

Lesvos 6-8 May 2011

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Highlights: *Black Stork, Ruddy Shelduck, Levant Sparrowhawk, Red-footed Falcon, Long-legged Buzzard, Baillon's Crake, Eastern Orphean Warbler, Kruper's Nuthatch, Isabelline Wheatear, Sombre Tit, Masked Shrike, Cinereous Bunting, Cretzchmar's Bunting, Rock Sparrow*

This is a trip report for this years' long weekend in spring. Last year [GreeceBirdTours](http://www.GreeceBirdTours.com) was at Lake Kerkini & Porto Lagos Lagoons, so this year we decided to go east. The island of **Lesvos** is definitely one of the top european destination. Plenty of bird species and, compared to the rest of Greece, birds seem less shy, and can easier be approached.

We stayed 2 nights at [Hotel Pasiphae](#) in Skala Kallonis. Very friendly staff, big rooms and the most updated birding log in Lesvos. This is mainly due to [Steve Dudley](#), an avid bird guide that uses the hotel as his base for his day trips in spring. Steve's book "[A Birdwatching Guide to Lesvos](#)" was accompanying us during these days, we found most information accurate and very detailed. We rented our car at "[Tsalis](#)" a 1.200cc Opel Corsa, no need to rent a 4x4, since the most roads are in very good condition. "[Tsalis](#)" also rents mini vans, suitable for 6-8 persons, however those that carry big lenses would need more spaces, therefore 6 would be their maximum capacity.

During these days we slept for about 8 hours in total & drove 700km. We shot around 1500-2000 picture each, filling our 8GB cards, especially around Kalloni Pools and Parakoila. The first night we ate at Ag. Paraskevi, while he second night at Kalloni, both nights excellent traditional food, rather cheap (around 15 euros, drinks included).

Flight from Athens with [Aegean Airlines](#), costs 170 euros, flight is 30min long.

Day 1: KALLONI AREA Mesa, Kalloni Saltpans, Alykes Pools, Tsiknias River, Metochi Lake, Potamia Reservoir, Parakoila

The first day we stayed around Kalloni area. The first highlight was the **Black Stork** at Kalloni Saltpans, enjoyed by numerous birders since the bird was fishing a few meters away from the road.



Black Stork @ Kalloni (Photo by Spyros Skareas)



Ruddy Shelduck @ Kalloni (Photo by Spyros Skareas)

Ruddy Shelducks were also there, together with a singly **Cattle Egret**. Six species of Terns (**Whiskered, White-winged, Black, Gull-billed, Little, Common**) were flying above us, and most times so close to us you could almost touch them. Kalloni wetland is unique in this matter, since the roads are inside the wetland, rather than around it, like more wetlands in Greece. Other highlights were **Lesser Grey Shrike** (just beyond the observation tower), **Spanish Sparrows, Black-winged Stilts** and of course **Red-footed Falcons** right beside the beach. We also saw **Montagu's and Pallid Harriers**.



Olivaceous Warbler @ Tsiknias River (Photo by Spyros Skareas)

At Tsiknias River, a **Middle Spotted Woodpecker** passed in front of our car, headed to the olive orchards. The area is great for bird photography, because the road is just beside the river, while the trees and bushes are at the eye level from your car window. We had **singing Black-headed Buntings, Nightingales, Purple Heron, Little Bittern, Woodchat Shrike**, not to mention the numerous **Spotted Flycatchers, Crested Larks, all hirundines, herons and egrets**.



Black-headed Bunting @ Tsiknias River (Photo by Spyros Skareas)

Heading west to Metochi Lake and Potamis Reservoir, we looked for cranes, but was too late (afternoon). We got a beautiful active nest of **Rock Nuthatch** just beside the road, as well as **Subalpine Warbler** and **Whitethroat**.



Goshawk @ Parakoila (Photo by Felix Rehsteiner)

We ended up at Parakoila. After the village, we turned right at the Agios Ioannis little chapel and started to hike up the hill (there is a paved road as well). This site was one of the top ones in our trip, since we had **Gowshawk**, **Eastern Orphean Warbler**, **Oriole**, **Sombre Tit**, **Cretzschmar's Buntings** and one of Lesvos' major birding attractions, **Cinereous Buntings**.



