

## Paphos 12<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> March 2014

### Trip Report

By Bob Shiret



View of Akamas Peninsular

### Introduction

This report follows last April's where as you will see a different mix of birds were seen. The holiday was again booked through Thomsons and [The Pioneer Beach](#) was our hotel. If you have not been to this hotel then you should give it a go as it is really superb. Cost for half board, including flights and transfers, was £800 each from Gatwick. One really important point to note is that we pre-booked our hire car though the Thomsons web site and it cost £110 for 11 days with no excess, we were given a free upgrade by "Sixt Cyprus", the hire car company, to a Skoda Octavia with 13,000 km on the clock; again their service was excellent and recommended. The first seven sites mentioned are new and where necessary, directions are given. Free maps of the Paphos region can be obtained form the very helpful and efficient ladies at the hotel reception desk. The [BirdLife Cyprus website](#) is the site to visit for up to date sightings and general site information. Temperatures on our visit were generally in the 65° - 70°F region with one cold day and one night of rain. One very important point to is that Cyprus had obviously had little rain over winter, so the local reservoirs were up to 20 ft lower and many of the small rivers had run dry. This meant that places that were very productive last year for waders and herons had none this year.

## Bird Watching Sites

### Anarita Mast

This new site consists of a large radio mast enclosed in a fenced compound about 300 metres square with unspoilt scrub predominant, some also existing outside the fence. The site can be reached by walking from the Aspro Dam wall from where it can be seen in the distance on the left, or by car through Anarita on the F622 and on exiting the village taking the first fork to the right and when the road takes a sharp turn to the right carry straight on down a gravel track and the mast is on the left. Birds seen here and the adjacent fields were six **Cretzchmar's Bunting**, ten **Red-Rumped Swallow**, fifty **Barn Swallow**, twenty **House Martin**, four **Serin**, two **Meadow Pipit**, thirty **Corn Bunting**, two **Chukar**, ten **Northern Wheatear**, one **Black-eared Wheatear**, one hundred **Spanish Sparrow**, two **Spectacled Warbler**, three **Red Throated Pipit** (lifer) one flyover male **pale Harrier** seen was a probable **Montagu's** as one was found later by others in the area.



**Cretzchmar's Bunting**



**Black-eared Wheatear**



Red-throated Pipit

### Mavrokolympus Dam

This site is reached from the Paphos - Coral Bay road (E701) taking the signed road to the right just before reaching Coral Bay. Carry on up this narrow road for about one kilometre and park where the road is blocked off and walk the short distance to the dam. Birds seen here were: **Bonelli's Eagle** (lifer) two **Greater Spotted Cuckoo** being chased by **Magpies**, one **Little Egret**, two **Cormorant**, two **Little Grebe**, two **Sardinian Warbler**, one **Grey Wagtail**, four **Chukar**, one **Kestrel**, one **Black-eared Wheatear**, one **Chiffchaff** and one **Grey Heron**.





Bonelli`s Eagle

### Foinikas



This site is an abandoned village on the edge of the Aspro Dam, it is best approached from Nata village; take the left hand track shown on the free 1:100,000 map, park in the orange groves and walk to the village. Note, last year the walk was not possible due to the higher river level. Birds seen here were two pairs of **Blue Rock Thrush**, one **Little Owl**, one **Greater Spotted Cuckoo**, two **Kestrel** and two **Hoopoe**.



Little Owl



Blue Rock Thrush



Swarm of Bees in village, time to go!

### Avdimou Beach

This coastal site is off the A6 motorway towards Limassol, take the Avdimou junction, follow the minor road to the beach and park. We walked to the left on paths up to where there is an army barracks so be careful with optics! Although not a prolific site we did see some interesting birds including a **Black Kite**, **Marsh Harrier** hunting over arable land being harassed by **Jackdaws**, two **Swift** and many **Chukar** on the cliff top. On our day here we did not encounter any other people probably due to its relatively remote location.

### Baths of Aphrodite

This area is on the north coast and is best reached by using the E709 road which rises up from Coral Bay through Pegeia and continues at high level towards Polis. Keep an eye out on this road for raptors as a large unidentified one was seen on our outward journey and a **Long-legged Buzzard** was seen on our return journey. As this road is not too busy it is possible to stop the car if something is seen. Birds seen in the Baths of Aphrodite area walking towards the Akamas Peninsular were: one **Yellow-legged Gull**, one **Cyprus Wheatear**, one **Shag**, two **Sardinian Warbler**, six **Linnet**, two **Kestrel**, seven **Chukar**, two **Cretzchmar's Bunting** and a **Yellowhammer**.



