

Kalymnos, Greece, May 16th-23rd 2014



Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia*, male singing, close to the high pass at Monde Rito.

Contact

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Highlights

- Eleonora's Falcons *en masse!*
- A few pairs of Cretzschmar's Buntings.
- Great Spotted Cuckoo harassed by an agitated Eastern Olivaceous Warbler.
- Eastern Orphean Warbler.
- A glowing European Roller in Vathi valley.

General information

Not much was found about birdlife on Kalymnos when scanning the web. Kalymnos belong to the Dodecanese Island of eastern Greece and is located 12 km north of more well-known Kos which is just west of the Turkish coastline and Bodrum. The population is only 16.000 and the island is mostly barren with mountaineous topography. Kalymnos is mostly well-known for sponge-divers and more recently rock climbing. There is a partly cultivated valley running from the small town of Vathi and westwards with small plantations of grapes and

oranges. Vegetation is sparse throughout, only the northern parts have areas with larger *macchia* growing, thyme was blooming. Kalymnos is easily reached with a short ferry trip from Kos, and also has a very small airstrip. I hope future birders going to Kalymnos will find this report somewhat useful.

Birding strategy

This trip was actually a business trip for educational purpose. We had one free day for recreation. Sessions were each day before lunch three hours and late afternoon three hours. That meant there were lots of spare time, three hours in the morning and five hours each afternoon. I birded on foot from our hotel Kalydna Island located near Kandouni on the western part of Kalymnos on three different mornings. I also hired a small car for three days, and explored almost every corner of the island on the recreation day and the following morning.

Prior to the trip I used Google Earth to scan the island for proper habitat since I couldn't find any useful information on the web. I found one Italian trip-report (which I couldn't Google translate) and one French (which I haven't been able to refind). From these reports it seemed possible to find both Olive-tree Warbler and Rüppell's Warbler (two birds I really looked and taped for but never found). When comparing the landscape with Narince in Turkey where I've seen Olive-tree Warbler I guess the best-looking habitat for that species would either be the southern slope of the small valley at Arginonda where a lot of larger old olive-trees grow or somewhere in the cultivated parts of Vathi valley. For Rüppell's Warbler I'm not sure where to look. There are some important sea-bird colonies on smaller rocks around the island according to BirdLife Greece which holds most importantly small numbers of Audouin's Gulls but also Yelkouan and Scopoli's Shearwaters, Shags, and Yellow-legged Gulls.

Generally birding was quite tough with few birds and few species. The timing should be perfect though with all breeding birds probably on site (Olive-tree Warbler?) and the possibility of migrants. After a week I felt like there was hard to pick up any new birds, at least resident ones. I reckon Cretzschmar's Bunting, Eastern Orphean Warbler and Great Spotted Cuckoo to be my best findings since they might represent breeding birds. It was easy to drive around the island, traffic was sparse on the northern parts of the island, good maps were available at many places I found one (1:25,000) for outdoor activities with nice topography and marked paths.



Eleonora's Falcon Falco eleonorae, not often depicted 2cy, possibly dark phase (quite dark underwing coverts). Rather untypically inconspicuous dark trailing edge to the wing on this individual. Monastery of Fotis, SW of Kandouni.

Day-to-day

- 16th: Arrival day.
 17th: Morning birding: On foot around Kandouni to the Monastery of Pandeileimonas.
 18th: Morning birding: On foot around the castle of Chora. Afternoon: Skalia and Arginonda Bay.
 19th: Full day birding: Morning around the high road pass near Monde Rito, later in the morning upper parts of Vathi valley and the small valley at Arginonda. Lunch at Arginonda. Afternoon at Vathi valley and driving the eastern and southeastern parts of Kalymnos.
 20th: Morning birding: Upper parts of Vathi valley. Afternoon: Small valley at Arginonda.
 21st: No birding.
 22nd: Morning birding: On foot along the coast southwest from Kandouni toward Monastery of Fothis.
 23rd: Departure day.



Overview from Google Earth, with some key sites marked. The barren impression is quite accurate.

