



Crete 11 to 25 July 2009

This time we were based at Kalamaki a few kilometres west of Chania. As usual most birding was done by bicycle in the early hours of the morning and once again it was Aghia Lake that received most of the attention. 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.

The reduced species list this time is probably mostly due to visiting in the middle of summer. 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.

Cory's Shearwater were plentiful, if for the most part rather distant from the hotel.

One of the highlights this time was the spectacular "Swift show" over the harbour at Chania each evening. Thousands of Swifts came in and put on a brilliant display each evening. Small numbers of Alpine Swifts joined them as did bats and possibly a smaller species of Swift.

The water levels at Aghia lake varied tremendously during two week period despite there being no rainfall. At times there seemed to be perilously little water there – though this may be what attracted the Green Sandpipers.

Itinerary was as follows:

13th July: cycle to Aghia Lake

14th July: cycle to Aghia Lake

18th July: cycle to Aghia Lake

19th July: cycle to Aghia Lake

19th July: cycle along the coast – Keridis River / Gherani area / Planation at Platanias

22nd July: Omalos Plateau / Samaria Gorge

24th July: cycle to Galata / Aghia Lake



Evening view of Chania harbour



Chania viewed from the east (no birds at the gull roost – visited too early in the day?)



Ferruginous Duck / hvitøyand at Lake Aghia



Little Grebe / dvergdykker at Lake Aghia



Olivaceous Warbler / bleksanger at Lake Aghia where a few family parties were encountered on each visit.



Barn Swallow / låvesvale, one of the most numerous species on Crete



Purple Heron / purpurhegre and Night Heron / natthege showing off camoflauge at lake Aghia



Common Buzzard / Musvåk



Alpine Swift / alpeseiler



Above and below: Cetti's Warbler *cettisanger*





Water Rail / vannrikse at Lake Aghia



Little Plover / dverglo – still nests on less disturbed beaches



Yellow-legged Gull / gulbeinmåke – small numbers seen daily



Woodlark / trelerke on the Omalos Plateau



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>	**	At least 80 present at Lake Aghia
Cory's Shearwater / Gulnebblire	<i>Calonectris diomeda</i>	***	Up to 100 off Kalamaki, mostly distant views
Black-crowned Night Heron / Nattheigre	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	*	1-6 at Lake Aghia. Many juveniles (breeding?)
Grey Heron / Gråheigre	<i>Ardea cinera</i>	*	1-4 at Lake Aghia
Purple Heron / Purpurheigre	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	*	1 at Lake Aghia
Mallard / Stokkand	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	*	1 at Lake Aghia 24.07.09
Common Pochard / Taffeland	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	*	1 male at Lake Aghia throughout
Ferruginous Duck / Hvitøyand	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	*	At least 2 present at Lake Aghia "daily"
Griffon Vulture / Gåsegribb	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	*	Several over Omalos Plateau
Common Buzzard / Musvåk	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	**	Widespread, even in built up areas
Common Kestrel / Tårnfalk	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	*	Singles seen
Eleonora's Falcon / Leonorafalk	<i>Falco eleonora</i>	*	Only one bird seen inland of Platania
Common Quail / Vaktel	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	*	Only one bird seen inland of Platania
Water Rail / Vannrikse	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	*	1-3 "daily" at Lake Aghia
Little Crake / Sumprikse	<i>Porzana porva</i>	*	One seen very briefly at Lake Aghia
Common Moorehen / Sivhøne	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	**	Approx 30 present at Lake Aghia
Common Coot / Sothøne	<i>Fulica atra</i>	***	Approx 200 at Lake Aghia
Little Plover / Dverglo	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	*	Several seen along the shores around Gerani. Breeding
Green Sandpiper / Skogsniipe	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	**	1-13 at Lake Aghia (seen on each visit)
Common Sandpiper / Strandsniipe	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	*	Heard migrating at night over Kalamaki, also seen on the shore here and singles at Lake Aghia
Yellow-legged Gull /	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	*	1-5 daily on the shore or flying at Kalamaki



English / Norwegian name	Scientific name	Numbers	Comments
Gulbeingrāmåke			
Rock dove / Klippedue	<i>Columba livia</i>	*	A few on the Omalos Plateau
Eurasian Collared Dove / Tyrkedue	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	**	Everywhere
Common Swift / Tårnseiler	<i>Apus apus</i>	****	Thousands in Chania, hundreds elsewhere
Alpine Swift / Alpeseiler	<i>Apus melba</i>	**	Usually less than 10 seen daily but tens occasionally present at Lake Aghia
Hoopoe / Hærfugl	<i>Upupa epops</i>	*	A pair seen in olive groves near Galatas. Breeding?
Crested Lark / Topplerke	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	*	A few on cultivated land near Platantias and Galatas
Woodlark / Trelerke	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	*	A few on the Omalos Plateau
Crag Martin / Klippesvale	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	**	Tens seen on Omalos Plateau and Samaria Gorge
Barn Swallow / Låvesvale	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	****	Everywhere, probably commonest bird
Red-rumped Swallow / Amursvale	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	**	Several regular at Lake Aghia and Platantias
Yellow Wagtail / Gulerle	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	*	1-3 on most visits to Lake Aghia
White / Pied Wagtail / Linerle	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	**	A few always present at Lake Aghia, obvious post-roost dispersal movement at dawn along the coast at Kalamaki
Winter Wren / Gjerdesmett	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	*	Widespread
Stonechat / Svartstrupe	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	*	Widespread
Northern Wheatear / Steinskvett	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	*	A few on Omalos Plateau and in the hills
Common Blackbird / Svartrost	<i>Turdus merula</i>	**	Everywhere
Olivaceous Warbler / Blekspottesanger	<i>Hippolais pallida</i>	**	Locally common at Lake Aghia and in some cultivated areas
Sardinian Warbler / Svarthodsanger	<i>Sylvia melnocephala</i>	**	Widespread
Blackcap / Munk	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	**	Widespread
Cetti's Warbler / Cettisanger	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	**	Widespread
Bonnelli's Warbler / Bonellisanger	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	*	One heard and seen briefly near Galatas
Spotted Flycatcher / Gråfluesnapper	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	*	Widespread
Blue Tit / Blåmeis	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	*	Lake Aghia and Samaria Gorge
Great Tit / Kjøttmeis	<i>Parus major</i>	**	Common everywhere
Red-billed Cough / Alpekråke	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	**	In the hills and at Samaria Gorge



English / Norwegian name	Scientific name	Numbers	Comments
Eurasian Jay / Nøtteskrike	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	*	One on Omalos Plateau
Hooded crow / Kråke	<i>Corvus corone</i>	**	Common everywhere
Common Raven / Ravn	<i>Corvus corax</i>	*	Omalos Plateau and hills
Italian Sparrow /	<i>Passer (domesticus) italiae</i>	***	Common everywhere, much commoner than Spanish Sparrow
Spanish Sparrow / Middelhavsspurv	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	*	Only a few examples seen but little attention paid to sparrows
Eurasian Tree Sparrow / Piffink	<i>Passer montanus</i>	*	Several at Lake Aghia
Chaffinch / Bokfink	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	**	Widespread
European Serin / Gulirisk	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	**	Very common in cultivated areas
European Greenfinch / Grønnfink	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	**	Widespread
European Goldfinch / Stillits	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	***	Everywhere, probably second commonest bird
Common Linnet / Tornirisk	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	*	A few on the Omalos Plateau
Cirl Bunting / Hekkspurv	<i>Enberiza cirrus</i>	*	A few on the Omalos Plateau

More about birding Crete here: <http://www.naturalbornbirder.com/travel/Crete.html>

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