**Sardinian Warbler**



**Long-legged Buzzard** in typical hovering mode

### Avgas Gorge

This site is reached via Agios Georgios north of Coral Bay on the E701, take the road signposted Akamas Peninsular and park in the designated parking area at the entrance to the gorge. Birds seen here were: two **Hoopoe**, one **Grey Wagtail**, two **Sardinian Warblers**, two **Chukar** and one **Kestrel**. This area looks good for large raptors but none were seen.



**Hoopoe**

### Oroklini Lake

This superb site is around one and a half hours drive from Paphos passing Larnaca and turning left at junction 58 on the A3 motorway. Then take the first main road left again back under the motorway and the main site is on the right hand side. This site is now protected by high fencing and BirdLife Cyprus has done a superb job developing the site and in constructing a two storey hide and providing information boards for the visitor. Birds seen here were: six **Greater Flamingo**, three **Spur-winged Plover**, two **Black-winged Stilt**, two **Northern Lapwing**, two **Little Grebe**, two **Ruff** and six **Shoveler**.



**Spur-winged Plover**



Greater Flamingo

### Cape Greco

On our visit here we encountered six **Cyprus Wheatear**, one **Blue Rock Thrush**, two **Chukar**, two **Kestrel** and a superb male **Pallid Harrier** (a lifer identified from record pictures) flying in from the sea.

### Mandria

Birds seen here were: two **Fan-tailed Warbler**, two **Buzzard**, one **Lesser Whitethroat**, ten **Linnet**, four **Grey Heron** on the offshore rocks and two **Hoopoe**.

### Aspro Dam

From the Dam end were seen: ten **Alpine Swift**, four **Grey Heron**, three **Black-winged Stilt**, one **Cyprus Warbler**, two **Greater Spotted Cuckoo**, one **Black Kite**, one **Buzzard**, two **Corn Bunting** and two **Sardinian Warbler**.



Alpine Swift



## Pioneer Beach Hotel Headland



This site is next to the Pioneer Beach Hotel and was always worth a look after breakfast or before dinner. Birds seen included: twenty plus **Northern Wheatear**, four **Isabelline Wheatear**, six **Black-winged Stilt**, one **Tawny Pipit**, small groups of *feldegg* and *flava* race Yellow Wagtails, fifteen migrating Cormorant, ten **Crested Lark** (common throughout), six **Stonechat**, one **Kingfisher**, twenty **Night Heron** high on migration, **Slender-billed Gull** (lifer), **Little Egret** and **Black Frankolin** (heard).



**Black-winged Stilts**



Isabelline Wheatear



Yellow Wagtail (*flava*)



Yellow Wagtail (*feldegg*)



Night Herons

These migrating birds circled for 15 minutes looking for water and then flew off along the coast.



Crested Lark



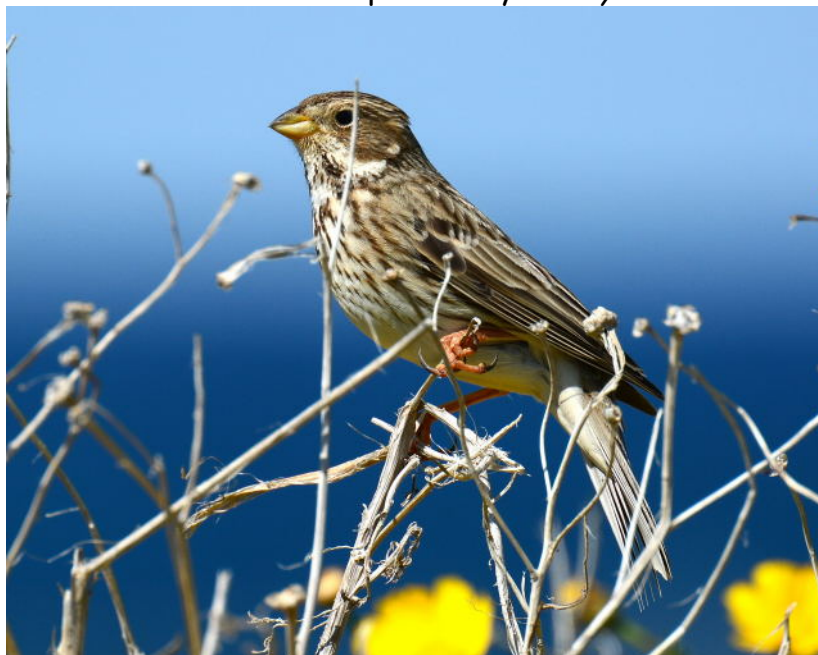
**Slender-Billed Gull** (record shot)



**Little Egret**

### **Paphos Archaeological Site (Paphos Headland)**

This site is one of the gems of Cyprus during migration periods and each day can bring something new. Birds seen on our visit included: four **Woodlark**, two **Kestrel**, one **Black Redstart**, six **Night Heron**, two **Corn Bunting**, ten **Stonechat**, one **Red-throated Pipit**, one **Purple Heron**, one **Subalpine Warbler** (lifer), **White Wagtail** (common throughout), four **Northern Wheatear**, one **Sardinian Warbler** and ten **Barn Swallow**. On the day of our visit others had seen a *Saker Falcon* earlier and previously a *Wryneck* had been seen.



