the cisticola and also a male Kestrel shows well. A second male Kestrel lands briefly and Jane wonders if it might be a Lesser Kestrel, but it flies before we get good enough views. After the holiday Roy C discovers he has a photo of a Lesser Kestrel taken here – was it this bird?? Probably, but how frustrating to fail to clinch it at the time!

We drive on a bit further, pausing to look at some Spanish Sparrows and there is a Mediterranean Shag out on the rocks - an immature with very pale belly. There are at least two Swallowtails – of the subspecies *siriacus*, plus Clouded Yellows and Painted Ladies flying through. Yellow-legged Gulls pass by in small numbers and at 'Lark Corner' we pause to check a ploughed field. Here we find several wheatears, most of which are Northern Wheatear, but there are two Isabelline Wheatear here too. There is a very bizarre optical illusion as we find some very blue coloured wagtails! This is very strange as all of us see them as a very definite blue colour - but looking through the scope they are clearly White Wagtails! It seems hard to believe and is presumably to do with the background colour – either that or they have fallen in some paint! There are also a few Yellow

Wagtails here and we identify a couple of different races, Black-headed and Blue-headed, plus their hybrid 'superciliaris'. There are plenty more Crested Larks and a couple of us pick up a couple of Red-throated Pipits, but they are almost instantly scared off by a couple of children who seem to be collecting potatoes from the field.

We drive on to another ploughed field and here find four Greater Short-toed Larks but, as we are looking at these, a chap we were talking to earlier appears in his car and asks if we would like to see the Black-bellied Sandgrouse (a species we knew has been here for the last three or four days and we were looking out for it). Well - we are soon back in the vans and following him to another track and sure enough there it is! We are absolutely thrilled to see this gorgeous bird - and showing very well too, perhaps the best views one any of us have ever had of this species. We also notice there are Short-toed Larks here and then realise that one has a streaky chest... making it a Lesser Short-toed Lark and a big surprise! We get great views of Sardinian Warbler here too. We are mildly amused that our new friend is very keen to get some shots of our group watching the sandgrouse and goes to great lengths to get us and the bird in the position he wants.

We are amazed at how the time has flown by and we drive back to the picnic site where we are intending to have lunch, but it is too busy so we head instead to the beach bar where the owner seems very happy for us to use the tables if we buy a drink.

After lunch we decide to go in search of a reported Baillon's Crake. Arriving at the spot, the whole area looks beautiful and the weather perfect and we spot Scarlet Darter Dragonfly and Lesser Emperors over the water. The flowers are stunning, with masses of Crown Daisy, Winged Sea Lavender and Three-leaved Gladioli. We flush a Green Sandpiper as we approach the pools then we carefully scan the edges. Lots of Swallows flit overhead, with plenty of House Martins amongst them, as well as a superb Alpine Swift which even comes in to drink - which is spectacular to watch.

Sara is the first to spot the Baillon's Crake as it vanishes into some vegetation. We wait and watch and suddenly there it is walking back out towards us. It is soon right out in the open and we can't believe how well it is showing - a new bird for almost everyone and so lovely to watch. It wanders towards us a little way and we enjoy lovely scope views - then it heads away to the far corner where we are astonished as Jane says, "There is a different crake!" The second bird is a lovely buffy colour - a female Little Crake!! We can't believe our luck and soon have both crakes in the view through the scope at the same time.

We watch the crakes for a while, also enjoying good views of Sedge Warbler and Sardinian Warbler and we point out the crakes to a couple of birders who arrive, who tell us they have just come from another pool nearby where there is a Citrine Wagtail. We are soon back in the vans and on our way!

The Citrine Wagtail is almost the first bird we see as we arrive. It is a stunning male and what a bird! We enjoy wonderful full frame scope views before seeing what else is around. We find at least three Wood Sandpipers, a Green Sandpiper, Ruff, several White Wagtails and a group of Yellow Wagtails including mainly Black-headed Wagtails, but also a single of the hybrid between two subspecies called 'dombrowskii' which has a dark grey head with a pale supercilium. There are lots of swallows around again and a couple of Sand Martins. We check the sky and find two different Long-legged Buzzards but rather distant and lots of Yellow-legged Gulls, along with an astonishing number of Hooded Crows. Other birders arrive and another tip off sets us on our way again - this time in the hope of seeing a Spotted Crake - surely we can't see three crake species in one day!

