

Birding Abroad Ltd Cyprus 4 – 11 April 2026 Trip Report

Spring arrives early in Cyprus, where the first stirrings of migration can be felt as early as mid-February, building steadily through March and with a slowly changing profile of bird species, lasting well into early May. For birdwatchers, the island is at its most captivating in the first half of April, when its strategic position, just 164 miles from the coast of Lebanon, transforms it into a vital stepping stone for migrants pushing north toward the European mainland. During this brief window, skies, scrub, and wetlands come alive with movement, colour, and song.

Our visit was carefully timed to coincide with this spectacle, while also seeking out the island's three endemic breeding species: the Cyprus Wheatear, the Cyprus Warbler, and the elusive Cyprus Scops-owl, a nocturnal voice more often heard than seen, and undoubtedly the most challenging of the trio. Over the course of a week, we divided our time between the contrasting regions of Paphos and Larnaca, allowing us to explore a rich variety of habitats and migration hotspots. While birds were always our primary focus, Cyprus has a way of drawing one into its layered history and culture, and we made time to visit a couple of sites of archaeological and cultural interest, each also renown birding sites. This marked our fourth visit in eight years, a testament to the island's enduring appeal, both for us and for the many enthusiastic clients and friends who join our tours.

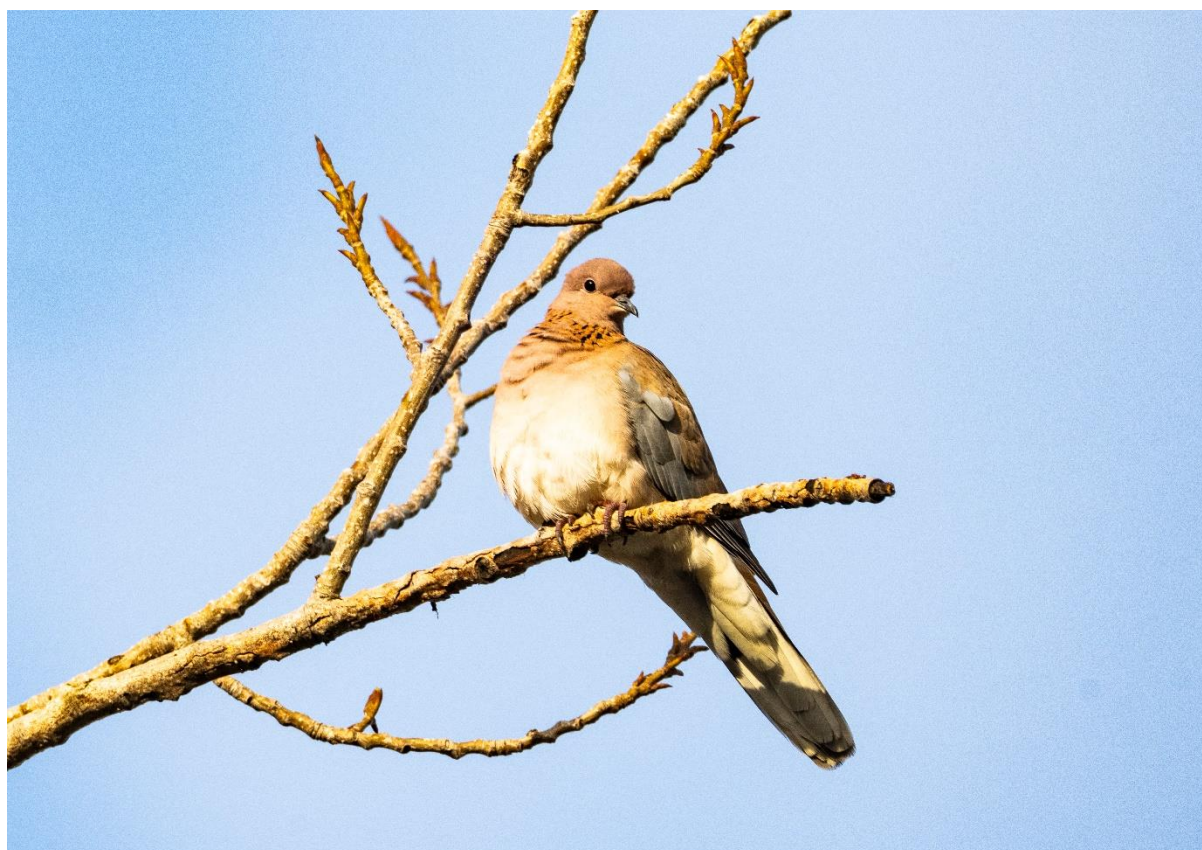
Our group for the week comprised Deborah Cook, Dave and Sue Cropper, Dorothy Jackson, Bob and Pat Martin, Richard and Georgina Penticost, Keith and Liz Reynolds, with Lance and Nick leading for Birding Abroad.