Cinereous Bunting @ Parakoila (Photo by Spyros Skareas)



Cretzschmar's Bunting @ Parakoila (Photo by Spyros Skareas)

DAY 2: THE WILD WEST. Metochi Lake, Skalochoi, Agios Taxiarchis, Lardia Valley, Ispilou Monastery, Sigri, Eressos,

We knew from the Hotel Pasiphae bird blog that **Baillons' Crake** was at Metochi Lake, so we woke up at 5:30 am and at 6 we were at the site. The bird was there, moving around the reeds and gave us several good pictures, together with **Little Crake, Night Heron and Little Bittern**.



Baillon's Crake & Little Bittern @ Metochi Lake (Photo by Spyros Skareas)

We started to drive north-west, to Skalochoi. At Agios Taxiarchis we had our first **Masked Shrike** (we saw this species around Achladeri as well) and Hoopoe.

The western part of the island (Ipsilou, Sigri, Petrified Forest, Eressos) is a dry rocky land, with beautiful landscape views and chances to see some rare vagrants. We were not as lucky in the later, but managed to see **breeding Rock Sparrows, Isabelline Wheater, Levant Sparrowhawk, Ravens, Short-toed Eagles, Long-legged Buzzards, Isabelline Wheatear**. Simply driving the Sigri-Eressos road is a unique unforgettable experience.



Rock Nuthatch @ Metochi Lake (Photo by Spyros Skareas)



Levant Sparrowhawk @ Eressos (Photo by Felix Rehsteiner)



Masked Shrike @ Agios Taxiarchis (Photo by Spyros Skareas)

DAY 3: Napi Valley, Platania, Achladeri Forest, Polychnitos Salt pans, Keramia

We wanted to see **Kruper's Nuthatch**, the second Lesvos highlight. So we headed to Achaderi forest, after a not so productive early morning in Napi Valley. It's worth trying all roads around Achladeri, because the main pick-nick point might be full of birders and thus birds stay hidden. After a while, we got nice shots of this most-wanted Lesvos species.



Kruper's Nuthatch @ Achladeri Forest (Photo by Spyros Skareas)



Sombre Tit @ Napi Valley (Photo by Spyros Skareas)



Eastern Orphean Warbler @ Meladia Valley, Sigri (Photo by Spyros Skareas)

Polychnitos Salt pans and Keramia added a few more species to our list, such as **Turnstone, Curlew Sandpipers, Zitting Cisticola, Shag, Collared Pratincole, Red-backed Shrike**



Red-footed Falcon @ Eressos (Photo by Spyros Skareas)

Overall, we saw **126 species** in 36 hours of birding during these 2.5 days.

Special thanks to

- [Steve Dudley's book](#)
- Vasilis Vogiatzis, manager of [Hotel Pasiphae](#)
- Michalis Tsalis, manager of [Tsalis Rent a Car](#)
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Below is the complete bird list (highlight species in **bold**)