As we drive round to another set of pools we pause when Roy spots a small group of Serin. The bushes here also have at least two Chiffchaffs, a Blackcap and we spot Starred Agamas on the rocks nearby.

We arrive at the pools to find another group have just been watching not just a Spotted Crake but another Little Crake, a male this time. The Little Crakes shows shortly but only briefly and we wait for a long time for the Spotted Crake to show. Eventually it appears briefly, then as we decide to leave and some are already heading to the minibus it comes out again. It vanishes again quickly and once more we decide to leave, then as we are about to drive away we notice the other group looking more animated again and there is it out in the open again! Many more of us enjoy a good view this time - then as we are once more about to leave it comes out again!! It is as though it knows. We enjoy one more nice view then it vanishes into cover and we decide this time we really do have to go - but two Great Spotted Cuckoos fly by! We are already later than we intended to be and after a fly by view of the cuckoo again we finally get on our way and head for home.

Day 3: After a delicious breakfast we get on our way, starting today at a Roman Stadium where sporting events used to be watched including races and athletic events. It has also been a good place in the past for Cyprus Warbler, but today there is no sign of any - and the number of Sardinian Warblers makes us wonder if they have been kicked out. We find at least two Lesser Whitethroats however and at least three Blackcaps. A very distant perched up wheatear turns out to be a female Black-eared Wheatear and then another wheatear that comes much closer is a Cyprus Wheatear - a smart male too. As we are leaving a Great Spotted Cuckoo calls and then flies across our view - a nice sighting. The flowers here are superb with some beautiful flowers we take to be anemones - in fact I think we are all sure of it... but further investigation on returning home proves them to be Turban Buttercup of the white form that look like white poppies with a dark centre - they are gorgeous. There are so many other flowers but it is hard to identify them without taking hours over it, so we just enjoy them. We also spot Snake-eyed Lizards scurrying away here and there.

We drive on a short way to Kourion Archaeological site, where there is a very impressive Roman Amphitheatre as it is still virtually complete and performances still take place here. There are remains of houses and one has some rather nice mosaics, including some birds like Guinea fowl and doves of some invented plumage. There is time for a look round, but before we gather back at the vans Roy and the two Jane's are delighted when a Cyprus Warbler hops up on one of the bushes and sings! So before we leave we gather everyone together and head back out to the spot. After looking for a little while we decide to try playing a little of the song and that soon has it popping up on the top of the bushes again and showing exceptionally well and showing its speckled chest.

We also discover several pale yellow coloured Clouded Yellows and this is a puzzle! There is only one species of Clouded Yellow recorded on the island and these are the wrong colour – but we find out later by emails with local experts that this is likely to be a local form of the female which is normally cream coloured.

It is shocking how quickly the time passes and it is already time for lunch, so we drop down to the beach and enjoy lunch at a café where we eat our sandwiches and buy everyone a drink. We have a lovely view out to sea, but there is not a single bird out there!

Our aim today was to visit Akrotiri area and we start at the marsh, where we are amazed to find lots of water in the meadows here. It is teeming with birds!! There are lots of Glossy Ibis, a flock of Wood Sandpipers, a few Ruff, lots of Spur-winged Plovers and plenty of Teal. There are Little and Cattle Egrets and we get excellent views of Marsh Harriers hunting over the reeds. A Purple Heron is flying as we arrive and we find a couple of sleepy female Pintail, while Swallows and House Martins skim overhead with a few Swifts too.

We drive on a little way, stopping to look at a Great White Egret, when Marilyn spots something on the wire and asks, "What warbler is black on the head and the throat?" Wow -she has spotted A Rüppell's Warbler! With great excitement we jump out of the van and soon we are enjoying the most incredibly wonderful views of this utterly gorgeous warbler. It performs so well! Hopping along the fence and picking insects off the thistles, flitting in and out of the reeds and just generally showing off in spectacular fashion - we are absolutely thrilled. What a bird!!

