

Lesvos

Thursday 17 April - Thursday 24 April 2008

Leaders:

Rebecca Nason
Philip Harris

Driver:

Philip Harris

Introduction

Thank you all for making the 2008 Lesvos trip such a successful and enjoyable experience this year, Lesvos never fails to reward us with exciting birding highlights and this year was certainly no exception! We thoroughly enjoyed your good company and humour throughout the week and hope to see you all again on trips with us in the not-too-distant future. Please do not hesitate to contact us again.

The Travelling Naturalist Lesvos itinerary was undertaken with the utmost success this year and additional 'excursions' were also added and proved very fruitful. Again, with a small group and two leaders with a small minibus, areas were visited which would be otherwise inaccessible in a larger vehicle, adding a huge bonus to the trip with several visits to the famous Inland Lake and access to the Upper East River and Napi Valley, as well as new detours along the coast near Eftalou. Phil proved an exceptionally considerate driver throughout.

The total bird species seen on the trip was a very respectable 142. It is always difficult to predict when the 'best time' is to visit Lesvos in Spring, it certainly varies year to year by a week or two as to when the bigger 'numbers' start to arrive and migrate through the island and when several much sort-after 'breeding species' arrive back on territory. This year we were lucky to just catch the beginning of such movements and thankfully managed to see superb active migration, particularly on the last day with the arrival of Red-footed Falcons and Black-headed Buntings as well as earlier finding the first breeding pair and nest location of the year of Kruper's Nuthatch and the first recorded Olive-Tree Warbler of the year which had other groups clamouring for information and locations! Although numbers were not as high as they could have been this April, all birds were seen very well by all group members, particularly the most 'wanted' species which we enjoyed stunning views of, often 'full frame' in the scope.

The Kalloni Pool was not up to its usual birding standard this year, even though there was plenty of water present. This may be in part due to the lack of tadpoles present which has caused a frenzy of bird activity on past visits. This may be due to the timing of our visit, or perhaps it is just not a good tadpole year! We did hear that the water present in the Pool was only evident a week before our visit, and it was dry through late Winter and early Spring, so perhaps water was not there when the frogs were ready to breed this year? However, other sites proved excellent and these were visited instead of the Kalloni Pool on our daily pre breakfast excursions. The weather throughout the trip was perfect, warm to hot, mainly clear and sunny with occasional light cloud and slight welcoming sea breeze.

We also enjoyed two very authentic local meals out in the evenings which were a delightful change from the hotel buffet and had two super lunches out in Petra and Molivos, which really went down well with everyone and added that special 'sense of place' This year we also changed the packed lunches, having specific fresh items from the hotel and added extras from the local supermarket as well as plenty of cold water! My last memory of Lesvos is being sat along the west river on the last day, with fresh tomatoes, olives and bread, watching Bee-eaters hawking around us in the sunshine and a slight breeze in the hot midday air. Lovely!

Both Phil and I would like to give special thanks to the staff at the Kalloni 11 Hotel, in particular Steve and the other helpful kitchen staff, the reception staff and the room maids.

Best wishes,

Rebecca Nason and Phil Harris - May 2008.

Diary

Thursday 17 April

Mytilini Airport, Kalloni Salt pans (briefly) Kalloni Pool,

Weather: Warm and overcast on our arrival late pm.

Rebecca and Phil met the group at Gatwick Airport and after checking in, we made our way to the departure lounge. We arrived at Mytilini Airport on time after an initial delay leaving from Gatwick. After a pleasant short flight we had arrived and were through the airport quickly and out into our mini-bus. We headed for our accommodation (once we were out of the busy capital!) in Skala Kalloni via a quick stop off at the Kalloni Salt pans. Here we had our first views of the **300+ flock of Pied Avocets** and **150+ Black-winged Stilts**. Other birds of note were a **Wood Sandpiper** and **Greenshank** as well as many **Crested Larks, Spanish Sparrows** and tuneful **Corn Buntings**. En route to the hotel we also spotted **1 Hoopoe, 2 Jays, 1 Peregrine** and a **Turtle Dove**.

We arrived at the Kalloni 11 Hotel early evening, just in time to settle into our rooms and take our first look at the pool before dinner. Birds seen here included **5 Squacco Herons**, singing **Cetti's Warblers** and **Nightingale, Little Grebes, Moorhen, Coot**, and numerous **Marsh Frogs!**

We then had our first meeting and welcome drink before our buffet dinner and an early night.

Friday 18 April

Kalloni Pool, Papiana, Derbyshire, Achladeri, Upper East River, Kalloni Salt Pans.

Weather: Overcast but warm am. Sunny, warm, light breeze pm.

Our pre-breakfast walk around the Kalloni Pool and Hotel saw us enjoy views of **5 Squacco Heron, 1 Purple Heron, 6 Little Grebes, 1 male Garganey, 3 Marsh Harrier, 2 Cormorant, 1 Great-crested Grebe** in the bay, **1 Little Ringed Plover** on the beach, **20+ Wood Sandpiper, Olivaceous and Cetti's Warblers** singing in nearby Tamarisks, **Sedge and Reed Warblers** as well as two **Yellow Wagtails** overhead. Phil and I also had a **Little Crake** at the Kalloni Pool just before 7am. A quick pre-breakfast trip to Papiana and a past 'Scops Owl' site did not prove successful.