Internet Resources

Italian trip-report: http://www.cuneobirding.it/file/trip/trip_kalymnos.htm

BirdLife Greece: http://issuu.com/birdlife.greece/docs/marine_iba_book_birdlife_greece_2012

List of birds: Kalymnos, Greece, May 16th-23rd 2014

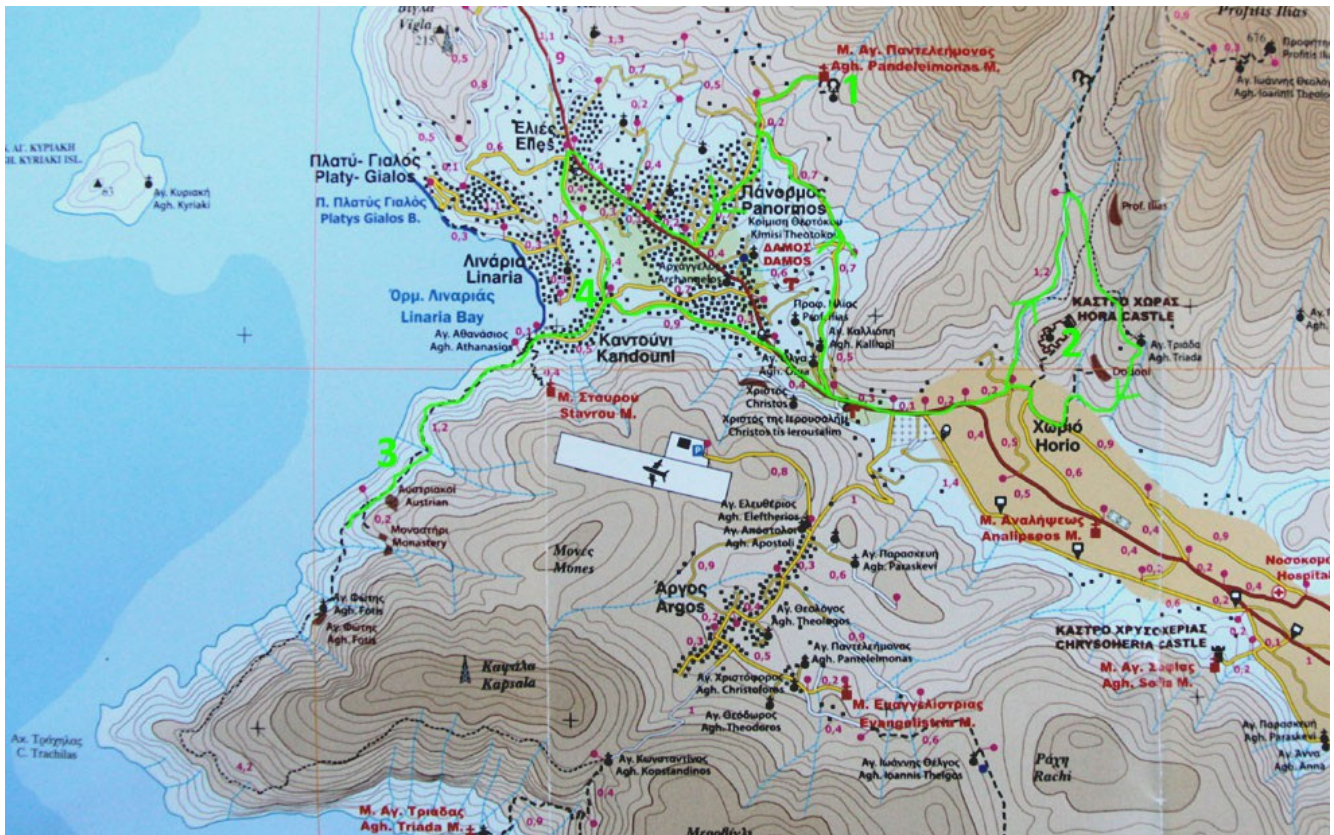
Following IOC World Bird List 4.2 (April 2014) (www.worldbirdnames.org). In total: 38 species. Subspecies notations are foremost literature-based.