Once the warbler has finally disappeared, we notice that up ahead are a couple of Spoonbills, so we walk down the road for a better view. From here we find many of the same species and bigger flocks of Ruff and Wood Sandpipers. There are lots of Teal, a few Shoveler, a Snipe, lots more Glossy Ibis and quite a few smaller birds too, including plenty of Black-headed and White Wagtails, two Water Pipits which is a great find and two Meadow Pipits. We enjoy some wonderful views of Hoopoes, when the cows don't stand in the way. Back at the

vans we are delighted to discover Tony and Joyce are watching two Squacco Herons.

We decide it is time to head home and drive along the road a way to find a good place to turn round, but in doing so Roy spots two Black-winged Stilts, so we jump out for a look. There are Purple Herons at the edge of the reeds, two of them - no three - no five! They are great through the scope, but shortly they take flight -and we discover there are actually eight! They fly round even hesitantly 'hovering' as if they can't decide what to do which is a strange sight, then come back in and several land in full view. We find two Black-tailed Godwits and one of the Ruff in breeding plumage with a white head. We are checking the ducks etc when Sara says she has a wader with a very thin bill... it's a Marsh Sandpiper! This is another great find and soon it is wandering around and showing well.

Time really has flown by, so we finally manage to drag ourselves away and get going, arriving home with half an hour to catch our breath before our evening meal.

Day 4: Today is Troodos day and a chance to see the interior of the island and the mountains. The road follows the Dhiarizos valley up and up and we make a stop at a spot where Roy has seen Bonelli's Eagles in the past. Today they are nowhere to be seen, but we soon get absorbed with looking at orchids and other flowers and find some stunning examples of Naked Man Orchid and plenty of Serapias or tongue orchids. These are called Ploughshare or Long-lipped Tongue-Orchids and we add a couple of Giant Orchids and a few Pyramidal Orchids too. There is also the beautiful pink-flowered Salsify, the blue form of Scarlet Pimpernel and far too many flowers we can't identify. On the other side of the road we find a couple of Woodcock Orchids and yet more Tongue Orchids. There are plenty of butterflies here too, including Common Blue, Clouded Yellow, Speckled Wood, Brown Argus and a brief Cleopatra. As we are about to leave we enjoy excellent views of a Red-rumped Swallow.

We move on and have not gone very far when a Great Spotted Cuckoo flies across the road and away towards one of the larger trees the other side of the fields. We pull in and we're soon enjoying great scope views of this superb looking bird - which is soon joined by a second. Shortly, what turns out to be the male, drops to the ground and picks up a large caterpillar - then flies up and lands on top of the other one and offers her the caterpillar.... it must be spring!

We find more birds, including a superb male Black-eared wheatear of the dark-throated form. A third Great Spotted Cuckoo calls from very nearby and the other two fly across and chase it away providing more great views, then Roy spots a distant Long-legged Buzzard. We are pleased to discover a Redstart in the lower branches of a nearby tree and with it another wheatear which is not easy to make out. Eventually this bird drops to the ground and we can see it is an Isabelline Wheatear. Jane spots a Woodchat Shrike on a distant bush and we enjoy great scope views, plus a Northern Wheatear under the same bush.

We finally drag ourselves away and continue onwards and upwards gaining height fairly rapidly and making one last stop to check out some orchids at a spot Roy knows. Here we find lots more Naked Man Orchids, a couple of Giant Orchids that are going over but also two types of Ophrys orchids, *Ophrys umbilicata*, sometimes known as Mount Carmel Orchid and *Ophrys incubacea* which doesn't seem to have a common name but is sometimes considered a subspecies of Early Spider Orchid.

We continue on our way and arrive at Troodos, where there is a very cold wind. As we try to decide where to have lunch out of the wind we can hear a Coal Tit singing, but it is hiding very well and we only get glimpses but we enjoy some excellent views of the Cyprus subspecies of Jay as we eat lunch.

