

## CYPRUS

“As the group arrived dark clouds rumbled in and the weather changed for the worst (or better, depending on how you look at it). The following morning a deluge of migrants littered Cyprus. There are not many European tours that can boast Caspian Plover as virtually the first bird of the trip but this one can! Our pre-breakfast outing to Mandria produced a stunning male Caspian Plover feeding amongst small groups of Blue-, Ashy- and Black-headed Wagtails, and good numbers of Red-throated Pipits. How was the tour ever going to top this initial hour of birding?

Following a quick breakfast we were back out for a stroll over Paphos headland. Migrants flighted in off the sea including 4 Glossy Ibis, a Purple Heron, and 3 Rollers, whilst the bushes and scrub held many passerines including an obliging Stone-curlew, Hoopoes, Whinchats, Black-eared Wheatears, Ruppell's Warblers, Woodchat Shrike, and two male Ortolan Buntings. As we chopped up fresh avocados, tomatoes, sweet peppers, feta, and haloumi, for the first of many picnic lunches, Wood Warblers flicked around us, whilst a trio of Wrynecks proved suitably elusive. Not so the Little Crakes at Asprokremnos, with two males and two females showing particularly well.

The draw of the Caspian Plover was hard to resist especially being so close by, so we opted for second looks. A wise choice as arriving on the coast a trio of summer-plumaged Greater Sand-plovers greeted us on the shore whilst the Caspian Plover had now become two Caspian Plovers! Unbelievable! The journey home was topped off by two highly obliging Spur-winged Plovers. What a first day!

It was difficult to know just where to go and how to follow the first day but with so many sites and habitats on offer there was certainly no shortage of possibilities. Further forays along the flat coastal plains produced a Cyprus rarity in the form of six fly-by Laughing Doves, whilst the newly cut fields heaved with birds. One field held over a 100 blushing Red-throated Pipits peppered amongst glowing Yellow Wagtails. The pool and valley at Asprokremnos can always be guaranteed to hold something of interest and as well as enjoying excellent views of both the endemics (Cyprus Warbler and Cyprus Pied Wheatear) we also located a fine Barred Warbler, Squacco Herons, Chukar and Alpine Swifts.

Our early mornings back on Paphos Headland yielded yet more great sightings and most importantly, good views. An immature female Peregrine plucking a Quail whilst on the wing was impressive, as were the fine views of Wrynecks sunning themselves and foraging amongst the edge of the Roman ruins. Ruppell's and Subalpine Warblers put in appearances and we were always treated to the supporting cast of Hoopoes, Nightingales, Fan-tailed, and Sardinian Warblers, and Woodchat Shrikes.

Exploring further afield the Akamas Peninsula in the north-west of the island holds a mosaic of olive groves, orchards, dells, open pine forest and scrub and inevitably holds a mix of great species. Collared, Semi-collared and Pied Flycatchers allowed almost direct comparison whilst a trio of Pallid Swifts cavorted with a single Common Swift allowing a superb opportunity to compare these often tricky species. Overhead Red-rumped Swallows filled the air and three Little Owls proved particularly obliging. Around Aphrodite's Baths, Wood Warblers sparkled in the dappled morning light, whilst up along the crest of the peninsula a family of Serins entertained and Common Redstart and

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Nightingales also put in an appearance. Our final stop of the day, whilst returning back to the hotel, revealed a pair of Long-legged Buzzards and a single Montagu's Harrier.

The Akrotiri Peninsula is another hotspot, although very different from Akamas. This barren, flat area is dominated by a huge salt lake, and around it a number of sites that regularly hold good birds. The dry gravel pits produced a few birds including Tawny Pipits and Short-toed Larks whilst the shelter of Bishops Pool had attracted a plethora of species including Ferruginous Ducks, Glossy Ibis, Common Sandpipers and Ruff. Close by a White Stork dropped in to a field, a great spring record. Further east we searched the brackish habitats of Lady's Mile where a trio of obliging Spectacled Warblers entertained us, whilst out on the pools a Marsh Sandpiper and a Greenshank fed alongside each other providing yet another superb comparative opportunity. Heading back west we paused at Phassouri reed-bed where a quartet of Cattle Egrets fed alongside a Little Egret and three very smart Glossy Ibis.

