



## Crete 24 September to 06 October 2006

Not a birding holiday at all, just a couple of early morning bike rides along the coast from Platania (around 13km west of Chania on the northern coast) towards Tavronitis, a couple of dawn trips to Aghia Lake and a day out in a hire car (with children). In other words rather less than usual, even for a family holiday. Generally plenty of birds to be seen all over the place – though often hard to obtain good views. Cetti's and Sardinian Warbler everywhere, along with huge flocks of hirundines on the move. Common Buzzard were plentiful in all but the most built up of areas.

Bearing in mind the few hours spent actually birding, the total of over 70 species was not too disappointing. All in all Crete was again a fantastic place to visit from all points of view with the exception of the continuing development along the coast making it difficult to get away from things without heading inland.

We were once again lucky with the choice of hotel – all the 100s of Cory's Shearwater, all but one of the many Eleonora's falcons and the vast majority of European Shag were seen from the hotel balcony. On some days raptors (largely Common Buzzard and Marsh Harriers) could be seen flying in off the sea and flocks of Little Egret and Grey Heron were regular heading west along the coast – all visible from the hotel room.

A hire car (or even a day spent birding properly) would have no doubt increased the number and variety of birds further.

Highlights were all from 04 October – in the form of a light phase Booted Eagle at Aghia Lake, good numbers of Griffon Vultures in the hills, Cirl Bunting at Omalos and the Chough flock at Samaria. For a Norwegian birder the good numbers of Kingfisher both along the coast and at Aghia Lake were another undoubted highlight.

Itinerary was as follows:

- 27<sup>th</sup> September: cycle along the coast to Tavronitis
- 29<sup>th</sup> September: cycle to Aghia Lake
- 30<sup>th</sup> September: cycle to Aghia Lake
- 04<sup>th</sup> October: drive to Omalos and Samaria Gorge
- 05<sup>th</sup> October: cycle to Tavronitis



Samaria Gorge, a good site for Red-billed Chough, Crag Martin and Griffon Vultures



Aghia Lake, full of birds on each visit



Common Buzzard / Musvåk – the commonest raptor by far



Red-rumped Swallow / Amursvale



Cattle Egret / Kuhegre



Greater Flamingo – origins uncertain



Yellow Wagtail / Gulerle



Kentish Plover / Hvitbrystlo



## Species List

### Explanation of numbers

- \* Less than 10
- \*\* 10s (10-99)
- \*\*\* 100s (100 -999)
- \*\*\*\* 1000s (1000+)

English / Norwegian name	Scientific name	Numbers	Comments
Little Grebe / Dvergdykker	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	***	Very common at Aghia lake
Cory's Shearwater / Gulnebblire	<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	***	Up to several hundred, largely distant
European Shag / Toppskarv	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	**	Up to 40 off Platánias
Black-crowned Night Heron / Nattheigre	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	**	12-14 Aghia lake, 30 September
Cattle Egret / Kuheigre	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	*	One Aghia Lake, 29 September
Little Egret / Silkeheigre	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	**	Flocks of up to 12 heading west along the coast regular. Otherwise 1-3 Aghia Lake, Tavronitis river etc
Grey Heron / Gråheigre	<i>Ardea cinera</i>	**	Flocks of up to 40 heading west regular. Otherwise up to 20 at Aghia Lake
White Stork / Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	*	A single present on the military area at Tavronitis
Flamingo / Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus</i>	*	A juvenile Greater Flamingo on the shore at Platánias was of unknown origin
Eurasian Teal / Krikkand	<i>Anas crecca</i>	*	A few present at Aghia Lake
Mallard / Stokkand	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	**	Aghia Lake
Gargany / Knekkand	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	**	Up to 20 at Aghia Lake 29 September
Northern Shoveler / Skjeand	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	**	20++ Aghia Lake
Common Pochard / Taffeland	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	*	6+ Aghia Lake
Ferruginous Duck / Hvitøyand	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	*	Up to 6 at Aghia Lake
Griffon Vulture / Gåsegribb	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	**	Common on the Omalos Plateau / Samaria Gorge area
Eurasian Marsh Harrier / Sivhauk	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	*	Aghia Lake and coming in off the sea on at least two dates
Eurasian Sparrowhawk / Spurvehauk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	*	Samaria and Omalos
Common Buzzard / Musvåk	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	**	Very common throughout
Long-legged Buzzard / Ørnvåk	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	*	1+ present Omalos 04 October
Booted Eagle / Dvergørn	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	*	One light phase at Aghia Lake 04.10
Eleonora's Falcon / Leonorafalk	<i>Falco eleonora</i>	**	Up to 9 together off Platánias, one at Aghia Lake 04 October
Common Kestrel / Tårnfalk	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	*	Mountains
Water Rail / Vannrikse	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	*	One heard 29-30 September at Aghia Lake