We take a short walk out of the end of the town and soon enjoy some wonderful views of the Cyprus form of Coal Tit with its larger dark bib, which on some comes down onto the sides of the breast. We are even more pleased to quickly find a Short-toed Treecreeper, also a Cyprus subspecies called *dorotheae*. It shows very well indeed and we even get some great photos. Walking on we reach a spot from where we can scan the trees down below for Crossbills, but there are none here in the strong wind and we decide to head back into town. We enjoy a coffee before we move on and then pause to buy hot nuts from the shops here - expensive but delicious! As we are getting into the van we spot a couple of swifts flying round and convince ourselves they are Pallid Swifts as they do indeed look very pale with particularly large pale throats and two-tone wings.

Next we drive the winding road to Kykkos Monastery - one of the most famous sites on the island. It is quite a place and we head inside to take a look. It is an astonishing place with so much gold in the 'church' and in one of the rooms a lot of 'relics' with pieces of bone in them. The murals and mosaics showing scenes from the bible are amazing and we spend time having a good look before gathering back at the bus and heading back towards home. It is interesting to hear people reactions and most it seems are not keen - while some found it fascinating.

It is then a very long winding road to get back home and it does feel like it goes on forever - but we get there eventually and have a short break before our evening meal. After this we try again for the Scops Owl, but again with no luck though one is calling way off in the distance. Maybe we are going to have to try somewhere else!

Day 5: Another relaxed breakfast and we get on our way, this time heading to Paphos headland but via the airport to pick up a new van due to problems with the one we have. It isn't here but should be here by lunchtime, so after struggling through roadworks in Paphos we finally arrive and head out onto the headland in a strong westerly wind! It is surprisingly cold!!

We head to the covered area to look at the mosaics, pausing to check bushes on the way but only finding a Sardinian Warbler and a couple of Great Tits. There are plenty of Barn Swallows skimming very low to the ground. The Mosaics are amazing and we have fun identifying the various animals and birds in the images - some of which are truly remarkable in the details they show given the coarseness of the medium. Jane fills us in on some of the background knowledge which helps too.

We head back outside and down towards the amphitheatre, where we feel it might be a bit more sheltered and hence a better chance of birds but even here it is quiet. We find a skulking Lesser Whitethroat, a couple of Sardinian Warblers and a White Wagtail but little else until suddenly three Cretzschmar's Buntings fly in and land right in front of us! We are delighted, but they soon fly. We check out the field which sometimes has shrikes or Whinchats but the wind is so strong you'd have to be a crazy bird to perch on top of a thistle today! Two Corn Buntings appear on top of one of the tees and fly on. We check lots more bushes and look for wheatears amongst the ruins, but there is very little around so we head to look at more mosaics including an astonishing circular one depicting Theseus and the Minotaur.

As we head back to the vans a Northern Wheatear flies past, but very low down and vanishes instantly - it is certainly tough birding today in this wind. Back at the car park we decide not to sit on the sea wall to eat lunch as the waves are crashing over it... so we munch in the car park before heading back to the airport to pick up the new minibus.

On the way we make a stop to check an orchard where Roy has seen Stone Curlew in the past. He starts to look and finds one in seconds but before everyone has assembled to have a look it walks behind the trees and hides! It takes quite a long time to find another and then two come out and we all enjoy some superb scope views. We are also pleased to get brief views of a Chukar, but this also doesn't stay on view for long.

The van is now ready and we soon have them exchanged and are back on our way - heading up to an area known as Anarita Park - though who knows why! It is not a park for sure and we drive the dirt tracks very slowly looking out for birds, soon finding a superb male Cyprus Wheatear. There is very little else around it seems, but eventually we come to a very noisy bush! It is weird - the noise is incredible and it is all sparrows but we can't see any to start with. Then birds start to appear and some fly out or perch on the outside and they are all Spanish Sparrows. Many are flying to other nearby bushes and we decide to get out and have a look round. At first it seems that all that is here is these sparrows then Marilyn spots a bird that looks different and Tony and Joyce are especially pleased when we realise it is a Cyprus Warbler, as they missed the first one. There is a lovely flock of Red-rumped Swallows here and we have them all around us looking superb in the sunshine. We also realise there are several Kestrels hovering over the hillsides and try to get a good enough view to decide whether they are

Common or Lesser, but they are just too distant and silhouetted to get enough on them. We are however soon distracted by an absolutely superb Long-legged Buzzard. It is just beautiful with a creamy head and orange tail and pale patches on the tops of the wings - it is a gorgeous bird and we watch it hanging in the wind for a while before it finally leaves.

