

## A short trip report Western Crete 20 July – 3 August 2006

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This report is perhaps of most interest as an indication what can be expected to see during high season of tourism but low season of the birds. I birded a couple of hours a few days close the Rethymnon where we stayed, and brought the binoculars when we did family excursion on the island. According to Coghlan's "A birdwatching guide to Crete", June to August is the quiet period on the island – and indeed, it was quiet. Not even the gorges, that was supposed to be pretty good for raptors also at this time of year, produced very much – I only saw Griffon-vultures, Buzzards and one Lesser Kestrel.

Places I visited:

Platanes river (Coghlan's site no 40). A walked up the valley on morning and spent one hour at the river mouth. Turtles-doves and a Stonechat perhaps the most exciting apart from the Cory's Shearwaters seen from the river mouth.

Samaria gorge (34). We did the 18k walk, nice but quite from a birders perspective. Griffon vultures, Alpine swifts and Crag-martins. One male Lesser Kestrel at the National Park exit.

Amari (5). I spent 3-4 hours here driving around during mid-day that didn't produce much. Griffons' vulture, a couple of turtle doves and red-rumped swallows.

Georgeioupolis lake (14). A couple of hours one morning. It was nice but rather empty this time of year. Ferruginous Duck, kingfisher, and alpine swifts were the highlights.

Petres river (36). Two mornings for one hour around the bridge. Seemed difficult to walk on the east side of the river as suggested by Coghlan. It looked better on the (sheep) trail on the west side (but I only followed it a couple of hundred meters). Not much, but Cory's Shearwaters, Chukar and a possible lesser kestrel.

Island Thodoropoulo from Agia marina. I read somewhere that Eleonora's Falcon breed on the island. Instead of taking the tourist boat from Chania we spent a couple of hours before sunset at a seaside taverna close to the Agia Marina harbour. In spite of the significant distance it was possible to identify 2-3 falcons in the nice evening light with the telescope.

Reference: Coghlan, S (2001) A birdwatching guide to Crete. Arlequin Press, Essex, England.

1. **Little Grebe** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*). 2 in Georgeioupolis lake 2006-08-01
2. **Cory's Shearwater** (*Calonectris diomedea*). 5-6 Platanes river mouth 2006-07-22, 1 Petres river mouth 2006-07-28, 6 from the boat Plakias-Prevelli 2006-07-29
3. **Ferruginous Duck** (*Aythya nyroca*). 1 ♂ Georgeioupolis lake 2006-08-01. A rare winter visitor and spring migrant according to Coghlan.
4. **Eurasian Griffon-vulture** (*Gyps fulvus*). Common in gorges, for instance Samaria gorge 2006-07-24, Kourtaliotiki gorge 2006-07-29
5. **Common Buzzard** (*Buteo buteo*). Common

6. **Lesser Kestrel** (*Falco naumanni*). 1 adult ♂ at the exit of Samaria National Park
7. **Common Kestrel** (*Falco tinnunculus*). 1 close to Gonia 2006-07-28
8. **Eleonora's Falcon** (*Falco eleonora*). 2 at Island Thodoropoulo seen from Agia Marina 2006-08-01
9. **Chukar** (*Alectoris chukar*). 10 Petres gorge 2006-08-01
10. **Common Moorhen** (*Gallinula chloropus*). Ca 6 Georgeioupolis lake 2006-08-01
11. **Eurasian Coot** (*Fulica atra*). Ca 10 Georgeioupolis lake 2006-08-01
12. **Little Ringed Plover** (*Charadrius dubius*). 4 Platanes river mouth 2006-07-22
13. **Common Sandpiper** (*Tringa hypoleucos*). 2 Petres river mouth 2006-07-28
14. **Yellow-legged Gull** (*Larus michahellis*). Here and there, 2 juv Agia Marina 2006-08-01
15. **Black-headed Gull** (*Larus ridibundus*). 1 adult heading east Agia Marina 2006-08-01. Winter visitor.
16. **Feral Pigeon** (*Columba livia 'feral'*). Common
17. **Wood Pigeon** (*Columba palumbus*). A few observations, for instance close to Gonia 2006-07-28
18. **European Turtle-dove** (*Streptopelia turtur*). Three observations, for instance Platanes river 2006-07-22
19. **Eurasian Collared-dove** (*Streptopelia decaocto*). Common
20. **Alpine Swift** (*Tachymarptis melba*). 3 observations, for instance Samaria gorge 2006-07-24
21. **Pallid Swift** (*Apus pallidus*). Common at Rhetymnon harbor
22. **Common Kingfisher** (*Alcedo atthis*). 1 Georgeioupolis lake 2006-08-01
23. **Crested Lark** (*Galerida cristata*). 1 Prevelli 2006-07-29
24. **Eurasian Crag-martin** (*Hirundo rupestris*). Common Samaria gorge and Prevelli
25. **Barn Swallow** (*Hirundo rustica*). Very common
26. **Red-rumped Swallow** (*Hirundo daurica*). 2 Amire valley 2006-07-28
27. **Winter Wren** (*Troglodytes troglodytes*). 1 heard Gomis 2006-07-28
28. **Common Stonechat** (*Saxicola torquata*). Common
29. **Eurasian Blackbird** (*Turdus merula*). 1 Platanes river 2006-07-22
30. **Cetti's Warbler** (*Cettia cetti*). 1 Petres river 2006-07-28
31. **Eurasian Reed-warbler** (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*). 1 heard Platanes river mouth 2006-07-22
32. **Blackcap** (*Sylvia atricapilla*). 1 heard Platanes river mouth 2006-07-22
33. **Sardinian Warbler** (*Sylvia melanocephala*). Very common
34. **Spotted Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa striata*). 1 Platanes river 2006-07-22, 1 Georgeioupolis lake 2006-08-01
35. **Great Tit** (*Parus major*). A few birds Samaria gorge 2006-07-24
36. **Blue Tit** (*Parus caeruleus*). A few birds Samaria gorge 2006-07-24
37. **Eurasian Jay** (*Garrulus glandarius*). 2 Samaria gorge 2006-07-24
38. **Hooded Crow** (*Corvus corone cornix*). Common
39. **Common Raven** (*Corvus corax*). 1 Petres gorge 2006-07-28, 4 Kourtaliotiki gorge 2006-07-29
40. **Italian Sparrow** (*Passer domesticus italiae*). Very common
41. **Chaffinch** (*Fringilla coelebs*) 2 Samaria gorge 2006-07-24
42. **European Greenfinch** (*Carduelis chloris*). Common
43. **European Goldfinch** (*Carduelis carduelis*). Very common
44. **Eurasian Linnet** (*Carduelis cannabina*). Common