



TURKEY, GEORGIA & CYPRUS TOUR REPORT 2024

20 April - 6 May 2024

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Our second 'Grand Tour' of Asia Minor this year was one with several ups and downs, quite often literally! Especially our visit to the southeastern parts of Turkey was a great success, with amazing views of specialties such as Desert Finch, Pale Rockfinch, Iraq Babbler, Pallid Scops Owl, See-see Partridge, Caspian Snowcock, Radde's Accentor, Red-wattled Lapwing, White-throated Robin and Upcher's Warbler to name a few. Our visit to Cyprus also saw us having great success with the aptly-named Cyprus Scops Owl, Cyprus Warbler and Cyprus Wheatear and although our visit to Georgia was hampered by a lack of snowfall in days before our tour, which resulted in us not seeing Gldenstdt's Redstart and Great Rosefinch, it did help with obtaining rather close views of Caucasian Grouse and Caucasian Snowcock!

The people you meet during this tour are always very friendly and helpful, the food is great and the scenery is some of the best you can get!

Our journey began in Georgia, where we left the capital city of Tbilisi in the early morning, sent off by a massive number of Common Swifts which frequent the old town. Our destination for the day was the High Caucasus town of Stepantsminda, formerly known as Kazbegi, and we headed northwards along the Georgian Military Highway. En route we had our first Common Wood Pigeons, Eurasian Collared Doves, Laughing Doves and Hooded Crows. Our first stop gave us the first few common species and was also the main staging ground for just-returned Semi-collared Flycatchers and hopefully Green Warblers. Fleeting views of the first were obtained but sadly only by me and no Green Warblers were singing. It turned out we were too early for this species. However, we did have great views of singing male Red-breasted Flycatcher, samamiscus Common Redstart, Eurasian Jay, Great Tit, Hawfinch and Eurasian Blue Tit.

As we started to ascend, we made another stop where we found a singing male (Caucasian) Mountain Chiffchaff and some amazing

scenery, something we were going to have to get used to! The winding road took us high up over the icy Jvari Pass previously known in Soviet times as the Krestovyy Pass. We stopped at a few sites which resulted in good views of the very common Water Pipit, distinctive Caucasian subspecies *coutellii*, Ring Ouzel of the *amicorum* subspecies, flocks of Red-billed Choughs, White-throated Dipper and White Wagtails. We then pressed on to our comfortable and extremely friendly hotel in Stepantsminda.

During our lunch break, we, of course, didn't stop birding and we had a view Griffon Vultures and several Common Buzzards flying in the distance. After lunch, we quickly headed up to the base of the cliffs at the edge of the valley for some more birding. Firstly, we were off to the viewpoint east from the village. Here we scored our first Caucasian Grouse, a bit distant but giving good scope views. While scoping the grouse, a flock of twelve Red-fronted Serins came to keep us company.

We moved our way up the valley but apart from the standard Ring Ouzels, Water Pipits, Eurasian Chaffinches, White Wagtails and such we did not see anything new here. Thus, we moved to the other side of the Terek Valley and were hoping to encounter the sole female Great Rosefinch that had still been lingering in the sea buckthorn bushes last week. Sadly, this lady had also decided to move to higher pastures... Several singing chiffchaffs here and plenty of Black Redstarts were hopping about the mountainside and a Common Sandpiper was foraging in the meltwater that flows through the valley. As the day was coming to an end, the best part had yet to come. At least two Wallcreepers had been frequenting the nearby dam, that blocks off the Terek River, in the last few days so we hoped to catch up with them too. Lo and behold, as soon as we strolled up to the dam, a nice, flapping red was found on the dam's wall and we could all enjoy magnificent views of not one, not two but three Wallcreepers in total. A perfect ending to a day's birding!

The following day was all about trying to see all the Caucasus had to offer us in. The breakfast had already proven to us that we would not have to worry about starving in any case. We started our hunt by going back to the eastern viewpoint, looking for more chickens! At the same site we had our first Caucasian Grouse, we saw at least two individuals again. We also had a Lesser Whitethroat and Mountain Chiffchaff in the bushes around. We moved further up to the carpark next to a small church, from which we were able to get great scope view of Grouse but also of Caucasian Snowcock here! One Caucasian Snowcock made its way down the slope quite a bit while we were watching it. We stayed here until lunch and then it was decided we had to give it our utmost to find the mysteriously absent Great Rosefinch and *Güldenstädt's* Redstart. After searching near and in the Trinity Church, we went to extreme measures and drove up a track with our 4x4 until we couldn't go any further by motorized transport and we continued on foot. Sadly, we were not able to find either, despite much effort! It was a fabulous walk, through great scenery, and we did see plenty more, including several Bearded Vultures, a pair of Peregrine Falcon, Eurasian Crag Martins, good looks at the local Griffon Vulture colony, singing Mountain Chiffchaffs, White-throated Dippers, Dunnocks and Black Redstarts, European Stonechat, Northern Wheatears, a Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Ring Ouzels everywhere and a few Grey Wagtails. The highlight for some was the pair of Rock Bunting that was showing well on the mountain side and for some the Camberwell Beauty on the track that gave away a nice show. A fantastic dinner was waiting for us after the hike and it was a very welcome end to the day.

Another attempt to find either Great Rosefinch or *Güldenstädt's* Redstart was on the books for today's program. This time we would go through the Kazbegi Valley again but then follow up south and visit the eastern valleys. We did not find these two target species, but we did have another large number of more commoner species, including new birds for the trip list such as Little Ringed Plover, loads of Common Sandpipers along the river, the small villages had several groups of House Sparrows, a European Greenfinch was seen, along with some Common Linnets and of course the fields were full with Hooded Crows, Water Pipits and Northern Wheatears. We saw a pair of Rock Bunting on the higher slopes again, but the road was blocked with ice to go any further up to the next village. We returned to enjoy breakfast before switching venues again. After breakfast, we visited Trinity Church again and scanned the Western Valley. From the car park at Trinity Church we had another Caucasian Grouse, but more interesting were the raptors passing by on migration. Apart from a few more Bearded Vultures, we saw 20+ Griffon Vultures, at least three Steppe Eagles, one Black Kite, one Eurasian Sparrowhawk and about 15 Steppe Buzzards soaring past, with three Alpine Swifts racing by and a very large group of European Bee-eaters making their way north. A large flock of Alpine Chough was a nice addition to the list and another new species came in the form of two Meadow Pipits. The local Common Kestrels and Peregrine Falcons were also present. Sadly, no hoped-for redstart or rosefinch here so we went down to the dam again and check this area as there had been about ten redstarts there only five days ago...

As you might have guessed, the redstarts were not present. However, we had the usual suspects of European Stonechat, Ring Ouzel, Common Blackbird, Chaffinch, Great Tit and Mountain Chiffchaff. As we had made our way through the Terek River Valley and sun was setting, we made our way back to the hotel and enjoyed another great Georgian dinner.

