# **Turkey**

'Brown Fish Owl and Caspian Snowcock Special'

# WildWings / Birdwatch Magazine Trip Report

20th to 25th June 2015

Report by tour leader Kerem Ali Boyla

# Day 1 Saturday 20th June

#### **Arrival to Antalya and Manavgat**

Upon arrival I met the group at the airport and started the bird list with a Spanish Sparrow nest in the terminal building. After an hour's drive, we arrived at our first hotel and started birding in and around the gardens. White Stork, White-spectacled Bulbul and Graceful Prinia were noted, all in the wastelands around. The pine forest near the hotel hosted a few Scop's Owl which we could hear at night. We went early to bed, to get ready for the next day's early start.

#### Day 2 Sunday 21st June

#### Oymapınar Damlake and Akseki sites

We started very early and departed at 4 am and drove to the Lake to catch our boat for the Brown Fish Owl expedition. On the way we collected some cheese-bread and our local guide Özcan. At 5am we were at the jetty, where we actually detected an owl in the pine woods! The white flecks on the back immediately revealed it species and somebody called "Brown Fish Owl". We tried to get it on the scope with the help of Colin's laser, but it was not easy to see.

Then we moved onto the lake. As scheduled, we first visited the small canyon, where famous photos of the birds on the tree with red bark are taken. At our arrival, we immediately detected two birds sitting on the rocks. One moved to the broken log on the other side of the water and flew directly over us. Another was sitting on the rocks further up the river. Then the two met on a pine tree, when we could see they were fully fledged young. Eventually they flew to the famous tree where they met with one of the adults. The other adult showed up briefly at the beginning. So there were two adults with two successfully raised chicks. Well done Mr and Mrs Brown Fish Owl!

We followed to the other canyon and arrived at the location where they were seen last in late April. Özcan our local guide thought that this pair was chased away by Ravens. We searched extensively, but no more luck. Well, we sailed back to the bus, and visited on the way a colony of Yellow-legged Gull with a Baltic subspecies of Lesser Black-backed Gull. I mentioned that this bird was seen two years ago as well. Maybe the first hybrid pair ever?



After a late breakfast at our hotel, we packed and moved to Akseki. First we went to the old graveyard. In the heat of midday, there were only few Eastern Bonelli's Warbler calling constantly, "chip". Eventually we got more and more species, particularly the Olive-tree Warbler, actively flying between feeding and their nesting trees. All four species of shrike were present, the most common being the Masked Shrike, many singing. A very pale Short-toed Snake Eagle, two Honey Buzzards, a very odd Common Buzzard and Egyptian Vulture filled the skies around. Later we moved to the Turkish Pine forest near Akseki, targeting the near-endemic species, Krüper's Nuthatch. At the first site where we stopped the bus, we got some good views of the species. In late afternoon, we moved further to the next town in the search of other East Mediterranean specialties.

Cretzschmar's Bunting, Ruppel's Warbler, Eastern Orphean Warbler all showed up at the site. Crimson-winged Finch and Red-fronted Serin, as representatives of Alpine fauna also appeared. The latter drinking water on the pools on the road, and the former at the lick salt on the rocks, laid for the grazing goat flocks. What a first wonderful day it was, starting with the rarest owl in the Western Palaearctic, and finishing with many eastern Mediterranean specialities! In the last hours of the day, we searched for the *samamicus* subspecies of the Redstart in the graveyard of the town. Some brief views but not much luck. We then finished for dinner, but no beer this time, due to Ramadan.



Day 3 Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June

Akseki and drive to Ereğli via Karaman

Today we went straight into the field to make use of the early birding hours before breakfast. Black-headed Bunting was abundant, and all other species revealed very good views with some patience. Our missing species was the White-throated Robin, which was known to be very secretive at this time of the year. All other species gave us great views, but no robin...

After breakfast we started driving towards Ereğli, our next hotel. On the way through the high plateau via Bozkır and Karaman, I had another site for the robin. When we arrived there, we started searching for the bird, and in few minutes one appeared. First it visited two taller trees in the oak shrub with boulders and stones. Later it moved down and settled on some big rocks and boulders. Excellent views in the shade at noon time. We drove on.