After breakfast we headed via a supermarket for supplies, to the Kalloni Salt pans. Here we had **17 Little Egret**, over **100 Greater Flamingo** (especially for Ruth!) **40+ Greenshank, 3 Marsh Sandpipers** (stunning views of one of these gorgeous waders close to the minibus), **300+ Avocet, 150+ Black-winged Stilt, 6 Little Stint, 1 Ruff, 50+ Wood Sandpipers, 3 Sanderling, 3 Kentish Plover, 2 Little Ringed Plover, 6 Whiskered Terns, 1 Montagu's Harrier** hunting across the pans and nearby fields, **3 Red-throated Pipits, 20+ Ruddy Shelduck** and a pair of **Garganey**. Also noted were **4 Purple Heron** and **5 Grey Heron** in flight over the pans. The Salt pans did not disappoint!

Our next port of call was Derbyshire, and a short walk down a track bordered by shallow water on the right and a scrubby hillside on the left. This walk proved to be more fruitful for plants this year than birds and highlighted the fact that we had arrived on the Island with a lot of beautiful plant species in full flower, from the Tamarisks to the Orchids and Poppies! Birds of note included a few great raptor species with **3 Short-toed Eagle**, hanging effortlessly over the hillside, **1 Hobby, 6 Long-legged Buzzard** and **1 Common Buzzard. 2 Subalpine Warblers** and an **Orphean Warbler** made brief appearances on the hillside too along with our first **Cirl Bunting, Black-eared Wheatear, Black Stork, Great White Egret** a pair of **Linnet** and

5+ Alpine Swifts. We also saw a **Hoopoe**, **2 Turtle Dove** and several **Common and Ruddy Shelduck**. At a small pool we had our first sighting of a **Marsh Frog** and a stunning photogenic **Common Tree Frog**.

Achlideri did not disappoint us this year, as even though earlier than normal, we soon found a pair of **Kruper's Nuthatch** and then the new stump they were nesting in – a great find! We enjoyed our picnic lunch in the pinewoods after enjoying the best views ever of numerous **Violet Birds Nest Orchids**. Other species seen here and along the road near the river and sharp bend included our first and only **Short-toed Treecreeper** of the trip near the Kruper's Nuthatches, **4 Masked Shrike**, **2 Woodchat Shrike**, **3 Cirl Bunting**, **1 Kingfisher** (good record!), **Common Whitethroat** and a **Nightingale** singing. We also had an attractive **Persian Squirrel** at the sharp bend, up on the rocks.

After lunch we took the dirt track up the Upper East River, where the Rufous-bush Chats were not yet back on territory. However numerous species were seen including **2 superb Sombre Tits** and **2 Cretzschmar's Bunting**, and our first **Western Rock Nuthatch** at the nest. Other species of note included **3 Long-legged Buzzards**, **Common Buzzard**, **2 Black Stork**, **3 Black-eared Wheatear**, **1 Little Owl**, **Subalpine Warbler**, **1 Orphean Warbler**, **2 Cirl Buntings**, **1 Woodchat Shrike** and **2 Whinchat**. We also saw 2 large **Starred Agama's** sunning themselves.

We took another quick trip to Papiana before dinner for another attempt at spotting a certain owl species but did not find one, but we had 1 **Osprey** overhead, which was a good bird to round off our first full day in the field!

Saturday 19 April

Inland Lake, Vatousa Gorge, Ipsilou Monastery. Sigri - Melodia Valley.

Weather: Cloudy cool start, becoming hot and sunny later.

We headed out on our cool pre-breakfast trip to the Inland Lake. Here we had one **Little Bittern**, **1 Little Crane**, **1 Great Reed Warbler**, a **Raven** and **Honey Buzzard** overhead, **16 Red-rumped Swallows** sat on wires above us on the road in and numerous singing **Cetti's Warblers**, two of which showed very well. On our return for breakfast, another **Great Reed Warbler** could be heard in the Tamarisks surrounding the pool.

We headed out via the supermarket to the West side of the Island, stopping off at another known Scops Owl location en-route. This time was to prove much more successful and before long, a good crowd of us were enjoying superb views of a stunning little **Scops Owl** roosting in the shadows of a large Eucalyptus trunk. After full frame scope views and photography we carried on West, with a splendid Owl under our belts! A great start to the day.

Our stop at Vatousa was rather quiet, although there were still at least **6 Crag Martins** flying about below us as well as **6 Red-rumped Swallows**. Other notable birds here were another **Western Rock Nuthatch**, **3** very vocal **Subalpine Warblers**, **1 Sombre Tit**, **1 Cretzschmar's Buntings** and **2 Cirl Bunting**.

We climbed steadily up towards Ipsilou Monastery through stunning mountain scenery, which is where we were due to have lunch. Although still hot and sunny, there was now a strong breeze developing! We stopped at the 'Isabelline Triangle' and walked a short distance from the vehicle in the breeze. It was a real hot spot here – and we all enjoyed cracking views of **4 Isabelline Wheatear**, **6+ Northern Wheatear**, **2 Cinereous Buntings** (one very bright singing male!), a lone **Rock Sparrow** and a male **Stonechat**. A lovely stop! Whilst having lunch, a male **Blue Rock Thrush** made an appearance on the monastery walls, **Woodlark** could be heard singing in the distance and a **Sparrowhawk** and **Lesser Kestrel** soared overhead.

We headed round to Sigri after lunch, noting a good flock of **Jackdaws** en-route and waved to our Manchester friends who were sat out eating lunch in the harbour. Our last stop was to be the Melodia Valley. At the ford we enjoyed passing **Bee-eaters (23)** overhead, **2 Little Owl**, **2 Sedge Warblers**, **1 Reed Warbler**, **1 Purple Heron**, **2 Red-throated Pipits** passing through calling, and **4+ Woodchat Shrikes** on full view. We also spotted a few more **Cretzschmar's Buntings**, some coming to the ford to bathe, and another **Western Rock Nuthatch**. It was a long drive today, Phil did a grand job and spotted a dead **Larger**

Whip Snake on the journey back. We arrived back in good time to freshen up pre-dinner. We walked into Skala Kalloni for a welcome dinner and a couple of carafe's of local house wine! A **Bat species** was noted near the hotel.