Saturday 4 April

With group members travelling from London Gatwick, Leeds, and Manchester, arrivals into Paphos were staggered across the afternoon. The island greeted us with unsettled skies, the aircraft's descent being buffeted by strong winds, before we disembarked into squally showers – quite an atmospheric and unusual introduction to the Mediterranean spring! Fortunately, our first base lay just a short drive from the airport, and after a couple of shuttle runs in our comfortable people carriers, the group was soon assembled.

Our accommodation, a charming rural hotel of vine-clad stone and traditional character, proved perfectly situated amid a mosaic of productive birding habitat. The surrounding valley, with its mix of scrub, trees, and a partially dry stream, invited immediate exploration. With the rain and breeze easing, we set out for a gentle introductory walk. It didn't take long before the trees began to reveal their treasures: a delicate Wood Warbler flickered through the foliage, accompanied by a smart adult male Collared Flycatcher and a glowing Common Redstart. Sardinian Warblers were already busy feeding young, an early sign of the season's progression; they would become constant companions throughout the week. Elsewhere, a striking Woodchat Shrike surveyed its potential feeding grounds from an exposed perch, while a couple of migrant Lesser Whitethroat remained mostly concealed within dense cover. Familiar species provided a comforting backdrop; Hooded Crow, Eurasian Magpie and House Sparrow, while both Laughing Dove and Eurasian Collared-dove added to the gentle rhythm of the landscape. The former, a relatively recent colonist, has expanded rapidly across the island in just over a decade and is now a familiar and welcome sight.



Down in the valley, the shallow stream provided a vital stopover for a lone Green Sandpiper, our only encounter with the species during the trip, and a reminder of the constant movement unfolding across the island.

Back at the hotel, Barn Swallows were already attending nests in the courtyard, their activity a reassuring signal that spring was far more advanced than back in the UK. As evening fell, we gathered for drinks and dinner, sharing first impressions and anticipation for the days ahead. It had largely been a day of travel, but as darkness settled, one final highlight drifted through the night air of the valley below - the soft, repetitive call of the Cyprus Scops-owl, hinting at the island's more secretive inhabitants waiting to be discovered.

Sunday 5 April

Breakfast was taken at 07.30 and one hour later we were stepping out into the soft, shifting light of a Cypriot spring morning, setting the rhythm of our daily schedule for the week ahead. Even before departure, the hotel grounds offered fresh interest; amongst the more familiar House Sparrows, several Spanish Sparrow were present, the smartly marked males chattering noisily from rooftops and vines.

With the weather holding, for now, as we made our way west toward the celebrated Paphos Archaeological Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1980 and a magnet for migrating birds. Just half an hour from our base, the site offers a remarkable blend of history and habitat. As we climbed the entrance steps, we were greeted by a tapestry of wildflowers and low scrub, threaded with sandy paths and scattered with ancient ruins - Roman mosaics, crumbling walls, intact foundations and quiet groves of trees. It is a place where past and present coexist, and for birders, every corner seems to hold promise.

The morning began under intermittent sunshine, and we were quick to take advantage, aware of the darkening skies gathering out to sea. Along the grassy margins between the well-worn paths and the coastal fence, flocks of wagtails fed busily, taking cover in slightly longer vegetation. Careful approach rewarded us with excellent views and among roughly 150 birds, the diversity was striking. Most males were *feldegg* 'black-headed', their bold dark heads gleaming against vivid yellow underparts, while smaller numbers of *flava* 'blue-headed' added contrast. Even more exciting were a handful of scarcer forms, *thunbergi* 'grey-headed' and the distinctive '*superciliaris*' form, their subtle differences interesting to study. Each represented birds bound for different breeding grounds across Eurasia, a fleeting convergence of journeys in one small corner of Cyprus.

Nearby, six Red-throated Pipit and four Tree Pipit fed quietly on the ground, occasionally lifting into the air with soft calls that betrayed their presence. A few Zitting Cisticola sang as they flew around the site, a species we were to note wherever we ventured in the lowlands. A brief but tantalising encounter came in the form of a vibrant male Cretzschmar's Bunting perched momentarily in the middle of a bush before it vanished as quickly as it appeared. Surprisingly, it was our only sighting of the species all week.