To break the long drive, we stopped at a village at the border immediately after leaving the open scrubland of the Taurus Mountains, entering the Steppe zone. We deviated from the main road and visited a 2 km long road to a village. The sugar beet farmers' cooperative had planted trees along the road, which hold a lot of Magpie nests, and at the same time Great Spotted Cuckoo and Long-eared Owl. Lots of Magpies and also two owls appeared on the trees, but no luck with the cuckoo. Probably they are already back in Africa.

For the rest of the day we visited the ex-wetland of Ereğli. On the horizon were very distant (8 km away) views of flying flamingos, and the dried areas already converted into arable land were very productive for Lesser Short-toed Lark. At dusk before arriving to the hotel, three Lesser Kestrels showed well on the wires along the road.



#### Day 4 Tuesday 23rd June

3

Sultansazlığı and Yahyalı

After experiencing little activity (and water) at Ereğli Marshes, we decided to move to Sultan Marshes, only two hours away. After an early start and drive, we arrived at Sultan Marshes at 10am and drank some coffee and tea, while we checked the Penduline Tits, Long-eared and Little Owls breeding around Sultan Pension. Then we set off, and walked on the 1km platform through the reeds. This recently built structure offered wonderful opportunities to see Moustached Warbler and Bearded Reedling. We arrived at the hide at the end at noon time, but a little waiting revealed a male White-headed Duck and Ferruginous Duck. On the way back we detected 33 Great White Pelicans whilst a juvenile Egyptian Vulture flew over.

After lunch at Sultan Marshes, we moved to the interior part with more open habitat. A Moustached Warbler was singing with Black-headed Yellow Wagtail, SE European (thicked-billed) Reed Warbler plus some Citrine Wagtails sitting on tamarisks and reeds. Common, Little, Whiskered and White-winged Tern were hunting little fish at the end of a canal, and near the observation tower we had two Collared Pratincoles.



So we finished with Sultan Marshes, I suggested to move to a recently discovered site for Upcher's Warbler. We drove to Yahyalı, met with the local birder Mehmet. Mehmet is primary school teacher with good command of English and very good knowledge of it's birds. He brought us to a montane steppe with low *Astragalus* layer and scattered *Berberis* bushes. Walking along with 500 sheep, 4 monster dogs (who just fought off a wolf the night before!) we scanned the slopes. Lynsey, the youngest member of the team, detected a warbler moving close to the ground. Bingo! This warbler is unique in perching frequently on low vegetation, rocks and stones. After 15 minutes of observation we discovered the possible nesting site. A good bonus species! We spend the early evening driving to the famous lodge of Hasan Safak at Aladağlar.

## Day 5 Wednesday 24th June

Aladağlar

We woke up again very early at 4am to start the tractor ride to the high plateau of Demirkazık Peak of Aladağlar range. Hasan started whistling, and received an answer. But finding the Snowcocks was a challenge. We looked over and over again, and finally picked up two birds barely visible, even with a scope. After a while however, the birds flew to a closer slope and then we finally had a good view of a male, calling occasionally accompanied with the smaller female, mostly feeding. Working through the boulders, vegetation and hills we got all the other expected alpine species, including Radde's Accentor. A wonderful surprise was a Wallcreeper, first seen while flying down over us, then some hours later flying up and perching on the rocks! Probably the rain in the previous days brought the bird down from the high peaks of Aladağlar.

After this long morning we returned to Hasan's Pension, had a tea and breakfast. At noon, the weather was overcast, so we decided to set off again. This time to Emli Valley. We checked the dry plateau for Bimaculated Lark, and got two birds sitting on *Asphodeline taurica* stalks. Then we entered in the valley with *Berberis* scrub. White-throated Robin, Red-fronted Serin and Eastern Orphean Warbler was plentiful. While examining a Rock Nuthatch nest, Colin spotted a Lammergeyer (at exactly at the time I thought we would see it, at 14:30!) We hung around there, and watched it soaring leisurely around the peaks of the Aladağlar mountains.

In the late afternoon, we checked one of the gorges further north for Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush. The ravine was very productive with birds, good views of Finch's Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, nesting Rock Sparrow and Crag Martin and Alpine Swifts with genuine Rock Doves! But no rock thrush, pity...We went back to the pension for a beer and to celebrate the successful day and snowcocks.