A sad day today as we had to leave the wonderful people of Stepantsminda behind. We took off in the very early morning, with it still being a bit dark when we arrived at our first stop. We made another attempt to find Green Warbler and Semicollared Flycatcher at

Zhinvali Reservoir. It took quite some time and dedication but then we finally all laid eyes on a nice 2cy-male Semicollared Flycatcher. We had two more male Red-breasted Flycatchers here as well, along with the standard supply of European Robins, Great, Blue and Long-tailed Tits, Eurasian Chaffinches and we also got good looks at a pair of Hawfinch. After our birding here, we went further inland, as we had yet to locate a Green Warbler. Our next destination was the Zedazeni Monastery, high up in the inner mountains near Tbilisi. No Green Warblers to be found here, so we went on to find a few other targets including Armenian Gull.

We drove off to Tbilisi Reservoir, where we had a field lunch, trying to keep our cheese on the bread as it was blowing quite a wind. Luckily this kept most of the gulls on the reservoir and this allowed us to scan the flocks with scopes relatively easily. Among the larger group of Armenian Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gulls (*fuscus*) we also managed to find a few Yellow-legged Gulls. Furthermore, several Great Cormorants were present.

From the reservoir, we went again back into deep Georgian countryside to try at another site for Green Warbler, but sadly, halfway into the journey, we were stopped by a police blockade and had to change plans. Before we were well and back, we had to make a few emergency stops for flying raptors. As later confirmed by photos, we had at least two Greater Spotted Eagles and one Eastern Imperial Eagle. Therefore, we went southward, more towards the steppes of Georgia. Here, we added a few nice species to the list. Great views of a pair of Eurasian Penduline Tits, the first shrikes on migration including Red-backed and Woodchat Shrike, a flock of Ruddy Shelduck was a nice surprise, a female Pallid Harrier was another great addition, and then it was time to head back to Tbilisi. Our final stop of the day was the Ponichala Reserve, in the southeastern smoke of Tbilisi. This turned out to be a very nice way to end our birding in Georgia, as we added Middle Spotted, European Green, Lesser Spotted and Syrian Woodpecker here, a few Pygmy Cormorants, Black-crowned Night Herons, we heard Water Rails squealing, Common Kingfishers bolting past, a large group of European Bee-eaters was foraging low above the park forest as the upcoming rain was pushing the insects down and also singing here was a pair of Great Reed Warbler, several Common Nightingales and a few Cetti's Warblers.

As we returned to the hotel we were greeted by the large numbers of Common Swifts again. Their screees were heard late into the evening as we enjoyed our final Georgian dinner.

The airport was nice and quiet this early in the morning, as we geared up for our flight to Istanbul, from where we would travel to Erçan in Northern Cyprus. Not much was seen in terms of birding, apart from the Great Spotted Cuckoo that flew past, as we drove down the wrong road before our friendly car renter came to show us the correct route. A few European Rollers were seen along the way and we arrived at our hotel in the evening.

Our first day on this Mediterranean island would be all about finding the endemic specialities Cyprus has to offer. We would have two full days to explore the Turkish side of the island and it was to be great birding, with nice weather to boot! A Little Owl on the wire at the car park was the first bird of note, as along with that were the usual Collared Doves, House Sparrows, Common Wood Pigeons, Hooded Crows and now also Barn Swallows and a few Laughing Doves. We made our way over to Kukla Wetlands. As soon as we turned off the highway, into the grain fields, we flushed a Great Spotted Cuckoo. We managed to get good views, before continuing and seeing a few Chukar Partridges cross the road. A few European Rollers were also hunting locusts above the fields here, along with several Red-backed Shrikes. A large group of Spanish Sparrows were our first for the tour.

The lake we were supposed to drive to seemed to have disappeared and we continued onwards to the supposed Wetlands, which also dried up. As we made our way to the watchtower, we could see how it should've looked like, but continued droughts and agricultural activity seemed to have destroyed the Kukla Wetlands. A few Eurasian Stone-curlews were still present, relaxing in the shade of the eucalyptus trees. We did not see much from the watchtower apart from several Black Francolins, as they were running between their sounding posts. However, views were still quite a bit distant. On we went, to find some actual water.

At our next port of call, we managed to find some actual water! At Famagusta, we saw some Spur-winged Lapwings along the highway and decided to see if we could take a closer look. Making our way through a massive Western Cattle Egret colony, it turned out we couldn't quite see into the water itself from where we were. Several Gadwalls, Mallards, Red-crested Pochards and Ferruginous Ducks flying about so the water couldn't be far. We located a few ponds and racked up some new species for the trip list. A Sedge Warbler was singing, Gadwall, Eurasian Coot, Common Moorhen, Ferruginous Duck, Mallard and also Black-crowned Night Heron and Little Grebe were present. Sand Martins were flying on and a flock of 24 Glossy Ibises made its way across. A few Cetti's Warblers were singing and after some more driving we found the most-wanted Spur-winged Lapwings. Now we still had to square away two of the main targets, a wheatear and warbler. A visit to the Karpaz Peninsula was first on the schedule, but not before we had a nice seaside lunch. No shearwaters were located, but we did find a Red-throated Loon while scoping from the terrace. Several European Bee-eaters were migrating past as well and a few Red-rumped Swallows were flying past as well amongst the continuous stream of Barn Swallows. We made our way on to the Karpaz Peninsula and here it was that we saw the real power of bird migration. European Rollers, Eurasian

Turtle Doves, Red-backed Shrikes, Lesser Grey Shrikes, Whinchats, Western Marsh Harriers everywhere! Our main quarry, the Cyprus Warbler, gave itself up after an extensive search, but more importantly, us finally reaching suitable habitat that had not yet been overtaken by Sardinian Warblers! They seem to really be taking over on the island. We enjoyed a nice singing male Cyprus Warbler, although the enjoyment didn't last long as we were soon located by the thousands of mosquitoes that must specialize in feeding on passing birders! We made our way further up the peninsula and soon after located the other main target: Cyprus Wheatear! One male was showing nicely on the wires next to the road, but a while later we had a few more, closer to the car. Eurasian Hoopoes were foraging along the verges and showed well, while gearing up for more migration.

On our way back home, we had, where previously a Black Francolin was showing well, now a Chukar Partridge sitting on a collapsed old building's walls. When we turned into the car park, we were welcomed by a Western Barn Owl, screeching across.

The following morning was an early one as we went out to find some Cyprus Scops Owls! It didn't take long once we reached a good spot before we heard a pair of Scops Owls calling. After enjoying the owls for a while, we returned to the hotel where the Little Owls were waiting for us again. We tried to visit the St. Hilarion Castle, but were turned away by the UN soldiers stationed nearby. Apparently, the castle opens only at 9 am for visitors. Back to the hotel and after another lovely breakfast, we went to explore the island a bit more, turning our eyes to the western side of the island. We first visited the Acapulco Reservoir, to see if any migrants had turned up here. We saw quite a few of these here, including another juvenile-type Great Spotted Cuckoo, a few Tree Pipits, while there was some vismugging going on as well; a Eurasian Golden Oriole, a Common Cuckoo and a Eurasian Hobby all flew past while we were birding the site. It was also a good spot for Cyprus Warblers, of which several males were protecting a territory. We also found two Barred Warblers here. After this, we made our way towards Cape Kormakitis. We had a nice local lunch enroute; it wasn't easy to find a lunch spot and on one of our detours to try to find a one, we suddenly had a pack of Eleonora's Falcons hunting overhead!

