

Bird Report for Turkey: Side – Anatolia area, September 2013

Introduction

This report describes a short birding trip that my wife, Joan, and I made to Side and surrounding environs of the area of southern Turkey between 12 and 19 September 2013.

Flew from Newcastle and arrived at Antalya airport late at night from a flight from Newcastle. Temperature at destination @ 2300 hrs was still 31 C. Picked up hire car and drove the 55 kms of so east to our rented apartment at Side-Kumchoy.

Day 1: Friday 13th September. Side Area

Most of day was spent acclimatising to temperatures of 35 C plus. Time was well spent studying target species in “Collins Bird Guides” and planning routes from Gosney’s guidebook “Finding Birds in Turkey Ankara to Birecek “and from other birder reports downloaded from in the internet, whilst keeping cool by drinking cold Efes pilsner and sitting under the air conditioning system.

Birds seen from hotel balcony include the usual kind found around most Mediterranean resort areas; House Sparrow, Hooded Crow and Collared Dove, with a variety of hirundines hawking overhead. One Spanish Sparrow also was also seen.

An evening trip to the ancient ruins at Side (Antik Side) was more productive. First birds seen were three White Spectacled (Yellow vented) Bulbuls, good numbers of Red Backed Shrike and Spotted Flycatcher, Crested Lark, two Bee Eaters flew over and one Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Olive Tree Warbler and Tawny Pipit also seen. Finally after much searching, good close up views were obtained of Cretzschmer’s Bunting.

Day 2: Saturday 14 September Akseki

An early morning start at 0500 hrs. Drove 80 kms north towards the town of Akseki, nestling in the foothills of the Taurus Mountains. Travelled to the three known birding areas identified by Gosney (p 31)and others; the Walled Plantation, Akseki Cemetery at the White Woodpecker Site.

Walled Plantation

Took the turn-off by the Toros Restaurant just south of Akseki and parked up. Walking up and across the embankment and over the access road four Eastern Rock Nuthatch were immediately identified and one Finsch’s Wheatear on the telegraph line. A small area of scrub and rocks at the entrance to the track leading towards the plantation produced one Rueppel’s Warbler and Olive Tree Warbler. Jay, Goldfinch and the ubiquitous Spotted Flycatcher were present around the plantation itself.

A black and white woodpecker, too distant to be recognised, was seen in the olive groves. Walking back towards the car, several Red backed Shrike and a Redstart (of the species sammisicus) revealed themselves. As well as Raven overhead.

Akseki Graveyard

Welcomed into the cemetery by the raucous calls of several Jay. Spotted Flycatcher and Red backed Shrike, Great Tit, Hooded Crow and Blackbird were numerous. Having walked around the cemetery, a Syrian Woodpecker appeared from nowhere on a rock by the cemetery gates.

White Woodpecker Site

Headed north out of Akseki to prescribed 'site. The track leading to the Y clearing produced a number of Sombre Tit and four Krueper's Nuthatch. The steep ascent out of the Y clearing recommended by other birders produced little except for one Eastern Bonelli's Warbler.

Returning back down to the Y clearing, two Long-Legged Buzzard soared above the limestone crags of the mountain overlooking the site. Heading back along the track to the car, the call of a woodpecker was heard, followed by the appearance of a White Woodpecker on a nearby pine tree.

Day 3: Sunday 14 September

Manavgat River (west side)

Following recommendations from previous bird reports, a trip was made to Titrenyegol Lake and the eastern bank of the Manavgat river.. The ornamental lake was fairly quite, a party of Little Grebe, with Coot and Moorhen on the lake itself and one Kingfisher seen. Access to the river and river mouth is gained by driving from Side on Alanya road and taking the first turning right after crossing the Manavgat river.

A bumpy dirt and gravelled road, some 6 km in length, leads towards the mouth of the Manavgat river and the sea. Several stop-off en-route produced a wealth of birds. Cuckoo, Calandra Lark, Crested Lark, Sardinian Warbler, Tawny Pipit, Little Owl, Lesser Grey Shrike, Northern Wheatear and Masked Shrike were all viewable . At the river mouth both Yellow Legged and Audouin's Gull were much in evidence. The lagoons backing into the beach produced large numbers of Reed Warbler and Coot, with swarms of hirundines around the reedbeds. Highlight of the visit was the appearance of a Graceful Prinia.

Day 4: Monday 15 September

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As penance for my obsessive need to seek birds at every opportunity I was given orders for a non-birding morning, with a visit to Manavgat Bazaar market. Definitely not my scene; market was full of Russian and German tourists buying high brand labelled clothes, that are locally produced but of a surprising good quality. Ended up buying clothes for grandchildren. Point to note, if not already known, when bartering; if the vendor asks for 100 TL, offer 30 or 40 TL and expect to pay no more than 50 TL

Pm

Manavgat River (second visit)

Back the location previously reported. In addition to birds mentioned above, the highlights included the presence of three Icterine Warblers in splendid summer plumage and, half way along the track 23 Spur Winged Lapwing (aka Plover) were situated in the middle of the road .

En-route an Isabelline Wheatear was also spotted. A walk along the beach at the fringes of the lagoons also produced a juvenile Greater Sand Plover.

