

PEREGRINE BIRD TOURS

TURKEY

16 May – 4 June 2010

TOUR REPORT

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Turkey is often described as where east meets west, and this is very much the case. In the west of the country the commercial capital Istanbul, is a bustling, modern, westernised city. However, in the hundreds of small villages dotted throughout the rolling steppes in the eastern part of the country, the villages have changed very little since biblical times, and you are left in no doubt, that you are in Asia. Turkey really does have it all; dozens of ancient archeological sites are to be found throughout the length and breadth of the country; Seljuk Turk fortresses, crusader castles and Roman temples and mausoleums, are commonplace. The scenery throughout is spectacular, the carpets of wildflowers simply stunning, the birdlife is both prolific and very varied and we saw a staggering 230 species of birds, which included a new bird for the Mediterranean, a Brown Booby, and best of all, the people themselves are extremely welcoming and friendly. We all enjoyed a wonderful tour in an equally wonderful and timeless country.

Following a long and tiring flight from Australia we arrived at Istanbul Airport, where not wanting to waste any time, we started looking for birds through the windows of the airport waiting lounge. We saw good numbers of Western Jackdaws, a couple of Hooded Crows and a few European Starlings; our Turkish adventure, was underway! We then took a short flight from Istanbul to Ankara, the capital city of Turkey. Here we joined up with Hickmet, who was to be our driver throughout the tour and Demir who was to be our local guide. We were very pleased to meet up with them and they provided terrific service throughout the tour. We then began the drive to Kulu Lake, which was to be our ultimate birding destination for the day. However, we enjoyed plenty of short birding stops along the way, allowing us to get to grips with some of the more common birds of the steppes, of central Turkey.

While driving through the sprawling suburbs of Ankara we added Feral Pigeon, Common Swift and the stunningly attractive Common Magpie. While driving through the rolling steppes, which stretched to the horizon on either side of the road, new birds included White Stork, Eurasian Collared Dove and Barn Swallow. A short comfort stop produced several new birds for us, including Long-legged Buzzard, which was to become a conspicuous feature of the steppes, Common Kestrel, a small flock of delightful European Bee-eaters, an Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, a male Blackcap, which was to be our only sighting for the tour, Spotted Flycatcher, Rook and House Sparrow.

On our arrival at Kulu we enjoyed lunch and then spent the entire afternoon birding Kulu Lake as we circumnavigated this very large lake in our bus. There were large numbers of birds congregating around the edge of the lake and we very much enjoyed our time here. New birds for the trip were many and varied; Grey Herons stalked the shallows, along with good numbers of

shimmering pink Greater Flamingos, both Ruddy and Common Shelducks were plentiful, Black-winged Stilts and Pied Avocets fed in the shallows and Kentish Plovers ran along the edge of the lake. We enjoyed watching several showy Spur-winged Lapwings and one or two of their close relatives the Northern Lapwing, smaller waders included Little Stint, Common Redshank, Ruff and our only sighting for the tour of Dunlin, most of which, were in full breeding plumage. There was also good numbers of Black-headed Gulls and large numbers of beautiful Slender-billed Gulls and a solitary immature Yellow-legged Gull. There were large numbers of both Gull-billed and Whiskered Terns who were foraging over the open grassland surrounding the lake. We also found a good variety of passerines in the open grassland, which included no less than five species of larks, Calandra, Greater and Lesser Short-toed, Crested and Eurasian. We were very fortunate to find Greater and Lesser Short-toed Larks literally side by side, allowing us to observe their differences in plumage, very well indeed. Large flocks of Common Sand Martins were flying above the grassland and this species was seen in enormous flocks during our time in Turkey, it was commoner here than in any other country that I have visited. We came across our first Tawny Pipit, lots of splendid Yellow Wagtails, with stunning black caps; and we were delighted to watch many displaying Isabelline Wheatears. We also added two very colourful species here, the attractive Red-backed Shrike and the stunning Black-headed Bunting. One of the many highlights of this tour was to have the Black-headed Bunting as a common roadside bird throughout the tour. We also saw our first mammal of the tour today, around Kulu Lake we observed many Asia Minor Ground Squirrels.

The following day was a travel day; we drove further to the southeast and drove past the huge salt lake of Tuz Golu, before overnighting at Sultanhani. However, we had allowed plenty of time for birding along the way. Roadside birding at small drainage channels proved very rewarding and along the edge of the channels we added such exciting species as Little Egret, a pair of Black Storks who had an immature with them, this was to prove our only sighting of this species for the tour, Western Marsh-Harrier, a small flock of the delightful, but unfortunately, endangered Lesser Kestrels, Wood Sandpiper, a flock of a dozen or so Black-bellied Sandgrouse in flight, which was to be our only sighting of this species, Little Owl, Eurasian Hoopoe, Great Reed-Warbler and Corn Bunting. At the southern end of Tuz Golu we were traveling through some very arid and sparsely populated country when the bus suddenly came to a screaming halt, jumping out of the bus as quickly as we could, we were able to enjoy great scope views of a pair of very uncommon Lesser Spotted Eagles, we were even able to scope them sitting on the ground and we also watched them in flight, this was our only sighting of this very uncommon species of eagle. A little further down the road and the bus came to a screaming halt once again, this time for another uncommon species of raptor, and we were able to watch a splendid adult male Montague's Harrier fly past us, exhibiting its typical buoyant, almost butterfly-like flight, as it did so. A further roadside stop produced good looks at our first of many splendid European Rollers.

We enjoyed a very good picnic lunch at the 12th Century ruins of Obruk Hani, which had been a lodging place on the legendary Silk Route, providing both lodging and protection from the many brigands who were only too happy to relieve the merchants of their precious cargoes. Obruk Hani also had a clinic where weary travelers could be treated for any ailments that they were suffering from. The series of fortified lodging houses along the Silk Route, not only enabled goods to be transported from Asia to Europe; they also enabled new inventions, new ideas and new religions to spread westwards. Following lunch we walked around a huge crater lake immediately behind the

fortress, from which the fortress had once obtained its water supply. New birds for us at the crater lake included European Turtle-Dove, Northern Wheatear, Eurasian Tree Sparrow and Rock Sparrow. Our next birding stop was at Lake Meke, yet another volcanic crater lake, it was actually a Ramsar Site, because it is an important wintering ground for large numbers of wildfowl. However, it was spring and all the wildfowl had already headed north. Even so, there were good numbers of birds around the edge of the lake and new birds for us included Little Ringed Plover, Eurasian Crag-Martin, stunningly attractive Finsch's Wheatears and Common Linnet. As we were driving out of the crater the dirt road we were travelling along cut through layer after layer of volcanic ash. Early in the day we saw our second mammal of the tour, a solitary Brown Hare.

The following day our first scheduled birding stop was at the Kachar State Research Farm, close to Topakkaya. Here in the fields and orchards we added several species of passerines to our ever growing list; they included Cetti's and Upcher's Warblers, Common Whitethroat, Eurasian Golden Oriole, European Goldfinch and Spanish Sparrow. Our next birding stop was at Acigol Crater, yet another volcanic crater. As we climbed the steep slopes of the crater, which were covered with holly and stunted oaks, we enjoyed great looks at a splendid male White-throated Robin, a Lesser Whitethroat and a superb pair of Rock Buntings. We then drove through the very impressive area of Cappadocia, located in the very centre of Turkey. This area is famous for its spectacular natural rock formations; thousands of years of erosion by wind and rain on soft volcanic stone, with a layer of hardened lava caps, has created a fascinating landscape of rock cones and pinnacles. It is strewn with underground cities, where layers of tunnels and an intricate system of caves hid early Christians who were fleeing from persecution. Inside the rocky cliffs there are numerous churches and stone chapels, with beautifully painted frescos, as well as monasteries and other dwellings, all hewn out of the weirdly eroded volcanic rock, dating from 400 BC. In this fascinating area new roadside birds included Alpine Swift, Common House Martin and Eurasian Jay. We then enjoyed a picnic lunch along the banks of the Kizilirmak River at Avanos, where we also did a little birding. New birds here included Little Bittern, Common Moorhen, our only sighting of Savi's Warbler, Eurasian Reed-Warbler, Great Tit, several uncommon Eurasian Penduline Tits and a singing Common Nightingale who somewhat surprisingly, allowed us to approach closely, enabling us to enjoy very good looks at this normally very shy and secretive species.