**Corn Bunting**



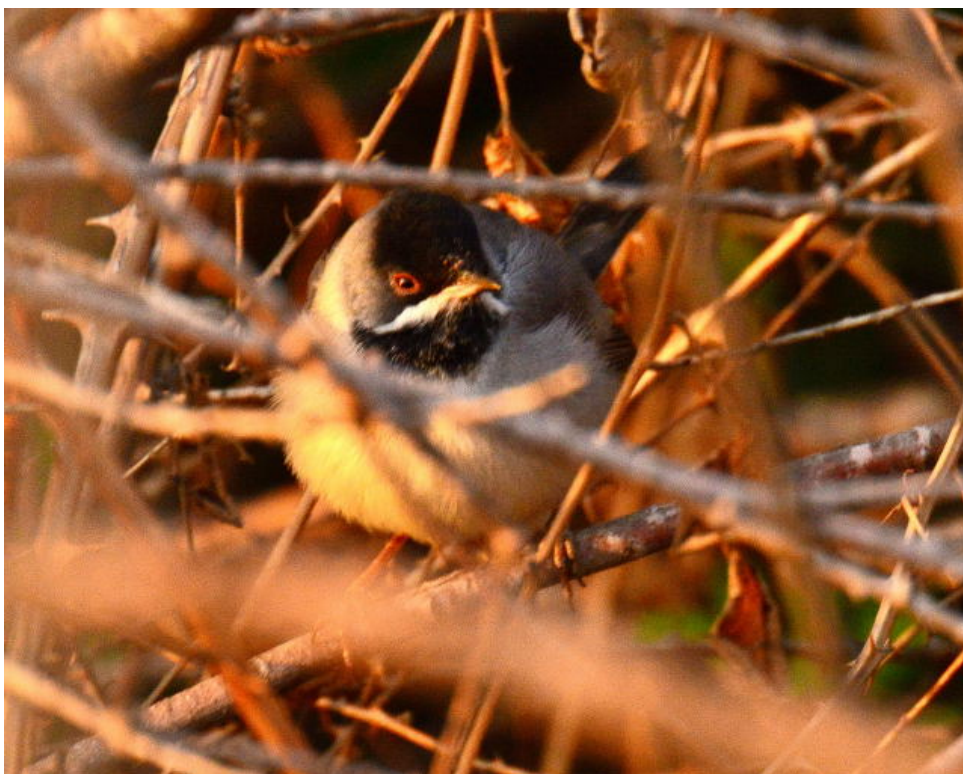
Purple Heron

### Agios Georgios - Coral Bay

On this walk were seen one each of **Cyprus**, **Fan Tailed** and **Sardinian Warbler** along with one **Blue Rock Thrush**, three **Yellow-legged Gull**, one **Whitethroat** and one **Black Francolin**.

### Geroskipou Beach River

Whereas last year this small river was full of water, this year it was dry and had been for some time so there were no waders/herons/crakes around; it was good for warblers however. **Cetti's Warbler** were very abundant here along with **Sardinian Warbler** and **Chiffchaff**. A pair of **Rüppell's Warbler** were seen along with a lone **Redstart** and a flyby **Pied** or **Collared Flycatcher**.





Rüppell's Warbler

Phassouri Reedbeds

Seen here on our visit: one **Glossy Ibis**, six **Cattle Egret**, one **Little Egret**, two **Ruff** and three **Marsh Harrier**.





Marsh Harrier

### Summary

Bearing in mind that ours was primarily a walking holiday whilst carrying a camera on the back and small binoculars in the pocket for non "experts" we were pleased with the variety of species seen. This year I have joined the Cyprus BirdLife organisation to support them in the major struggles they have to deal with in protecting bird life on the island. If any readers are contemplating a similar trip to ours here are the advantages:

1. Fantastic Hotel
2. Reasonable Car Hire with easy driving on roads
3. Unsurpassed Birding
4. Weather Conditions - March/April 65°-75°F - ideal for getting about.

Many thanks to Colin Richardson (Cyprus Bird Recorder) for his help (again!).

**Bob Shiret**