



LESVOS

April 23 - 30, 2016

TRIP REPORT

Leaders: Gina Nichol & Steve Bird



Photos, top to bottom: Collared Flycatcher, Spotted Redshank, Temminck's Stint, Little Owl, Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt all by Steve Bird. European Bee-eaters by Gina Nichol.



Sunrise Birding LLC

www.sunrisebirding.com

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TRIP REPORT – The “Mythical” Tour

Leaders: Gina Nichol & Steve Bird

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS & FAVORITES:

- European Bee-eater
- Red-footed Falcon
- Chukar
- Cirl Bunting
- Greater Flamingo
- Curlew Sandpiper
- Subalpine Warbler
- Western Marsh Harrier
- Eurasian Scops Owl
- White-winged Tern
- Eurasian Jay
- Great Snipe
- Spur-winged Plover
- Rufous Bush Robin
- Krüper's Nuthatch
- Cinereous Bunting
- Baillon's Crake
- Cretzschmar's Bunting
- Sombre Tit
- Rüppell's Warbler
- Sardinian Warbler
- Golden Oriole
- Little Owl
- Great Bittern
- Isabelline Wheatear
- Lesser Gray Shrike
- Collared Flycatcher
- Ferruginous Duck
- Northern Goshawk
- Slender-billed Gull
- Pallid Swift
- Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush
- Penduline Tit (+nest)

Day 1 – April 23, 2016

By mid-day everyone had arrived and settled in to our charming hotel near Skala Kalloni village. A few of us checked the Skala Kallonis Pool across from the hotel which held a flock of Glossy Ibis, Great Egret and Gray Heron. Hooded Crows were around and seen daily after that. After a delicious lunch, we were off to find the avian treasures of Lesvos, the princess of the north-eastern Aegean. Our first stop was Soumouria (Kalloni Mini Soccer Pitch) and we soon found four **Eurasian Scops Owls** (Photo: Gina Nichol) roosting in the trees in the parking lot. The birds were not bothered by our gawking at them and were well photographed. As we watched the owls, a Middle Spotted Woodpecker flew out of one of the trees apparently from a nest hole that had been used last year. We positioned ourselves at a reasonable distance and waited for the bird to return to the nest. The female returned carrying food so we moved off so as not to impact the situation.

We moved on toward the Kalloni Salt pans stopping at the bridge over the Tsiknias River where a White Stork was foraging the pools. There were several House Martins and Barn Swallows collecting mud from the edge of another pool and further away two Black Storks flew past. A Dice Snake moved along in the shallow water, skulking at first and then moving toward us in the water allowing great views and photos.

Along the Salt pans, we had our first Yellow-legged Gulls, Pied Avocets, two Black-tailed Godwits, Ruddy and Common Shelduck. There were some close Ruff in the moat along with Spotted Redshank, Wood Sandpipers, Marsh Sandpipers and Black-winged Stilts. Of the five Spotted Redshank, at least two were in good breeding color. We moved on to the Alykes Wetlands where we had an adult male



Northern Wheatear, some Little Terns over the sea, Red-throated Pipits and some distance Kentish Plovers.

As we drove back along the Saltpans, Steve spotted a Lesser Gray Shrike that perched up on some weeds and then moved to a fence. Some cars came out of the side track and flushed the bird as several other birders rushed over to try and see it. In the meantime, Paul W. spotted a Snipe on the edge of the moat which turned out to be a Great Snipe. The bird moved beyond some rocks so we approached slowly on the road. We got close and as the bird flew, some of us saw its white outer tail feathers confirming the identification.

From here we moved to another area of the Saltpans and walked the East Track to look at the fields and the Saltpans from another angle. We finally had a chance to look at the many Crested Larks and Corn Buntings in the fields and these would become the default birds every day for the duration of our stay in Lesvos. A Squacco Heron flew out of a small pool on one side and further on a female Red-backed Shrike was spotted perched on a fencepost. We had nice views of Grey Heron, Ruff, and Woodchat Shrike and distant views of Ruddy and Common Shelduck.