In the afternoon we made a prolonged visit to the Sultan Marshes, before driving south to Camardi, where we enjoyed a three nights stay. The Sultan Marshes are a low area of flooded grassland, which were literally teeming with birds; new birds here included several Great Crested Grebes, a small flock of Cattle Egrets, the only ones we saw during the tour, a few Squacco Herons, one or two Purple Herons, small numbers of Mallard, a drake Garganey in full breeding plumage, several Common Pochards, good numbers of Eurasian Coots and best of all, a flock of approximately 150 White-winged Black Terns in full breeding plumage, providing an exceptional ending to what had been one of the most interesting days of the tour.

The small village of Camardi lies at the foot of Mount Demirkazik, the highest mountain in the Aladag mountain range. Mount Demirkazik is home to a wide range of high alpine specialities, which includes the highly range restricted Caspian Snowcock, which was to be our number one target species in this area. We were up at three in the morning, well before dawn, and after a quick breakfast we started up the mountain, on a dirt track, in a purpose built trailer, which was pulled by a tractor. Even with five layers of clothing on, it was very cold and after an hour or so, as we

approached the tops of the mountain and the snow, it had not warmed up, not one little bit. However, we all stopped thinking about the cold as we jumped off the trailer and began our search for the high alpine specialities. The first thing we noticed was the many alpine plants that dotted the landscape. Unfortunately, as soon as we began our search, low cloud spiraled up from the valleys below and shrouded the mountains in mist. During the next few hours a pattern of low cloud totally obliterating the mountains was interspersed with short periods which were free from cloud, with good visibility, allowing us good looks at some of the specialities, before another wave of low clouds enshrouded us all in semi-darkness once again. One of the first birds we saw well was the beautiful Horned Lark, and then several Black Redstarts popped into view, followed by a stunning Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush. During one period of good visibility a beautiful Radde's Accentor was found singing from the top of a rock. All the while, we could hear the loud, mournful calls of Caspian Snowcock, all around us. They were quite close, but the poor visibility prevented us from seeing our number one target species. By late morning we had seen all the high alpine specialities including Chukar, Alpine Accentor, the very uncommon Ring Ouzel, the equally uncommon Wallcreeper, Red-billed Chough, White-winged Snowfinch and the very beautiful Crimson-winged Finch, but not the elusive Caspian Snowcock. It was a delight to watch Northern Wheatears and White-winged Snowfinches performing their aerial display flights all around us. Then suddenly, it cleared completely, we could see the rock face in front of us and we scoured the tops for our last target species. A Caspian Snowcock then flew past us and landed on the cliff in front of us and began to call from the top of a rock; the scope was soon on the bird and we all enjoyed wonderful scope views of this high altitude and extremely range restricted species. We were now happy to travel back down the mountain, where we would enjoy our lunch. As we were walking back to the trailer a pair of Golden Eagles circled overhead and as we were watching them a solitary Peregrine Falcon began mobbing them. Paying no attention to the Peregrine the eagles settled on a nearby rocky crag, where we were able to enjoy good scope views of them. During the morning we also enjoyed good scope views of the Bezoar Goat, the ancestor of all domestic goats, which looks much more like an ibex, than a goat.

While walking to lunch back in Camardi, we saw our first White Wagtail and our first of many flocks of the stunning Rose-coloured Starling. In the afternoon we went birding on the lower slopes of Mt. Demirkazik, where we enjoyed good looks at three new species of birds; the beautiful Menetries's Warbler, a small flock of Alpine Choughs and great looks at the very striking Ortolan Bunting.

The following morning, we spent the whole morning birding the very beautiful Emli Gorge, in the nearby Aladag Mountains. This striking gorge has been inhabited for many centuries and there were countless homes that had been carved into the rocky sides of the gorge. Even today, Eurasian Rock Martins and Rock Sparrows were living in holes in the rock face along with Turkmen nomadic tribesmen, who live here during the summer months. The birding was as spectacular as the scenery; a Blue Rock-Thrush perched on top of one of the rocky crags, a European Blackbird sang from a nearby tree, as an Eastern Orphean Warbler foraged in a large bush, a Coal Tit showed well in a small conifer and a small group of Western Rock Nuthatches were searching nearby rocks looking for spiders. A beautiful Lesser Grey Shrike sat at the top of a large bush, a pair of Common Ravens flew by, a pair of European Serins were feeding on the ground and best of all, we very much enjoyed watching a small flock of the extremely range restricted Red-fronted Serin.

Back to Camardi for lunch and a little birding, new birds here included Black Kite, Syrian Woodpecker, Blue Tit and Common Chaffinch. We spent most of the afternoon birding at Akkaya Barraje, close to the town of Nigde. During the drive there we drove through an area of rolling steppe, and when we were close to the small village of Uckapili, we found three new species for the tour, a Great Spotted Woodpecker, a Grey Wagtail and a solitary Common Stonechat. The birding at Akkaya Barraje was extremely enjoyable and we added three very uncommon birds here; a pair of endangered White-headed Ducks, a small flock of breeding Greater Sandplovers and a stunning Citrine Wagtail, in full breeding plumage. There was also a supporting cast of new birds, which included Black-necked Grebe, Eurasian Teal, Northern Shoveler, Common Greenshank and Common Sandpiper. We also stumbled across a nest of the Lesser Short-toed Lark, which had four eggs in it. Somewhat surprisingly, the nest was not placed in the ground as is the norm with most species of larks; the nest was actually built on a platform above the ground, amongst the grass.

An early start the following morning found us at a stakeout for the uncommon Bimaculated Lark, at the nearby village of Celaller. In no time at all, we were enjoying scope views of this range restricted species. Reluctantly leaving the mountains behind, we headed for Tasucu, on the Mediterranean Coast. As we neared the coast we drove through the first of many conifer forests, so we decided we would have a quick birding stop. This was to prove very rewarding and new birds for us here included a stunning dark morph Booted Eagle, the first of many Red-rumped Swallows and our only Mistle Thrushes and Short-toed Treecreepers of the tour. As we reached the Mediterranean coastline we drove past many archeological ruins which included medieval fortresses, crusader castles and Roman temples. From the bus we added two new species here, the delightful White-throated Kingfisher and the range restricted White-spectacled Bulbul. We spent much of the afternoon birding in the famous Goksu Delta, this area is most famous as a wintering ground for wetland birds from northern Europe, even in late spring there was still large numbers of resident birds in attendance and somewhat surprisingly, even the odd bird still wintering and good numbers of birds still on passage, through the delta. We added a staggering 13 new species of birds for the tour, and we went back the following morning and added a further 7. New birds in the afternoon included a pair of Great Egrets, this is the only place in Turkey where this species breeds, a small flock of Eurasian Spoonbills, a pair of endangered Marbled Ducks, a drake Red-crested Pochard, in full breeding plumage, a couple of Black Francolins, a solitary Eurasian Oystercatcher, a flock of superb Collared Pratincoles, three third winter Caspian Gulls, several Common Terns in full breeding plumage, good numbers of Little Terns in breeding plumage, a solitary Sandwich Tern, also in full breeding plumage, several Graceful Prinias and a magnificent Woodchat Shrike. We also observed a Golden Jackal walk across one of the tracks. We were staying in a hotel that overlooked Tasucu Harbour, where we found our first of many Laughing Doves.

We spent a full morning birding once again in the Goksu Delta and one of the features of this mornings birding was the huge numbers of Common Sand Martins nesting in the sandy banks of the delta. Offshore gale force winds made the birding very difficult, because the passerines were very reluctant to perch up, where they could be seen. However, there was such a storm blowing offshore we decided to see if any species of seabirds had been blown close to shore. This was exactly what had happened; large numbers of Cory's Shearwaters could be seen battling the winds close to shore and amongst them there were a couple of Yelkouan Shearwaters and then we were stunned to find a juvenile Brown Booby flying along the beach; this is the first time this species has ever been recorded in the Mediterranean. Other new birds included Ferruginous Duck, Grey-

headed Swamphen, Bearded Reedling, European Greenfinch and the surprise find, of a pair of Pale Rock Sparrows.

