

## Croatia 4.9. – 11.9.2016 (Split area, Krka NP and Vis Island)

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We hereby present short notes about birding in Split area. This was mainly a family vacation with some casual birding. Most of our (UP, MM) observations have been entered to eBird database.

### 4.9

Arrival to Split airport and short easy drive to Kastel Stari where we had booked an apartment for two families. Villa Jaman (43.554144, 16.353659) was very clean and cosy, everything worked smoothly. Traffic here is generally very polite and slow. Birding in the first evening was limited to the closest surroundings of the hotel – not the most productive habitat as you would expect. Golden Orioles were always around (max 4).



### 5.9

First try at Rock Partridge. We didn't have any background info about the occurrence of this species in this general area so we (UP, MM) went out just by checking suitable habitat. We heard the first Rock Partridges in the first 15 minutes (the location is at 43.615395, 16.333501) but birds refused to show. Also one Woodlark was in the area and few other commoner species like Jay, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Chiffchaff. Despite the nice habitat around, the local birdlife seemed to be very quiet. Due to family duties we had to retreat to the hotel. 3 Short-toed Snake Eagles were flying around here with nice flock of swifts of all three possible species. The next destination was Otok Ciovo island which wasn't the smartest move. The bridges connecting Trogir town with the island were packed with tourists so we had to wait 30+ minutes both ways to get on and out of the island. Traffic jams here are common as locals said so early morning hours are preferred for commuting. Very quiet on the island birdwise but Margus managed to see one Eastern Orphean Warbler at Okrug Gornji where we visited a nice seafood restaurant. Turtle Doves were common and showy here. Afternoon brought heavy rain.



## 6.9

Early in the morning all three of us headed back to the partridge site. We saw one Nightjar on the way there. Finding the partridges was easier this time as we knew the exact location. After hearing the calls, Uku manages to see first bird on a rock. Soon there were 6 birds in a tight flock showing nicely albeit too distant for photography. In a few minutes juvenile Goshawk showed up and sat few meters from the partridges (check the photo below) who took cover immediately. The Goshawk didn't get its prey and we didn't get any photos. On the way back towards our hotel we found 4 Sombre Tits. Daytime was spent at Krka National Park. The place is nice but for birding purposes you should choose morning hours and sidetracks. The main tourist site around the waterfalls is crowded with thousands of tourists. Mariliis and Margus manage to hear one Lesser Spotted Woodpecker here and Short-toed Snake Eagles flies by. On the way back to Kastel Stari we have a short stop near Trogir at Pantan pond (43.529809, 16.277750). Among other birds we see Red-rumped Swallow and 2 Black-necked Grebes here. The place is worth a second look.



## 7. - 8.9

Uku and Mariliis head to Vis island with 11:00 Jadrolinja ferry. Beware that parking at Split port is very expensive and getting a decent rental car on Vis island can be tricky. The buses between Vis and Komiza are numerous so if you don't have little kids (or even so) you don't necessarily need a car on the island. We stayed in Komiza at Karmela apartment. This place was in the center of the city just next to sea (you could feed the gulls from hotel window). Our host Petra was very helpful with organizing us a rental car (old Fiat Punto) and the hotel itself was really amazing. Highly recommended. You can go swimming just next to the apartment

door (which i was forced to do when our kid throw up a chair cover from the apartment window). Actually we got our best views of Eleonora's Falcon from the hotel balcony. At least 3 birds including one dark and one pale morph were circling above the cliffs overlooking the town. We could also see at least 5 falcons hovering at N tip of Bisevo island (8.9 km from here) which were also Eleonora's based on the location and the behaviour of the birds. The next day we also saw one pale morph bird at Vis town. The birds were not as easy to find as you might expect and the views were quite distant. We did a circle around the island seeing some light raptor movement (1 Black Kite, 13 + 5 Marsh Harriers, 6 Honey Buzzards, 1 Peregrine, 1 Goshawk, 2 Sparrowhawks, 1 Kestrel and few Common Buzzards). At Rukavac there was Squacco Heron on the coastal cliffs. Couple of more distant falcons left unidentified. Seawatching from the ferry was disappointing because of lots of effort we didn't see any shearwaters. Cory's should be regular here.



#### 9.9

Uku does some birding at Pantana pond. The place has some reedbeds and scrub surrounding a pond and small channels. At least 8 Little Grebes, 1 Black-necked Grebe, 4 Water Rails, 1 Kingfisher, 1 Dunlin, 2 Common Sandpipers, 2 Zitting Cisticolas, 1 Red-backed Shrike, 2 Savi's Warblers, Great Reed Warblers and Spanish Sparrows were here. Also nice movement of Tree Pipits (80+) and Yellow Wagtails (25+) was going on. Probably thousands passed the coastline here today. Mari and Uku head to Peruca Lake in the daytime. Sinj town is a nice place and the parks here could have even some birding potential. The northern shores of Peruca Lake (near Garjak) have some swimming possibilities and we stop here. There are some coots and grebes (including one Slavonian) on the lake and the scrub here holds many passerines (Spotted Flycatchers, Red-backed Shrikes, Sylvia warblers, Common Nightingale, Hawfinches and Hoopoe). Also some raptors are around (2 Hobbys, Short-toed Snake Eagle).



#### 10.9

Morning birding is skipped and we head out later. At Brocanac (43.616446, 16.494250) there's a small cemetery where we had very good views of Sombre Tits and other birds here included Firecrest, Hobby and Cirl Bunting. We moved on to Donji Muc forests (43.697226,

16.469626) for a quick scan. We found 1 Green Woodpecker, many Long-tailed Tits, Coal Tits, Spotted Flycatchers, Mistle Thrush, Common Whitethroat and Common Redstart here. Nice area which could be productive in early morning. In the afternoon Uku does some raptorwatching at the hotel and sees 1 subadult Golden Eagle and a flock of 55 Honey Buzzards heading to SE.



11.9  
Heading back home to Tallinn. At least 96 species recorded by all of us.