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Black-throated Diver (<i>Gavia arctica</i>)	1	Alpine Swift (<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>)
Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>)	Scarce	Common Swift (<i>Apus apus</i>)
European Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>)	1	Pallid Swift (<i>Apus pallidus</i>)
Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>)		European Bee-eater (<i>Merops apiaster</i>)
Purple Heron (<i>Ardea purpurea</i>)		Hoopoe (<i>Upupa epops</i>)
Great Egret (<i>Ardea alba</i>)		Middle Spotted Woodpecker (<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>)
Little Egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>)		Greater Short-toed Lark (<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>)
Cattle Egret (<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>)	1	Crested Lark (<i>Galerida cristata</i>)
Squacco Heron (<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>)		Eurasian Skylark (<i>Alauda arvensis</i>)
Black-crowned Night Heron (<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>)		Wood Lark (<i>Lullula arborea</i>)
Little Bittern (<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>)		Collared Sand Martin (<i>Riparia riparia</i>)
Black Stork (<i>Ciconia nigra</i>)		Barn Swallow (<i>Hirundo rustica</i>)
Eurasian White Stork (<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>)		Northern House Martin (<i>Delichon urbicum</i>)
Glossy Ibis (<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>)		Red-rumped Swallow (<i>Cecropis daurica</i>)
Greater Flamingo (<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>)		Tree Pipit (<i>Anthus trivialis</i>)
Ruddy Shelduck (<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>)		White Wagtail (<i>Motacilla alba</i>)
Common Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)		Black-headed Wagtail (<i>Motacilla feldegg</i>)
Short-toed Eagle (<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>)	Common	Common Blackbird (<i>Turdus merula</i>)
Eurasian Marsh Harrier (<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>)	Common	Blue Rock-thrush (<i>Monticola solitarius</i>)
Montagu's Harrier (<i>Circus pygargus</i>)	1	Nightingale (<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>)
Levant Sparrowhawk (<i>Accipiter brevipes</i>)	1	Whinchat (<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>)
Northern Goshawk (<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>)	1	European Stonechat (<i>Saxicola torquata</i>)
Common Buzzard (<i>Buteo buteo</i>)	Scarce	Northern Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>)
Long-legged Buzzard (<i>Buteo rufinus</i>)	Scarce	Black-eared Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>)
Common Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)		Isabelline Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>)
Red-footed Falcon (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)		Spotted Flycatcher (<i>Muscicapa striata</i>)
Eleonora's Falcon (<i>Falco eleonorae</i>)		Collared Flycatcher (<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>)
Chukar (<i>Alectoris chukar</i>)		Zitting Cisticola (<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>)
Little Crake (<i>Porzana parva</i>)	2	Cetti's Warbler (<i>Cettia cetti</i>)
Baillon's Crake (<i>Porzana pusilla</i>)	1	Sedge Warbler (<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>)
Common Moorhen (<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>)		Reed Warbler (<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>)
Common Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>)		Marsh Warbler (<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>)
Black-winged Stilt (<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>)		Great Reed Warbler (<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>)
Pied Avocet (<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>)		Eastern Olivaceous Warbler (<i>Hippolais pallida</i>)
Stone-curlew (<i>Burhinus oedipnemos</i>)	1	Icterine Warbler (<i>Hippolais icterina</i>)
Collared Pratincole (<i>Glaucopis pratensis</i>)	1	Wood Warbler (<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>)
Little Plover (<i>Charadrius dubius</i>)		Blackcap (<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>)
Kentish Plover (<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>)		Eastern Orphean Warbler (<i>Sylvia crassirostris</i>)
Green Sandpiper (<i>Tringa ochropus</i>)		Whitethroat (<i>Sylvia communis</i>)
Common Sandpiper (<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>)		Subalpine Warbler (<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>)
Ruddy Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>)	3	Sardinian Warbler (<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>)
Little Stint (<i>Calidris minuta</i>)		Long-tailed Tit (<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>)
Temminck's Stint (<i>Calidris temminckii</i>)		Sombre Tit (<i>Poecile lugubris</i>)
Curlew Sandpiper (<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>)		Great Tit (<i>Parus major</i>)
Ruff (<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>)		Blue Tit (<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>)
Western Yellow-legged Gull (<i>Larus michahellis</i>)		Kruper's Nuthatch (<i>Sitta krueperi</i>)
Black-headed Gull (<i>Larus ridibundus</i>)		Rock Nuthatch (<i>Sitta neumayer</i>)
Gull-billed Tern (<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>)		Red-backed Shrike (<i>Lanius collurio</i>)
Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>)		Lesser Grey Shrike (<i>Lanius minor</i>)
Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>)		Masked Shrike (<i>Lanius nubicus</i>)
White-winged Tern (<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>)		Woodchat Shrike (<i>Lanius senator</i>)
Black Tern (<i>Chlidonias niger</i>)		Eurasian Jay (<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>)
European Turtle Dove (<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>)		Eurasian Magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>)
Eurasian Collared Dove (<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>)		Hooded Crow (<i>Corvus cornix</i>)
Eurasian Scops Owl (<i>Otus scops</i>)		Common Raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>)
Tawny Owl (<i>Strix aluco</i>)		House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)
Little Owl (<i>Athene noctua</i>)		Spanish Sparrow (<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>)

Lesvos (continued)

Rock Sparrow (*Petronia petronia*)

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

European Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*)

European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

Common Linnet (*Acanthis cannabina*)

Cirl Bunting (*Emberiza cirlus*)

Cinereous Bunting (*Emberiza cineracea*)

Cretzschmar's Bunting (*Emberiza caesia*)

Black-headed Bunting (*Emberiza melanocephala*)

Corn Bunting (*Emberiza calandra*)