After finally finding a lunch spot, we then birded the cape for the entire remainder of the day. Masked, Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrikes were all along the path, in terms of vismig we had European Bee-eaters, Red-rumped Swallows, Common Swifts, Purple Herons, Western Marsh Harriers, Barn Swallows, Common Kestrels, House Martins, Common Wood Pigeons, European Turtle Doves and one Blue-cheeked Bee-eater as well flying past! It was a semi-constant stream of birds. On land, we tried hard to locate a Spectacled Warbler, which are also seemingly pushed out by Sardinian Warblers, but luckily, we found a nice male at the end of the cape. A Common Quail was heard and we flushed a Green Sandpiper from a ditch along the road. Two Greater Short-toed Larks were feeding at the cape's end along with a few Tawny Pipits as well. After this successful day of migration birding, we went back to our hotel for a final dinner in Northern Cyprus.

Our flight to Antalya wasn't until midday so we went out for some early morning birding. Sadly, the Haspolat Sewage Ponds were completely dried up, but we still managed to get some good stuff in the nearby area. There were a few Spur-winged Lapwings about, a few showy Black Francolins (with plenty more calling from hidden places), a pair of Spectacled Warblers showing very well, singing Eastern Olivaceous Warblers, we flushed a pair of Eurasian Stone-curlews, many Western Cattle Egrets flying about, a pair of Eurasian Hoopoes and a Little Owl, singing Zitting Cisticola and a few Corn Buntings.

After this session, we went back to the hotel for breakfast and packing our remaining stuff into our travel bags, gearing up for our travel to Turkey. After an uneventful flight to Antalya, we had a bit of a delay collecting our van as the previous renters had destroyed one of the seats. For reasons unknown, the suppliers had not noticed this and tried to send us away with the van. It turned out that there was no replacement vehicle in stock so we had to return later to pick up a new vehicle. Thus said, thus done and after this debacle, we were off to look for our most wanted owl of the trip, Turkish Fish Owl. It would be long night with no sign of our quarry, but we did add Eurasian Scops Owl to our list on the way back to the hotel.

As we had returned very late from our search for the fish owl, we had a bit of a lie-in. After a later breakfast than normal, we went to explore the Side coastal regions. This is a good area for the near-endemic Delicate Prinia and a hotspot for arriving migrants. We didn't have to search far to find our first Delicate Prinias singing away in the agricultural fields, while we slowly drove past the many ditches and irrigation channels. Other nice birds seen here were Great and Common Reed Warblers, Little Bitterns, White-spectacled Bulbuls, a Masked Shrike, Eastern Olivaceous Warblers, Common Moorhens, a Little Grebe, a few Spur-winged Lapwings here and there, Western Cattle Egrets, Grey and Purple Herons, a Little Owl, a few Hoopoes, several European Bee-eaters, Squacco Herons, Woodchat and Red-backed Shrikes, Greater Short-toed Larks and much more. We found a field that was being irrigated, that had a lot of waders, gulls and terns on it. Amongst the group of Gull-billed Terns present were a few Whiskered Terns as well, and further up were at least eight Yellow-legged Gulls. A flock of Glossy Ibises flew past and a few Collared Pratincoles flew in on the field as well and allowed for nice views. The waders consisted of mostly Common Ringed Plovers, a few Little Ringed Plovers, Spur-winged Lapwings, one Black-tailed Godwit, Little

Egrets, Green and Wood Sandpipers, Common Redshanks, a couple of Common Greenshanks, a single Ruddy Turnstone, a handful of Little Stints and a large number of Ruffs. A Great Spotted Cuckoo was also heard calling here.

After this bonanza of waders, we went to get a well-deserved lunch. Although not the most idyllic site for a lunch, along the highway, the food was good and with renewed energy we went back to the coastal areas. We tried to locate Greater Sand Plovers but failed to do so as it was very windy. We did add several other species to the list, including a few Spotted Flycatchers, Northern Wheatears and singing Rufous-tailed Scrub Robins. A field with a large flock of Yellow Wagtails offered a nice opportunity to look at the several subspecies/forms of this complex, with at least Yellow-headed / lutea, Black-headed / feldegg and Blue-headed / flava present amongst the group. After this good day's birding, a nice dinner across the street from our hotel was waiting for us. We went off into the mountainous interior of Turkey again, for another attempt at locating a fish owl, but sadly, we did not succeed.

This morning, we set our sights at the forest above Antalya/Side. Our main quarry here would be the White-backed Woodpecker, which can be quite difficult to locate at this time of year, as you are near the end of the breeding activities. We started working our way through several sites with recent activity. The first stop did not result in us seeing a woodpecker, but we managed to get great views of European Serin, Red Crossbill and Chaffinch, as a mixed flock was drinking from a puddle created by a leaking tap. Furthermore, several Krüper's Nuthatches were about, and at least two Eastern Bonelli's Warblers were singing their hearts out. On to a different site, as our hunt for woodpeckers continued. Here we had a group of Sombre Tits, a Short-toed Treecreeper, a few European Goldfinches and a breeding site for Red-rumped Swallows. It was nice to see these up close. A nice surprise here was also the pair of Western Rock Nuthatches which gave great views after a while. A woodpecker that flew by and wasn't showing itself well straight away turned out to be a Middle Spotted Woodpecker. Not the one we wanted, but still nice to see a male in good plumage! When we made our way back to the van, we heard the pleasant song of a Woodlark and soon a few more followed. It took some time to locate the bird itself, but we obtained full scope views of a singing male sitting on top of a pine tree. After an impromptu chat with the local law enforcement, who were quite puzzled but ultimately quite excited by our interest in birds, we enjoyed a pair of Eastern Black-eared Wheatears before driving to the next stop. The track that followed was not completely suited for a minivan, but steady does it and we persevered along the beautiful path and this turned out to be jackpot! We had almost given up, but then heard the drumming of a woodpecker. This must be it! It took some patience, but then a male White-backed Woodpecker gave a call and flew in quite close to us. We had located its territory and finally managed great views of this tricky woodpecker.

After this success, we went down towards the hill forests, and left the closed-up, thick pine forest behind us. The sunny hills near Akzeki are a good area for some of the key warblers of this tour, most importantly the Rüppell's Warbler. Once we found a nice overview of the hedgerows and walled meadows below us, it wasn't long before we had singing Rüppell's Warblers all around us. The males of this species are a tough one to beat! While we were birding along the small roads, reminiscent of any backroad in southern England, we had two Bonelli's Eagles flying above. Sadly, the views weren't great as the eagles were flying so far away, but a nice surprise nonetheless. A few more Eurasian Magpies, Jays, Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrikes later, we had another great addition to our list: a pair with a juvenile Cretzschmar's Buntings showed nicely. More Sombre Tits were present as well, but not yet any sign of White-throated Robin or Olive-tree Warbler.

A hasty dinner followed as we changed plans for the night and would try for the fish owl again, but starting while it was still light. A White-throated Dipper was a fine distraction, but we would go home with empty hands once again.

Although we feared we would be too early to find Olive-tree Warbler, you don't know until you try. There had been a report of one the day before, so we did a pre-breakfast birding walk through Side. No sign of any Olive-tree Warbler but we did see another Great Spotted Cuckoo, several dozen White-spectacled Bulbuls, a Cetti's Warbler, Eurasian Blackcaps, at least three Barred Warblers, a Spotted Flycatcher, a bunch of European Greenfinches, Common Linnets and Goldfinches. A small flock of seven Black-headed Buntings was the highlight of the morning. We returned to the hotel, finished packing and geared up for our travel to Nigde, where we would be staying overnight.