As anticipated, the weather soon turned. Heavy rain swept in and held us at bay for approximately 45 minutes, but the interruption proved a welcome opportunity to explore the site's remarkable archaeological treasures. Taking shelter within a purpose-built structure, we found ourselves immersed in the history of ancient Paphos. Founded in the 4th century BC under the Ptolemaic Kingdom, whose power base lay in Alexandria, the site later flourished under Roman rule. Its crowning glory lies in the exquisitely preserved mosaic floors of grand Roman villas, their intricate designs depicting scenes from Greek mythology with astonishing artistry and detail. Even for those primarily drawn here by birds, it was impossible not to be captivated by the depth of history beneath our feet. With much of the site still awaiting excavation, the sense of discovery, shared by archaeologists and birders alike, felt very much alive.

The rain cleared as swiftly as it had swept in, and warm sunshine returned to bathe the landscape. Almost immediately the birdlife responded, scrub and low bushes seemed to come alive, and it was the warblers that provided the greatest spectacle. Five striking male and a single female Eastern Subalpine Warbler showed beautifully (male shown in the photo below), their subtle tones glowing in the fresh light, while a couple of handsome male Rüppell's Warbler added a touch of eastern Mediterranean glamour. Sardinian Warblers were seemingly everywhere, their scratchy calls a constant backdrop, joined by smaller numbers of Eurasian Blackcap and Common Whitethroat.



Wheatears dotted the open ground, including several Northern Wheatear, three pale Isabelline Wheatear, and a particularly elegant male Black-eared Wheatear. As the air warmed, at least five Common Nightingale emerged cautiously from cover, some offering brief

but acceptable views, while four Whinchat perched conspicuously, no doubt taking advantage of the sunshine to dry their rain-soaked plumage.

Overhead, the sky grew busier by the minute. Around 15 Common Swift scythed through the air, accompanied by a lively mix of hirundines, predominantly Barn Swallow, Red-rumped Swallow and House Martin. Meanwhile, a couple of Woodchat Shrikes sat watchfully on exposed perches, ever alert to the activity of smaller birds and insects below. On the ground, Crested Larks and Common Hoopoe probed the sandy soil, while a few Yellow-legged Gull drifted effortlessly along the coastline on the uplift of the sea breeze.

Returning to our accommodation for lunch, we enjoyed the relaxed setting of the garden and terrace. The rhythmic song of a Common Quail echoed briefly from an adjacent barley field, an evocative sound of Mediterranean farmland in spring.

Refreshed, we set out once more, this time heading for Timi Beach. A scarce visitor had been lingering here for over a week, and it wasn't long before we located the sought-after male Trumpeter Finch feeding quietly among the seedheads of the short coastal turf, a delightful and rather special sighting.



A gentle walk along the shoreline added further interest, with two grounded Purple Herons and a couple of Eurasian Thick-knee (more often still called Stone Curlew), alongside more Northern Wheatear and a single Isabelline Wheatear. Scanning out to sea we picked up a

group of 12 Purple Herons coming 'in-off'. Butterflies also added colour to the scene, with several Clouded Yellow and numerous Small White fluttering across the coastal grassland.

Later in the afternoon, we visited the 'Motorway Pools', a series of neglected soak aways beneath the nearby motorway bridge which despite their unassuming appearance, are renowned among birders as a haven for elusive migrants. Patience here proved essential, but ultimately rewarding: careful watching revealed both a male and female Little Crane creeping delicately along the water's edge and occasionally stepping into view through gaps in the vegetation. Sharing the pools were 15 Common Moorhen and two Eurasian Coot, while eight Little Grebe dived repeatedly in search of food. In a quiet, sunlit corner, a Common Kingfisher perched motionless, a flash of brilliance against the still water. Above us, two impressive Long-legged Buzzard settled on rocky outcrops, affording prolonged views through the telescopes in the golden light of late afternoon.

As the day ended, we returned to our hotel for a well-earned evening meal, reflecting on a rich and varied day in the field. Yet one final highlight awaited us not too far away. As dusk turned to darkness, we were treated to superb views of a pair of Cyprus Scops-owl, a magical encounter, and undoubtedly one of the most memorable moments of the entire tour.



Monday 6 April

Another fine spring morning began in relaxed fashion with breakfast before we set out once more into the Cypriot countryside. Our first destination was the impressive Asprokremmos Dam, where the valley below the dam wall supports a rich expanse of maquis scrub, prime habitat for both resident birds and newly arrived migrants.

No sooner had we arrived than the raucous calls of Eurasian Magpies betrayed something of interest. Their agitation soon paid off, revealing two striking Great Spotted Cuckoo, their elegant forms watched at leisure. Following a narrow path through the dense scrub, we worked patiently to locate one of our key targets. Eventually, persistence was rewarded with excellent views of two territorial male Cyprus Warbler. While their song closely resembles that of their widespread relative, the Sardinian Warbler, their distinctive calls offered a reliable clue to their presence. There is increasing concern that the expanding resident Sardinian Warbler population may be placing pressure on this migrant endemic breeding species, which arrives in Cyprus each spring from wintering grounds bordering the Red Sea.