Sunday 20 April

Lower East River, West River, Parakila/Chapel of the Holy Cross, Kalloni Saltpans and Sheepfields, Inland Lake.

Weather: Very hot today, up to 30°C, no cloud, muggy.

We took a different early morning walk to unexplored territory along the Lower East River. What a great area! Here we had a singing and visible **Savi's Warbler** on the opposite bank, **1 Grey Plover** at the mouth of the river, **3 Nightingales** (good for photo's Martin!), **1 Woodchat Shrike**, **1 Common Sandpiper**, **1 Green Sandpiper**, **4 Wood Sandpiper**, **2 Montagu's Harrier**, **6+ Common Tern**, **2 Shag**, **1 Great Reed Warbler**, **2 Olivaceous Warbler**, **1 Long-legged Buzzard** (on a post, great scope views!), **2 Common Buzzard**, **4 Squacco Heron**, **1 Purple Heron**, **1 Grey Heron**. Quite a good number of birds pre-breakfast! There were also **6+ Swallowtail butterflies** and **Balkan Green and Wall Lizards**.

After breakfast we stopped off at the nearby bridge over the West River. Here we enjoyed views of several pairs of **Black-headed Wagtails (8+)**, a smart **Stone Curlew** at the nest, **2 Little Ringed Plover**, **4 Grey Heron** and **8+ Little Egrets**.

Parakila is a great little spot with a simple tiny chapel. Here we had **7 Turkish Gecko's** on the cool internal walls. On our way up the steep rubble track we noted a very confiding **Sombre Tit**, which hid in the stonewall, presuming it was out of sight but actually giving the best Sombre Tit views ever! A **Levant Water Frog** was noted in the small well near the chapel and an attractive **Red-Orbed Underwing Skipper** kept Martin occupied as it busily floated around the flower heads. Other birds of note were single **Cretzchmar's Buntings**, **Black-eared Wheatear** and **Subalpine Warbler (3)**. Along the road near the chapel our known Western Rock Nuthatch nest was still intact and visible and before long, **2 Western Rock Nuthatch** were seen entering the nest hole and calling on the nearby rock face. Overhead we had close views of **Crag Martins (4)** and **Red-rumped Swallows (2)**.

After a quick stop back at the Kalloni Hotel where **7+ Bee-eaters** flew over, we returned to the **Scops Owl** site for a shaded lunch and enjoyed more great views. We also noted **15+ Bee-eaters** overhead here. Apart from the German Coach crowd interrupting our quite lunch, it was another memorable picnic stop.

In the scorching afternoon heat, we headed for the saltpans again and also had a walk about on the 'Sheepfields' nearby. Another **3 Bee-eater** were seen hawking and passing quickly through, and there was a good count of **24 Little Stint** on the pans. Out towards and on the Sheepfields we had our first **Short-toed Larks (30+)** and numerous **Red-throated Pipits (30+)**. The flock of over **100 Greater Flamingo** were still present out in the middle of the pans. Other birds present included **6+ Kentish Plover**, **1 Lesser Kestrel**, a **female Montagu's Harrier**, **4 Little Terns** and a **Marsh Sandpiper**.

On a road outside Kalloni we spotted and stopped for raptors seen circling a nearby hillside peak. On closer inspection we had good views of **2 female Pallid Harriers** and an extremely good record of an adult **Lanner Falcon** that sat up on the rock face allowing scope views!

A quickly snatched pre-dinner stop at the Inland Lake proved interesting with our first adult **Black-crowned Night Heron** present along the edge of the lake, **4 Olivaceous Warblers**, a **Purple Heron** and a **Dice Snake** was seen by some. Numerous **Balkan Terrapins** were noted sunning themselves along the banks of the lake and nearby water-filled channels.

Monday 21 April

Lower East River, South Petra, Panoramic Viewpoint, Molivos, Efftalou Coastal Path, Potamia Valley briefly and the Kalloni Saltpans.

Weather: Another scorcher of a day – hot 30°C + no cloud, no breeze.

We couldn't resist another pre-breakfast trip to our newly found hot spot – the Lower East River. A relaxed stroll in the early morning sun revealed **7 Bee-eater, 6 Squacco Heron, 4+ Olivaceous Warblers, 4+ showy Nightingales** (another good opportunity for Martin!). Also **1 Common Sandpiper** and a **Long-legged Buzzard** were present.

As temperatures rose post-breakfast, we drove towards Petra and stopped off on a bend (one of many!) to see if there were any signs of a nesting pair of Middle-spotted Woodpeckers in a nearby tree we had spotted them nesting in a few years before. Again we were lucky! As before long we were all enjoying views of a male **Middle-spotted Woodpecker** with food at the hole entrance. An uncommon treat!

One of our favourite stops was next – a short drive along the coast to the Panoramic Viewpoint. Excitement rose at the prospect of one particular species known to breed here – and tensions were high as we stepped out of the vehicle and moved to view the scrub down slope towards the sea. After a short wait, we were all enjoying good views of **Ruppell's Warblers, 6** in all. An additional unexpected treat was a striking male **Sardinian Warbler!** A smart Blue Rock Thrush was seen further down slope and other species noted included **2 Woodchat Shrikes, 2 Subalpine Warblers, 1 Cretzchmar's Bunting** and **3 passing Crag Martin**. We were to have an unexpected bonus, as we were just about to leave the viewpoint as a stunning male Ruppell's Warbler bounced up onto the closest foliage to us and stayed singing beautifully for last views and photo's!!! (wuhoo Martin!).