1. **Chukar Partridge** *Alectoris chukar cypriotes*
1 seen displaying Monde Rito 19th, 1 + 1 heard upper Vathi valley 20th.
2. **Yelkouan Shearwater** *Puffinus yelkouan* VU
4 distant birds SW of Kandouni 22nd.
3. **European Shag** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii*
1 Arginonda Bay 18th, a few birds in the eastern waters 19th.
4. **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus rufinus*
1 Above Kandouni 17th, 3 Skalia 18th, 1 Vathi valley 19th, 1 Hali Bay 19th.
5. **Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michaellis michaellis*
40+ in the water dam in upper Vathi valley 19th. Good numbers in flight throughout.
6. **Rock Dove** *Columba livia livia*
Common.
7. **European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur turtur*
1 Kandouni 18th.
8. **Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto decaocto*
Common.
9. **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius*
1 pair upper Vathi valley 19th. Initially one bird harassed by an Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, when it eventually took off another birds appeared calling. Breeding?
10. **Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus scops cycladum*
1 heard nighttime Kandouni 20th.
11. **Little Owl** *Athene noctua indigena*
1 Monde Rito 19th, 1 roadside E Arginonda 20th.
12. **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba melba*
15 Kandouni 18th, 5 Hali Bay 19th, 8 Kandouni 21st.
13. **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus garrulus* NT
1 upper Vathi valley 20th.
14. **European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster*
1 Skalia 18th.
15. **Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni*
1 male in a flock of 70 Eleonora's Falcons, Kandouni 18th.
16. **Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus tinnunculus*
Common.
17. **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonorae*
7 around Chora Castle 18th, 70(!) Kandouni 18th, 2 Arginonda 19th, 2 Vathi valley 19th, 20 Mirthis 20th, 4 SW Kandouni 22nd, noted almost daily from the hotel in Kandouni. Birds were often seen hunting for smaller insects in a very casual manner, quite different from the ultraspeed hunt on passerines I've experienced on Mallorca in september.
18. **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio*
1 female N Chora Castle 18th, 1 male E Chora Castle 18th, 1 female upper Vathi valley 19th.
19. **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator senator*
1 E Kandouni 17th, 3+ Vathi valley 19th-20th.
20. **Hooded Crow** *Corvus cornix*
Common.
21. **Northern Raven** *Corvus corax*
1 pair N Arginonda 19th, 1 pair upper Vathi valley 20th.
22. **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica rustica*
Singles Vathi valley 19th-20th.
23. **Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum meridionale*
Singles.
24. **Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
1 Vathis valley 19th.
25. **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris*
1 heard Vathis valley 19th. Singing shortly.
26. **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** *Iduna pallida elaeica*
One of the most common passerines, singing from every other bushery on the island. Especially common in Vathis valley.

27. **Eastern Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia crassirostris crassirostris*
1 calling bird, Monde Rito 19th.
28. **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans albistriata*
1 pair Monastery of Pandeleimonas, Kandouni 17th, 1 pair + 3 juveniles Arginonda 19th-20th. Soon to be split to Eastern Subalpine Warbler.
29. **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala melanocephala*
1 male calling, upper Vathi valley 20th.
30. **Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica melanoleuca*
10-15 birds from Arginonda along the road over the high pass at Monde Rito to the upper Vathi valley 19th-20th.
31. **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*
1 upper Vathi valley 19th, 1 Arginonda valley 19th.
32. **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*
Common.
33. **Western Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava*
1 heard migrating upper Vathi valley 20th.
34. **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba alba*
5 Skalia 18th, 1 Arginonda 20th.
35. **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*
1 heard migrating Vathi valley 20th.
36. **European Greenfinch** *Chloris chloris muehlei*
Singles Vathi valley 19th-20th.
37. **European Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis balcanica*
Singles Vathi valley 20th.
38. **Cretzschmar's Bunting** *Emberiza caesia*
5 Monde Rito 19th, 1 heard upper Arginonda valley 19th.



A beautiful migratory European Roller *Coracias garrulus* at upper Vathis valley.