Day 6 Thursday 25th June

drive to Adana, Seyhan River

The morning was relaxed; we set of for Adana at 8am, after checking a Redstart in Hasan's Garden. We had a good amount of time, so we decided to check Seyhan River bridge before getting to the airport. After an hour drive from Aladağlar and before getting to the highway, we stopped on the way to look for Booted Eagle. After 10 minutes search a very distant pale phase did indeed enter the list. But a generous dark phase gliding over the road gave excellent views and totally satisfied the eyes.

Before getting to Adana, we entered to the narrow service roads of the Çukurova plains, the most productive and the biggest agricultural plain of Turkey. Everywhere cornfields, citrus groves, channels, small villages with a single central mosque and tents of agricultural workers. Eventually we arrive to the concrete bridge over Seyhan River and starting looking for two large kingfishes. First a Pied appeared on a distance tree. Then a White-breasted Kingfisher flew over the sand flats and landed generously on a bramble bush. Two young and adults were showing well. Tens of Cattle Egret, Night Heron, Little Egret and Pygmy Cormorant commuted along the river between the feeding grounds and nesting colony on the river. In dry fields Spur-winged Plover and Collared Pratincole was present. A total 10 species added to the list, before we continued to Adana city centre for lunch and the airport in the city.

Bird List

	Species	Scientific Name	June 20	June 21	June 22	June 23	June 24	June 25
1	Common Shelduck	Tadorna tadorna			1			
2	Ruddy Shelduck	Tadorna ferruginea			3			
3	Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos				12		
4	Northern Shoveler	Anas clypeata				1		
5	Garganey	Anas querquedula				2		
6	Red-crested Pochard	Netta rufina				3		
7	Tufted Duck	Aythya fuligula				6		
8	White-headed Duck	Oxyura leucocephala				1		
9	Caspian Snowcock	Tetraogallus caspius					4	
10	Chukar Partridge	Alectoris chukar		1			X	
11	Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis				5		
12	Great Crested Grebe	Podiceps cristatus				5		
13	Black-necked Grebe	Podiceps nigricollis				1		

	Species	Scientific Name	June 20	June 21	June 22	June 23	June 24	June 25
14	Greater Flamingo	Phoenicopterus roseus			X	40		
15	White Stork	Ciconia ciconia	Х	X	X	X		
16	Little Bittern	Ixobrychus minutus				10+		2
17	Black-crowned Night Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax						3
18	Squacco Heron	Ardeola ralloides				16		5
19	Western Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis						40
20	Purple Heron	Ardea purpurea				10+		
21	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta						1
22	Great White Pelican	Pelecanus onocrotalus				33		
23	Pygmy Cormorant	Microcarbo pygmeus						30
24	<b>Great Cormorant</b>	Phalacrocorax carbo		15				
25	Bearded Vulture	Gypaetus barbatus					1	
26	Egyptian Vulture	Neophron percnopterus		1		1		1
27	European Honey Buzzard	Pernis apivorus		2				
28	Short-toed Snake Eagle	Circaetus gallicus		2	1			
29	Booted Eagle	Hieraaetus pennatus						2
30	Golden Eagle	Aquila chrysaetos					3-6	
31	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Accipiter nisus	2					
32	Western Marsh Harrier	Circus aeruginosus			1	10		
33	Black Kite	Milvus migrans				2		
34	Long-legged Buzzard	Buteo rufinus			X	X	X	
35	Common Buzzard	Buteo buteo		X	X			
36	Water Rail	Rallus aquaticus				1		
37	Common Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus						X
38	Eurasian Coot	Fulica atra				X		
39	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus				X		
40	Northern Lapwing	Vanellus vanellus			2	1		
41	Spur-winged Lapwing	Vanellus spinosus						1
42	Little Ringed Plover	Charadrius dubius						2
43	Common Redshank	Tringa totanus				X		
44	Green Sandpiper	Tringa ochropus				4		
45	Collared Pratincole	Glareola pratincola				4		2
46	Black-headed Gull	Chroicocephalus ridibundus				4		
47	Yellow-legged Gull	Larus michahellis	X	X				
48	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Larus fuscus		1				
49	Little Tern	Sternula albifrons				1		
50	Common Tern	Sterna hirundo				5		
51	Whiskered Tern	Chlidonias hybrida				10		
52	White-winged Tern	Chlidonias leucopterus				1		
53	Rock Dove	Columba livia		X			X	
54	European Turtle Dove	Streptopelia turtur						Х
55	Eurasian Collared Dove	Streptopelia decaocto	X	X	X	X	X	X
56	Laughing Dove	Spilopelia senegalensis			Х			Х