We went into the pretty town of Petra for lunch, our usual Petra lunch stop was closed for refurbishment pre-season so we found another attractive local café instead. Sat outside in a shady spot within the town walls we enjoyed tasty local cuisine and cold soft drinks before having a while to walk around the town and collect any gifts and icecreams.

Taking the track up past Efftalou we parked up and walked a short way along the coastal track. There were many butterflies noted including **Eastern Dappled White, Orange Tips, Clouded Yellows, Small Copper, Holly Blue, Painted Lady, Small Heath, Wall Brown and Red Admiral**. We also saw **Little Owl, Woodchat Shrike, Subalpine Warbler, Sombre Tit** and **Lesser Kestrel**.

We stopped off at a small building near the Potamia Valley on the way back, where we had heard large unidentified moths had been seen the day before. Here we found an ant-ridden male **Giant Peacock Moth**, Europe's largest moth and an attractive **Striped Hawkmoth** nearby. A larger female Giant Peacock Moth was found dead on the road.

Again, after a quick stop back at the hotel for refreshments, we made a last whistle stop at the salt pans pre-dinner. Here we had **16 Black-crowned Night Heron** together on a saltpan bank, 15 adults and 1 Juv. We also noted **1 White Stork, 2 Short-toed Lark, 6 Little Stint, 1 Great White Egret, 1 Grey Heron, 1 Ruff** and at least **20 Ruddy Shelduck**. Another fine, successful day in the field!

Tuesday 22 April

Lower East River, Napi Valley, Upper East River, Kalloni Salt pans.

Weather: Overcast and hot today! 27°C +

A visit to the Lower East River pre-breakfast saw the usual daily birds plus excellent views of **2 Temminck's Stints** and a nice male **Blackcap**. **15+ Bee-eaters** were also seen hawking around the river mouth. Back at the Kalloni Pool there were **12 Squacco Heron** noted as we passed by on our way to breakfast.

Today we headed up into one of our favourite spots, the Napi Valley – off road and always interesting! En-route we had a **Middle-spotted Woodpecker** from the minibus. Up in the valley we were soon watching a **Hoopoe** on the track in front of us, then out of the vehicle to enjoy views of **2 Cuckoo** and **11+ Golden Orioles** which could not have been more showy and allowed excellent scope views. The valley was alive with shrikes, **15+ Masked Shrikes** were noted as well as **3 Woodchat Shrikes**. The special bird of the valley we were hoping to see proved difficult so early in the season, but amazingly we did get to see **1 Olive-tree**

Warbler, a great find and the first recorded on Lesvos this season. We left the vehicle for a short walk before returning to enjoy another picnic lunch in the valley surroundings. Other notable birds seen were a flock of **5 Ortolan Bunting**, a good record, as well as more usual birds here such as **Subalpine Warbler**, **Sombre Tits**, **Orphean Warbler**, **Western Rock Nuthatch** and a few **Cirl Buntings**. Species not seen before on this trip but seen here were **Spotted Flycatcher** and **Lesser Whitethroat**.

After a pleasant lunch stop we headed off up a little further, noting **2 Honey Buzzards** and a **Long-legged Buzzard** overhead before leaving the East Valley and driving up into the West the other side of the main road. We parked up at a scenic spot with a valley view and soon had **2 female Goshawk** jostling together overhead. Also singing away very close to us was a smart male **Ruppell's Warbler**, not a Warbler we were expecting in the valley. Later we had another **1 Goshawk**, **4 Short-toed Eagles**, **1 Common Buzzard**, **1 Lesser Kestrel** as well as a male **Montagu's Harrier**. We also had an interesting encounter with a dog on a chain across the track which had been chewing on a **Greek Spur-thighed Tortoise**. Chewed around the edges and perhaps a little less spurred, we managed to rescue the Tortoise and point him away from the perplexed dog. Martin spotted our only **Red-backed Shrike** of the trip as we left the valley.

After a brief stop at the Upper East River where we were hoping for the Rufous-bush Chat's return, we headed back down to the salt pans. Here we enjoyed the early evening and well lit views of **2 White Stork**, **2** summer plumaged **Spotted Redshank**, **2 Caspian Tern**, **1 Whiskered Tern**, **8+ Little Tern**, **2 Sanderling**, **1 Great White Egret**, **2 Grey Heron**, **1 (f) Marsh Harrier**, **2 Yellow Wagtail**, **1 Black-headed Wagtail** and a **Squacco Heron**.

Wednesday 23 April

Inland Lake, Skala Sikaminias, Coast road to Eftalou, Molivos, Achlideri, Kalloni Salt pans, Lower East River.

Weather: Sunny and hot - again!

A cool early start saw us at the Inland Lake pre-breakfast. Here we had great views of **2** male **Little Crakes** feeding along the edge of the lake as well as our first **Golden Oriole** in a nearby large mature tree. Also of note were **2 Purple Heron** and **3 Great Reed Warblers**, the Great Reeds giving good scope views!