We decide to head for home and on the way we pass over a bridge where Tony and Carol notice a Night Heron flying into some reeds. We decide to take a walk here and find a few birds of interest. The area seems to be full of Sardinian Warblers but we also see Linnets, a couple of Spur-winged Plovers and two Marsh Harriers fly over, a male and a female. More surprising however is a Crag Martin that appears briefly amongst the Swallows and Red-rumped Swallows.

Day 6: Roy is absolutely delighted to start the day by finding a pair of Cyprus Scops Owls in one of the trees in the garden of the hotel and soon we are all enjoying wonderful views through the scope and even getting good photos too. How strange that we have not heard a peep from them since we have arrived, yet they are clearly still here.

When we leave we pop to Asprokremmos Dam to see if a Semi-collared Flycatcher that was found yesterday is still here - but despite a good search it appears to have left.

We then have the long drive to Lamaca area, making our first stop at some pools, where we enjoy lovely views of Greater Flamingos out on the shallow water. What amazing birds they are and we watch them doing that strange head thing where they look one way - then the other - then back again repeatedly as if waiting to cross a busy main road.

There is very little else on the first pool, but there are plenty of Swifts and Swallows passing through and we also check the bushes finding three or four Lesser Whitethroats and a distant Woodchat Shrike. A Steppe Buzzard appears over the lake circling and gradually gaining height - like a cross between our buzzard and Long-legged Buzzard. We are also pleased to see a Peregrine circling above the road and more than one Kestrel.

We head over to check out the other side of the road where there are more flamingos and a large flock of ducks made up of Shoveler and Teal, plus a few Mallards. A Little Grebe is diving almost constantly, then a small bird in the bushes in front of us catches the eye. After struggling at first to get a view it pops out and we are astonished to see it is an Eastern Subalpine Warbler! What a great find - and we enjoy some fabulous views now and then as it flits about in the bushes. There is also a nice flock of Black-winged Stilts in the background.

We drive round to the next area where there seems to be no waders on the pool edge, then pass a guy who tells us of a Semi-collared Flycatcher not far away. We thank him profusely and head out following his directions to some trees and

bushes by one of the coastal huts. We soon find the bird and enjoy wonderful views as it flits around showing well.

Our next stop is the hide overlooking some rather uninspiring looking pools with concrete sides covered in plastic. We decide to have lunch here while we scan the edges and the water soon finding plenty of good birds. There are lots of Shoveler, Teal and Mallards and amongst them at least five or six Garganey. Three Ruddy Shelducks are resting on the embankment and scanning around the edge we find a few waders too including one Greenshank, a Redshank, several Wood Sandpipers, one Green Sandpiper, one Marsh Sandpiper and several Ruff. There are a few White Wagtails and a single Black-headed Wagtail, but we are more excited when a Rüppell's Warbler appears on the fence nearby.

As we leave Sara says that they had just seen a Cretzschmar's Bunting apparently feeding young in the bushes, so we pause and watch for a little while. We spot several Lesser Whitethroats, at least three Zitting Cisticolas showing very well, but there is no sign of the bunting so we move on. As we drive down the track a Black Francolin crosses the track ahead of us so we jump out and try and playing a bit of the call. After a few moments a pair of Black Francolins take off and fly a short distance dropping back down into long vegetation, but don't appear anywhere we can see them - but at least we have seen them even if not very well.

We drive on and pause to chat to the same guy we met earlier. He says he has seen Spectacled Warblers on one of the tracks. We have not managed to find one yet so we take a look and soon Jane A picks one out that keeps popping up onto the vegetation. It shows well, but is a little distant so we go closer and enjoy some superb views. A couple of Meadow Pipits appears which is a bit of a surprise and there are several Crested Larks, while in the background we can see a large flock of Yellow Wagtails.

We make a stop to scan Spiro's Pool and enjoy our closest view so far of Greater Flamingos. There is a good sized flock of Ruff and lots of Little Stint as well as a few Kentish Plover, one Ringed Plover and much more surprising, a single Grey Plover which is scarce at this time of year. We find two Dunlin and a single Marsh Sandpiper.