English / Norwegian name	Scientific name	Numbers	Comments
Common Moorehen / Sivhøne	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	***	ca 200 Aghia Lake. A few at Platania river
Common Coot / Sothøne	<i>Fulica atra</i>	***	ca 400 Aghia Lake. A few at Platania river
Little Plover / Dverglo	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	*	2 Aghia Lake 29 September
Kentish Plover / Hvitbrystlo	<i>Charadrius alexandrius</i>	**	Up to 14 on the shore east of Tavronitis
Sanderling / Sandløper	<i>Calidris alba</i>	*	Singles on the shore at Platania on two dates
Dunlin / Myrsnipe	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	*	One Tavronitis river 28 September
Yellow-legged Gull / Gulbeingrāmåke	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	**	Small numbers except when following fishing vessels
Eurasian Collared Dove / Tyrkedue	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	***	Very common throughout habitation / cultivated land
European Turtle Dove / Turteldue	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	*	One at Aghia Lake 04 October
Long-eared Owl / Hornugle	<i>Asio otus</i>	*	One flying over a restaurant at Platania 04 October
Common Kingfisher / Isfugl	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	**	Up to 5 at Aghia Lake, singles widespread along the shores
Crested Lark / Topplerke	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	**	Common in coastal farmland / waste ground
Woodlark / Treleerke	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	**	Common in the mountains and at Omalos
Sand Martin / Sandsvale	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	***	Common migrant
Crag Martin / Klippesvale	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	***	1-200 present Samaria gorge 04 October
Barn Swallow / Låvesvale	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	****	Commonest bird?
Red-rumped Swallow / Amursvale	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	*	One at Aghia Lake 29-30 September
Tree Pipit / Trepplerke	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	**	Common along the coast 26-27 September, numbers seemed to decrease thereafter but present throughout the period
Yellow Wagtail / Gulerle	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	**	Common along the coast at Aghia Lake
Grey Wagtail / Vintererle	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	*	One heard at Aghia Lake 30 September
White / Pied Wagtail / Linerle	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	**	Commonest around Platania harbour
Winter Wren / Gjerdesmett	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	*	Occasional birds in orange groves
Common Redstart / Rødstjert	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	*	Two near Omalos 04 October
Whinchat / Busksvett	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	**	Coastal fields near Tavronitis
Stonechat / Svartstrupe	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	**	Common throughout
Northern Wheatear / Steinskvett	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	*	Coastal fields near Tavronitis and near Omalos
Common Blackbird / Svartrost	<i>Turdus merula</i>	**	Common
Cetti's Warbler / Cettisanger	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	**	Very common
Great Reed Warbler / Trostesanger	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	*	One seen and heard at Aghia Lake 29-30 September
Sardinian Warbler / Svarthodsanger	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	**	Very common
Common Whitethroat / Tornsanger	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	*	A few in cultivated area near Platania 26 September
Blackcap / Munk	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	**	Common in orange & olive groves
Willow Warbler / Løvsanger	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	*	Largely along the coast but also Aghia Lake





English / Norwegian name	Scientific name	Numbers	Comments
Spotted Flycatcher / Gråfluesnapper	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	*	Tavronitis and Omalos
Blue Tit / Blåmeis	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	*	Samaria and Omalos
Great Tit / Kjøttmeis	<i>Parus major</i>	***	Very common throughout
Red-backed Shrike / Tornskate	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	*	One at Omalos 04 October
Chough / Alpekråke	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	**	ca 70 Samaria Gorge 04 October
Eurasian Jay / Nøtteskrike	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	*	A few near Omalos 04 October
Hooded crow / Kråke	<i>Corvus corone</i>	**	Common throughout
Common Raven / Ravn	<i>Corvus corax</i>	**	Widespread in small numbers (maksimum 6 at Samaria)
House Sparrow / Gråspurv	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	***	Very common at the coast
Eurasian Tree Sparrow / Pilfink	<i>Passer montanus</i>	*	A few a Aghia Lake
Chaffinch / Bokfink	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	***	Common throughout
European Serin / Gulirisk	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	**	Up to 20 at Aghia Lake 29 September
European Greenfinch / Grønnfink	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	***	Very common
European Goldfinch / Stillits	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	***	Very common, but rather more flighty than in northern Europe
Common Linnet / Tornirisk	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	*	A few in the mountains
Cirl Bunting / Hekkspurv	<i>Emberiza cirius</i>	*	Two near Omalos 04 October

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Platanius River