The drive was not that eventful, but one of the short stops resulted in good views of a singing male Ortolan Bunting. We made a detour via the Meke Colu Krater Lake, which was now just a krater and no more a lake. Even though the lake was dry and we did not see any of the species associated with the lake, we did get great views of Calandra, Crested and Greater Short-toed Larks, a very large number of Common Swifts, a few Northern Wheatears, Isabelline Wheatears everywhere, a pair of Eastern Black-eared Wheatears and a Finsch's Wheatear. Throughout the day, we saw large numbers of White Storks, a Woodchat Shrike here and there, a few Red-backed Shrikes, plenty of Western Jackdaws and Hooded Crows, a handful of Rooks, a pair of Northern Ravens and Barn Swallows and House Martins enlightened the skies everywhere. We reached the hotel in Nigde and quickly turned to bed as we had a very early start the following morning.

Today would be all about Aladağlar Milli Park (Aladag NP), or more famously known, Demirkazik Peak. We drove to our local guide Hasan's lodge and enjoyed a 4 AM coffee and biscuit pre-departure rest. After this, we mounted the famous tractor wagon and set off in the complete dark to reach the mountains at first light. We reached the viewing point in good time and at were putting up our scopes at the crack of dawn. It was at around 5 that we logged the first Caspian Snowcocks calling and after a tense wait, the scopes filled with Caspian Snowcocks calling from the mountaintops. A Golden Eagle flew past, probably also excited by seeing some snowcocks, albeit for a different reason. Not long after, a few singing Radde's Accentors showed no fear for human visitors and allowed very good, close views. While it was warming up, a pair of Common Rock Thrushes took to the sky in their display song, a flock of Asian Crimson-winged Finches flew by and we had a large flock of swifts, amongst which were Little and Alpine Swifts showing well (once you located them against the large blue sky!). We were lucky, as even though we could not locate the flock of Crimson-winged Finches, another one showed up and perched on the rock face. A large murmuration of not starlings but Alpine Choughs skimmed around the mountain peaks, while we were enjoying great views of interacting White-winged Snowfinches. A Ring Ouzel briefly showed itself before flying down the mountain, a few Black Redstarts were singing among the crevices of the mountain and a few Rock Bunting were present. It was time to head back for breakfast. We managed to add a few more Chukar Partridges to our tally as they were flushed by the tractor on the way back. A very nice, homemade breakfast followed but it was not long before we set off again, visiting another side of the National Park. It has rained a bit during breakfast, so activity was high now that it was dry again. A soaked Common Cuckoo was the first bird of note, but more liked were the Eastern Orphean Warblers further up the road. It took some manoeuvring but we managed nice views after a while. On we went, and at the next stop we laid eyes on one of our most wanted birds: a beautiful male White-throated Robin! We birded the small valley for a bit longer and not only saw a few more White-throated Robins, we also had great views of a foraging pair of Cretzschmar's Buntings, two Lesser Whitethroats, and nice showy Horned Larks of the penicillata subspecies. Back for lunch, with amazing Turkish 'pizza's', we attempted to find a Bimaculated Lark but soon the weather turned against us and since we had already been up since 2 am, we decided to call it a day, albeit with a detour. On this detour, we added the sole Northern Lapwing to our Turkey list and two Great Crested Grebes on an otherwise dead reservoir. A quick dinner and bed was the recipe for the remainder of the day.

Further east we went, as we made our way to Eastern Turkey. It would be another long travel day, but we made sure to fit in plenty of birding as well in the morning. We visited Sultan Sazlığı NP and the surrounding agricultural fields. Sadly, these fields, once a great birding destination, have now mostly transformed to dry and empty land. There used to be a breeding population of Greater Sand Plover here; they have all but vanished. We did get views of Turkestan Short-toed Larks, hundreds of White Storks, an Egyptian Vulture, Long-legged Buzzards, Calandra Larks, Common Starlings, Western Yellow and White Wagtails. Inside the National Park we did score a few targets, mostly due to our great perseverance, as the reed beds usually do not give up their price easily. The National Park is made out of a large lake in the middle, with a walking platform leading from the edge to the centre of the lake. The large reedbeds cover most of any of the water, so you have to walk the whole path to the centre. Along this path we found a pair of Citrine Wagtails foraging along the water edge at the entrance of the reedbeds. A Savi's Warbler was singing, Moustached Warblers gave themselves up to great views after what felt like hours waiting, Bearded Reedlings flicked through the reed stems like tiny monkeys, Reed Buntings were present, Water Rails screeched from the shadows, a few Green Sandpipers got spooked by our presence and at the end of the path we added some waterfowl to our list, including Mallard, Red-crested and Common Pochard and Ferruginous Duck. Also present were Little Grebe, Common Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, Squacco and Purple Heron. As we had still quite a bit of driving to do, we made our way back to the minivan and set off for our next destination in Adiyaman where we arrived late in the evening.

Mount Nemrut was waiting for us today as we left the hotel early in the morning. As soon as we reached Mount Nemrut, we noticed it would be quite a cold and windy morning. Luckily it did not take long to locate a few Cinereous Buntings to get us started. Several males were singing from the rocks dotted across the hillsides. It took a bit more time before locating the main quarry; Kurdish Wheatear. In total, we did see at least three males but we did have to be mindful of the many Eastern Black-eared Wheatears here. An active Western Rock Nuthatch was a nice distraction from the singing White-throated Robins and Black-headed Buntings and also a showy male Finsch's Wheatear was seen here.

Rain was looming, so just before lunchtime we made our way back down the mountain. We birded along the route and there were plenty of migrants about. Lesser Whitethroats, Eastern Orphean Warblers, Red-backed and Woodchat Shrikes, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robins, a singing Marsh Warbler, and plenty more European Bee-eaters, Northern Wheatears and more of the, now quite 'standard' species. The long drives and early starts were getting to most of us by now and seeing as the rain was coming down now, we went for a siesta. The afternoon was designated for a visit to a bee-eater colony, amongst which not only European but also Blue-cheeked are breeding. With this exciting prospect in view, we set off again in the early afternoon. It was a bit of a drive across Turkish country roads, but in good time we reached the site and even though no Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters were present at first amongst the many European Bee-eaters, we

soon heard the typical chirping calls and found a nice few sitting on the wires in the village. We decided to explore the village and its surroundings which resulted in great views of Little Owl, Black-headed Bunting, European Rollers and Hoopoes and a surprise encounter with a small group of Dead Sea Sparrows! As soon as they had appeared, they were gone again but instead we located a few Yellow-throated Sparrows, another great surprise. It's always nice to get ahead of your targets. After this, we headed back to the hotel as we were due for another early rise and shine!