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57	Common Cuckoo	Cuculus canorus		X	X		X	
58	Eurasian Scops Owl	Otus scops		h		h		h
59	Brown Fish Owl	Ketupa zeylonensis		5				
60	Little Owl	Athene noctua				1		
61	Long-eared Owl	Asio otus			2			
62	European Nightjar	Caprimulgus europaeus					1	
63	Alpine Swift	Tachymarptis melba		3			X	
64	Common Swift	Apus apus			X	X	X	
65	European Roller	Coracias garrulus	1	1	1			
66	White-throated Kingfisher	Halcyon smyrnensis						3
67	Pied Kingfisher	Ceryle rudis						2
68	European Bee-eater	Merops apiaster			X		X	
69	Eurasian Hoopoe	Upupa epops		X	X	X	X	X
70	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Dendrocopos minor		X				
	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	Dendrocopos medius		X				
72	Syrian Woodpecker	Dendrocopos syriacus		X	X	X		X
73	Common Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus	X		2	X	2	
74	Eurasian Hobby	Falco subbuteo			1			
75	Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrinus				1	1	
76	Red-backed Shrike	Lanius collurio		1	1	X	X	
77	Lesser Grey Shrike	Lanius minor		3				
78	Woodchat Shrike	Lanius senator		2	2			
79	Masked Shrike	Lanius nubicus		X	X	X		
80	Eurasian Golden Oriole	Oriolus oriolus		1		1		
81	Eurasian Jay	Garrulus glandarius		X	X	X		X
	Eurasian Magpie	Pica pica			X	X	X	
83	Red-billed Chough	Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax			45		X	
84	Alpine Chough	Pyrrhocorax graculus		40	50		X	
85	Western Jackdaw	Coloeus monedula				2		
	Rook	Corvus frugilegus				2		
	Hooded Crow	Corvus cornix	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Northern Raven	Corvus corax		6	2	X	X	
	Coal Tit	Periparus ater		X	1			
	Sombre Tit	Poecile lugubris		X	X			
	Great Tit	Parus major		X		X	X	X
	Eurasian Penduline Tit	Remiz pendulinus				X		X
	Bearded Reedling	Panurus biarmicus				X		
	Woodlark	Lullula arborea		X	X		X	
	Crested Lark	Galerida cristata	X	X	X	X	X	X
96	Horned Lark	Eremophila alpestris					X	
97	Greater Short-toed Lark	Calandrella brachydactyla		X		X		