After breakfast we went to a new location on the coast and ended up in the quaint little harbour village of Skala Sikaminias, with octopus hanging out to dry and colourful fishing boats bobbing on their moorings. There was one species known to frequent the waters around this harbour and after about 10 minutes, one flew in quite close by, a super adult **Audoin's Gull**. It did not stay close for long and soon, after catching a fish, headed out into deeper water where it sat still in view through the scope for sometime. Also of note here were **4 Shag** passing by. After a little photo stop under the octopus we headed off along the coast road towards Eftalou, with not a great deal of note along this track other than **2** gorgeous **Tawny Pipits** which made a brief appearance on the roadside ahead. Several **Masked Shrikes**, **Woodchat Shrikes**, **Subalpine Warblers**, **Orphean Warbler** and a **Starred Agama** were seen. We also saw a colourful **Cream-spot Tiger** moth along the coast path.

We had a great lunch stop in Molivos in a harbour side open café, one of the only ones open early for the season! Surrounded by hungry cats, we had Greek Salad and fresh fish and took in the local ambiance.

We returned briefly to Achlideri to see a Long-eared Owl nest. Here, although well hidden, we spotted **3 Long-eared Owl** chicks high up in the treetops. We were also disappointed to witness a photographer far too close to the Kruper's Nuthatch nest where **2 Kruper's Nuthatch** were on view again and very active, though much less showy with someone so close to their nest hole. Comments went un-heard . . .

We pulled up at the river and bridge near Achlideri as we had spotted a lovely log at the waters edge, covered with small **Balkan Terrapins** and Martin was keen to photograph them. We were all rolling about in laughter after watching Martin's skill and stealth approach to the bridge, only for him to make a last sudden spurt forward at the crucial moment when both Martin and Terrapins made eye contact, causing a mass exodus of Terrapins as they leapt for their lives – we heard them departing from the minibus! The ones that got away

Martin! Unlike the Ruppell's this time eh!?

A lone **Curlew Sandpiper** was noted on a pool in Derbyshire on the way back towards Kalloni and we pressed on for a spell at the Saltpans later afternoon. Of note this time from the wooden hide were **2 Curlew**, **20+ Greenshank** and **161 Greater Flamingos**. Along the track near the car park, a pair of **Serin** were seen, our only Serin of the trip and excellent views were obtained of a hovering **Short-toed Eagle** that also landed for a while! Also **Long-legged Buzzard** and **Common Buzzard** were present. Along into the Saltpans we enjoyed views of 3 Black Stork, a Marsh Harrier, a small flock of newly arrived **Yellow Wagtails**, **8 Flava** and **1 Thunbergi** as well as **2 Black-headed Wagtails** amongst them. Birds were arriving! Later we had a further **6 Short-toed Lark**, a few **Red-throated Pipits** and **6 Bee-eater**.

After refreshment back at the hotel, we took a short drive along the Lower East River. At the crossing we had great views of a stunning **Little Bittern** in the thin vegetation at the waters edge, and we saw our first **Black-headed Bunting** of the trip! At least **4 Nightingales** showed extremely well singing out in the open along the river bank in great evening light and **2 Great Reed Warbler** and **4+ Olivaceous Warblers** were also very active. A superb end to another packed and enjoyable day. After showering and enjoying a cold beer at the hotel, we headed back into town for our 'last supper' together at the local restaurant we had visited on the Saturday before and enjoyed so much. We were equally as pleased with the friendly service and fresh food the second time round!

Thursday 24 April

Lower East River, Kalloni Saltpans, Mytilini Airport, Home.

Weather: Another hot cloudless day with a slight breeze.

Our early morning excursion saw us return to the Lower East River. Here we became aware of an influx of migrants with several **Black-headed Buntings** now evident, and a passing gorgeous male **Red-footed Falcon** along with the usual daily birds. A quick stop off at the Saltpans as we circled our way back saw even more wonderful migrants with several **Red-footed falcons** hunting slowly over a ridge opposite the pans. This spectacle was added to with stunning new marsh terns evident over the pans comprising of several **White-winged Black Terns** and one lone **Black Tern** sat out on posts. Incredible!

After breakfast we spent some time packing and sorting out tips for the Hotel staff. When we were all ready to go we headed back out to the Saltpans for a last bird watch and to try and relocate the birds for those who didn't come on the early morning excursion. Upon arrival we had more great views of the Red-footed Falcons in flight and sat perched up on hilltop vegetation. In total we had **11 Red-footed Falcons** and **2 Lesser Kestrels**. All obtained wonderful views and of **30 White-winged Black Terns** feeding over the saltpans before we made our way to the Lower East River for an early lunch. We sat about near the banks on the East River in the hot sun, enjoying our fresh lunch with **Bee-eaters** hunting around us and I don't think anyone wanted to leave! We had to drag ourselves away to make our trip back to Mytilini and onward to the UK.

With thanks, fond memories and best wishes to you all,

Rebecca Nason and Phil Harris - May 2008.

BIRD LIST

Little Grebe: Noted on 2 days, with 6 birds present at the Kalloni pool on the 18th and 1 present at the Inland Lake on the 23rd.

Great Crested Grebe: 1 in Kalloni bay on 18th and another on the 20th off sheepfields.

Great Cormorant: Noted on 4 days, highest count of 11 on 18th.

European Shag: Seen on 5 days, 10 seen on coast road to Efftalou on 23rd.

Grey Heron: Noted most days. Highest daily count was 8.

Purple Heron: Noted on 4 days, 4 together over salt pans on 18th was highest count.

Great White Egret: Seen on 5 days, most were of single birds.

Little Egret: Noted each day. 40+ on 21st was largest count.

Squacco Heron: Noted each day, maximum count of 12 seen together on the Kalloni Pool on the 22nd.