We would make our way down to Gaziantep today, but not while visiting Birecik beforehand, and we would do that by taking the back roads around Sanliurfa. We set off before the break of any dawn and about the first good birds we saw were another most wanted: a small band of See-see Partridges! We heard a male calling and soon located one and a few females amongst the high grass on the road side, along a small winding road. After we had our fill of the See-see Partridges and interested locals, we continued down this road, stopping whenever something interesting was spotted. A Chukar here or there, a Little Owl now and again, but the first new species was a very confiding Pale Rockfinch. Its very typical song could be heard well before we located the bird, as it is such a difficult sound to find the origin of. A male Montagu's Harrier shot across the road while we continued onwards but more surprisingly was a Red-wattled Lapwing that suddenly took off from the nearby farmland shooting up in the sky. Loudly demonstrating its discomfort with having to move, we enjoyed great views of this WP-mega. As we approached the end of the road, we turned west towards Birecik. Two Black-bellied Sandgrouse sadly flew too fast for most to pick up, but the Lesser Kestrels posed nicely at their colony for all to see. A short walk to locate any more Mediterranean Short-toed Larks was not successful, but Zitting Cisticola's, Black-headed Buntings, Delicate Prinia's, Common Whitethroats, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robins, European Stonechats, Finsch's Wheatears and much more kept us entertained.

It was time to locate a nice lunch spot, but due to the recent earthquake, most roads in this region are not there where they are supposed to be, according to Google Maps that is, and thus it took us some time to navigate out of cities and towns as we made our way to Birecik. A quick stop at the rehabilitation / breeding centre of the Northern Bald Ibises, located at the north of the town, was a bit of a let-down as the centre was closed for visitors for no apparent reason. We went onwards and enjoyed a nice river-side lunch. The Euphrates runs straight along Birecik and this does attract quite a lot of birdlife. During our lunch, we enjoyed this birdlife and saw large amounts of Eurasian Coots floating about, several Common Moorhens, a few Little Grebes and plenty of Great Crested Grebes. Two Pied Kingfishers were hovering and hunting about, near our table, and gave away great views. Impressive was also the large flock of Northern Bald Ibis that was battling the strong winds, making them seemingly stuck in place, just above the breeding centre. Since these are semi-wild birds, 'countability' can be debatable, however, seeing at least two hundred of this once nearly-extinct bird, in one flock was impressive nonetheless.

Having filled our bellies to the brim once more, we made our way through Birecik and started our birding along the Euphrates, south of the town. Almost as soon as we turned onto the track, we laid eyes on a small flock of Yellow-throated Sparrows. Females & males combined gave good views as they were foraging along the fencing. Not long after, we located a band of Iraq Babblers; another speciality of this part of the world where it can be safely seen, as they were hopping from bush to bush and babbling to each other. A bit further onwards, another major target showed itself in multitude, as a small group of Dead Sea Sparrows was cleaning and preening in the shade of roadside bushes. A male was even doing its best trying to impress anyone watching; while not sure the females were that interested, we certainly feasted our eyes. Much to our delight, fleeting views of this species previously where now well improved, when the group of Dead Sea Sparrows was joined by a few Desert Finches! As we drove along the track, we were happily surprised by two Grey-headed Swamphens foraging in the reeds just along the bank. This species seems to be gaining territory further north.

We made a stop along the Euphrates river at a nice viewpoint, where we quickly noticed a very large flock of birds at the other side of the river. At least a thousand birds, which turned into White-winged Terns once we put our bins on them, were making their way up the river. A constant stream of terns kept making their way north, but we were soon distracted when behind us, a Black-winged Kite popped up! It was clearly hunting, hovering in a Kestrel-like way, so we were able to enjoy it for quite a while. At this point in time, we were struggling to find any Menetries's Warblers as they had not been showing in their known sites up until now. As we had failed to locate any Pallid Scops Owls as well, we were very eager to put this warbler target behind us. Perhaps they were still making their way back to the breeding grounds, but we still had a good site left to try. So, we made our way over through the winding roads in between the cashew and grape plantations. Although light was starting to fade a bit at this point and thus activity, and a bit of tape did not result in any wanted response, hope was fading also. However, as we say in Dutch, the persistor always wins! While some were enjoying more Dead Sea Sparrows, suddenly a Menetries's Warbler starting singing. It took some time before everyone managed to get the wanted views of this bird, as it kept itself mostly deeply inside the shrubs. After this successful score, we made our way to the hotel in earthquake-stricken Gaziantep.

Our final day of birding in Turkey started, as always, very early. The plan was to get to our destination before sunrise and walk up the hills so we would make the most out of our time. On the menu this morning was looking for Eastern Rock Nuthatch and Upcher's Warbler. We found the hills completely fogged in, to our dismay, and a hefty wind was blowing a mighty cold draft through the pass. As we made our way up, we met a Finnish birding group, who, despite their natural stoic behaviour, told us that they had great views of one of our target species. While talking about this, as if speaking of the devil, one started singing right by us. Soon, everyone had great views of Upcher's Warbler. Two Sombre Tits made an appearance as well, showing very close. We made our way further up the slope and tried not to get too distracted by the many Eastern Black-eared Wheatears and Finsch's Wheatear, as this used to also be the site for Kurdish Wheatear, singing Cinereous Buntings, a nice male White-throated Robin, several more Upcher's Warblers, a male Blue Rock Thrush, and the swallows and martins on their migration. After a while, it became clear the morning fog wouldn't subside anytime soon so we just had to make the most of the spells where the wind would blow away the clouds and reveal the cliff faces. Frustrating as it was, because we could hear several 'sing' from within the mist, we finally laid eyes on an Eastern Rock Nuthatch through the scope. Having succeeded here after all, the leader finally allowed everyone the joy of breakfast.

We had only two major targets remaining for a day's birding left but both Bimaculated Lark and Pallid Scops Owl can be notorious for their absence.

First, we would try to put the lark behind our belt. We made our way to the plains in the hills north of Birecik but struck out at the first stop. Plenty of Calandra Larks to keep us busy but no Bimacs were to be found here. Now, the other side is behind a, seemingly randomly located, military checkpoint, but upon showing him our cameras with birds on the display and nothing else, the AK-47 was waved in such a way to indicate us that we were OK in moving on. After being distracted shortly by a European Roller nest in the clay cliff side next to the road, we drove further inland, gaining quite some altitude. As soon as we saw displaying larks we stopped and it did not take long before we laid eyes on Bimaculated Larks. We took our time to get good views and had scope-filling views of a perched individual and enjoyed several flight displays. A large band of Lesser Kestrels was hunting here and a Pale Rockfinch started singing, right next to the road! A pair of Short-toed Snake Eagles was flying about and a few Long-legged Buzzards were up and about as well. After this great success, we birded our way back down to get lunch at the same site as yesterday, but not before we made another attempt at Pallid Scops Owl. Sadly, the site was seemingly abandoned, even though the locals tried to convince us that this was not the case. Feeling like we had tried our best, with only a Spotted Flycatcher, several chatty Western Jackdaw and singing Eastern Olivaceous Warblers to show for it, it was now really time for lunch. A European Pied Flycatcher was a nice find, just before we reached the van.

A Pied Kingfisher was still present, as were a couple of Little Grebes, a Red-crested Pochard, a few Mallards, Pygmy Cormorants flying along the Euphrates, but soon the unrest of not having seen one of the most-wanted, we went back after the midday heat to look once more for the Pallid Scops Owls. This time, we hadn't even been there for five minutes and boom, there was one resting along the tree trunk! A sign of collective relief and happiness followed, with everyone getting great views. Something disturbed the owl though and it didn't stay still for a long time, and flew off. Not wanting to cause stress amongst the birds ourselves we decided to leave and not look anymore.