Elsewhere, several Common Nightingales sang or broadcast their 'whoet' call from deep cover, and a smart male Pied Flycatcher sallied from a bare branch. Overhead, migration was in full swing with at least 25 Tree Pipit passing above us, their quiet calls marking steady northbound movement that morning. A small group of Alpine Swift powered past, while a flock of 15 European Bee-eater paused briefly on telegraph wires, their vivid colours glowing against the sky. An assemblage of seven blue butterflies in one small area drew our attention and close inspection revealed them to be Paphos Blue, an island endemic. The undisputed highlight of the morning, however, came when a pair of Bonelli's Eagle appeared overhead,

circling slowly and majestically just above us for several minutes, a breathtaking encounter with one of the region's most impressive raptors.



By late morning, we moved on to the coastal fringes of Mandria, where a mosaic of farmland and scrub stretches from the village down to the sea. A leisurely walk through this open landscape produced a steady stream of interest. Offshore, two European Shag rested on rocks, while an Isabelline Wheatear and several Northern Wheatear were conspicuous across the fields. A flock of at least 35 Greater Short-toed Lark blended superbly into the stubble, requiring a careful and measured approach to fully appreciate them. Two Common Quail were unexpectedly flushed from weedy margins; their sudden departure a reminder of how easily these birds can remain hidden. Helpful information from fellow birders led us to a freshly tilled field, where a Collared Pratincole was feeding, allowing prolonged close views from the comfort of our vehicles.

After returning to our accommodation for lunch, we headed out again at 14.00, this time to the higher ground of Anarita Park. This elevated valley and hillside location acts as a natural corridor for migrants moving inland from the coast. Our first reward was a stunning European Roller, its brilliant blues shining in the afternoon light before it slipped away. Migration was clearly building, particularly among Whinchats, with at least 18 counted during our walk. Two male Black-eared Wheatear showed well, though our hoped-for first Cyprus Wheatear

remained frustratingly distant, a species we would need to pursue further as the week progressed. A Red Fox peered at us from a rock pinnacle before it then disappeared amongst the boulders.

Raptors again provided plenty of action, with at least four Long-legged Buzzard actively hunting and displaying over the hillsides. Additional passerines included a fine male Eastern Subalpine Warbler, along with five Common Linnet and four Corn Bunting. At least four Chukar were also noted, their presence given away by their distinctive calls.

Our final stop of the day brought us to the pools at Agia Varvara, another unassuming yet highly productive site. Here, we were once again rewarded with excellent views of both male (photo below) and female Little Crake feeding delicately along the water's edge. Above the pools, hirundines hawked for insects, including our first Collared Sand Martin of the trip.



As the day drew to a close, we returned to our hotel, where even the immediate surroundings continued to deliver. A Spotted Flycatcher and two Collared Flycatcher posing obligingly before we settled into pre-dinner drinks and another excellent evening meal. Another richly rewarding day had drawn to a close, filled with both memorable sightings and the quiet satisfaction of time spent immersed in Cyprus's spring migration.

Tuesday 7 April

Today we turned our attention inland, heading towards the cooler heights of the Troodos Mountains. Leaving the coast behind, we followed the winding Diarizos Valley road, climbing steadily through a landscape of scattered hamlets, terraced hillside and vine-covered slopes. Goat herds moved across the scrubby hillsides and clusters of beehives dotted the margins of

the road, adding to the sense of a traditional rural landscape shaped by both nature and long-standing human use.

Our first stop came at a reliable site for one of the island's key endemics, and we were quickly rewarded with excellent views of a singing male Cyprus Wheatear, its peculiar buzzing song carrying across the scrub. Nearby, two noisy Great Spotted Cuckoo chased each other in energetic pursuit flights, before sweeping low across the hillside and disappearing upslope. Amongst small, scattered pines and maquis-like vegetation, a singing male European Serin performed well, the first of the tour, while a softly "purring" European Turtle-dove was a welcome surprise; one of only two recorded during the entire trip. A further stop in mixed farmland on a valley slope produced another highlight, superb views of a striking Masked Shrike, one of the most elegant of breeding birds of the island. Despite careful searching, however, we could not locate any Cretzschmar's Bunting in apparently ideal habitat, perhaps a sign that cooler spring conditions had delayed their arrival onto breeding territories.

We eventually climbed higher, reaching the summit area and the village of Troodos itself, where the air was noticeably cooler and the cloud base hung lower over the pines. A fine drizzle threatened but, fortunately, held off as we explored the village park, where we turned our attention to the island's endemic subspecies. Almost immediately we encountered the distinctive *cypriotes* island race of Coal Tit. At least ten were noted, their darker plumage and reduced cheek patches giving them a noticeably more sombre appearance than their mainland relatives. Equally conspicuous were several *glaszneri* Eurasian Jay, some even venturing into the village streets.