The following day was a good behaviour day, and by that I mean that not only did the participants behave themselves but so did the birds! First came a pair of Crested Larks engaged in an beautiful little dance, then an Alpine Swift being mobbed by Swallow during which the Swallow actually landed on the back of the Swift, a charm of Goldfinch's bathed in the Reservoir, a pair of Sardinian Warblers foraging right next to us on the dam edge, and a Nightingale bucked its skulking nature to feed right out in the open on a track. The only badly behaved bird was the Baillon's Crake, which, once again, proved to be particularly elusive.

The Troodos mountains provided a cool and tranquil alternative to the coast. High up in the Troodos Pine forest we encountered a number of endemic subspecies including Wren, Coal Tit and Jay whilst many of the summer migrants had returned, the highlight of which was locating the nest-building pair of Masked Shrikes. A superb male Cretzschmar's Bunting put on a fine show and we even secured views of singing Eastern Olivaceous Warblers. A superb day in a beautiful area.

Our final day was largely interrupted by the effects of an irrupting volcano a long way away but we still managed a walk out on the headland where we added the last new bird of the trip, a stunning male Red-backed Shrike." – *Dan Brown*

### BIRD LIST:

Column A = Number of days this species was seen on the last tour.

Column B = Maximum daily count for this species on the last tour.

H = Heard only

(H) = Mostly heard but some seen

	A	B	
Little Grebe	1	5	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
European Shag	1	1	<i>Leucocarbo aristotelis</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron	4	1	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Squacco Heron	3	6	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
Cattle Egret	1	4	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>

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Little Egret	4	10		<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Purple Heron	5	4		<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
White Stork	1	1		<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
Glossy Ibis	5	25		<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
Mallard	1	19		<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Garganey	1	1		<i>Anas querquedula</i>
Ferruginous Duck	1	9		<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
Western Marsh Harrier	3	1		<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Pallid Harrier	1	1		<i>Circus macrourus</i>
Montagu's Harrier	1	1		<i>Circus pygargus</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	1	2		<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Long-legged Buzzard	1	2		<i>Buteo rufinus</i>
Lesser Kestrel	1	1		<i>Falco naumanni</i>
Common Kestrel	7	20		<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Eurasian Hobby	1	1		<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
Peregrine Falcon	2	1		<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Chukar	5	5		<i>Alectoris chukar</i>
Black Francolin	3		H	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>
Little Crake	3	5		<i>Porzana parva</i>
Eurasian Thick-knee	2	1		<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>
Little Ringed Plover	2	1		<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Caspian Plover	1	2		<i>Charadrius asiaticus</i>
Spur-winged Lapwing	1	2		<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>
Little Stint	1	1		<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Ruff	5	25		<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Snipe	2	1		<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Spotted Redshank	1	1		<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
Marsh Sandpiper	1	1		<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
Common Greenshank	1	2		<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Green Sandpiper	2	1		<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Wood Sandpiper	3	12		<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Common Sandpiper	2	6		<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Baltic Gull	3	9		<i>Larus fuscus fuscus</i>
Yellow-legged Gull	6	150		<i>Larus michahellis</i>
Rock Pigeon	7	100		<i>Columba livia</i>
Common Wood Pigeon	7	200		<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove	7	60		<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
European Turtle Dove	2	5		<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
Great Spotted Cuckoo	2	1		<i>Clamator glandarius</i>
Common Cuckoo	4	1		<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
Eurasian Scops Owl	1		H	<i>Otus scops</i>
Little Owl	1	3		<i>Athene noctua</i>
Alpine Swift	4	100		<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
Common Swift	7	250		<i>Apus apus</i>
Pallid Swift	2	3		<i>Apus pallidus</i>
Common Kingfisher	1	2		<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
European Bee-eater	2	20		<i>Merops apiaster</i>
European Roller	3	5		<i>Coracias garrulus</i>
Eurasian Hoopoe	5	5		<i>Upupa epops</i>
Eurasian Wryneck	5	4		<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
Greater Short-toed Lark	4	100		<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>