Now, it was time for some exploration to see if any missing species could still be added to our list. With a full afternoon remaining, we made our way to the Hancağız Barrage, a large reservoir created by the aptly-named Hancağız Dam.

The weather seemed to turn for the worst, but while the weather wasn't that bad yet, we looked for a view of the reservoir. It looked like there was a way to get closer to the water, which is what we decided to try and do. While doing so, our minds changed several times about whether or not it was indeed possible to do so, but in the end we reached the water's edge. The wind had turned into quite a storm by this point, which had blown quite some birds into the shoreline. We added Common Tern, Black-headed Gull and Black-winged Stilt to the list, but there were quite some more birds present. A large number of Spur-winged Lapwings was foraging in the shoreline, which was a bit sheltered from the wind. A Common Snipe flew past, or rather, blasted past, several Green and Wood Sandpipers were present as well, a large number of Ruffs and many Little Stints were seeking through the mud to find anything edible. Numbers of White-winged Terns were up into the twenties here as well.

Even though Google Maps showed a road across the reservoir as the best way to get back to the hotel, it was clearly not possible to cross this fully-submerged path. We were not the only ones being fooled by navigation systems as large trucks kept turning up on this dead-end back country road, as it seemingly used to be a nice shortcut. However, we made our way back, birding here and there and adding another Syrian Woodpecker to our tally, several more Eurasian Hoopoes, a few Delicate Prinias, Isabelline Wheatears, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robins, a large flock of Desert Finches and our penultimate Crested Larks and Hooded Crows. The rain was now pouring down and we made our way back to the hotel for our final Turkish extravaganza.

Our final day was solely designated to our travel to Adana from where we would fly back. We left after having our final great Turkish breakfast and set off to the airport. A smooth drive resulted in a timely arrival at the airport and we could look back on an action-packed, species-filled tour across three different countries and as many cultures. Even though a few species managed to elude us during this tour, we ended on a great high with a very successfully visit to Eastern Turkey! Soon most of us were boarding a plane and set off on our different travels back home. Thanks to all of the group for making this a very enjoyable, special 'Grand Tour' of Asia Minor!

BIRDS OF THE TOUR

- 1. Pallid Scops Owl**
- 2. Caucasian Grouse**
- 3. Radde's Accentor**
- 4. Cretzschmar's Bunting**
- 5. Wallcreeper**

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g., it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).

The species names and taxonomy used in the bird list follows Gill, F., Donsker, D., & Rasmussen, P.(Eds). **2024. IOC World Bird List (v14.1)**.

Where the subspecies seen is/are known, these are often given in parentheses at the end of the species comment.

BIRDS

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Gadwall *Mareca strepera*

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

Caucasian Grouse ◊ *Lyrurus mlokosiewiczi* Great views around Stepantsminda (G).

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*

Caucasian Snowcock ◊ *Tetraogallus caucasicus* Great views around Stepantsminda.

Caspian Snowcock ◊ *Tetraogallus caspius* Excellent scope views of at least 4 at Demirkazik [*tauricus*].

See-see Partridge ◊ *Ammoperdix griseogularis* Very nice views of a confiding pair near Sanliurfa.

Chukar Partridge *Alectoris chukar*

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* Non-leader.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*

Common Cuckoo (Eurasian C) *Cuculus canorus*

Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis*

Rock Dove (R Pigeon) *Columba livia*

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis*

Water Rail ♠ *Rallus aquaticus* Heard in Ponichala Reserve and the wetlands at Sultan Sazligi.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Eurasian Coot (Common C) *Fulica atra*

Grey-headed Swamphen *Porphyrio poliocephalus*

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus*

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus*

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

White-winged Tern (W-w Black T) *Chlidonias leucopterus*

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Armenian Gull ♦ *Larus armenicus* Good numbers and great views at Tbilisi Reservoir.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Lesser Black-backed Gull (Baltic G) *Larus [fuscus] fuscus*

Lesser Black-backed Gull (Heuglin's G) *Larus [fuscus] heuglini*

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Pygmy Cormorant ♦ *Microcarbo pygmaeus* Very common in Tbilisi and Bireçik.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

European Shag *Gulosus aristotelis*

Northern Bald Ibis ♦ (semi-captive) *Geronticus eremita* Great views of a large group soaring above the breeding station and close up at the station itself.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Great Egret (G White E) *Ardea [alba] alba*

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier) *Gypaetus barbatus*

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*

Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

Greater Spotted Eagle *Clanga clanga* At least two individuals as identified from photographs, seen while travelling

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* Several flying over during migration, while we were 'raptor watching' from the car park at Trinity Church.

Eastern Imperial Eagle ♦ *Aquila heliaca* At least one flying over during 'raptor watching' from the car park at Trinity Church.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Western Marsh Harrier (Eurasian M H) *Circus aeruginosus*

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

Common Buzzard (Steppe B) *Buteo [buteo] vulpinus*

Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

Pallid Scops Owl ♦ (Striated S O) *Otus brucei* After a failed first attempt, great views were had on our second visit.

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops*

Cyprus Scops Owl ♦ *Otus cypricus* Great views at night from a confiding individual near the hotel.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocoptes medius*

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor*

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus*

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

White-backed Woodpecker ♦ (Lilford's W) *Dendrocopos [leucotos] lilfordi* After a bit of a slow, long drive and a wait, great views were had of a drumming male.

European Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae*

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Masked Shrike ◊ *Lanius nubicus* Several males seen very well on Cyprus during their migration.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhacorax*

Alpine Chough (Yellow-billed C) *Pyrrhocorax graculus*

Western Jackdaw (Eurasian J) *Coloeus monedula*

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

Northern Raven *Corvus corax*

Coal Tit *Parus ater*

Sombre Tit ◊ *Poecile lugubris* Fairly common in Ceceler Forest.

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Great Tit *Parus major*

Eurasian Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*

Bearded Reedling (B Tit) *Panurus biarmicus*

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Horned Lark (Shore L) *Eremophila alpestris*

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Bimaculated Lark ◊ *Melanocorypha bimaculata* After visiting a few sites where only Calandra Lark could be found, the jackpot was hit near Yeniakpınar where several were seen well.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*

Turkestan Short-toed Lark ◊ *Alaudala heinei* Fairly common in the plains near Sultan Sazlığı.

White-spectacled Bulbul ◊ (Yellow-vented B) *Pycnonotus xanthopygos* Quite common throughout Turkey.

Sand Martin (Bank Swallow) *Riparia riparia*

Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Western House Martin (Northern H M) *Delichon urbicum*

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Eastern Bonelli's Warbler ◊ *Phylloscopus orientalis* Great views of several in Ceceler Forest.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Mountain Chiffchaff ◊ (Caucasian C) *Phylloscopus [sindianus] lorenzii* A few seen very well near Stepantsminda and the way up to the Caucasus.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Common Reed Warbler ◊ (Caspian R W) *Acrocephalus [scirpaceus] fuscus* Common at some wetlands in Cyprus and Turkey.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida*

Upcher's Warbler ◊ *Hippolais languida*. Amazing views of a few confiding birds at Isikli.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Delicate Prinia ◊ *Prinia lepida* Common near Side.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Barred Warbler *Curruca nisoria*

Lesser Whitethroat *Curruca curruca*

Eastern Orphean Warbler ◊ *Curruca crassirostris*

Menetries's Warbler ◊ *Curruca mystacea* Great views of a singing male at Bireçik.