Up above the hilltops behind us, we spotted a Short-toed Eagle kiting and the bird offered prolonged views as it seemed to hang in mid-air forever. A smaller raptor appeared below it and as it turned in the sky we saw that it was a European Honey Buzzard. By now we were being completely distracted by a couple of elegant looking **White-winged Terns** (Photo: Steve Bird) that were working down the waterway toward us dipping in the water as they flew. The birds would turn and head up the moat again only to return toward us and repeating the show again and again. A Zitting Cisticola flew over calling and displaying.

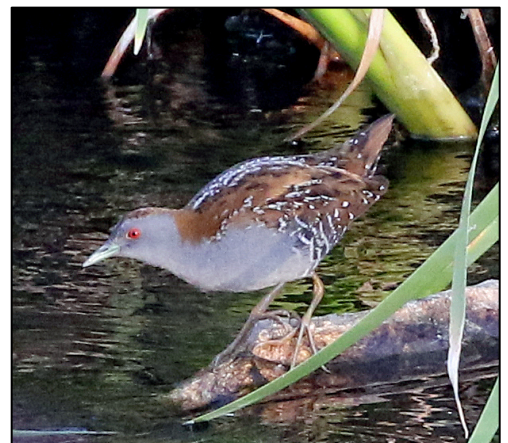
We headed back and stopped along the farm road that traverses the Saltpans West Fields to look at some European Bee-eaters perched on the power lines. As we watched them two Collared Pratincoles whizzed past leaving us wanting better views. As the sun started to set, we headed back to the hotel for dinner and a review of our fabulous first half day of birding the magical island of Lesvos.



Day 2 – April 24, 2016

This morning we went to the Tsiknias River for a crane stake out. As soon as we arrived, we positioned ourselves on the side of the road overlooking the sunlit side of the river and a **Baillon's Crane** (Photo: Steve Bird) came into view. We studied the bird noting its features, getting photos and comparing it to the Little Crane which also showed in the same area. The birds moved through the reeds and reappeared several times, both coming out into the open for excellent views several times. At one point, we heard and then saw a Penduline Tit pulling fluff out of the cattail heads above the Crakes. A (Least) Weasel ran across the road below and a Kingfisher dashed through quickly. A preening Little Ringed Plover got slight attention and the Common Moorhens were virtually ignored as the Crakes gave an extended show. A male Little Bittern flew across in front of us and perched up on the reeds offering good views and photo opps.

After breakfast, we headed toward Polichnitas. On the way, we stopped near a bridge where a Common Nightingale was singing its heart out. We found and scoped the bird only later noticing the many Stripe-necked Turtles in the water under the bridge. A little further on, we stopped to admire the field of brilliant red poppies, a gorgeous scene.





There were several birds singing here including Olivaceous Warbler and Common Whitethroat which showed well. A Woodchat Shrike appeared and several Common and Alpine Swifts flew overhead. A Wood Pigeon flew past and a Common Buzzard soared above a distant hill. Two Turtle Doves were scoped as they perched on some power lines and a Black-eared Wheatear moved from weed to weed in the field below. We took a few more photos of the poppies and then moved on to Polichnitos.

We cruised through town and out to the Salt pans where we found some close Kentish Plovers and a couple of Little Stints. A Tawny Pipit exhibited well in the road in front of us but other than that and the innumerable Corn Buntings, it was quiet so we moved on to Vatera on the south coast. The wind was pushing the waves of the Aegean Sea on to the beach as we stood and watched groups of Yelkouan Shearwaters move across above the water. The proprietors of a local taverna welcomed us and our scopes and set up a table outdoors so that we could continue our sea watch and enjoy our picnic lunch. Further out over the sea there were a few Scopoli's Shearwaters and the scopes helped us see their different flight habit. A Cormorant flew by heading west and later Shag flew by heading east.



After lunch, we moved down along the coast and battled with a Sardinian Warbler that sang not far from the road and moved all around us refusing to show well. On the other side of town, we parked by bridge over a river. As we got out of the vehicles, we found a nice male Black-headed Bunting singing on a power line. Red-rumped Swallows were flying over a distant hill showing their pale rumps. Olivaceous Warblers were very vocal and revealed themselves for us at close range. Our first views of Cirl and Cretzschmar's Bunting were here. Overhead we had all three Swift species – Common, Alpine and Pallid. Spanish Sparrows were busy near a brickmaking plant and as we walked back down toward the vehicles, a Purple Heron flew up river. We headed up a hill in a residential area stopping to view the sea and check for **Sardinian Warbler** (Photo: Steve Bird) again. This time, the little beauty showed well for us perching for a few seconds on top of a bush.