Our principal target in these uplands, however, was the *dorotheae* form of Short-toed Treecreeper, a taxon sometimes considered a potential future split. Moving slowly and carefully through the pine forest, patience was eventually rewarded with excellent views of a single bird creeping methodically along trunks and branches, occasionally flitting from tree to tree.

The still mountain atmosphere was broken occasionally by song. The resonant sound of a Mistle Thrush echoing through the woods, a Eurasian Wren bursting into energetic song from dense cover and the distant calls of Red Crossbill drifting through the forest canopy. Overhead, small groups of Common Swift passed through, though despite careful scanning we could not pick out any Pallid Swifts among them.

Descending from the mountains, we paused for a relaxing lunch at a trout farm restaurant, before trying a site we have visited on previous visits to locate Cretzschmar's Bunting. We were again unsuccessful with the bunting, though a pair of Masked Shrike held territory nearby, offering repeated views (see photo below).



The drive back towards the coast was eventful in itself. As we crossed the island's interior, heavy rain briefly swept across the road, drumming down for a few minutes before giving way once more to bright sunshine as we descended towards the plains. Along the roadside we encountered several more Cyprus Wheatear, here a familiar and welcome presence. The countryside was lusher than usual, with various wildflowers at the roadside, almond trees in blossom in small villages and vineyards just beginning to bud, presenting an altogether dramatic, pretty and unspoilt rural landscape.

Our final birding stop of the day was a small pine woodland near Asprokremmos Dam. In the soft late-afternoon light, the trees came alive with activity. At least 12 Collared Flycatcher and three European Pied Flycatcher were feeding actively, accompanied by three Wood Warbler and four Eastern Bonelli's Warbler. Also present were three Common Redstart, along with single Willow Warbler and Common Chiffchaff. Looking out over the reservoir, a gathering of Yellow-legged Gull included four darker and black-backed individuals, identifiable as Baltic Gulls. As the sun began to sink lower in the sky, we made our way back to the hotel for another nice meal and drink accompanied by our usual relaxed and fun discussions and the shared satisfaction of another full and rewarding day in the field.

Wednesday 8 April

After breakfast, it was time to bid farewell to our welcoming hosts and begin our journey east toward Larnaca. The coastal highway offered easy travelling, but as ever in Cyprus, there were birding sites en-route and the temptation to stop and explore proved irresistible. Within twenty minutes, we had already turned off to investigate a promising stretch of scrub-covered hillside. Despite clear signs of a recent fire, with charred earth and blackened stems just beginning to regenerate, the habitat still held life, and it didn't take long before a superb male Cyprus Warbler revealed itself, singing boldly from one of the surviving patches of vegetation. At one point, it was closely shadowed by a male Sardinian Warbler, perhaps a subtle glimpse of the competitive pressures between these two closely related species. From beyond the ridge came the rich, far-carrying calls of two Black Francolin, though frustratingly they remained just out of sight. A confiding Cyprus Wheatear added to the scene, these engaging birds often showing a curious tolerance of human presence.

Continuing east, we passed the British military base at Episkopi and made a brief stop at the dramatic Kensington Cliffs. This is a well-known breeding site for Eleonora's Falcon, but the question remained, had they returned yet from their distant wintering grounds in Madagascar? On this occasion, it seemed we were just a little too early. Nevertheless, the cliffs still delivered interest with a Peregrine Falcon circling while an impressive Eurasian Griffon Vulture drifted effortlessly along the updrafts. In the pines above the cliffs, several Collared Flycatcher and two European Pied Flycatcher fed actively, with one male Collared Flycatcher seen to flash by us, arriving "in-off" the sea, a vivid reminder of the journeys these migrants undertake.

By late morning we were back on the road, stopping shortly at the remarkable Kourion, a UNESCO World Heritage Site perched dramatically above the sea just west of Limassol. With its sweeping Greco-Roman theatre and extensive ruins dating from 300 BC to 650 AD, the site offers both historical grandeur and birding potential. The group spread out across the windswept plateau, though the strong breeze made finding migrants a challenge. Even so, a Woodchat Shrike and three Collared Flycatchers provided some reward, while four Eurasian Griffon Vultures glided overhead, offering magnificent views against the coastal backdrop. Our picnic lunch near the visitor centre provided a welcome pause before we descended to the

coastal plain to explore the lesser-known M1 Pools. Though still exposed to the persistent wind, the pools held a scattering of wetland species: three Glossy Ibis (two pictured below), four Western Cattle Egret, and three Little Egret. Five Common Sandpiper, probably recently arrived, added movement and sound along the water's edge.