We drive on and amazingly meet the same birder again and he tells us about a couple of Cretzschmar's Bunting he has found. We go with him to the spot and quite quickly locate one of them as it flits up into a Tamarisk bush. We get great views here and then back near the ground. Roy scans the vegetation nearby and locates a female Siberian Stonechat. This is a great find, though the bird itself doesn't behave all that well flying to a more distant spot, but we take turns at the scope before it vanishes. The following day this bird was reported as a female Caspian Stonechat – a scarcer subspecies of Siberian Stonechat. We would have needed views of its open tail to make that identification. As we leave lots of Yellow Wagtails fly down beside the track - perhaps as many as a hundred

- mainly Black-headed Wagtails but one or two other subspecies such as *dombrowskii* and Blue-headed.

Driving back we pass loads of Swifts and Swallows and even an Alpine Swift coming in off the sea. We head round to Hale Sultan Tekke Mosque – just to see it as it is a beautiful mosque and one of the most important in the world. Indeed, many scholars agree it is the third most important site in the world for Muslims and the fourth most important for the Islamic world after Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem!! The site is where Umm Haram is buried, the wife of a companion of the prophet Muhammad and foster sister of Muhammad's mother. It seems so unassuming and the little sign pointing you in the right direction seems to hardly be fitting for such an important site. A few photos taken we notice a flock of very distant gulls, but decide there really isn't time to start going through them and they are very distant with the flamingos so we head for home.

Day 7: Some of us decide to try a pre-breakfast visit to Mandria and we arrive to find a Marsh Harrier hunting low over the fields. There are six Black-winged Stilts in an equally spaced line on the sea shore - just a lovely sight somehow and perfect for a photo.

Bob asks if we ever see Ospreys here - and within seconds of him finishing the sentence an Osprey appears flying in off the sea... a crazy coincidence or did he see it subconsciously in the distance?

Checking the fields birds are fairly scarce, but we find two Northern Wheatears, Sardinian Warblers, several Yellow Wagtails flying by, two Serins and a Whitethroat. A flock of Corn Buntings appear amongst the twigs and we hear a calling Black Francolin. We decide to go closer and try playing the call and it quickly appears in flight heading towards us then away.

Heading for breakfast we are pleased to find the Cyprus Scops Owls are there again in their tree all cuddled up together. Ahhhh. We enjoy another great breakfast, then head out to Kensington Cliffs. We have been given directions for how to get closer to the cliffs by vehicle and start down a dirt track close to the army barracks. Several Griffon Vultures are circling above the scrub near the cliff top and we jump out to enjoy amazing views of them as they circle low overhead. They look enormous!!

We park at the end of the track and find a couple of Paphos Blue butterflies with large dark spots under their forewings. A female Rüppell's Warbler is in the bushes here, along with Lesser Whitethroats and Sardinian Warblers and a commotion of Jackdaws alert us to a Sparrowhawk circling nearby. Alpine Swifts are passing over as we walk to the clifftop and take photos of the beautiful view - while down below a Yellow-legged Gull and a Shag fly past. What a glorious day - beautiful sunshine, a blue sky and a sparkling sea!

As we enjoy the view we are stood close to the MOD fence and this becomes relevant when we are stopped by the police on our way to the next destination! We are astonished we have been reported as taking photos next to the fence and they ask to check all the recent photos on our cameras! They are charming and very polite and quite friendly as they check we have not been taking photos of the military buildings or anything. It seems crazy as all that was there were a few houses - but with everything checked they leave us be, but there is much joking about how attractive both he and she were and how happy some were to be asked for our phone numbers!

We continue on our way and arrive at the reed beds, where a hide looks out over a very small pool and the reeds marshes. Apparently we have just missed a Little Crakes but we enjoy great views of a Kingfisher and some get a flight view of a Bittern, which is a great find here. There are two Spotted Redshank, several Glossy Ibis, a Great Egret, Little Egrets, Ruff and Wood Sandpipers, while there is a background soundtrack of singing Reed and Cetti's Warblers. Amongst the grasses we find a couple of Pygmy Skipper, which actually seem rather large!