Rüppell's Warbler ◊ *Curruca ruppeli* Several seen well at Akseki.

Cyprus Warbler ◊ *Curruca melanothorax*. A few singing males seen really well throughout our stay on Cyprus.

Sardinian Warbler *Curruca melanocephala*

Common Whitethroat *Curruca communis*

Spectacled Warbler *Curruca conspicillata*

Iraq Babbler ◊ *Argya altirostris*. Good views of a babbling band at Bireçik.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Krüper's Nuthatch ◊ *Sitta krueperi* Many great views in the Ceceler Forest area.

Western Rock Nuthatch ◊ *Sitta neumayer* Seen very well at several sites in Turkey.

Eastern Rock Nuthatch ◊ (Great R N) *Sitta tephronota* Eventually, great views at Isikli.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*

Eurasian Treecreeper (Common T) *Certhia familiaris*

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Common Blackbird (Eurasian B) *Turdus merula*

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin (R Bush R) *Cercotrichas galactotes*

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

White-throated Robin ◊ *Irania gutturalis* Never get enough of this stunner; many great views in Turkey.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

Semicollared Flycatcher ◊ *Ficedula semitorquata* After a long chase, great views of a singing male were obtained!

European Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Common Redstart ◊ (Ehrenberg's R) *Phoenicurus [phoenicurus] samamisticus* A few males ID'ed in Georgia.

Common Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

Eastern Black-eared Wheatear ◊ *Oenanthe melanoleuca* Great views throughout the tour.

Cyprus Wheatear ◊ (C Pied W) *Oenanthe cypriaca* Several seen well on Cyprus.

Finsch's Wheatear ◊ *Oenanthe finschii* Several of these stunners at various sites in Turkey.

Kurdish Wheatear ◊ *Oenanthe xanthopyrna* Several seen well in Turkey.

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

Pale Rockfinch ◊ *Carpospiza brachydactyla* A few superbly confiding ones seen well in Turkey.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*

White-winged Snowfinch (Eurasian S) *Montifringilla nivalis*

Yellow-throated Sparrow (Chestnut-shouldered S) *Gymnoris xanthocollis*

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Dead Sea Sparrow ◊ *Passer moabiticus* Common near Birecik; great views of several groups.

Radde's Accentor ◊ *Prunella ocularis* Amazing views at Demirkazik.

Dunnock (Hedge Accentor) *Prunella modularis*

Western Yellow Wagtail (form unidentified) *Motacilla flava*

Western Yellow Wagtail (Blue-headed W) *Motacilla [flava] flava*

Western Yellow Wagtail (Black-headed W) *Motacilla [flava] feldegg*

Western Yellow Wagtail (Grey-headed W) *Motacilla [flava] thunbergi*

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

White Wagtail (White W) *Motacilla [alba] alba*

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*

Water Pipit ◊ (Caucasian W P) *Anthus [spinoletta] coutellii* One of the most common birds near Stepantsminda.

Eurasian Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Asian Crimson-winged Finch ◊ *Rhodopechys sanguineus* A few flyby's and great scope views on Demirkazik.

European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta*

Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Red Crossbill (Common C) *Loxia curvirostra*

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Red-fronted Serin ♦ *Serinus pusillus* Great views of several flocks around Stepantsminda and Demirkazik.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus*

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*

Cinereous Bunting ♦ (Eastern C B) *Emberiza [cineracea] semenowi* Brilliant views of many in eastern Turkey.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

Cretzschmar's Bunting ♦ *Emberiza caesia* One of the best; seen very well in eastern Turkey.

Black-headed Bunting ♦ *Emberiza melanocephala* Our first few in Cyprus, but much more common in Turkey; singing everywhere.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

MAMMALS

Golden Jackal (Common J) *Canis aureus*

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

Wild Goat (Ibex) *Capra aegagrus*

Daghestan Tur *Capra cylindricornis*

European Hare (Brown H) *Lepus europaeus*

Caucasian Squirrel (Persian S) *Sciurus anomalus*

European Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus citellus*



Yellow-throated Sparrow (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Woodchat Shrike (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Woodchat Shrike (image by Diedert Koppenol)



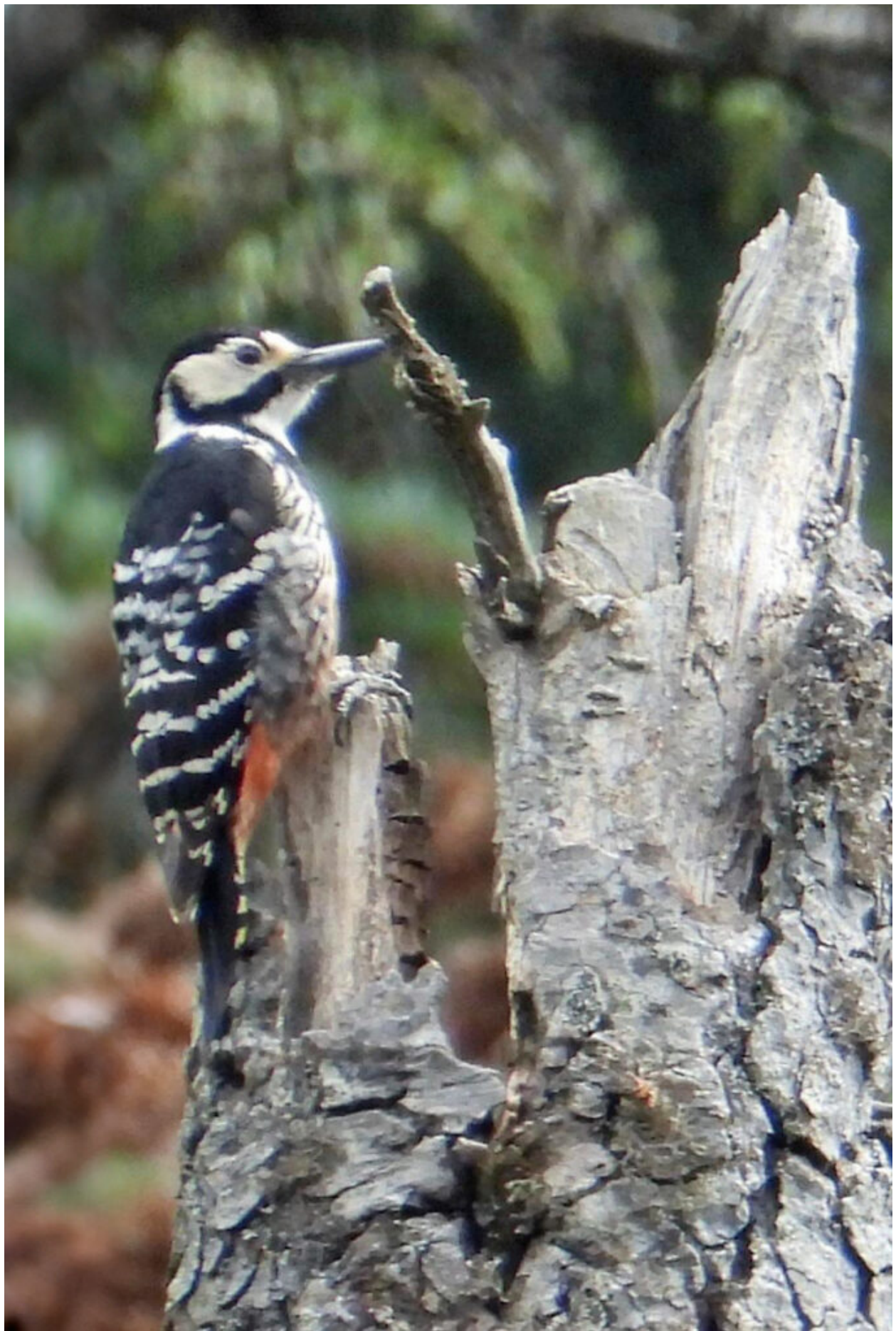
White-winged Snowfinch (image by Diedert Koppenol)