We made our way back to Skala Kalloni and as we drove the farm road a Montagu's Harrier was seen. After a quick pit stop at the hotel we went back out to find the Potamia "mini" Reservoir where there were six Ferruginous Ducks, Little Grebes, Little Bittern, a Little Crake and a Great Reed Warbler. As we watched there, a Short-toed Eagle appeared behind us giving a similar show to yesterday afternoon.

Our last stop of the day was back at the Alykes Wetlands. On the way we had nice views of a male Marsh Harrier and in the sheep fields (aka Kalloni Alykes Wetlands) we had 14 Red-throated Pipits feeding on the ground and a Collared Pratincole. Beyond them were



some Bee-eaters and the large flock of Greater Flamingos adding some color as they took flight back toward the Salt pans. On our way back to the hotel, we had the Montagu's Harrier that dropped into the grasses in the middle of a field and never reappeared. Perhaps it was settling in for the night. Along the river there was a nice black-headed Yellow Wagtail lit up by the afternoon sun. We returned to the hotel, enjoyed a delicious dinner and reviewed our list of sightings for our second fabulous day on Lesbos.

Day 3 – April 25, 2016

Before breakfast we went out toward the Alykes Wetlands. On the way we stopped and scanned the mouth of the Tsiknias River where there were two Eurasian Curlews newly in. In the distance was a tree full of European Bee-eaters and we continued on across the ford and along the bumpy farm road. A Montagu's Harrier lifted up from the field and flew toward the Salt pans. We thought it would fly back but instead it perched on some weeds for the rest of the time we were there. Some Black Storks flew by and we had good views of an adult Lesser Gray Shrike in the morning sun showing pink flanks. Other birds in the area included a couple of Whinchats and a distant perched Red-backed Shrike. We continued on to the bridge where we saw three **Spur-winged**



Plovers (Photo: Steve Bird) perched on the raised bank overlooking the sea. The birds sat for a while and then were spooked by an approaching photographer. We relocated them on another part of the road and then left them to rest.

After breakfast we headed to the western side of the island. It was a beautiful sunny day as we headed to the interior of the island with the sparkling sea visible from many of the elevated points along the road. We stopped to check a pair of Short-toed Eagles soaring and Carolyn noticed a warbler in a bush on the corner which turned out to be a Subalpine Warbler.

Our next stop was at the Grand Canyon (Ladia Valley) where we found Western Rock Nuthatch and several Crag Martins flying around. After a long search we located the Rock Sparrow that was vocalizing from somewhere among the massifs and eventually had good scope views of this declining species. Meanwhile we added Chaffinch and the first of many Black-eared Wheatears to our day list. From here we drove west stopping for a couple of Goshawks and more Short-toed Eagles.

We continued on to Antissa and turned off the main road to check a new area (Mount Ordimnos) we had



heard about from Steve Dudley and Paul Manning. Isabelline Wheatears were plentiful here including some doing flight displays. There were Cirl Buntings around and we saw Linnets and Cretzschmar's Buntings in the area. A Long-legged Buzzard had us studying it and was again the first of several seen today. Steve erupted with excitement at the sight of a Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush which showed well but briefly for us. We moved to another part of the road that was lined with fragrant Chamomiles and found our first Cinereous Buntings on the rocks above the road. Views were distant so we scanned below but the birds seemed to like the boulders above us and "shared" them with Black-eared Wheatears and Cretzschmar's Buntings. Paul W spotted a Blue Rock Thrush up the hill which fled quickly (but luckily we bettered our views later in the day). The Wood Lark that was singing was seen perched up on a rock and a Sombre Tit was seen below us.

We moved on up to a lovely area in front of a monastery where the views were spectacular and the ground was covered with fragrant Chamomile. We set up our picnic and enjoyed the setting and then were invited by Paul Manning to go and take a

look at a patch of Pitcher Plants that he found. We walked a short way on the track and Paul showed us

these rare flowers, also called **Hairy Birthwort** (Photo: Gina Nichol). The oak trees above held Bonelli's Warbler and we saw Blue Tit and Eurasian Jay here. On the way out we spotted a Meadow Pipit which was quite unusual for this time of year (identified positively by Sandy).