In the afternoon we went birding in the hills above Silifke, in and around Uzuneabure Gorge. New birds came thick and fast; and included a beautiful European Honey-buzzard, which flew directly overhead, Black-eared Wheatears perched on the top of several large rocks, a beautiful male Ruppell's Warbler sang from the top of a large bush, we saw Sombre Tits particularly well, Long-tailed Tits were very much in evidence, we enjoyed watching a very active Kruper's Nuthatch, a pair of stunning Masked Shrikes and one or two very striking male Cretzschmar's Buntings, in full breeding plumage. At one time we found ourselves birding along an ancient road made of limestone rocks, which were littered with ancient fossils, the road predated Roman times. We also took a little time off to visit a Roman Temple built in 70AD in honour of their main god, Zeus. We also saw a beautifully coloured Persian Squirrel which jumped from rock to rock right in front of us. During the drive back to our hotel in Tasucu, we drove past the very impressive Silifke Castle, built in the 13th century by Armenians, to protect themselves from attacks by Seljuk Turks. On arrival at Tasucu Harbour, gale force winds were still blowing hard and there were still large numbers of Cory's Shearwaters inshore. While doing a seawatch through my bedroom window, I managed to pick out a pair of second summer Audouin's Gulls, battling to fly against the strong winds, which we all saw extremely well.

We spent the whole of the following day in the very large Cukurova Delta, to the south of Adana, where we concentrated our efforts in the Adana Karatas bird sanctuary. The sanctuary is a large freshwater marsh surrounded by extensive sand dunes. Most of the delta is intensely cultivated and it is here that most of Turkey's water melons and rock melons are grown. This was the time of the harvest and literally hundreds of itinerate Kurdish farm labourers from eastern Turkey, were working in the fields and were housed in large makeshift tent cities, lining the roadsides. The Kurds come here for three months of the year, to work in the fields, before driving back to eastern Turkey. The birding proved very successful and we found a number of very late waders on passage to their breeding grounds in the far north of Europe and Siberia. These included a few Ringed Plovers, a few Grey Plovers, one in stunning breeding plumage and a Ruddy Turnstone in absolutely immaculate full breeding plumage. We also found a first winter Pallas's Gull, which is a very occasional visitor to Turkey. Other new birds included Pied Kingfisher, Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin and a solitary Zitting Cisticola.

Continuing eastwards, we spent much of the morning birding the very scenically attractive Isikli Valley, where our main target species was the recently split and extremely range restricted, Kurdish Wheatear. We climbed high into the mountains in our vehicle, before setting off on foot to walk along the top of a nearby mountain range. The top of the mountain was a large area of limestone kaste, where exposed limestone had been weathered by rain and wind and carved into spectacular rocky pinnacles, of all shapes and sizes. Finsch's Wheatears were very conspicuous and were displaying all around us, but try as we may, we could not find a Kurdish Wheatear anywhere. However, we did find a number of other exciting new birds; one or two Pallid Swifts were picked out amongst the flocks of Common Swifts, a small flock of Eurasian Nuthatches was found in one of the orchards, the extremely range restricted Eastern Rock Nuthatch, was commonplace, we found a pair of nesting Desert Finches, a very uncommon species of bird, and another range restricted species, the attractive Cinereous Bunting, also proved to be common in this area. In the

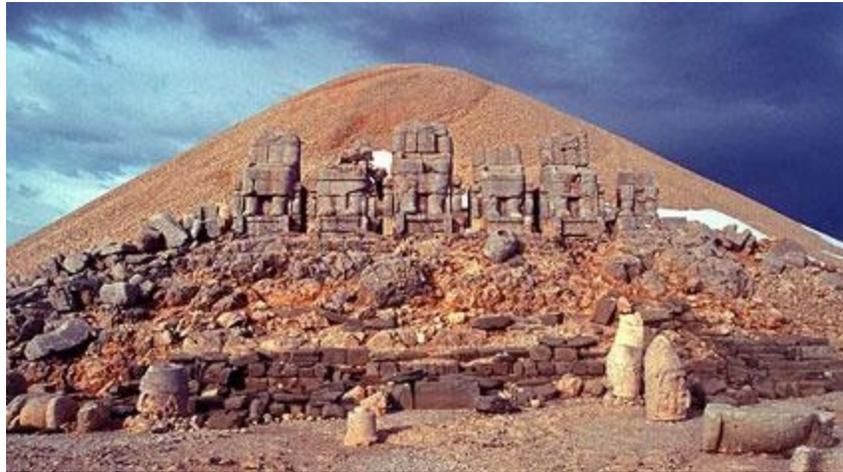
afternoon we had a long drive to the east, before arriving at Birecik, on the banks of the Euphrates River, very close to the border with Syria.

Birecik is without doubt one of the most outstanding birding spots in the whole of Turkey, with many target species occurring here. Our hotel literally overlooked the Euphrates River, the cradle of civilization, and from the hotel itself, we were able to add the very range restricted Pygmy Cormorant and the Black-crowned Night-Heron. Sadly, a small gorge on the outskirts of Birecik, is now the only nesting place in the Western Palearctic of the critically endangered Northern Bald Ibis. As we drove towards the gorge a number of the ibis were flying upstream along the Euphrates River and we were also able to watch good numbers on their nesting cliffs. In all, we saw approximately 75 individuals, which is a large percentage, of the entire world population. Continuing out of town we searched for one of the other main target birds, the range restricted See-see Partridge, but it was now becoming very hot, and we did not have any luck finding it, although the habitat looked perfect. We decided we would return early the following morning. While searching for the partridge we did find the very attractive and incredibly range restricted Dead Sea Sparrow and the far more widespread Chestnut-shouldered Sparrow. We then decided to look for one of the other main target species in this area, the Iraq Babbler, which was only discovered in Turkey, as recently as 2006. We found this species very easily and had a good look at a couple of birds. While here, we also found a Dead Sea Sparrows nest, built on the outside of the nest of a Hooded Crow. Later in the afternoon we visited a small colony of nesting Little Swifts, this is the only breeding place for this species in the whole of the Western Palearctic. In downtown Birecik, we then visited a small park and searched for two species of owls which are known to breed in the park. We were spectacularly successful, finding an adult Pallid Scops-Owl at its daytime roost, where we enjoyed excellent scope views of the bird. This is one of the most difficult owls to find in the world and has a very small range. We also found an adult Long-eared Owl at its daytime roost, in a different tree, and once again, we were able to obtain good scope views of it.

Early the following morning found us searching for the See-see Partridge and this time, we found a pair very easily, and we watched them flush from our feet and fly into the adjoining valley. We had now found all the target species of Birecik and still had a day up our sleeve. It was decided that we would leave Birecik immediately and on our way further east we would make an unscheduled overnight stop at the famous ancient monument of Nemrut Dagi, and late this afternoon we would try again for the Kurdish Wheatear.

Following a long drive to the east we arrived at Nemrut Dagi and booked in for the night at a local hotel. We then drove to the ancient monument and slowly drove up the road, watching for birds as we did so. In only a matter of minutes we had found the Kurdish Wheatear and we enjoyed good scope views of both male and female. We continued to bird our way up to the ancient monument and added a further four new species, three of them were raptors. The first was a Eurasian Hobby, which flew swiftly overhead and out of sight, this was followed by a prolonged sighting of a Bonelli's Eagle in flight, this is a very rare species in Turkey. We then enjoyed prolonged and excellent looks at two juvenile Short-toed Eagles, who spent much of their time hovering together, looking for food. We also had a couple of quick looks at a Desert Lark, yet another, very uncommon bird in Turkey. We then walked around the very impressive archeological site of Nemrut Dagi. In 62 BC, King Antiochus I of Commagene, a city state, built for himself a mountain top tomb in the Anti-Taurus mountains of southeastern Turkey. The tomb is flanked by huge

statues 8–9 metres in height, of himself, two lions, two eagles and various Greek, Armenian and Persian gods, including Hercules, Zeus and Apollo. The statues are seated, with the names of each god inscribed on them. The site is as awe inspiring as it is enigmatic.



Nemrut Dagı

The following day was very much a travel day, spending almost all of the day in the bus as we drove from Nemrut Dagı to Tatvan, in the far east of Turkey. It rained for much of the day, which did not affect us, as we were inside the bus. This was to be the only rain that fell during daylight hours, throughout the whole tour; it could not have come at a better time. Early in the drive we had to take a ferry across a large river, to us, it looked like organised chaos, buses, trucks, cars and motor bikes all jostling for position to ensure they got on the ferry. In the end, everyone got on and the transfer across the river went like clockwork. Today we traveled through villages that had changed very little since biblical times.