Black crowned Night Heron: Noted on 2 days. 1st bird was an adult at Inland Lake on 20th, then a bank side flock of 16 (inc 1 Juv) on 21st at the Salt pans.

Little Bittern: Singles noted on 3 days.

Greater Flamingo: Noted each day, largest count of 161 from hide overlooking salt pans on the 23rd.

Black Stork: Seen on 2 days. Highest count was 6 seen separately on 23rd

White Stork: Noted on 4 days, 2 pairs noted at nest, one in Paraskevi and one pair at Papiana.

Glossy Ibis: One bird seen coming into roost with Little Egrets on a wooden jetty at salt pans on 21st.

Ruddy Shelduck: Noted most days, mainly at the salt pans. Highest count was 32 on the 18th, around the salt pans and Derbyshire area.

Common Shelduck: Most days in small numbers.

Garganey: A pair at the salt pans on the 18th and a single male at Kalloni Pool also on the 18th.

Osprey: One over at Papiana on the 18th whilst Scops Owl hunting.

Short-toed Eagle: Seen on 5 days, maximum count was 5 seen during the 22nd.

Montagu's Harrier: Single females noted on 18th at the salt pans and 22nd at Napi Valley. 3 noted on the 20th, 2 at Lower East River and a single at the Salt pans.

Western Marsh Harrier: 3 together over Kalloni Hotel 11 on morning of the 18th. Singles noted on a further 3 days.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk: Singles noted on 18th and 19th.

Northern Goshawk: 3 noted on the 22nd whilst in the Napi Valley, 2 females seen very well jostling together.

Common Buzzard: Noted on 4 days.

Long-legged Buzzard: Noted each day, maximum count of 6 on 18th and 23rd.

Lesser Kestrel: Seen on 4 days, maximum count of 6 on the 19th in the Sigri area.

Common Kestrel: One noted on 18th.

Red footed Falcon: A single male observed flying fast past the East River on the morning of the 24th, then 11 males and females together noted hunting over the hillside opposite the entrance to the salt pans later the same morning.

Eurasian Hobby: Single on the 18th at Derbyshire.

Peregrine: One noted by Martin on way to hotel from airport on 17th.

Lanner Falcon: Single noted over and then perched on rocky outcrop near Skala Kallonis on the 20th.

Little Crane: One seen by leaders at Kalloni Pool on the morning of the 18th, then noted on 2 days at the Inland Lake, one on 19th and 2 on 23rd – all showed well.

Common Moorhen: Noted each day with birds present at the Kalloni pool and the Inland Lake.

Eurasian Coot: Noted each day with at least 4 pairs on the Kalloni pool.

Black-winged Stilt: Noted each day with a large flock of 150+ at the Saltpans. One pair finally arrived at the Kalloni Pool on the 23rd.

Pied Avocet: 300+ most days at the Saltpans.

European Stone Curlew: Singles noted on 3 days, including bird on nest at the West River on the 20th.

Grey Plover: A single bird noted on 20th at the Lower East River mouth.

Greater Ringed Plover: 2 noted on the 20th on Lower East River.

Little Ringed Plover: Observed on 5 days in small numbers.

Kentish Plover: Noted on 4 days, maximum count was of 13 on 18th and pair with young noted at Saltpans on the 23rd.

Eurasian Curlew: 2 at Saltpans on 23rd.

Spotted Redshank: 2 seen on roadside pool near saltpans on 22nd and 23rd.

Marsh Sandpiper: Noted on 2 days, maximum count was 3 at Saltpans on the 18th.

Common Greenshank: 40+ at Saltpans on several occasions.

Wood Sandpiper: Noted in good numbers each day.

Common Sandpiper: One seen on 20th and 21st at Lower East River near ford.

Green Sandpiper: Single at Lower East River ford on 20th.

Sanderling: Observed on 2 days with maximum of 3 on 18th at Saltpans.

Little Stint: Seen on 5 days, maximum of 20+ on 20th.

Temminck's Stint: 4 at Saltpans on 18th, 2 on Lower East river on 22nd.

Curlew Sandpiper: Single o roadside pool at Derbyshire on 23rd.

Ruff: Noted on 3 days, maximum of 3 on 18th.

Common Snipe: One noted on the 19th.

Yellow-legged Gull: Seen daily in good numbers.

Audouin's Gull: One smashing adult at Skala Sikiminias on 23rd.

Common Tern: Seen most days in small numbers.

Whiskered Tern: Observed on 2 days with a maximum of 6 seen at the saltpans on the 18th.

White-winged Black Tern: 30 + noted on the 24th a the Saltpans.

Black Tern: One noted at the Saltpans on the 24th with the WWBT's.

Little Tern: Seen on 5 days with good numbers seen on the 23rd at the Saltpans.

Caspian Tern: 2 sat with Avocets at the Saltpans on the 22nd.

Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon: Noted each day.

European Turtle Dove: Noted most days in small numbers.

Eurasian Collared Dove: Noted each day.

Common Cuckoo: 4 noted in the Napi Valley on the 22nd.

Eurasian Scops Owl: A single bird found roosting near Kalloni on the 19th and again on 20th.

Little Owl: Noted on 4 days, individuals and 2 pairs.

Long-eared Owl: 3 Juv's at the nest at Achlideri on the 23rd.

Alpine Swift: Seen on 3 days in varying small numbers.

Common Swift: Noted every day.

European Bee-eater: Noted on 6 days, maximum of 25+ on 20th.

Hoopoe: Observed on 4 days, one close bird on the track into the Napi Valley on the 22nd, followed by another 10+ that day also with in the Valley. Others observed from the minibus on several occasions.