We headed back toward Kalloni stopping to take a look at a Little Owl perched on a farm building. A turn of the main road found us a great spot with some showy **Cinereous Buntings** (Photo: Gina Nichol) which were well photographed.



Back at the Saltpans in late afternoon we saw the Slender-billed Gull that had been reported earlier. In the same area were many Pied Avocets, three Marsh Sandpipers, Little Terns, Kentish Plover and a large flock of Ruff that flew in and settled in a distant part of the Saltpans. There were several European Bee-eaters on the power lines behind them and while watching them, Gina spotted a male Red-footed Falcon kiting just beyond them. Next we had nice views of a Curlew Sandpiper close in the moat and as we went to turn around and head back to the hotel, the Montagu's Harrier that had started our day showed briefly.

Day 4 – April 26, 2016

This morning we woke up to the sound of howling winds. Windows were rattling and trees were bent over. Most others in the hotel took the morning off but we were keen to see what the night had blown in so we were off before breakfast to check the Saltpans and sheep fields. We stopped at the sheep fields and as we got out to check the situation our hats blew off. We headed back toward the salt pans and as we rounded the corner by the pumping station, Maureen spotted a female Pallid Harrier coursing low over the embankment. It was flying low and fighting the wind allowing great views for us. Further on at the northwest corner of the Saltpans we found a lone Spur-winged Plover initially being chased by gulls and then eventually heading down the moat. We continued along the Tsiknias River where a couple of Masked Shrikes were perched on the power lines overhead hanging on in the wind. There were several Bank Swallows, House Martins and Barn Swallows whirling around in the wind. A Red-footed Falcon was seen in the distance and as we got to the lower end of the river we saw a large flock of **Greater Flamingos** (Photo: Steve Bird) flying in the distance. Despite the wind it was well worth the excursion this morning!



Greater Flamingos flying over the Saltpans

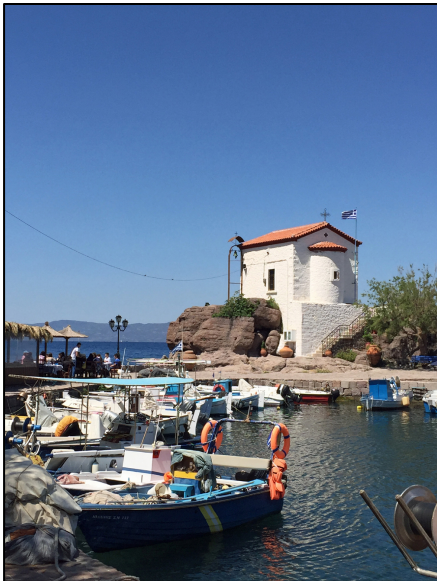


After breakfast we headed toward Achladeri and found the pair of **Krüper's Nuthatches** (Photo: Steve Bird) tending a nest. We carefully positioned ourselves so as not to disturb the birds as they actively fed their chicks and we were able to get great views, photos and videos. We walked back to the vehicles noting a very handsome male Gull Bunting singing from a perch atop some pine cones. This place was magical and difficult to leave but we had some business at the north end of the island so we were off again.

Traveling through town we found a Lesser Mole Rat on the road which Steve promptly rescued and bonded with. Then we continued up to Kavaki where the Rüppell's Warbler was hunkered down from the wind and thus difficult to see at all. We enjoyed a hot drink and sweets and the bakery and then continued to Molivos. We stopped for a group of close European Bee-eaters and then continued on the dirt track between Eftalou

and Skala Sikminias. The strong winds seemed to be following us and the result was the at the birds were lying low. Our first stop here was for a close Spotted Flycatcher. We walked a bit of the road and found Sombre Tit, Great Tit and Blue Tit, but otherwise it was quiet. The real excitement was the waves crashing over the road along the north coast and it was a little hairy in a few spots as we drove over water and sea debris. On one slope we saw a quick Eleanor's Falcon fly by and Paul W added that as his 1000th species.