The following morning we were to drive to Nemrut Dagı Volcano, not far from Tatvan, however, when we were approximately three and a half kilometres from the crater lake, the road became impassable, as heavy snow and ice had washed away a section of the road. So we made the decision to walk to the lake and back. It was a lovely day and there were plenty of birds for us to look at, even though we had seen them previously on the tour. Then we found a small bird doing a broken wing distraction display, the adult bird was trying to lure us away from its nest, which it did very successfully. The bird was a Woodlark, a new bird for the tour, a little later we enjoyed a second sighting, this time of a Woodlark singing from the top of a small spruce. These were the only Woodlarks we were to see throughout the whole tour, if it had not been for the landslide, we would never have seen this species. On arrival at the lake we found a large number of Armenian Gulls nesting on a small island, in the lake.

In the afternoon we visited a large reedbed close to Ahlat along the shoreline of Lake Van. The weather was still good, with little wind, making it ideal weather to search for reedbed birds, and in no time at all we were enjoying great looks at the two target species we were searching for, Moustached Warbler and Paddyfield Warbler. The Paddyfield Warbler has only been found breeding in Turkey, in the last few years. During the next few days, while birding in and around Lake Van, the weather followed the same pattern, with clear, bright mornings followed by a build

up of clouds during the afternoon and then rain in the evenings. Lake Van is so huge, that it forms its own weather system! While driving to Gevas Marshes we came to a screeching halt and we all piled out of the bus to admire three Common Wood pigeons, a not so common bird in Turkey, in fact, it is a very uncommon bird in Turkey. There were plenty of birds for us to look at in the Gevas Marshes, most of which we had seen previously on the tour. However, we did enjoy good scope views of one new bird, a solitary Black-tailed Godwit, in full breeding plumage.

A little to the east of Lake Van, lies Ercek Lake and we spent a full day here, birding at several locations around the lake. It was a very enjoyable days birding and we even managed to find some new birds for the tour. Around the edge of the lake, new birds included a few Little Grebes and a flock of 12 Red-necked Phalaropes, all in full breeding plumage, pirouetting close to the lakeshore, just a few metres from us. This was a very enjoyable sighting and we spent some time watching these most delightful of birds. We then decided to walk a small trail which headed off into the mountains which surrounded the lake. The first new bird we found was a superb adult Egyptian Vulture, soaring in the sky above us, it was a terrific sight. The next new bird was a Common Cuckoo, which perched for us on telegraph wires, and the last new bird for the day was a stunning adult male Siberian Stonechat, which we saw very well indeed. Today we also saw many large flocks of stunning Rose-coloured Starlings, the majority were in full breeding plumage; we saw approximately 800 birds, some of them feeding on the ground just a few metres away from us. We also enjoyed our best sighting of Golden Jackal.

The following day we drove northwards to the small village of Serpmetas, near Caldiran. Here there is a fine example of a shiny black, volcanic flow of molten lava, which had cooled and set rock hard, it was an amazing sight. We birded around the lava flow and up into the mountains and we were very pleased to find a total of seven new birds for the tour. They included Common Crane, Eurasian Buzzard, the seldom seen Common Quail, Whinchat, Twite, Common Rosefinch and the very uncommon Mongolian Finch, only a handful of birds breed in the far east of Turkey. In the afternoon we birded at various places along the north shore of Lake Van. While birding at Bendimahi Delta, near Timar, we climbed an observation tower overlooking the marsh. This was a tremendous vantage point and we very much enjoyed our time here. Amongst the many birds here were two drake Gadwalls in eclipse plumage, which was a new species for the tour.

The following morning we drove to the east, to the 2,710 metre Guzeldere Pass, near Guzelsu. Shortly after our arrival a pair of Eurasian Griffon Vultures flew high over our heads. We then walked up a steep gully where we found nesting Bluethroats, a very uncommon bird in Turkey. On the way back to Van, for lunch, we made a quick birding stop at a small area of woodland, close to Zamek Barrage. Here we managed to find another new bird for the tour, the Mountain Chiffchaff. After lunch in Van, we visited Van Marshes and enjoyed great looks at a couple of Common Reed Buntings, a new bird for the tour, and another very uncommon bird in Turkey.

We spent the following morning at a Rocky Gorge south of Donenec, where we enjoyed great scope views of a singing male Grey-necked Bunting, another very uncommon bird in Turkey. In the afternoon we drove to the airport and flew back to Istanbul, for an overnight stay. From our hotel windows we could look over the Bosphorus Straits, where we added Great Cormorant and European Shag. In nearby parkland, we found an introduced Alexandrine Parakeet. This was a perfect end to a perfect tour in the ancient land of Asia Minor.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

PODICIPEDIDAE

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* This species is a common winter visitor to western Turkey and an uncommon breeding bird which is sparsely distributed throughout Turkey. We saw it very well on two separate occasions; firstly, at Ercek Lake and secondly at Bendimahi Delta, on Lake Van, close to Timar.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* Scattered sightings of breeding birds throughout the tour.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* A fairly common winter visitor to western Turkey and an uncommon breeding bird in southwestern Turkey. We enjoyed good scope views of a small number of birds in breeding plumage at the Akkaya Barrarj, near Nigde, in southwestern Turkey.

PROCELLARIIDAE

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* Breeds on islands in the Aegean Sea, off the coast of western Turkey and does not normally occur along the south coast of Turkey. However, on the 23rd May there was a tremendous storm in the Mediterranean and large numbers of Cory's Shearwaters were observed just offshore from the Goksu Delta and off Tasucu. This species was first described by Charles Barney Cory in 1881. Carl Hieronymus Euler 1834-1901, was the Swiss consul in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 1897 until his death. The ornithologist Jean Louis Cabanis first described the flycatcher from a specimen which Euler had sent him. Euler's collection of 369 species of birds, most of which were collected on his farm are housed in the Berlin Museum. Unfortunately, today only 40% of this number can now be found in the valley which Euler farmed.

Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* This species also breeds on islands in the Aegean Sea, off the coast of western Turkey and does not normally occur along the south coast of Turkey. However, during the tremendous storm of the 23rd May a couple of birds were observed offshore from the Goksu Delta, amongst the far more numerous Cory's Shearwaters.

SULIDAE

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster* This was the most surprising find of the tour; during a large storm in the Mediterranean Sea on the 23rd May, a juvenile Brown Booby was observed flying just off the beach at the Goksu Delta, on the south coast of Turkey. This species has never been recorded previously in the Mediterranean Sea. However, it is often recorded in the Gulf of Aqaba, off Israel. From there it is only a short flight up the Suez Canal and into the Mediterranean.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* A fairly common winter visitor to Turkey and an uncommon breeding bird. One of the areas it breeds in Turkey is around the Bosphorus Straits at Istanbul, where we found it to be plentiful.

European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* Similar to the above species, the European Shag is a fairly common winter visitor to Turkey and an uncommon breeding species. One of the areas it breeds in Turkey is around the Bosphorus Straits at Istanbul, where we observed a few individuals.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus* Overall this diminutive species of cormorant is an uncommon resident in Turkey, with only a few known breeding colonies. It proved to be common along the Euphrates River at Birecik and we saw a solitary bird at Bendimahi Delta on Lake Van, close to Timar.

ARDEIDAE

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Mainly a winter visitor to western Turkey, a fairly common passage migrant and a scarce breeding bird. We saw odd birds at most wetland areas.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* This is an uncommon breeding species in Turkey, we observed small numbers, at several wetland locations.

Great Egret *Ardea alba* The only known breeding colony in Turkey of this species, is the Goksu Delta, on the south coast of Turkey. We were very fortunate to observe two birds at this exact location.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* An uncommon breeding species in Turkey, we observed small numbers at several wetland sites.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* Another uncommon breeding species in Turkey, which we observed well, in several wetlands.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Only one known breeding colony in Turkey, therefore we were very fortunate to observe a small flock of five birds, while birding at the Sultan Marshes.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* An uncommon breeding bird in Turkey, it was obviously breeding in small numbers along the Euphrates River, at Birecik.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* Another uncommon breeding species in Turkey; we flushed a bird along the Kizilirmak River, at Avanos and then observed several birds at gravel pits to the south of Birecik.

CICONIIDAE

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* An uncommon breeding species in Turkey, all but one colony is in the northern part of Turkey. In the part of Turkey we visited during the tour, there is only one known breeding colony, and we must have been very close to it when we observed a couple of adults and an immature bird, close to Damlakuyu, at the very centre of Turkey.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* In sharp contrast to the Black Stork; the White Stork is a common and widespread breeding species in Turkey, which we observed on most days of the tour.