Middle-spotted Woodpecker: Noted on 3 days. One bird at the nest site south of Petra on the 21st.

Greater short-toed Lark: Noted on 4 days, including 30+ at Sheepfields on the 20th.

Crested Lark: Noted each day. Numerous.

Woodlark: A Couple heard at Ipsilou Monastery on the 20th whilst having lunch.

European Sand Martin: Noted in good numbers each day.

Eurasian Crag Martin: Noted on 4 days, with 8 birds noted between Vatousa and Ipsilou on the 19th.

Barn Swallow: Noted each day.

Red-rumped Swallow: Small numbers on 5 days. 16 sat on wire together at Inland Lake on the 19th.

Common House Martin: Noted each day.

Kingfisher: Single seen by the leaders near Achlideri on the 18th.

Yellow Wagtail: Seen on 3 days, max of 9 on 23rd which included 8 Flava and 1 thunbergi.

Black-headed Wagtail: Seen on 3 days, 8+ at West River on the 20th.

Red-throated Pipit: Observed on 4 days, 30+ at Sheepfields on 20th.

Tawny Pipit: 2 seen on track to Eftalou on 23rd.

Tree Pipit: Noted on 2 days, max on 3 seen on 22nd in Napi Valley.

Red-backed Shrike: Martin had one bird leaving the Napi Valley on the 22nd.

Masked Shrike: Noted on 5 days, 15+ in Napi Valey on the 22nd.

Woodchat Shrike: Noted every day, 9+ on 19th.

(Winter) Wren: Heard only on 3 occasions/days.

Blue Rock Thrush: Noted on 2 days, one individual (male) at the Ipsilou Monastery on the 19th, and another male at the Panoramic Viewpoint on the 21st.

Common Blackbird: Noted each day.

Common Nightingale: Noted each day usually in song but 2 birds gave excellent views. 7+ on 20th, best views in Lower East River.

Whinchat: Noted most days with maximum count of up to 4+.

Common Stonechat: Observed on 4 days.

Northern Wheatear: 6 noted at Ipsilou Monastery on the 19th.

Black eared wheatear: Noted in small numbers every day.

Isabelline wheatear: 4 showing well at Ipsilou Monastery on the 19th.

Cetti's Warbler: Noted each day usually in song but some excellent views were gained by all.

Sedge Warbler: Noted every day, mainly in Kalloni Pool area.

Eurasian Reed Warbler: Noted most days but only in small numbers.

Savi's Warbler: Single tail-less individual was seen singing along the Lower East River on the 20th and 21st.

Great Reed Warbler: Seen on 3 days, highest count was 3 at Inland Lake and 2 at Lower East River on the 23rd.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler: Noted each day.

Olive Tree Warbler: First bird recorded on the Island in 2008 – was a single on the 22nd in the Napi Valley.

Blackcap: One male seen at Lower East River on the 22nd.

Common Whitethroat: Noted on 4 days, highest count was 3 on the 19th.

Lesser Whitethroat: 2 noted on 22nd in Napi Valley.

Orphee warbler: Seen on 4 days, 3 on 21st and 22nd. Derbyshire, Panoramic Viewpoint, Napi Valley. . . .

Ruppell's Warbler: Seen on 2 days. 6+ showing very well at Panoramic Viewpoint on 21st and a singing male in the Napi Valley on the 22nd.

Subalpine Warbler: Noted in small numbers each day.

Sardinian Warbler: Male noted at Panoramic Viewpoint on 21st, a nice surprise!

Spotted Flycatcher: One in Napi valley on 22nd, our only flycatcher of the trip.

Sombre Tit: Noted on 5 days, firstly at the Upper East River and best views had of one confiding individual at the Chapel of the Holy Cross/Parakila on the 20th.

Great Tit: Noted each day.

Blue Tit: Noted each day.

Western Rock Nuthatch: Noted on 4 days in small numbers, nests noted at the Upper East River and at Parakila.

Kruper's Nuthatch: We found the first nest of the year at Achlideri on the 18th, where a pair were watched well. We also returned on the 23rd to see the Long-eared Owls and had views of the Kruper's again then also.

Short-toed Treecreeper: Single noted at Achlideri on the 18th.

Eurasian Jay: Noted in small numbers each day.

Hooded Crow: Noted in good numbers each day.

Common Raven: See on 2 days, highest count was of 4 on the 22nd.

Golden Oriole: Seen on 2 days, 12+ showed very well in the Napi Valley on the 22nd and single male at the Inland Lake on the 23rd.

Corn Bunting: Noted each day. A numerous bird in lesvos.

Cinereous Bunting: 2 superb singing males at Ipsilou Monastery on the 19th.

Cretzschmar's Bunting: Noted in small numbers every day.

Cirl Bunting: Noted on 4 days in small numbers.

Black-headed Bunting: First one noted on the 23rd in the Lower East River, then several more noted the following morning along the same stretch.

Ortolan Bunting: 5 together in the Napi Valley on the 22nd.

Common Chaffinch: Noted most days in good numbers.

European Serin: Pair noted at the Salt pans on the 23rd.

European Greenfinch: Noted most days, common.

European Goldfinch: Noted in reasonable numbers most days.

Common Linnet: Noted each day.

House Sparrow: Noted each day.

Spanish Sparrow: Noted each day. 30+ flocks seen on several occasions.

Rock Sparrow: One noted at Ipsilou Monastery on the 19th.

MAMMALS

Bat sp: Noted around the hotel on several evenings.

Persian Squirrel: Noted on 4 days, max of 4 on 19th. First one near Achlideri on 19th.