White-throated Robin (image by Diedert Koppenol)



White-throated Robin (image by Diedert Koppenol)



White-backed Woodpecker (image by Kaj Sjöstedt)



Western Rock Nuthatch (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Wallcreeper (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Wallcreeper (image by Diederik Koppenol)



Upcher's Warbler (image by Diederik Koppenol)



Upcher's Warbler (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Steppe Eagle (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Spur-winged Lapwing (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Squacco Heron (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Spectacled Warbler (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Sombre Tit (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Asia Minor Ground Squirrel (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Bearded Vulture (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Black Francolin (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Black-headed Bunting with Western Rock Nuthatch (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Black-shouldered Kite (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Eurasian Scops Owl (image by Diedert Koppenol)



European Turtle Dove (image by Diedert Koppenol)



European Roller (image by Diedert Koppenol)



European Turtle Doves (image by Diedert Koppenol)



European Bee-eaters (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Grey-headed Swampphen (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Laughing Dove (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Little Owl (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Gearing up for our morning tractor ride up the mountains at Demirkazik! (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Radde's Accentor (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Red-breasted Flycatcher (image by Diedert Koppenol)



See-see Partridge (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Sardinian Warbler (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Red-fronted Serin (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Purple Heron (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Mourning Cloak (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Pale Rockfinch (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Pallid Scops Owl (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Little Bittern (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Rüppell's Warbler (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Red-backed Shrike (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Pale Rockfinch (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Mountain Chiffchaff (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Rüppell's Warbler (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Pied Kingfisher (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Little Owl (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Lesser Grey Shrike (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Kurdish Wheater (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Eurasian Jay (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Rock Bunting (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Ring Ouzel (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Red-rumped Swallow (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Masked Shrike (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Menetries's Warbler (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Red-wattled Lapwing (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Mount Kazbeg (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Lesser Kestrel (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Kurdish Wheatear (image by Diedert Koppenol)



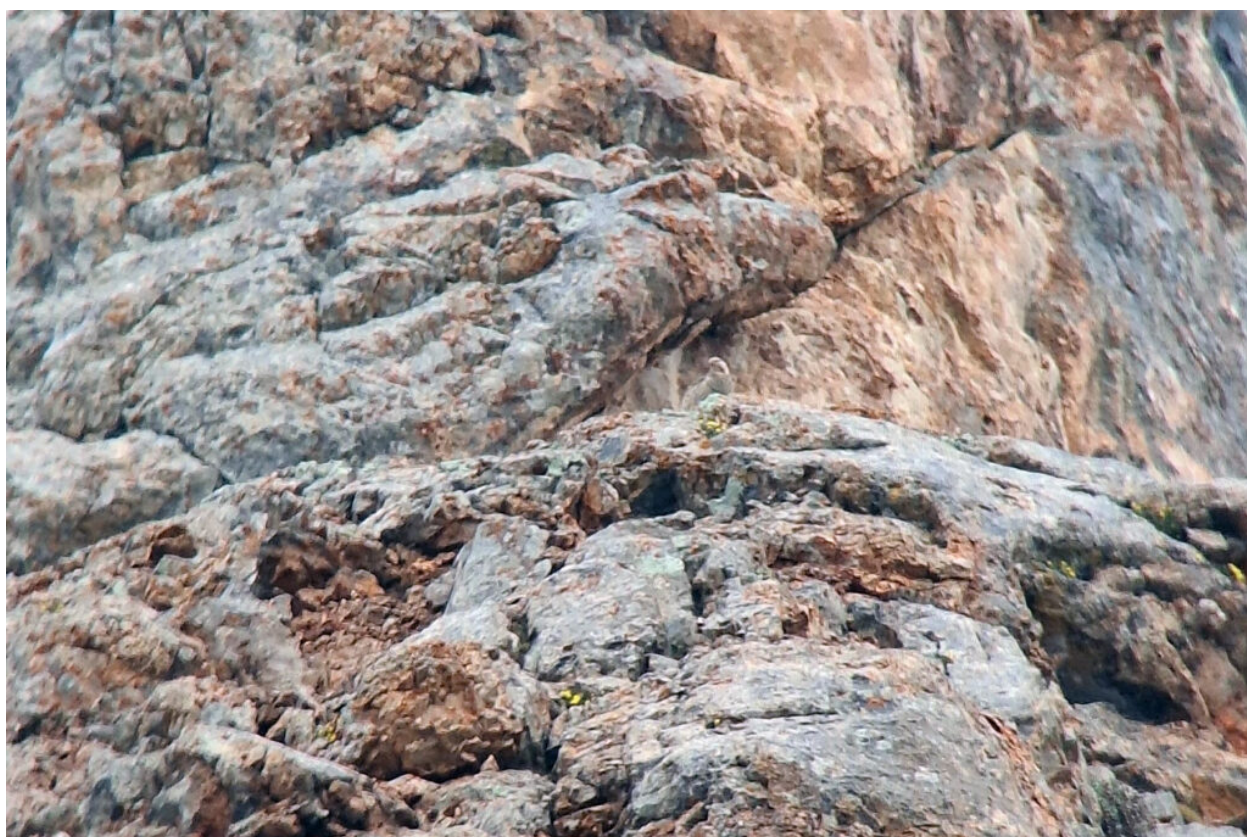
Krüper's Nuthatch (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Bimaculated Lark (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Caspian Snowcock (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Caucasian Grouse (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Ortolan Bunting (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Cyprus Wheatear (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Eastern Black-eared Wheatear (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Red-fronted Serin (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Desert Finches (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Eurasian Hoopoe (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Eleonora's Falcon (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Iraq Babbler (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Cinereous Bunting (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Chukar Partridge (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Caucasian Grouse (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Cyprus Warbler (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Desert Finch with Dead Sea Sparrows (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Delicate Prinia (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Dead Sea Sparrow (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Eastern Olivaceous Warbler (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Citrine Wagtail (image by Kai Sjöstedt)



Cyprus Scops Owl (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Cyprus Warbler (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Desert Finch with Dead Sea Sparrows (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Horned Lark (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Hiking up the mountains in Georgia (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Kurdish Wheatear (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Cyprus Wheatear (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Dead Sea Sparrow (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Great Spotted Cuckoo (image by Diedert Koppenol)



Ortolan Bunting (image by Diedert Koppenol)