Day 5; Tuesday 16 September: Green Canyon and Green Lake

An organised boat trip and tour to the Green Canyon and Green Lakes in the Taurus Mountains. Birds seen at the ' Canyon include Yellow Legged Gull, Cormorant, Grey Heron and Rock Nuthatch. No sign of Brown Fish Owl, other than copious amounts of bird lime at their favourite roosting site. I was informed that they had migrated to place unknown with the last sighting at the end of July.

After Green Canyon, the tour took us to Green Lake for lunch. A good look around the scrub and reeds along the shore line produced an Eastern Orphean Warbler, Graceful Prinia, Eastern Bonelli's Warbler, Bee Eater, Spotted Flycatcher and Red backed Shrike.

Day 6: Wednesday 17 September: Second trip to Akseki bird sites.

Again, early morning visits to the three bird sites were made. Most of the species already mentioned on the first visit were seen. Additional birds include a pair of Blue Rock Thrush and Black eared Wheatear (@ Walled Plantation) and Green Woodpecker at the White Woodpecker site (sadly no re-appearance of White Woodpecker this time). A Long Legged Buzzard was seen in the sky above Akseki.

Joan and Paddy Heyland

SELECTED LIST OF SPECIES

Krueper's Nuthatch :	Four at White Woodpecker site
Eastern Rock Nuthatch:	Three/four at Walled Plantation
Rock Nuthatch;	Green Canyon
Great Tit:	Common
Blue Tit:	Common
Sombre Tit:	Several at White Woodpecker site
Eastern Bonelli's Warbler:	White Woodpecker site and Green lake
Eastern Orphean Warbler:	Green lake
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler:	Green lake
Graceful Prinia:	Manavgat rivermouth & Green lake
Olive Tree Warbler:	Walled Plantation
Rueppel's Warbler:	Walled Plantation
Icterine Warbler:	Three on access road to Manavgat river mouth
Great Reed Warbler:	Possible @ lagoons by river mouth
Reed Warbler:	Common @ lagoons Manavgat
Sardinian Warbler:	Common
Masked Shrike:	Common
Red Backed Shrike:	Common
Lesser Grey Shrike:	Access road to Manavgat river mouth
Calandra Lark:	Common - road to river mouth
Crested Lark:	Common
Black Headed Bunting:	Side-Kumchoy resort area
Cretzschmer's Bunting:	One at Antik Side
Eastern Black-Eared Wheatear:	Walled plantation
Finsch's Wheatear:	Walled Plantation

Isabelline Wheatear:	Access road to river mouth
Northern Wheatear:	Fairly common
White Spectacled Bulbul:	Common
Tawny Pipit:	Common
Spotted Flycatcher:	Common
Lesser Grey Shrike:	One on access road to river mouth
Red backed Shrike:	Common
Goshawk:	Possible sighting in pine grove near Akseki
Kestrel:	Common
Long legged Buzzard:	2 /3 over mountains in Akseki area
Little Owl:	One/ two @ Manavgat river
Collared Dove:	Common
Turtle Dove:	Manavgat river mouth and Side-Kumchoy are
Kingfisher:	3 along Manavgat river and access road
Grey Heron:	Common
Barn Swallow:	Common
Swift:	Common
Pallid Swift:	Three @ Side-Kumchoy
House Martin:	Common
Sand Martin:	Common
House Sparrow:	Common
Spanish Sparrow:	One @ Side-Kumchoy
Blackbird:	Common
Blue Rock Thrush:	One pair @ Walled Plantation
Mistle Thrush:	Common

Blue Tit:	Common
Great Tit:	Common
Sombre Tit:	Several @ White Woodpecker site
Goldfinch:	Common
Robin:	Common
Jay:	Common
Hooded Crow:	Common
Raven:	One seen @ Walled Plantation
Spur-Winged Lapwing:	23 on access road to river mouth
Greater Sand Plover:	One on beach at Manavgat river
Little Egret:	Common
Bee Eater:	Common
Redstart	Walled Plantation
Green Woodpecker:	White Woodpecker site
Syrian Woodpecker:	Akseki cemetery
White Woodpecker (Lilfordii) :	White Woodpecker site
Cuckoo:	Access road to river mouth
Golden Oriole:	One in garden adjacent to hotel complex
Cormorant:	Common
Yellow Legged Gull:	Common
Audouin's Gull:	Common
Coot:	Common
Moorhen:	Common
Teal:	Manavgat river mouth
Mallard:	Common

Little Grebe: Titrenyegol Lake

Bibliography

Collins Bird Guide 2nd Edition, Svensson et al, HarperCollins, London, 2009

Finding Birds in Turkey; Ankara to Birecik, Gosney, D, Birdguides Ltd, 1991

Websites

I acknowledge and am grateful for the opportunity to have been able to access bird reports from many fellow birders, who have posted on various bird report websites, especially:

www.birdguides.com and www.birdtours.com

Final Note

1. Birders planning to stay in Side are better advised to seek accommodation in the Antik Side area of the town. It is quieter there and far more pleasant and provides easier access to bird sites.
2. Keep your cool and patience when driving on Turkish roads. Just forget the Highway Code and just drive as they do.