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Crested Lark	7	25		<i>Galerida cristata</i>
Barn Swallow	7	400		<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Red-rumped Swallow	5	200		<i>Cecropsis daurica</i>
Northern House-Martin	6	150		<i>Delichon urbicum</i>
Tawny Pipit	4	10		<i>Anthus campestris</i>
Tree Pipit	6	10		<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
Red-throated Pipit	4	120		<i>Anthus cervinus</i>
Blue-headed Wagtail	3	60		<i>Motacilla flava flava</i>
Grey-headed Wagtail	1	2		<i>Motacilla flava thunbergi</i>
Black-headed Wagtail	4	120		<i>Motacilla flava feldegg</i>
Grey Wagtail	1	1		<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
White Wagtail	4	50		<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Winter Wren	1	2		<i>Troglodytes troglodytes cypriotes</i>
Common Nightingale	7	6		<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
Common Redstart	4	2		<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Whinchat	3	6		<i>Saxicola ruberta</i>
Isabelline Wheatear	3	3		<i>Oenanthe isabelina</i>
Northern Wheatear	5	30		<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Cyprus Wheatear	4	25		<i>Oenanthe cypriaca</i>
Eastern Black-eared Wheatear	5	10		<i>Oenanthe melanoleuca</i>
Eurasian Blackbird	1		H	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Cettis Warbler	7	1	(H)	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
Zitting Cisticola	7	25		<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Sedge Warbler	1	10		<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>
Common Reed Warbler	1	5		<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Great Reed Warbler	1		H	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	4	1		<i>Hippolais elaeica</i>
Spectacled Warbler	1	3		<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>
Subalpine Warbler	2	3		<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>
Sardinian Warbler	6	20		<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
Cyprus Warbler	3	5		<i>Sylvia melanothorax</i>
Ruppell's Warbler	2	3		<i>Sylvia rueppelli</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	4	10		<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
Common Whitethroat	2	2		<i>Sylvia communis</i>
Blackcap	6	8		<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Eastern Bonelli's Warbler	3	5		<i>Phylloscopus orientalis</i>
Wood Warbler	5	20		<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
Common Chiffchaff	1	1		<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Willow Warbler	1	1		<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Semicollared Flycatcher	1	2		<i>Ficedula semitorquata</i>
Collared Flycatcher	1	2		<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>
European Pied Flycatcher	2	2		<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
Coal Tit	1	10		<i>Parus ater cypriotes</i>
Great Tit	7	20		<i>Parus major aphrodite</i>
Short-toed Tree-creeper	1	2		<i>Certhia brachydactyla dorotheae</i>
Eurasian Golden-Oriole	3	15		<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
Red-backed Shrike	1	1		<i>Lanius collurio</i>
Woodchat Shrike	5	10		<i>Lanius senator</i>
Masked Shrike	1	3		<i>Lanius nubicus</i>
Eurasian Jay	1	2		<i>Garrulus glandarius glaszneri</i>
Black-billed Magpie	5	30		<i>Pica pica</i>

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Jackdaw	7	40	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Hooded Crow	7	50	<i>Corvus corvix</i>
House Sparrow	7	300	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Spanish Sparrow	4	20	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
Chaffinch	2	10	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
European Serin	2	5	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
European Greenfinch	6	15	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
European Goldfinch	7	80	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Eurasian Linnet	3	3	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
Ortolan Bunting	6	20	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>
Cretzschmar's Bunting	1	2	<i>Emberza caesia</i>
Corn Bunting	5	5	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>