Eventually we made it to the lovely village of Skala Sikminias and had to park in the middle of town versus our regular spot as the waves were crashing directly into the village. Nonetheless we had an amazing lunch at one of the tavernas and then moved to higher ground! After lunch the wind had subsided slightly and we



headed toward the Napi Valley. We stopped along the way at a small pond and found Little Grebe and some Greenfinches bathing. In the valley we had views of several Buzzards, both Long-legged and Common. As we watched the Buzzards and compared their field marks, we noticed a Wood Lark gathering food as if it were feeding young. The bird showed for a long time, first on the ground and then on some branches of a tree and had at 3-4 different species of insect in its bill. We made our way down the valley and had good views of male and female Stonechats perched on a bush near the side of the road.

Back near Kalloni, we went to Mesa and found a Ferruginous Duck in the Kalami Coastal Pool along with Eurasian Coot and Kentish Plover. Across the main road in Mesa Marsh we had Zitting Cisticola, Ruff, two Purple Herons, and a few Yellow Wagtails. A Western Marsh Harrier flew by and as we headed back we spotted a Kestrel that was later identified as a Common Kestrel. Across the road near in the Saltpans North Fields, we had 14 Little Stints and on our way through the farm fields back to Skala Kalloni we had a beautiful male Montagu's Harrier to end the day.

Day 5 – April 27, 2016

This morning brought a sparkling blue sky and light winds and just after sunrise we were out at the Saltpans to see what migrants had arrived overnight. A Eurasian Curlew was seen at the end of the Tsiknias River and the Spur-winged Plover was still in the mud at the pumping station. In the Alykes Wetlands we had a nice male Whinchat and both male and female Marsh Harriers flew over. A Squacco Heron was seen at the end of the rock jetty but otherwise it was a little quiet. Steve heard a "funny" song and we tracked it down to find a Greater Short-toed Lark close to the beach. On the way back we had two Spotted Redshank that departed quickly and a couple of Temminck's Stints in not so great light.

After breakfast we drove to the western part of the island. Our first stop was Ipsilou Monastery where we had quick views of Collared Flycatcher. We looked around at the top and heard a Thrush Nightingale but were only able to manage flight views. The action looked to be on the road below so we moved down and found Spotted Flycatcher and a few Cinereous Buntings singing from exposed perches. A pair of Woodchat Shrikes showed well but a Golden Oriole (that had been singing nearly continually) showed to only a few of

us. Further down the hill we had great views of Wood Warbler. A Lesser Kestrel appeared overhead and we studied the features as we as yet still hadn't solved the mystery of the Kestrel that we found the previous evening. Some friendly birders beckoned us to come down and showed us the nest of a Western Rock Nuthatch under a boulder down the hill. The bird appeared and we enjoyed good views of it.

We moved on to Sigri enjoying the stunning views on the way down. In town we had several Jackdaws and then we moved on to a grove of trees by the road that held Pied Flycatcher, European Goldfinch, Spotted Flycatcher, a pair of Masked Shrikes and a Golden Oriole that flew out into the open over an adjacent field eliciting ahhhhs from the crowd. From here we went to Faneromeni Beach and set up our picnic lunch in a stunning setting by the sea. While we ate a few **European Bee-eaters** (Photo: Steve Bird) flew over adding to the charm of this fabulous location. After lunch we packed up and while we were driving out noted a Little Ringed Plover on the beach.



We continued to Faneromeni which was quiet except for Woodchat and Red-backed Shrikes which seemed to be around in small numbers today.

We checked the village of Sigri briefly and then drove back along the coast road enjoying more spectacular views and a few more bird sightings. We stopped in the Meladia Valley and got great views of three types of flycatcher in the Fig Orchard including Spotted Flycatcher, Pied Flycatcher and a smart Collared Flycatcher. We watched these little beauties for a bit of time and also picked up a Golden Oriole in the back of the trees. We continued on for a short while and then a Sylvia type warbler caught our attention. We got out and found at least 4 Orphean Warblers including adults and juveniles and eventually got very good views. Further on along the farm road we had Black-eared Wheatear, Northern Wheatear and **Cretzschmar's Bunting** (Photo: Steve Bird) and it seemed as Carolyn put it that "every rock had a bird". We eventually got back to a paved road and along this we started seeing Little Owls. Usually the birds were somewhere near a farm building but as they do, the beauties were perched up in the open offering more photo possibilities.



