

Cyprus 20.07-26.07.2018

Uku & Mariliis Paal



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Despite being well-visited birding destination, there are not many Cyprus trip reports available from July - the hot season.

Two of us spent a week in the western part of the island. We managed to cover many good areas in a relaxed pace, seeing more than we expected. All our observations are recorded in eBird. We use Google Maps co-ordinates for important sites.

20.07

Late flight from Tallinn with Ryanair and arrival very early morning. Luckily the rental car service works 24/7 and we head out soon. Getting used with the left-sided traffic goes smoothly and the roads are in good shape. The first bird is a Cyprus Scops Owl (split by IOC) singing at a first random spot near Paramali. It's singing actively but doesn't show. Also a singing Nightjar and night-migrating Green Sandpiper are heard here. We park at Kensington Cliffs (34.666669, 32.862241) for a short nap in the car and wake up when it's light enough to start birding. Eleonora's Falcons are easy to spot (at least 22 ind) and there are some Griffon Vultures and Shags resting on the cliffs as well. A nice flock of Alpine Swifts hurtles by and Chukar family run around the maquis. Falcons give a nice spectacle and some fly by very close. An adult Peregrine seems to be territorial here and we get perfect scope views. It's a short drive to Akrotiri area from here. Short scan from Ladies Mile hide (34.642430, 33.003424) produces some expected wetland species and many dragonflies. A wet patch close-by (34.633861, 32.994315) is very good for waders and we decide to come here again in earlier hours. In daytime the heat is just too much. After being exhausted from the flight we hit the road to reach our homestay at Kathikas village. Michalis Anoyia Traditional Stonehouse is a cosy place and the village itself fairly quiet. Good place to stay for a birder. There are many orchard trails around the village and we do a short walk here (at 34.911428, 32.430279) in the evening seeing some Red-rumped Swallows, Olivaceous Warblers, Long-legged Buzzard, Masked Shrikes, Cyprus Wheatears, Cretzschmar's Buntings and other open country birds. Several species of butterflies are also seen.



21.07

We head out in the dark towards Akamas peninsula hoping to do some sea watching. Unfortunately the last part of the road is not accessible with a small vehicle and we can't reach the cape at all. So we resort to birding around Baths of Aphrodite Botanical Park (35.056151, 32.345142) and also cover the mountain trail (35.056983, 32.342646) here. Nice place, but nothing shocking here birdwise. Jersey Tiger (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*) is found at the baths. One *Phylloscopus* manages to escape without ID. It could be something exciting, as Phyllos are not common in these months on the island. Tried for Cyprus Warbler here with no result. Small beach nearby is a perfect place for a swim. After a nap in Kathikas we head to Mavrokolykos Dam . Several Rollers are posing south from our village on the way. The heat at Mavrokolykos Dam (left our car at 34.861143, 32.403147) is killer but we relentlessly carry on birding finding our first Cyprus Warblers here among commoner birds. The dam itself has a Grey Heron as the only waterbird here. Don't expect to see much on these artificial lakes in midsummer. Continuing back, towards Kathikas we make a longer walk at a valley south-west from Akoursos (34.886070, 32.397629). It's a good spot for Cyprus Warblers, Cyprus Wheatears, Olivaceous Warblers, Cretzschmar's Buntings and Masked Shrikes. A Little Owl poses near Akoursos while we drive back to our place.



22.07

Early start again to avoid the heat and hordes of tourists as Avakas Gorge is a popular site among visitors (carpark at 34.920440, 32.337789). It's a spectacular place. Birders usually come here in colder season to see wintering Wallcreepers. We don't keep our hopes high for this species in July but still keep our eyes on the rocky walls. There are dozens of Chukars here and a lone Mouflon stares at us from a cliff. Local Peregrine is overlooking the area and is probably happy here with all the Feral Pigeons, Jackdaws and Chukars around. After two hours here we slowly head back to the parking place when i hear Mari shouting "Wallcreeper!" bit further away. I miss the bird obviously as it flies higher up the valley and doesn't show anymore. An unexpected sighting, as the species is not considered to breed here. After obligatory swim and nap we drive further north to pine forest area. At Evretou Dam (34.976724, 32.473443) we find Long-legged Buzzard, Coot and 2 Moorhen. Not too exciting. Also the pine forests higher up are almost birdless in that heat, Coal Tits being the only vocal birds here.



23.07

Back to Akrotiri again and a very productive morning at Ladies Mile salinas. Broad-billed Sandpiper shows well and we are surprised to see and hear two species of crane here mid-summer. Baillons Crane is singing actively and makes short flights few times. Gull-billed Tern, Whiskered Tern, Greater Flamingoes, Collared Pratincoles, Glossy Ibises are nice to see as well. As we haven't seen several local woodland birds we head to Trodos area from here. Finding the local subspecies of Red Crossbill, Eurasian Jay and Short-toed Treecreeper proves easy. Also Hoopoe and Serin show here. We recommend quiet trail at 34.933141, 32.872090. This area seems to be good for butterflies as well. Hummingbird Hawkmoth (*Macroglossum stellatarum*) is an impressive creature. We check the Ladies Miles hide on the way back. One Spur-winged Lapwing is here. Evening round south from Kathikas village offers good views of 4 Bonellis Eagles. We manage to hear two Scops Owls in fading daylight and approach one bird very close but can't locate where it is in thick foliage. Apparently too close as it flies off just 50 cm from my head but only Mari sees when it flushes. Unbelievable camouflage.