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98	Bimaculated Lark	Melanocorypha bimaculata					Х	
99	Calandra Lark	Melanocorypha calandra			X	X		X
100	Lesser Short-toed Lark	Alaudala rufescens			X	X		
101	White-spectacled Bulbul	Pycnonotus xanthopygos	X					
102	Sand Martin	Riparia riparia						X
103	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica	X	X	Х	Х	X	X
104	Eurasian Crag Martin	Ptyonoprogne rupestris		Х		X	X	
105	<b>Common House Martin</b>	Delichon urbicum	X	X		X	X	X
106	Red-rumped Swallow	Cecropis daurica	X	X		X		
107	Cetti's Warbler	Cettia cetti				h		
108	Long-tailed Tit	Aegithalos caudatus		X				
109	Eastern Bonelli's Warbler	Phylloscopus orientalis		X	X			
110	Great Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus arundinaceus				X		Х
111	Moustached Warbler	Acrocephalus melanopogon				x		
112	Sedge Warbler	Acrocephalus schoenobaenus				X		
113	Eurasian Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus scirpaceus				X		X
114	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	Iduna pallida	X	X	X	X		X
115	Upcher's Warbler	Hippolais languida				2		
116	Olive-tree Warbler	Hippolais olivetorum		X	Х			
117	Savi's Warbler	Locustella luscinioides				Х		
118	Graceful Prinia	Prinia gracilis	X	X				X
119	Barred Warbler	Sylvia nisoria					2	
120	Lesser Whitethroat	Sylvia curruca			X		Х	X
121	Eastern Orphean Warbler	Sylvia crassirostris		X	X		Х	
122	Common Whitethroat	Sylvia communis					X	X
123	Rüppell's Warbler	Sylvia ruppeli		X	X			
124	Eurasian Wren	Troglodytes troglodytes					X	
125	Krüper's Nuthatch	Sitta krueperi		Х				
126	Western Rock Nuthatch	Sitta neumayer		X	X		X	
127	Wallcreeper	Tichodroma muraria					2	
128	Common Starling	Sturnus vulgaris			X	X	X	
129	Ring Ouzel	Turdus torquatus					(x)	
130	Common Blackbird	Turdus merula	Х	Х	X	X	X	
131	Mistle Thrush	Turdus viscivorus		Х	X			
132	Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin	Cercotrichas galactotes						(x)
133	Common Nightingale	Luscinia megarhynchos				1	X	X
134	White-throated Robin	Irania gutturalis			2	5	X	
135	Black Redstart	Phoenicurus ochruros					X	
136	Common Redstart	Phoenicurus phoenicurus		1				X
137	Blue Rock Thrush	Monticola solitarius		X	X	X	X	
138	European Stonechat	Saxicola rubicola					X	

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139	Northern Wheatear	Oenanthe oenanthe			X	X	X	X
140	Isabelline Wheatear	Oenanthe isabellina				X	X	X
141	Black-eared Wheatear	Oenanthe hispanica			X	X	X	
142	Finsch's Wheatear	Oenanthe finschii		X			X	
143	White-throated Dipper	Cinclus cinclus		X				
144	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	X	X	X	X	X	X
145	Spanish Sparrow	Passer hispaniolensis	X	X	X			
146	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	Passer montanus				X	X	
147	Rock Sparrow	Petronia petronia			X		X	
148	White-winged Snowfinch	Montifringilla nivalis					X	
149	Alpine Accentor	Prunella collaris					X	
150	Radde's Accentor	Prunella ocularis					X	
151	Western Yellow Wagtail	Motacilla flava				X		
152	Citrine Wagtail	Motacilla citreola				X		
153	Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea		X				
154	White Wagtail	Motacilla alba	X	X	X		X	X
155	Tawny Pipit	Anthus campestris			X		Х	
156	Water Pipit	Anthus spinoletta					X	
157	Common Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs		X	X			X
158	Eurasian Crimson-winged Finch	Rhodopechys sanguineus			10		X	
159	European Greenfinch	Chloris chloris	X		X	X	X	
160	Common Linnet	Linaria cannabina			2	X	X	
161	European Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis	X	X	X	X	X	
162	Red-fronted Serin	Serinus pusillus			6		X	
163	European Serin	Serinus serinus			5			X
164	Corn Bunting	Emberiza calandra		Х	X	X		
165	Rock Bunting	Emberiza cia					X	X
166	Ortolan Bunting	Emberiza hortulana			X	X	Х	
167	Cretzschmar's Bunting	Emberiza caesia		X	X	X		
168	Black-headed Bunting	Emberiza melanocephala		X	X	X	X	
169	Common Reed Bunting	Emberiza schoeniclus				X		

#### **Mammal List**

- Caucasian Squirrel / Persian Squirrel (*Sciurus anomalus*)
- Wild Goat (Capra aegagrus)
- Asia Minor Ground Squirrel /Anatolian Souslik (Spermophilus xanthoprymnus)
- European Hare (Lepus europaeus)

  Kerem's Note: In contrast to what I said during the trip the hare in Turkey is

  European and not Cape. Taxonomy changes constantly...

## **Amphibians**

- Black Whip Snake (*Dolichophis (Coluber) jugularis*)
- Ring-headed Dwarf Snake (*Eirenis modestus*)
- Grass Snake (*Natrix natrix persa*)

• European Pond Terrapin (*Emys orbicularis*)

# **Butterflies**

Marbled

Blue

Skipper

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