We drive along the road, finding many of the same birds we saw the other time we were here but also enjoy superb views of a Marsh Sandpiper. There are several Wood Sandpipers, a few Ruff and plenty of Glossy Ibis. Three Spoonbills fly over, Marsh Harriers hunt over the reeds and flush all the Teal and Shoveler. We continue along the road checking things quite quickly and again finding the Ruff with the white head.

Now we follow tracks through the dunes and damp dune slacks, but it seems eerily quiet compared to how it can be here. Shortly we arrive at the church, where we decide to have lunch. In the gardens here Roy C spots a Redstart and as we watch it a Robin appears in the background - a rarer bird here! At our feet we find plenty of Bug Orchids.

We drive on to Ladies Mile where we stop for a coffee, spotting a single Yellow legged Gull before driving very slowly along the side of a line of pools. Here we find lots of Little Stints and Kentish Plover, as well as several Little Ringed Plovers, four Ruff and two Dunlin. It is a lovely scene and it feels right to take it slowly and just enjoy it.

At the far end is a final pool on which we find an amazing six Marsh Sandpipers, one Greenshank, one Curlew Sandpiper, a Wood Sandpiper and a few Black-winged Stilts plus a lovely group of flamingos.

We make a final stop at a hide here that has sometimes been quite good in the past, but the reeds have been allowed to grow too tall this year and there is absolutely nothing. We head for home, arriving back with time to freshen up before our evening meal and our final run through the checklist and our traditional round up. This involves everyone letting us know their favourite species or two of the trip, a favourite place and a 'magic moment'.

Day 8: After breakfast we still have enough time for an outing before an early lunch and heading to the airport. Asprokremmos Dam is not too far and so we head there and park up to check the bushes and shoreline. There are the usual Sardinian Warblers as we arrive and two marsh Harriers flying overhead – plus masses of Swifts that seem to be in every direction and passing in their hundreds, with a few Alpine Swifts in amongst them.

There appears to be little on the shoreline, but we find a couple of Chukars in the distance and on the dam itself a superb male Black-eared Wheatear. We are amazed to spot a flock of around 35 Purple Herons in flight heading over the reservoir and eventually dropping down in the distance at the far end.

We decide to check out the trees at the far end and quickly hear a calling Eastern Bonelli's Warbler. Looking into the tree where the sound is coming from, Roy is amazed to see a stunning male Collared Flycatcher! Wow what a bird, a real beauty – then we spot the Eastern Bonelli's Warbler too. The flycatcher disappears and after fetching those not with us we search to try and relocate it – finding at least two more Bonelli's Warblers in the process and eventually find the flycatcher again. There are lots of Red-rumped Swallows overhead now and a Stepp Buzzard circles above us before drifting away.

None of us want to stop. It has been an exciting hour and we can't help thinking there is more to find, but with a flight to catch and time needed to pack – we decide we really do have to go and we drive back feeling well pleased with our sightings.

We enjoy a relaxed lunch at the hotel after we have packed - then load up the vans and sadly it is time to head to the airport and our flight back home.

BIRDS

Ruddy Shelduck
Mallard
Pintail
Shoveler
Teal
Garganey
Black Francolin
Chukar
Little Grebe
Shag
Cormorant
Night Heron
Cattle Egret
Squacco Heron
Great White Egret
Little Egret
Grey Heron
Purple Heron
Bittern
Glossy Ibis
Spoonbill
Greater Flamingo
Griffon Vulture
Osprey
Marsh Harrier
Long-legged Buzzard
Common (Steppe) Buzzard
Sparrowhawk
Kestrel
Lesser Kestrel (Roy A photo!)