24.07

We try to take our revenge on the Wallcreeper again at Avakas gorge. Two hours of unsuccessful attempt. We give up before wave of tourists arrives and spend the day

sightseeing at Paphos. Very hot weather again. In the late evening another revenge project at Akoursos valley. Cyprus Scops Owls are more showy this time and we manage to see one very well. While driving back to Kathikas there's a Little Owl on the road just five metres from our car headlights, picking an insect from asphalt.



25.7

This morning brings a change of habitat as we visit Akrotiri Marsh at first. The hide at 34.626824, 32.937968 has higher reeds and a small pond with Ferruginous Ducks. The central hide at 34.631738, 32.933139 is in more open habitat. Good selection of birds in the area, most noteworthy being Black Francolins showing very nicely. Another lifer for Mari is a Spectacled Warbler - a family group is active in the coastal scrub. A short stop at Kensington Cliffs in the mid-day heat for Eleonora's spectacle and then back to hotel for siesta. The local Bonelli's Eagles show nicely again on the way back to Kathikas.



26.7

Morning birding around Kathikas village with quality time among Rollers and Masked Shrikes is our last ornithological adventure.

Acknowledgements: Jane Stylianou, David Sparrow and Eddie John helped us with identifying some of the following species.

Birds (89 species seen) following IOC taxonomy:

Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
Chukar Partridge	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>
Black Francolin	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>
Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>
Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>
Baillon's Crake	<i>Porzana pusilla</i>
Spotted Crake	<i>Porzana porzana</i>
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Spur-winged Lapwing	<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>
Broad-billed Sandpiper	<i>Calidris falcinellus</i>
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Cyprus Scops Owl	<i>Otus cyprius</i>

Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>
European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>
European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Eleonora's Falcon	<i>Falco eleonora</i>
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Masked Shrike	<i>Lanius nubicus</i>
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Iduna pallida</i>
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
warbler sp.	<i>Phylloscopus sp.</i>
Spectacled Warbler	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
Cyprus Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanothorax</i>
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>
Cyprus Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe cypriaca</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>
Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>
Cretzschmar's Bunting	<i>Emberiza caesia</i>

Butterflies:

Colias crocea, Kathikas 20.7.18 & Trodos 23.7.18
Pieris brassicae, Kathikas 26.7.18
Pieris rapae, Kathikas 20.7.18 & common elsewhere
Pontia daplidice, Trodos 23.7.18
Vanessa cardui, Kathikas 20.7.18 & Trodos 23.7.18
Hipparchia syriaca, Baths of Aphrodite, 21.7.18
Maniola cypricola, Kathikas 20.7.18
Lasiommata maera, Kathikas 20.7.18
Lasiommata megera, Kathikas 26.7.18
Chazara briseis larnacana, Avakas Valley, 22.7.18
Celastrina argiolus, Baths of Aphrodite, 21.7.18
Polyommatus icarus, Kathikas 20.7.18
Chilades trochylus, Kathikas 26.7.18
Lampides boeticus, Kathikas 20.7.18
Leptotes pirithous, Kathikas 26.7.18
Carcharodus alceae, Kathikas 20.7.18

Dragonflies:

Chalcolestes parvidens, Avakas Valley, 22.7.18
Ishnura elegans, Ladies Mile Salinas 25.7.18
Anax parthenope, Ladies Mile Salinas 25.7.18
Orthetrum brunneum, Ladies Mile Salinas 25.7.18
Orthetrum coerulescens anceps, Baths of Aphrodite, 21.7.18
Orthetrum chrysostigma, Ladies Mile Salinas 25.7.18
Orthetrum sabina, Ladies Mile Salinas 25.7.18
Sympetrum fonscolombii, Ladies Mile Salinas 25.7.18
Crocothemis erythraea, Ladies Mile Salinas 25.7.18
Trithemis annulata, Ladies Mile Salinas 25.7.18
Trithemis festiva, Avakas Valley, 22.7.18

Reptiles:

Cyprus Whip Snake (*Hierophis cypriensis*), Paphos forest
Starred Agama (*Laudakia stellio cypriaca*), common
Snake-eyed Lizard (*Ophisops elegans*)
Spiny-footed Lizard (*Acanthodactylus schreiberi*)
Troodos Lizard (*Phoenicolacerta troodica*)

Mammals:

Ovis orientalis, Avakas Valley, 22.7.18
Vulpes vulpes, Kathikas, 26.7.18