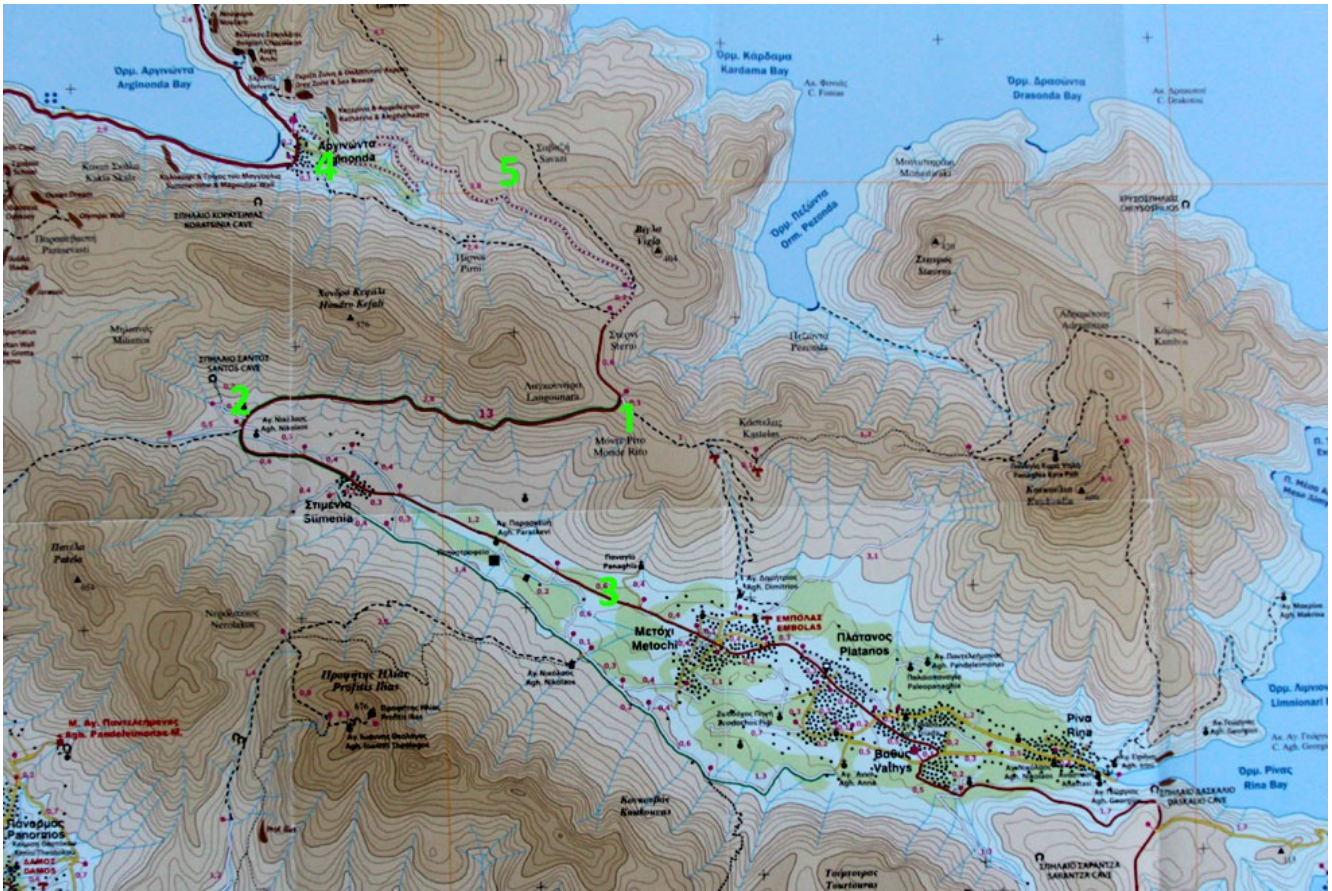
Area around Kandouni. Green markings indicating my morning birding sessions on foot. 1. A small area with pine forest surround the monastery of Panteleimonas, Subalpine Warblers were found at the gate. 2. Chora Castle, a dark phase Eleonora's Falcon sat on the embattlement. North of the castle in the small valley going uphill there were a few scattered olive trees which looked promising. Also east of the castle there was a small olive-tree plantation, only common stuff there though. 3. Along the coast southwest from Kandouni. A few Yelkouan Shearwaters were found far out. 4. Kalydna Island Hotel.



Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*, a calling bird at upper Vathis valley.



Female Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* at Arginonda.



Vathi valley and northern parts. 1. High mountain pass at Monde Rito. 2. A small plantation around a diminutive chapelle at the uppermost part of the valley, looked good for migrants. Sardinian Warbler and European Roller seen around here. 3. The upper Vathi valley, looked interesting at many places. Spend quite some time just west of Metochi, Sedge and Marsh Warblers here. 4. Arginonda with a small valley running east. 5. Along the newly constructed road promising larger macchias especially up the slope and on the ridge to the north. Couldn't find any Sylvia-warblers here though.



Little Owl *Athene noctua*, along the road east of Arginonda.



Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*, uppermost part of Vathi valley. Many seen around the high pass at Monde Rito.



Google Earth, the high pass at Monde Rito seen from north.



Great Spotted Cuckoo Clamator glandarius, nice views of a pair in Vathi valley.



Eastern Orphean Warbler Sylvia crassirostris, harshly calling in bushes at Monde Rito.



Arginonda with the valley going east. Lots of old large olive-trees on the southern slopes. Seen from south.



Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida*, Monastery of Savas, S of Pothia.