Peregrine
Baillon's Crake
Little Crake
Spotted Crake
Moorhen
Coot
Stone-curlew
Black-winged Stilt
Spur-winged Plover
Grey Plover
Little Ringed Plover
Ringed Plover
Kentish Plover
Dunlin
Curlew Sandpiper
Little Stint
Green Sandpiper
Wood Sandpiper
Redshank
Greenshank
Marsh Sandpiper
Black-tailed Godwit
Common Snipe
Ruff
Black-headed Gull
Yellow-legged Gull
Black-bellied Sandgrouse
Feral Pigeon

Wood Pigeon
Collared Dove
Laughing Dove
Great Spotted Cuckoo
Cyprus Scops Owl (endemic)
Common Swift
Pallid Swift
Alpine Swift
Hoopoe
Kingfisher
Crested Lark
Short-toed Lark
Lesser Short-toed Lark
Sand Martin
Crag Martin
Barn Swallow
Red-rumped Swallow
House Martin
Water Pipit
Meadow Pipit
Red-throated Pipit
White Wagtail
Yellow Wagtail - Blue-headed race *Motacilla flava flava*
Yellow Wagtail - Black-headed race *Motacilla feldegg*
Yellow Wagtail - M f 'superciliaris' race
Yellow Wagtail - M f 'dombrowski' race
Citrine Wagtail
Robin
Nightingale
Common Redstart
Siberian (Caspian) Stonechat
Blackbird
Northern Wheatear
Isabelline Wheatear
Black-eared Wheatear
Cyprus Wheatear (endemic)
Blackcap
Common Whitethroat
Lesser Whitethroat
Sardinian Warbler
Cyprus Warbler (endemic)
Rüppell's Warbler
Spectacled Warbler
Eastern Subalpine Warbler
Sedge Warbler
Zitting Cisticola
Cetti's Warbler
Reed Warbler
Eastern Bonelli's Warbler
Chiffchaff
Collared Flycatcher
Semi-collared Flycatcher
Great Tit
Coal Tit (endemic ssp)
Short-toed Treecreeper (endemic ssp)
Woodchat Shrike
Magpie
Jay (endemic ssp)

Jackdaw
Hooded Crow
Starling
House Sparrow
Spanish Sparrow
Chaffinch
Linnet
Goldfinch
Greenfinch
Serin
Cretzschmar's Bunting
Corn Bunting

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Starred Agama (endemic ssp)
Snake-eyed Lizard
Cyprus Water Frog

BUTTERFLIES AND DRAGONFLIES

Swallowtail
Large White
Small White
Painted Lady
Clouded Yellow
Paphos Blue
Common Blue
Cleopatra
Orange-tip
Large Wall Brown
Small Copper
Red Admiral
Eastern Festoon
Brown Argus
Speckled Wood
Pygmy Skipper
Scarlet Darter
Lesser Emperor

ORCHIDS

Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*
Bug Orchid *Orchis coriophora*
Naked Man Orchid *Orchis italica*
Giant Orchid *Barlia robertiana*
Mount Carmel Orchid *Ophrys attica*
Woodcock Orchid *Ophrys scolopax*
Ophrys umbilicata
Early Spider Orchid *Ophrys sphegodes*
Plough-share Tongue Orchid *Serapia vomeracea*

SELECTED PLANT LIST

Numbers refer to Mediterranean Wild Flowers, (Grey-Wilson & Blamey) where they are found in this book

Turban (Persian) Buttercup *Ranunculus asiaticus* 257
Cyprus Rock-cress *Arabis cypria* (*syn. A. purpurea*) 323
Hoary Stock *Matthiola incana* 327
Thorny Burnet *Sarcopterium spinosum* 411
Blue-leaved Wattle *Acacia cyanophylla* 439
Bermuda Buttercup *Oxalis pes-caprae* 735
Mallow-leaved Storksbill *Erodium malacoides* 752
Pink-flowered Cistus *Cistus creticus* 964
White-flowered Cistus *Cistus salviifolius* 965
Tamarisk *Tamarix tetrandra* 1021
Giant Fennel *Ferula communis* 1141
Scarlet Pimpernel (blue and red forms) *Anagallis arvensis* 1198
Winged Sea-lavender *Limonium sinuatum* 1220
Carmel Daisy *Scabiosa prolifera* 1750
Crown Daisy *Chrysanthemum coronarium* 1895
Eastern Salsify *Tragopogon sinuatus* 2058
Naples Garlic *Alium neapolitanum* 2225
Three-leaved Gladiolus *Gladiolus triphylus* 2312
Plus many more we never identified