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* Unfortunately, this critically endangered species is only known from two breeding colonies; one in Morocco and one at Birecik, in Turkey. The species became extinct in Birecik in 1989, but a breeding population of released captive-bred birds has now increased to almost 100 birds, of which we must have seen 70 odd percent of the population. This species is classified as critically endangered in 'Threatened Birds of the World.' The main threat to this species is hunting by humans, human disturbance and the loss of steppe and old fashioned agricultural areas.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* This species has only one known breeding site in Turkey. This is in the Goksu Delta, and we were very pleased to find a flock of 12 or so birds, during our time there.

PHOENICOPTERIDAE

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* An uncommon breeding species in Turkey; we found good numbers at several wetland areas throughout the tour.

ANATIDAE

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* A common breeding species in Turkey, which we saw well on many occasions.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* A very uncommon breeding species in Turkey, however, we did see small numbers, at several wetlands we visited.

Gadwall *Anas strepera* Another uncommon breeding species in Turkey; we only observed this species on one occasion. A couple of drakes in non-breeding plumage, were observed very well from the observation tower at Bendimahi Delta, at Lake Van, near Timar.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* An uncommon winter visitor to Turkey; somewhat surprisingly we found a pair of birds at the Akkaya Barrarj, near Nigde and a further couple at the Goksu Delta.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* A fairly common breeding species in Turkey, which we saw well on a number of occasions.

Garganey *Anas querquedula* A very uncommon breeding species in Turkey; however, we did see a few birds here and there, in some of the wetlands we visited.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata* Yet another very uncommon breeding species in Turkey; even so, we saw a few birds at three separate wetlands throughout the tour.

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* An extremely rare breeding bird in Turkey. This species is only known to have one breeding location in Turkey. This is in the Goksu Delta, and is exactly where we observed a pair of birds, on two separate occasions. This species is classified as vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. The main threats to this species are drainage of wetlands for agriculture, hydrological work has severely affected breeding sites throughout much of its range and pollution from agricultural, industrial and domestic sources, is also a continuing threat.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* Once again, this species is a very uncommon breeding bird in Turkey. We observed a single bird in the Goksu Delta, followed by a second sighting of a couple of birds at Ereck Lake, near Van.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* This species is supposed to be an uncommon breeding bird in Turkey, however, we saw small numbers at most wetland areas that we visited.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* This species of duck is also an uncommon breeding species in Turkey; we observed a pair of birds during our time in the Goksu Delta.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* This is one of the world's most endangered species of ducks, therefore, we were very pleased to find small numbers present at a number of the wetlands we visited. This species is classified as endangered in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. Mid-winter counts indicate that the population of this species has undergone a very rapid decline of 60% in the last 10 years. The main threats to this species are draining of wetlands, hunting, disturbance at nesting sites, ingestion of lead shot and hybridisation with the introduced Ruddy Duck, from the Americas.

ACCIPITRIDAE

European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* This beautiful species of raptor is only a passage migrant through Turkey; northward migration through Turkey mainly occurs throughout the second half of May. Therefore, it was somewhat surprising that we only saw this bird on one occasion; however, we did see it very well indeed, when an adult bird flew right overhead, heading north, above the Uzuneabure Gorge, in the hills above Silifke.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* This species is an uncommon breeding species and passage migrant throughout Turkey, we saw it well on a few occasions.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* This species is an uncommon summer breeding visitor to Turkey, where we enjoyed some good sightings in the Lake Van area.

Eurasian Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* Throughout much of Turkey this species is a summer breeding visitor, however, in the far east of Turkey, where we enjoyed our only sighting, this species is resident. We were very fortunate to have a pair of birds fly directly overhead, while we were birding at Guzeldere Pass, near Guzelsu, in far eastern Turkey.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* A scarce summer breeding visitor throughout Turkey; therefore, we were very pleased to enjoy a prolonged and close sighting of a pair of juveniles, just below the impressive Nemrut Dagi ancient monument.

Western Marsh-Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* In the western half of Turkey, this species is predominately a resident species. However, in the eastern half of Turkey it is a breeding summer visitor. We saw it well at almost all the wetlands we visited.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* This species is a very scarce summer breeding visitor to Turkey and only occurs in six localised breeding areas. Therefore, we were very pleased to enjoy two excellent sightings, both of adult male birds during the tour. The first, occurred close to Eskil, south of Tuz Lake, and our second sighting occurred close to Lake Van. Colonel George Montagu (1751-1815) was a soldier and natural history writer and served as a lieutenant-colonel in the English army during the American revolution. He was later court-martialed for what was referred to as '*provative marital skirmishing*'! He then devoted his life to ornithology and following a long and distinguished career in the south of England, at the age of 64, he unfortunately died of lockjaw (tetanus) after stepping on a rusty nail.

Eurasian Buzzard *Buteo buteo* Throughout the vast majority of Turkey this species is only a winter visitor, however, it is a resident species along the north coast and in northeastern Turkey. One bird was observed in the mountains above the small village of Serpmetas near Caldiran, in northeastern Turkey, on the very edge of its breeding grounds.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* An abundant resident throughout the length and breadth of Turkey; being particularly common throughout the rolling steppes of the central plateau. Where it feeds predominately on the many thousands of Asia Minor Ground Squirrels that inhabit this area. We observed the Long-legged Buzzard on almost every day of the tour.

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* This species is a very scarce summer breeding visitor to Turkey. Therefore, we were very fortunate indeed, to observe a pair of birds, flying above us, as well as good scope views of them sitting in an agricultural field, close to the village of Golyazi, south of Tuz Lake.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* An uncommon resident of predominantly Alpine areas; we saw it very well on a number of occasions, even enjoying scope views of perched birds, during

our time birding on Mount Demirkazik, in the Aladag Mountains.

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciatus* A very scarce resident of Turkey, we were very fortunate to observe a bird in flight, just below the Nemrut Dagi ancient monument. Franco Andrea Bonelli (1784-1830) was an ornithologist and collector. In 1811 he was appointed curator of the Turin Museum and it was during this time he officially described Bonelli's Eagle and Bonelli's Warbler.

Booted Eagle *Aquila pennatus* An uncommon resident; we saw a dark morph bird very well, close to the village of Kamisli, in central Turkey.

FALCONIDAE

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* This species is an uncommon breeding summer visitor to Turkey. We saw our first flock near the village of Damlakuyu and enjoyed a second sighting of a pair of birds, in the township of Tatvan. This species is classified as vulnerable in 'Threatened Birds of the World'. This species has undergone rapid decline, equivalent to 46% in each 10 years since 1950. The main threats to this species are habitat loss, afforestation and urbanization. On its wintering grounds in Africa, important areas of grassland have been lost to agricultural development.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* A common resident throughout Turkey, which we saw on almost every day of the tour.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* The Eurasian Hobby is a fairly common summer migrant to Turkey; we enjoyed some very good looks at this species during our time in far eastern Turkey.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* The Peregrine Falcon is a fairly common resident and winter visitor in Turkey. We enjoyed a few good sightings during the tour.

PHASIANIDAE

Caspian Snowcock *Tetraogallus caspius* This uncommon species occurs in three mountainous areas of Turkey; we enjoyed good scope views of a single individual, on Mount Demirkazik, in the Aladag Mountains. This species was voted bird of the tour, by tour participants.

Chukar *Alectoris chukar* A common resident of the mountains of Turkey, we saw it very well on several occasions, during our time in the Aladag Mountains, of central Turkey.

See-see Partridge *Ammoperdix griseogularis* A fairly common resident of southeastern Turkey, close to the border with Syria. We flushed a pair from our feet, at Birecik, in southeastern Turkey.

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus* This species only occurs in two areas in Turkey; in the Goksu Delta, where we saw it very well, and at Birecik, where we saw a few more by the roadside.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* An uncommon summer visitor throughout Turkey, this cryptically plumaged species is notoriously difficult to see, as it normally remains well hidden inside grassland or farmers crops. Therefore we were very pleased to see a pair along the roadside and later to flush them from grassland, at the village of Serpmetas near Caldiran.

RALLIDAE

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* An uncommon resident in Turkey; however, we did see small numbers of birds in a few of the wetlands.

Grey-headed Swamphen *Porphyrio poliocephalus* The only place in Turkey where this bird occurs is the Goksu Delta, where it is a shy inhabitant of dense reedbeds. Once again, we were fortunate to see a couple of birds, during our time in the Goksu Delta.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* A fairly common resident, which we saw well on many occasions.