From here, we continued across the expansive Akrotiri peninsula, pausing at the tranquil Agios Georgios Chapel. Surrounded by low scrub and steeped in quiet charm, this small 16th-century chapel proved another productive stop. More Collared Flycatchers were present, along with a striking male Rüppell's Warbler and a Eurasian Wryneck, a subtle and much-appreciated addition to the tour. Butterflies of interest today included two Swallowtail, four Orange Tip, and two Painted Lady.

Unfortunately, access to the nearby Phassouri Reedbeds was restricted due to concerns over disease transmission among grazing cattle, so we pressed on across the open salt flats. The Akrotiri Salt Lake, fringed with low salicornia scrub, looked promising but proved too windswept to reveal any smaller birds. At Lady's Mile, shallow creeks still held water, though waders were scarce, only a handful of elegant Black-winged Stilt huddled together roosting on a muddy islet.

By early evening, we completed our journey to Larnaca, arriving at our hotel on the eastern side of the island just after 17.30. After checking in, we gathered for a well-earned meal, drink and evening log.

Thursday 9 April

The day began in classic Mediterranean fashion, with breakfast taken against a backdrop of glittering blue sea, the hotel terrace basking in spring light. We set off for Cape Greco, taking the motorway that skirts Ayia Napa, delivering us to the cape in around forty minutes.

Parking up, we stepped straight into a mosaic of habitats; low scrub, rocky outcrops, and open coastal margins, all prime territory at this time of year. Cape Greco has a well-earned reputation among birders as one of Cyprus's top migrant traps, with a history of producing scarce and exciting species each spring. Today, however, the conditions being clear and bright, were perhaps a little too "perfect," offering little incentive for migrants to drop in. Still, the resident birds wasted no time in putting on a show. Several Chukar strode into view early on, handsome, characterful birds that are all too easily overlooked.



Warblers were reasonably represented, with Eurasian Blackcap the most numerous, a dozen counted as they flicked through the scrub. The presence of at least four Common Nightingale was betrayed more by movement than voice, their warm rufous tails showing as they slipped between cover. A brief burst of 'reeling' from a Common Grasshopper Warbler hinted at hidden life before silence returned. Reaching the coast, the sea added its own interest when a sleek Audouin's Gull passed by offshore, while a group of Yellow-legged Gull worked the water further out.

Spreading out across the cape improved our chances, and while numbers remained modest, quality more than compensated. At least five male Cyprus Warbler gave superb views, alongside six Cyprus Wheatear, both island specialties and always a highlight. Two female Black-eared Wheatear offered a useful plumage characteristics study, while two Woodchat Shrike added more flashes of colour to the landscape. Other migrants included five Whinchat and two Greater Short-toed Lark. A real surprise came in the form of a “conspiracy” of seven Common Raven, drifting purposefully over our heads towards the restricted far reaches of the cape.

A short drive inland brought us to a small pine wood, another classic migrant haven. Once again, it felt quiet, though four more Common Nightingale and a calling Eastern Bonelli's Warbler ensured it wasn't without interest. Underfoot, the ground was dotted with Barbary Nut, a pretty delicate small iris-like wildflower, native to the Mediterranean region. The flower is sometimes referred to as the “Noon Flower” because of its short-lived afternoon bloom time which lends subtle colour to drier coastal reaches.

Lunch was a relaxed affair at a roadside café in the small resort of Protaras, before we continued on to Paralimni Lake for the afternoon. Following spring rains, water levels were high, but the lake still held a good selection of birds. Ducks included 33 Common Teal, 15 Northern Shoveler and three Red-crested Pochard. Along the shrinking muddy margins, waders gathered: ten Common Ringed Plover, ten Little Stint and seven Spur-winged Lapwing.



Further out, a loose flock of thirty Glossy Ibis traced the shoreline, with a few individuals feeding much nearer.

Access to the northern sector was noticeably reduced due to ongoing development, an unwelcome but increasingly familiar sight. A Black Francolin called and Dave managed to find it atop a small earth mound amongst an adjacent barley field.



Our final stop, just a few miles from the hotel, was Oroklini Lake. Viewing from two raised hides, we rounded off the day with a pleasing mix of four Ferruginous Duck, 12 Red-crested Pochard, a handful of Spur-winged Lapwing and a group of 17 Ruff. The scratchy song of a Sedge Warbler provided a fitting soundtrack as the light softened.

By 17.00 we were back at the hotel, another rewarding day logged over good food, drinks, and shared reflections.

Friday 10 April

Our final full day began, as so many had, with clear skies and anticipation. Today's plan was to explore the well-known birding hotspots around Larnaca, starting at the productive pools of the Larnaca Salt Lake complex.