Eastern Hedgehog: A dead one (road casualty) noted on the 19th.

AMPHIBIANS

Common Tree Frog: Singles at Derbyshire on 18th, Inland Lake on 20th.

Marsh Frog: Noted each day in large numbers in appropriate habitat.

Levant Water Frog: Single noted at Parakila on the 20th.

REPTILES

Starred Agama: Noted on 4 days.

Turkish Gecko: 7 at the Chapel of the Holy Cross on the 20th.

Balkan Wall Lizard: Noted on 3 day in small numbers.

Balkan Green Lizard: Noted 2 days, with 3 on the 20th.

Spur-thighed Tortoise: Just 2 found on the 22nd, including one rescued from a mad dog.

Balkan Terrapin: Noted most days with good views of sunbathing individuals.

Dice Snake: Phil had one at the Inland Lake on the 20th.

Large Whip Snake: One dead at roadside on the 19th on way back from Ipsilou.

BUTTERFLIES

Swallowtail: 6+ Lower East River on 20th.

Scarce Swallowtail: Noted on 2 days.

Eastern Festoon: Noted on 5 days.

Large White: Noted each day.

Small White: Noted each day.

Eastern Dappled White: Noted on 5 days.

Orange Tip: Noted every day.

Clouded Yellow: Noted every day.

Small Copper: Noted on 3 days.

Brown Argus: 1 noted on 18th.

Holly Blue: 2 noted on 2 days.

Common Blue: 2 noted on 23rd.

Red Admiral: Noted every day.

Painted Lady: Noted every day.

Meadow Brown: Noted on 2 days.

Small Heath: Noted on 4 days.

Wall Brown: Noted on 3 days.

Orbed Red Underwing Skipper: A single at the Chapel of the Holy Cross.

MOTHS

Cream Spot Tiger: Single near Efttalou on 23rd.

Four-dotted Wave: Single on 20th.

Straw Belle: Single on 20th.

Giant Peacock Moth: Male found near light source and female found dead on road near Potamia Valley. (21st).

Striped Hawkmoth: One found on 21st.

Silver Y: Several in Napi Valley on 22nd.

DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES

Red-veined Darter: A few seen on 19th in Melodia Valley.

Norfolk Hawker: Single on 19th in Melodia Valley.

OTHER INSECTS

Egyptian Grasshopper: 3 of what is believed to be this species noted.

Violet Carpenter Bee: Singles only noted on 3 days.

Eyed Elator: One noted at Achlideri on 18th.

Giant Centipede: One at the Salt pans on the 18th.

Snakefly, *Atlantoraphidia maculicollis*: Seen on 22nd in Napi Valley.

Longhorn Beetle sp: One noted in the Melodia Valley.

PLANTS

Many of the plants seen during this trip are listed in the separate Plant List sent out to the Group members before the trip. Below are a few of the plants identified on this particular tour. The following is to be continued – any records most welcome!!

<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	Common Mallow
<i>Cistus creticus</i>	Cretan Cistus
<i>Tamarisk spp.</i>	Tamarisk
<i>Lysimachia atropurpurea</i>	Purple Loosestrife
<i>Echium plantagineum</i>	Purple Viper's Bugloss
<i>Verbascum sinuatum</i>	Greek Mullein
<i>Phragmites communis</i>	Common Reed
<i>Anemone coronaria</i>	Crown Anemone
<i>Anemone pavonina</i>	Peacock Anemone
<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	Navelwort
<i>Laburnum anagyroides</i>	Laburnum
<i>Spartium junceum</i>	Spanish Broom
<i>Glaucium flavum</i>	Yellow Horned Poppy
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Common Poppy
<i>Carpobrotus acinaciformis</i>	Red Hottentot Fig
<i>Ficus carica</i>	Fig
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	Sweet Chestnut
<i>Quercus ilex</i>	Holm Oak
<i>Pinus brutia</i>	Calabrian Pine
<i>Pinus pinea</i>	Stone Pine
<i>Urtica atrovirens</i>	Stinging Nettle
<i>Briza maxima</i>	Large Quaking Grass
<i>Platanus orientalis</i>	Oriental Plane
<i>Anthemis arvensis</i>	Corn Camomile
<i>Anchusa officinalis</i>	Alkanet
<i>Sarcopoterium spinosum</i>	Spiny Burnet
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Euphorbia dendroides</i>	Tree Spurge
<i>Euphorbia helioscopia</i>	Sun Spurge
<i>Euphorbia characias</i>	Large Mediterranean Spurge
<i>Olea europaea</i>	Olive
<i>Echium spp.</i>	
<i>Campanula rapunculus</i>	Rampion Bellflower
<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	Cornflower
<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	Common Lavender
<i>Medicago sp</i>	Small Medick?
<i>Campanula spp.</i>	
<i>Crepis rubra</i>	Pink Hawksbeard
<i>Tulipa orphanidea</i>	Wild Tulip spp.
<i>Ornithogalum nutans</i>	Large Star of Bethlehem

<i>Gladiolus orientalis</i>	Oriental Iris
<i>Gynandriris sisyinchium</i>	Barbary Nut
<i>Dracunculus vulgaris</i>	Common Dragon Arum
<i>Arum conophalloides</i>	Eastern Arum
<i>Aspodelus aestivus</i>	Common Asphodel
<i>Limodorum abortivum</i>	Violet Bird's Nest Orchid
<i>Serapias parviflora</i>	Small-flowered Tongue Orchid
<i>Orchis ?</i>	Loose-flowered Orchid

Rebecca Nason & Phil Harris, April 2008

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