GRUIDAE

Common Crane *Grus grus* A summer breeding visitor mainly to northeast Turkey. We were fortunate to observe two birds in flight, close to the village of Serpmetas near Caldiran.

HAEMATOPODIDAE

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* A very uncommon summer breeding species in Turkey and winters in very small numbers at only one place in Turkey, in the Goksu Delta. We were very fortunate to observe one bird very well, during our time in the Goksu Delta. This species normally migrates to its breeding grounds during the month of April.

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* A fairly common summer visitor to Turkey; which we saw very well on many occasions.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* An uncommon summer visitor to Turkey, which we saw well on a few occasions.

GLAREOLIDAE

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* A fairly common summer visitor to Turkey; we saw breeding flocks very well in the Goksu and Cukurova Deltas, on the south coast of Turkey.

CHARADRIIDAE

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* This species has a curious distribution in Turkey; in the western half of Turkey it is a breeding resident and winter visitor. In eastern Turkey it is a summer migrant. We saw a few birds in western Turkey, but these were vastly outnumbered by birds in eastern Turkey.

Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* A fairly common summer breeding species in Turkey; which we saw very well on several occasions.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* In Turkey the Grey Plover is mainly a passage migrant; with very small numbers wintering in the Goksu and Cukurova Deltas. We were fortunate to find a small flock of five birds in the Cukurova Delta. One bird was in magnificent, full breeding plumage.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* This species winters in very small numbers in the Goksu and Cukurova Deltas, on the south coast of Turkey. We found two birds in full breeding plumage, still on their wintering grounds in the Cukurova Delta.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* A fairly common summer visitor to Turkey, which we enjoyed watching on several occasions.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* A common summer migrant to Turkey; which we saw well on many occasions.

Greater Sandplover *Charadrius leschenaultii* The Greater Sandplover is primarily a bird of the Russian Steppes. However, small numbers also found the Turkish Steppes on the central plateau, to their liking and it is estimated that approximately 100 pairs breed here. We were very fortunate to find a small flock of half a dozen or so birds at the Akkaya Barrarj, near Nigde; a couple of birds were in splendid full breeding plumage.

SCOLOPACIDAE

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* This species is an uncommon winter visitor to Turkey and a passage migrant in small numbers. We saw a solitary bird, in full breeding plumage, in the Gevas Marshes, at Lake Van.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* In western Turkey this species is a fairly common resident and winter visitor; in eastern Turkey it is only a summer migrant. We saw small numbers throughout Turkey.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Very small numbers of this species winter in Turkey and there are also small numbers of passage migrants. So we were very fortunate to find a solitary bird along the edge of the Akkaya Barrarj, near Nigde.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* The Wood Sandpiper is an uncommon passage migrant in Turkey. We saw small numbers at a number of the wetlands we visited.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* This bird is mainly a passage migrant to Turkey, with the exception of the far east of Turkey, where it is a breeding summer migrant. We saw small numbers of birds on passage and one or two breeding birds in eastern Turkey.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* This species is a very uncommon passage migrant through Turkey, so we were very pleased to find a solitary bird in stunning, full breeding plumage, at the Cukurova Delta, on the south coast of Turkey.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* Small numbers winter in Turkey, mainly on the central plateau around Kulu Lake. We found small flocks in breeding plumage at a few wetlands on the central plateau.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* Small numbers of Dunlin winter on small lakes and wetlands on the central plateau of western Turkey. We saw a good number of birds, mainly in full breeding plumage, at Kulu Lake, on the central plateau.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* Small numbers of this species also winter on small lakes and wetlands predominantly on the central plateau of western Turkey. We saw a good number of birds, mainly in full breeding plumage, at Kulu Lake on the central plateau, at Akkaya Barrarj and in the Goksu Delta.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* The European population of Red-necked Phalaropes winter in the Arabian Sea, at the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula. Although thousands of birds migrate through the Caspian Sea, Turkey lies a little too far west of the main migration route and only very small numbers pass through the country. We were very pleased to find a flock of 12 birds, all in full breeding plumage, at Ercek Lake, close to Van, in far eastern Turkey.

LARIDAE

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* There is only one known breeding colony in Turkey, where approximately 50 pairs breed on an offshore island in the Mediterranean Sea, close to Tasucu. During the tremendous storm of the 23rd May, two immature birds were observed battling against strong winds in Tasucu Harbour. Jean Victoire Audouin (1797-1841) was a French naturalist, born in Paris, where he studied medicine, natural history and pharmacy. He was appointed assistant at the Musee National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris in 1825 and in 1833 became professor of entomology there.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* This species is mainly a winter visitor to Turkey; with small numbers breeding at Kulu Lake and on the southeast coast of Turkey. We observed a juvenile bird at Kulu Lake and several adult birds in Tasucu Harbour.

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* The Caspian Gull breeds around the Black and Caspian Seas, extending eastwards across central Asia to northwestern China. Birds from the Black and Caspian Seas region winter in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. We were very fortunate to find three second winter birds at the Goksu Delta, which were probably on passage, we found them to be particularly tame and we were able to approach them within a few metres.

Armenian Gull *Larus armenicus* The Armenian Gull breeds in the Caucasus and the Middle East. It nests beside mountain lakes in Georgia, Armenia, far eastern Turkey and western Iran. The largest colonies are at Lake Sevan and Lake Arpi in Armenia. We saw many thousands of birds during our time in the Tatvan and Van areas, of far eastern Turkey.

Pallase's Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* This is an uncommon species which breeds mainly on the Russian Steppes; wintering mainly in the Caspian Sea, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and along the coast of India. We saw a solitary, first winter bird in the Cukurova Delta, on the south coast of Turkey. It is a very rare passage migrant in Turkey and our bird almost certainly came from wintering grounds in the Red Sea. Peter Simon Pallas (1741-1811) was a German zoologist and one of the greatest of the 18th Century naturalists. He led numerous expeditions throughout much of Russia between 1768-1774. He described many new species of mammals, birds, fish and insects.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* A resident breeding species in Turkey, which we saw well on many occasions.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* A resident breeding species on the central plateau of Turkey; it was particularly numerous at Kulu Lake, on the central plateau.

STERNIDAE

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* This species is a summer breeding visitor to the central plateau of Turkey and to Lake Van in far eastern Turkey. We saw it very well at both areas during the tour.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* The Sandwich Tern is a fairly common winter visitor to coastal Turkey. We observed a solitary bird, in full breeding plumage, at the Goksu Delta, on the south coast of Turkey.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* This species is a summer breeding visitor to the central plateau of Turkey and to the Lake Van area in far eastern Turkey. We saw it very well at both areas during the tour.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* This species is also a summer breeding visitor to the central plateau of Turkey and to the Lake Van area in far eastern Turkey. We saw it very well at both areas

during the tour.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* This species is an uncommon summer breeding visitor to large lakes situated on the central plateau of Turkey. We saw it very well at a number of wetland areas we visited.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* This stunning species of bird is a passage migrant in Turkey. Therefore, we were very pleased to find a flock of approximately 150 birds, all in immaculate, full breeding plumage, at the Sultan Marshes, in central Turkey; which was followed by a second, much smaller flock of approximately 10 birds, at the Celebibagi Marsh, at Lake Van.

PTEROCLIDAE

Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis* Unfortunately, we only saw one flock of this species, and only in flight, close to the village of Damlakuyu, in central Turkey.

COLUMBIDAE

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* Seen on a daily basis throughout the towns and village of Turkey. We also saw some real Rock Doves amongst them, in a couple of the more remote areas of Turkey.

Common Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* An uncommon resident in northern and central Turkey, and a very uncommon resident on the south coast of Turkey. We saw three birds perched in trees, close to the village of Aksogan, in eastern Turkey.

Eurasian Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia turtur* An uncommon summer visitor, which we only saw on two occasions. The first occurred at the ruins of Obruk Hani, near Kizoran; followed by a second sighting, during the drive to Tatvan in eastern Turkey.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* In the last 20 years this species has colonised the whole of Turkey, and we saw it on almost a daily basis.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* During the last two decades the Laughing Dove has been spreading northwest from Israel and is now commonplace throughout southeastern Turkey, where we saw it on a daily basis.

PSITTACIDAE

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* An introduced population has now become feral in the parks of Istanbul. We saw a couple of birds there, on the last day of the tour.

CUCULIDAE

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* A fairly common summer breeding species to Turkey, which we heard on many occasions, but only saw on a couple of occasions. Our best sighting, of a bird perched on telegraph wires, occurred close to Ercek Lake.