The surrounding *salicornia* scrub quickly yielded six Spectacled Warbler, calling and in song, all clearly on territory. In the wetter areas, wagtails dominated. Numerous *flava* types flicked

through the shallows, offering an enjoyable challenge as we sifted through the different races. Commonest were the 40 or so Black-headed variety *feldegg*, with three Blue-headed *flava*, and two Grey-headed *thunbergi*. Among them were at least fifteen Red-throated Pipit, their soft calls giving them away, along with a brief glimpse of a Water Pipit.



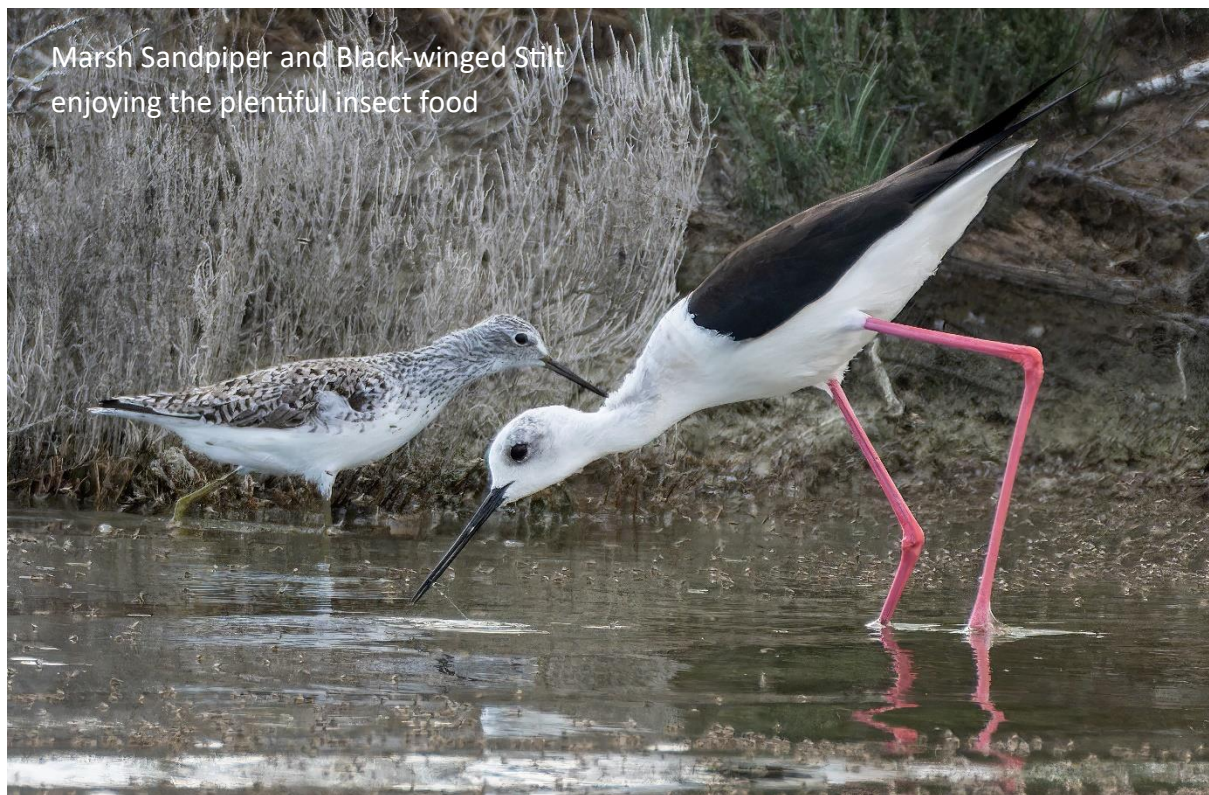
Wader numbers had clearly improved. Small groups of Little Stint, Wood Sandpiper and Ruff fed together, while Spur-winged Lapwing were a constant presence, with around forty counted here and later during the day in this vicinity. A distant “ring-tail” harrier lifted briefly from the fields, never clinched, but strongly suggestive of a Pallid Harrier. Drier ground held both Isabelline and Northern Wheatear.

Approaching the hide by the water treatment ponds, a small cluster of dead bushes beside the track proved particularly lively. A careful scan revealed a rewarding mix comprising a male Rüppell’s Warbler, alongside Woodchat Shrike, Whinchat and Common Nightingale. A Black Francolin strode across the track for some of the group, a second sat atop a small mound whilst at least two others called persistently from deeper cover, their presence more often heard than seen.