We made a quick pit stop back at the hotel and we were off again for the evening show at the Saltpans. It seemed quiet around the farm road but on the west side of the pans it was hopping. Shorebirds had come in and we counted 44 Little Stint, 47 Curlew Sandpipers (some in almost full breeding plumage), 50 Ruff and 2 Temminck's Stints. The Greater Flamingos that were feeding in the impoundments nearby added to the show and we enjoyed the views of the birds at closer range.

The sun was setting as we made our way back along the Tsiknias River and added Purple Heron and Little Bittern to our day list. At the mouth of the river, there were hundreds, perhaps thousands of Swallows dipping into the water making for a spectacular sight. We arrived back at the hotel, late for dinner (again!) but it was worth it for the fantastic day of birding we'd enjoyed. As Steve updated the log book in our hotel, a woman walked by and inquired what "mythical" sightings we were adding to the book. Steve noted that all of our sightings were real and we had pictures of most of the birds we'd seen! Hence, our tour was dubbed, the "Mythical" tour!



Day 6 – April 28, 2016

In the morning before breakfast, we went to Metochi Lake, formerly known as the inland lake. A **Cetti's Warbler** (Photo: Steve Bird) was just getting warmed up in the morning sun and offered good views for us. The lake edges were over grown making it difficult to see anything along the edges but the birds that came up into the reeds showed well including Great Reed Warbler and Common Reed Warbler.

There were a few Jays around and a couple of Golden Orioles flew past. Steve heard a Penduline Tit calling and soon located the bird and its nest in the trees at the edge of a farm field. In the pond itself there were Little Grebes and plenty of Common Moorhens. A Spotted Flycatcher was perched in a tree in the distance and the morning light lit it up like a lightbulb. Woodchat Shrikes were seen in the treetops and Paul C. spotted a Sedge Warbler working low in the reeds just above the surface of the water. Another Sedge Warbler appeared a little further right and Gina found a Little Bittern at the far edge of the pond.



Back for breakfast, we were soon off to try again for some specialties near Molivos as our first attempt had been thwarted by strong winds a few days before. Soon after we arrived at Kavaki, Gina found a **Ruppell's Warbler** (Photo: Steve Bird) perched on a Spanish Broom. We positioned ourselves for better views and also saw Subalpine Warbler, European Turtle Dove, Black-eared Wheatear, Shag and Cormorant just offshore and a Greater Short-toed Lark in the parking lot across the street. At the upper observation area, a Hobby flew over close offering nice views.

We moved on to a nearby reservoir which held lots of Yellow-legged Gulls and a Common Sandpiper. Steve found a Great Spotted Cuckoo perched in some nearby trees and we had good views of the perched bird as well as flight views.

Having attained our targets, we headed back to Kalloni area and on to Mesa to get a look at the two handsome Garganey that were feeding in the pond there. A Purple Heron was seen and a Zitting Cisticola was flying overhead calling. After a lovely taverna lunch overlooking the sea we continued on to Achladeri and found Serins in their usual spot and enjoyed scope views of them. We worked our way along the shore to some olive groves which offered Orphean Warbler, Common Whitethroat, and **Black-headed Bunting** (Photo: Steve Bird). Back to Achladeri Forest we found Short-toed Tree Creeper which showed well for all.



After a quick pit stop at the hotel, the evening crew went up to the Upper Tsiknias River where we found a pair of Stone Curlews in a mowed field. We drove up some rough road and found several Blackbirds, Red-backed Shrikes, several Whinchats, Cirl Buntings, and Alpine and Common Swifts.

Day 7 – April 29, 2016

Our last pre-breakfast excursion of the tour was once again at the Kalloni Saltpans. On the way, we had Lesser Grey Shrike and Black-headed Buntings along with the usual suspects and there were Common



Terns and nice looking Flamingos in the impoundments. As we drove along the moat, a Marsh Harrier perched on the ground immediately at the side of the road flew up giving us the closest views of the trip. We scanned and found a distant Montagu's Harrier but the real show was the nine **Red-footed Falcons** (Photo: Steve Bird) that were perched on the power lines and flying off to hunt insects and we enjoyed their antics for a half hour or so. A Little Owl was seen perched out in the morning light. We worked our way back and checked the mouth of the Tsiknias River where we found a quickly disappearing Rufous Bush Robin. Out on the water was Great Crested Grebe that we scoped as it was the first and last seen on the trip.