From the hide itself, scanning produced a good selection of wildfowl. A pair of Black-necked Grebe swam distantly at the edge, whilst on the open water were 14 Ferruginous Duck, 11 Garganey, two Common Pochard and a female Red-crested Pochard. A European Turtle-dove slipped quietly into nearby bushes, and the elusive ring-tail harrier made another brief pass before vanishing from view. A stroll along the perimeter of a beachfront property proved very productive. The sheltered conditions and tangled dead woodpiles created a perfect migrant haven, and patience paid off with superb views of perhaps 10 Common Nightingale and four Collared Flycatcher. Continued watching revealed a steady passage of migrants including European Pied Flycatcher, Lesser Whitethroat, Eastern Subalpine Warbler, a female Rüppell's Warbler, male Common Redstart, two Eastern Bonelli's Warbler, Willow Warbler and Common Chiffchaff, a rich and varied assemblage in a relatively small area.

Lunch was taken at a somewhat chaotic (and not so 'fast food') café in Meneou, after which we returned to the Spiros Beach area. At the far end of the track, a small lake held our first substantial gathering of 275 Greater Flamingo, as well as several groups of Glossy Ibis, totalling around 150 individuals. Overhead, the sky was increasingly busy with Common Swift, an estimated 500 birds over through the day suggesting a notable arrival.

The brackish lagoons were alive with waders. Here we enjoyed particularly close views of Wood Sandpiper, alongside two Marsh Sandpiper and a Spotted Redshank. Numbers of Little Stint were impressive too, with around 60 present and a 200 Ruff.



A remarkable hatch of flies had clearly taken place, and the waders were taking full advantage, many simply standing still and picking off insects within easy reach. We were told on of the

Marsh Sandpipers had been feeding in this manner for over five hours. A Collared Pratincole did much the same, sitting on the mud and simply taking flies that were close enough.



The day felt warmer now, as if spring had suddenly advanced, and over the sparkling shallows a White-winged Tern hawked gracefully alongside eight Whiskered Tern, all in summer plumage. Along the beach, at least twenty each of Kentish Plover and Common Ringed Plover were counted, but the highlight here was a lovely Greater Sand Plover (see photo below).



Later, we visited nearby agricultural land where a few pairs of Calandra Lark breed annually. Much of the area was under barley this year, making viewing more challenging, but persistence paid off with one bird eventually seen and heard, rising for a couple of minutes in full song before plummeting like a stone into cover.

Our final birding stop brought us back to the main Larnaca Salt Lake. Here we searched for one of the trip's target species and were rewarded with twenty-one elegant Slender-billed Gull among a scattering of Black-headed Gull. Nearby, seven Eurasian Thick-knee stood motionless and superbly camouflaged among the dry vegetation. Fittingly, the day ended on a high note with another Greater Sand Plover, found by Liz at the far side of the lagoon - well spotted, Liz!

The last dinner of the tour was taken back at the hotel, where we rounded off a thoroughly rewarding trip with good food, drinks, and a final review of an excellent list.

Saturday 11 April

Our final morning dawned and after a fabulous breakfast again, we loaded our vehicles and headed back towards the Limassol area, returning to the coastal flats of Lady's Mile Beach.

Encouragingly, wader numbers had increased since our previous visit. Around 30 Little Stint scurried across the mud, accompanied by ten Kentish Plover, their pale tones blending seamlessly with the sandy flats. Crossing the open ground towards Akrotiri Peninsula, we were briefly halted when yet another Black Francolin dashed across the track, an increasingly familiar but always welcome sight, even if it vanished as quickly as it appeared.

A short walk in this area proved a fitting finale to the trip. The roadside hedge held a delightful mix of migrants: Common Nightingale, Collared Flycatcher, European Pied Flycatcher, Common Redstart and Eastern Bonelli's Warbler. A line-up like that would be exceptional back home in Britain and provided a memorable closing flourish to the morning's birding. Continuing on, a Squacco Heron drifted over, while three Eurasian Griffon Vulture were a striking sight as they soared above the road near Episkopi.

By early afternoon we had returned to our rural hotel near Paphos, where a relaxed lunch and a chance to pack provided a gentle transition from field to departure. All too soon, it was time to head back to the airport for our flights home, with group members saying their fond farewells. For those with later departures, a few extra hours were spent in Mandria, enjoying a final stroll and a drink overlooking the sea, quiet moments to reflect on the week.

It had been a highly successful trip, with the island's endemics and specialities showing particularly well. Just as importantly, the camaraderie and good humour throughout the group made it an especially enjoyable experience, one that will no doubt draw us back again before long.

Thanks are due to Bob Martin and Liz and Keith Reynolds for the use of their photographs in this report.



Archaeological sites (and nice birding walks) at Paphos (top) and Kourion (lower).





Cape Greco – always an enjoyable morning's walk at this pretty coastal migration site