After breakfast, we traveled the road back to Sigri and had nice views of Chukar and a few more Little Owls. At the Fig Orchard, the flycatchers were still performing and we had views of Spotted,

Collared, and Pied. Along the road there were several Lesser Kestrels hunting. We stopped for a quick pit stop at a Taverna in the village and then continued to find our picnic spot on a rock wall near the Sigrí Fields. Here we had Common Redstart, more Bee-eaters, close views of a Cirl Bunting with a bill full of insects, a handsome male Stonechat, Lesser Whitethroat, and Masked Shrike. We walked along the road to Faneromeni Ford and found 65+ Black-headed Buntings perched along the edge of a field in some trees. There was a Purple Heron up in the ford and we were quickly called away by some other birders so see some Golden Orioles showing well across a small field. Back at the ford, we had Wood Sandpiper, Little Ringed Plover and saw Collared Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, Black-headed Bunting, and more Bee-eaters bathing in the water of the ford. We walked up the track to look at some petrified wood and then found 100+ Bee-eaters flying in some nearby fields. Those along with the Black-headed Buntings and Red-backed Shrikes offered a clear indication that migration was underway.

Later in the afternoon we headed back to the hotel for a pit stop and then back out to the Saltpans for our final evening. Along the way, we had four White Storks and a Little Owl and there was once again a Red-footed Falcon show. On the way back, Steve spotted a **Great Bittern** (Photo: Gina Nichol) along the Tsiknias River and a nice Purple Heron. We returned to the hotel for our official final dinner and checklist of the tour.



Day 8 – April 30, 2016



This morning we said good-bye to Paul and Darryl and a few of us went out for an extra session at the Saltpans. We found the Red-footed Falcons roosting on the wires near the main road and counted 31 of these little beauties as they warmed up on the morning sun and began to their morning hunt. We checked again at the mouth of the Tsiknias River and ran into Paul Manning who showed us yet another rare flower. As we were leaving, Paul called us back for a **Rufous Bush Robin** (Photo: Steve Bird) that posed for us a low bush. Later in the day we had lunch at a local Taverna and then said our good-byes again as Carolyn and Hank headed to Molivos, Paul and Maureen stayed for one last night, and Guy and Sandy came with us to the airport to continue their adventure in other parts of Greece.

Gina Nichol & Steve Bird
Sunrise Birding, LLC



A special thank you to Steve Dudley and Paul Manning for sharing their information and expertise with us during this tour. Your support really added to our enjoyment and the success of our tour this year.

Thanks also to the wonderful staff of the Kalloni Bay Hotel for making our stay most comfortable.

We had a very special group of people on our Lesvos tour this year. They were easy going and flexible and willing to travel to this lovely island in spite of the continued media reports of the refugee crisis. As we all knew in advance of the tour, Lesvos was on the frontline of the crisis and the island accepted with open arms hundreds of thousands of people fleeing civil war in Syria. The efforts of the island's residents and volunteers to help the refugees offer a multitude of yet untold lessons in humanity.

During our stay on Lesvos, evidence of the refugee crisis was minimal except for a few camps on the north coast road. We never saw any refugees in all the miles we traveled. We did see some humanitarian aid workers and volunteers who had come from all over the world to help the displaced people. The humanitarian effort seems to be well organized now, the life jackets have been removed and coastal patrols continue as the island tries to return to "normal".

One of the major impacts of the crisis on Lesvos, at least in the immediate future, has been the loss of tourism. With 2016 bookings reportedly down 70%, the future of the island's people, hotels and restaurants and other tourist services is uncertain. We ran our tour this year based on the information we received from our friends on Lesvos and we are glad we did. We plan to be back each year and to promote Lesvos as the wonderful birding destination that it is.



Sunrise over the Tsiknias River. Photo by Gina Nichol.



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