STRIGIDAE

Pallid Scops-Owl *Otus brucei* This species has only recently been discovered in Turkey, where it is only known from the one small area of parkland, in the town of Birecik, close to the border with Syria. We enjoyed terrific looks at a bird at its daytime roost, in the above mentioned park, in Birecik.

Little Owl *Athene noctua* This daytime species of owl was seen on a regular basis throughout the tour.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* The Long-eared Owl is a rare breeding resident in Turkey, at the very southeastern edge of its range. We enjoyed super looks at a bird at its daytime roost, in the same park in Birecik, where we saw the Pallid Scops-Owl.

APODIDAE

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* A fairly common summer visitor to southern and eastern Turkey; which we saw well on several occasions.

Common Swift *Apus apus* A common and conspicuous summer visitor, which we observed on almost a daily basis.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* A very scarce breeding summer visitor to Turkey, which we saw on two separate occasions. The first was observed amongst Common Swifts, in the village of Isikli and a second bird was observed amongst a flock of Common Swifts, at Birecik.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* In Turkey this species is only known from one small colony at Birecik, close to the border with Syria. We counted 30 or so birds, at the colony.

ALCEDINIDAE

White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* Small numbers of this species are resident along the south coast of Turkey; this is the most northwesterly part of this birds range. We saw it well on a few occasions.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* Once again, small numbers of this species are resident along the south coast of Turkey and along the Euphrates River. We only observed this species in the Cukurova Delta, on the south coast of Turkey.

MEROPIDAE

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* A common summer visitor to Turkey; we enjoyed many good looks at this species, which is possibly, the most beautiful of all the bee-eaters in the world.

CORACIDAE

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* Another common summer visitor to Turkey, which we saw sitting on telegraph wires, on most days of the tour.

UPUPIDAE

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Yet another common summer visitor, which we saw well on many days of the tour.

PICIDAE

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* An uncommon resident in Turkey; we were fortunate to see one bird in poplars lining the edge of a small stream, near the village of Uckpili, in southern Turkey.

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus* A fairly common resident throughout Turkey; which we saw well on many separate occasions.

ALAUDIDAE

Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti* This species has only very recently been discovered in Turkey, where it is probably a resident breeding species, in very small numbers. A couple of birds were observed in flight at the ancient monument of Nemrut Dagi, in southeastern Turkey.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* A common resident, which we saw very well, on many occasions.

Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata* This uncommon species is a summer breeding migrant to eastern Turkey. It is somewhat surprising to have a migratory species of lark, as most species of larks are resident birds. We enjoyed scope views of fairly distant birds at the small village of Celaller, and these were followed by much closer and much better sightings of this species at Ercek Lake, near Van.

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* Yet another migratory species of lark; it is a fairly common summer breeding species in Turkey, which we saw well on several occasions.

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* A fairly common resident of Turkey, which we saw very well on a number of occasions. We found a nest of this species with four eggs in it, at Akkaya Barrarj.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* A common and widespread resident, which we saw on almost a daily basis.

Woodlark *Lullula arborea* An uncommon summer migrant in Turkey; we saw two individuals while birding at Nemrut Dagi Volcano, near Tatvan, in southeastern Turkey. The first bird we saw was performing a magnificent broken wing distraction display, enabling us to enjoy very good looks at it; it must have had a nest close by. The second bird, was singing from the top of a small spruce tree.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis* In Turkey some populations of Eurasian Skylark are resident, while others are winter visitors and some are summer breeding migrants. We found it to be particularly common, on the rolling steppes of the central plateau.

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* A common, high altitude resident throughout Turkey; which we saw well on many occasions.

HIRUNDINIDAE

Common Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* An abundant summer breeding visitor throughout Turkey, which we saw on almost a daily basis.

Eurasian Crag-Martin *Hirundo rupestris* A common resident throughout Turkey, we enjoyed many good sightings throughout the tour.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* A very common summer breeding visitor, which we saw on almost a daily basis.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* A common summer breeding visitor to western and southern Turkey, which we saw well on many occasions.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbica* Another common summer breeding visitor to Turkey, which we saw on almost a daily basis.

MOTACILLIDAE

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* A common resident throughout Turkey, which we saw on many occasions.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* The Citrine Wagtail is a very scarce passage migrant through Turkey; therefore, we were very pleased to find two different individuals, both of which, were in full breeding plumage. We saw the first one at the Akkaya Barrarj, near Nigde and the second bird was observed at a large reedbed, close to the village of Ahlat, on Lake Van.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* A common summer breeding visitor, which we saw well on many occasions. Most were of the distinctive and very attractive black-headed race, *feldegg*.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* This species is mainly an uncommon summer breeding visitor to Turkey. We observed it on two separate occasions; both were on fast flowing mountain streams, near Uckpili and near Tatvan.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* A fairly common summer breeding visitor; we enjoyed several good sightings throughout the tour.

PYCNONOTIDAE

White-spectacled Bulbul *Pycnonotus xanthopygos* A common resident along the south coast of Turkey, where we saw it well on many occasions.

PRUNELLIDAE

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* The Alpine Accentor is an uncommon high altitude resident throughout much of Turkey. A few were present on Mount Demirkazik, in the Aladag Mountains.

Radde's Accentor *Prunella ocularis* This very range restricted species, is an uncommon high altitude resident, throughout eastern Turkey. We enjoyed very good close scope views of this species high on Mount Demirkazik, in the Aladag Mountains. Gustav Ferdinand Richard Radde (1831-1903) was originally trained as an apothecary. The Prussian naturalist and explorer founded the Caucasian Museum in Tiflis, Georgia, in 1867.

TURDIDAE

Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* This very attractive species is an uncommon summer breeding visitor to the more mountainous areas of Turkey; where we saw it very well on a few occasions.

Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius* Another uncommon summer breeding visitor to the more mountainous areas of Turkey; where we saw it very well on a few occasions.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* A very uncommon summer breeding visitor to Alpine areas of Turkey. We were very pleased to enjoy good scope views of an adult male, on the higher slopes of Mount Demirkazik, in the Aladag Mountains.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula* A fairly common resident species in Turkey; which we saw very well on a number of occasions.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* An uncommon resident of Turkey; we observed a couple of birds very well, in coniferous forest, close to the village of Kamisli.

CISTICOLIDAE

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* In Turkey the Zitting Cisticola is only known from two small areas, where it is very uncommon. Fortunately one of the two places where it occurs is Cukurova Delta, south of Adana and while we were birding there, we saw a solitary bird in flight.

Graceful Prinia *Prinia gracilis* A common resident of Turkey, it only occurs along parts of the Mediterranean coast of southern Turkey, where we saw it very well on a number of occasions.

SYLVIIDAE

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* This species is both an uncommon resident in the south and east of the country and an uncommon breeding migrant in the north and northeast of the country. We only saw this skulking species on one occasion, at the Kachar State Farm, near Topakkaya. Father Francesco Cetti (1726-1778) was an Italian Jesuit priest, zoologist and mathematician who wrote the *Storia Naturale di Sandegna*. The second volume (1776) deals with birds in Sardinia.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* The Savi's Warbler is a highly localised and very uncommon summer breeding species in Turkey. While birding along the Kizilirmak River, at Avanos, we were very fortunate to have one of these birds fly into a reedbed just a few metres away from us, where we were able to watch it for some time. Paolo Savi (1798-1871) was an Italian naturalist, zoologist, paleontologist and geologist. He studied physics and natural science at Pisa University, becoming Professor of Natural History there, and also director of the museum. He became an Italian senator in 1862. His greatest work was *Ornitologia Italiana*, which was published posthumously between 1873 and 1876.

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* The Moustached Warbler is a fairly common resident in coastal areas of Turkey and an uncommon summer breeding bird on the central plateau of Turkey. We saw it very well at a large reedbed at Ahlat, on Lake Van and at Celebibagi Marsh, near Ercis, also on Lake Van.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* This species has only recently been discovered in Turkey; where it is known to occur in some of the more extensive reedbeds along the edge of Lake Van and nearby Ercek Lake. We saw it very well at a large reedbed close to Ahlat, on Lake Van and also in a reedbed at Ercek Lake.

Eurasian Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* A common summer breeding visitor, which we saw well on many occasions.

Great Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* Another common summer breeding visitor, which we saw well on several occasions.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* This species is a very common summer breeding visitor to Turkey; which we saw very well on many occasions.

Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida* A very uncommon summer breeding visitor, which we only saw on two occasions. The first sighting occurred in the Kachar State Farm, near Topakkaya and the second occurred close to Karadut. Sir Henry Morris Upcher JP (1839-1921), Deputy-Lieutenant of the County of Norfolk, was a close friend and travelling companion of H B Tristram. He was born at Sherringham Hall, near Cley, Norfolk, and was apparently the owner of the only private lifeboat in England in 1911. Ehrenberg described the warbler in 1833 but his original description is rather vague and Tristram redescribed it in 1864, calling it Upcher's Warbler after his friend.

Mountain Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus sindianus* A fairly common breeding summer visitor to northeastern Turkey. We saw it very well on one occasion, in a patch of woodland close to the Zamek Bararge, near Guzelsu.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* The Blackcap is a fairly common summer breeding visitor to the north coast of Turkey, which we did not visit and small numbers winter along the coast in southwestern Turkey. We saw a solitary male, on the first day of the tour, during a rest stop at Karahamzali, on the central plateau, where this species is only a passage migrant.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* A fairly common summer breeding visitor to northern and central Turkey, which we saw well on two separate occasions. The first, was at the Kachar State Farm, near Topakkaya and the second sighting occurred close to the village of Serpmetas, near Caldiran.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* A common summer breeding visitor to Turkey, which we saw well on numerous occasions.

Eastern Orphean Warbler *Sylvia crassirostris* A fairly common summer breeding visitor to coastal areas of Turkey, which we saw well on several occasions.

Ruppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppelli* The Ruppell's Warbler is an uncommon summer breeding visitor to southwestern Turkey. We very much enjoyed watching an adult male singing from the top of a bush in the Uzuneabure Gorge, in the hills above Silifke. Wilhelm Peter Eduard Simon Ruppell (1794-1884) was a German collector. He made two extended expeditions to northern and eastern Africa in the first quarter of the 19th century. Although he brought back large zoological and ethnographical collections, his expeditions impoverished him. He was also a collector in the broadest sense of the word and presented his collection of coins and rare manuscripts to the Historical Museum of Frankfurt, his home town.

Menetries's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea* This species is an uncommon summer breeding visitor in Turkey. We were fortunate, to see it well on a few occasions. Edouard P Menetries (1802-1861) was a French zoologist who collected in Brazil from 1822-1824 and in Russia from 1829-1830. At one stage he was a Conservator of the collections of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

MUSCICAPIDAE

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* All the literature states that the Spotted Flycatcher is a fairly common summer breeding visitor to the north coast of Turkey. Most of the Spotted Flycatchers we saw were probably on passage; however, the birds we saw in the coniferous forest at Cesmeli, were behaving like they were on nesting territories.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* This very plain coloured species, is known throughout the world for its beautiful song. Our only sighting was of a bird in full song, which showed remarkably well, they are normally quite skulking, in riverside vegetation, along the Kizilirmak River, at Avanos. This breeding summer visitor is mainly confined to the northern and western coasts of Turkey, areas which we did not visit during the tour. It also occurs in a small area around Avanos, again at Birecik and also in the Lake Van area, where we heard the bird.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* The Bluethroat is a very uncommon resident in the far east of Turkey. We enjoyed watching a couple of breeding pairs in a large gully close to Guzeldere Pass, near Guzelsu, in far eastern Turkey.

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* This uncommon and range restricted species, is an uncommon summer breeding visitor to eastern Turkey. We saw it very well on a number of occasions, it was particularly common in the Isikli Valley, in southeastern Turkey.

Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes* A fairly common summer breeding visitor to southern Turkey, which we saw well on many occasions.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* This species is mainly an uncommon, high altitude, summer breeding visitor to Turkey. We enjoyed several good sightings during our time in the mountains.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* This species is a fairly common summer breeding visitor to the far east of Turkey. We observed this species very well at both Serpmetas near Caldiran and in a large gully close to Guzeldere Pass, near Guzelsu, in far eastern Turkey.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola* An uncommon resident; a male was observed in high altitude moorland, close to the village of Uckpili, this was our only sighting of this species.

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maura* This species is an uncommon summer breeding visitor to Turkey. Our first observation occurred on Nemrut Dagi Volcano, followed by a second sighting of a superb male, in the scope, close to Ercek Lake.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* A common summer breeding visitor to the central plateau of Turkey, which we saw well on many occasions.

Finsch's Wheatear *Oenanthe finschii* A fairly common summer breeding visitor to mountainous areas of southern and central Turkey, which we saw well on numerous occasions. Friedrich Hermann Otto Finsch (1839-1917) was a German ethnographer, naturalist and traveler. He traveled in the Balkans, Lapland, Turkistan, northwestern China, the Marshall Islands and North America. In 1884 Bismarck appointed him Imperial Commissioner for the German Colony of 'Kaiser- Wilhelm-Land', in what is now Papua New Guinea. He founded the town of Finschhafen there in 1885.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* An uncommon summer breeding visitor to Turkey, which we saw very well on a few occasions.

Kurdish Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia* This species has recently been split from the Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopygma*. Its breeding range covers southeastern Turkey, northern Iraq and western Iran. It migrates south in winter to the Arabian Peninsula and northeastern Africa. This is an uncommon and little known species, in Turkey there is only one known site for it, the Nemrut Dagi ancient monument, and it was here that we enjoyed superb scope views of a pair of birds.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* An abundant summer breeding visitor to the central plateau of Turkey, which we saw on very many occasions.

TIMALIIDAE

Iraq Babbler *Turdoides altirostris* First recorded in Turkey, as recently as 2006. We enjoyed good looks at a couple of birds at a gravel pit, a little to the south of Birecik.

PARADOXORNITHIDAE

Bearded Reedling *Panurus biarmicus* An uncommon resident in Turkey. We saw it briefly in a reedbed in the Goksu Delta, on the south coast of Turkey, where it is known to occur. We also enjoyed closer and much better looks at a large reedbed close to Ahlat on Lake Van, where they have not previously been recorded.

AEGITHALIDAE

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* An uncommon resident to coastal areas of Turkey; we saw a couple of family parties very well at Demircili, in the hills above Silifke.

PARIDAE

Sombre Tit *Poecile lugubris* This attractive species is a fairly common resident of Turkey, which we saw well on a few occasions.

Coal Tit *Parus ater* This species is also a fairly common resident throughout much of Turkey, we also saw it very well on a few occasions.

Great Tit *Parus major* A common and widespread resident throughout Turkey, which we saw well on many occasions.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* A fairly common resident of western Turkey. Somewhat surprisingly, we saw it on only one occasion. A single bird was observed well in the grounds of our hotel, at Camardi.

SITTIDAE

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* An uncommon resident of coastal areas of Turkey. We saw a small flock very well, in a small orchard at Isikli.

Krueper's Nuthatch *Sitta krueperi* This species is also an uncommon resident of coastal areas of Turkey. We saw a solitary bird very well indeed, in woodland at Demircili, in the hills above Silifke. Theobald Johannes Krueper (1823-1921) was a German ornithologist, entomologist, collector and natural history trader. He became Director of the Museum of Athens University in 1872 and continued in that post until his death.

Western Rock Nuthatch *Sitta neumayer* A common and widespread resident throughout Turkey, which we saw well on a few occasions.

Eastern Rock Nuthatch *Sitta tephronota* This species is on the extreme western edge of its range in Turkey, where it is only known from two small areas. We found it to be common in the Isikli Valley, where we enjoyed watching birds collecting food items, with their very long bills.

TICHODROMIDAE

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* In Turkey the beautifully plumaged Wallcreeper is a very uncommon resident, which only occurs in the Aladag Mountains. Therefore, we were very fortunate to find a solitary bird on a large rock face, high on Mount Demirkazik.

CERTHIIDAE

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* A fairly common resident of coastal areas of Turkey. We observed a few of these birds, very well indeed, in a coniferous forest, close to the village of Kamisli.

REMIZIDAE

Eurasian Penduline-Tit *Remiz pendulinus* An uncommon resident of Turkey; we enjoyed watching a small group in riverine vegetation along the Kizilirmak River, at Avanos.

ORIOOLIDAE

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* A fairly common summer breeding visitor to Turkey, which we saw well on a few occasions.

LANIIDAE

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* A common summer breeding visitor to the western half of Turkey, which we saw very well on many occasions.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* An uncommon summer breeding visitor, mainly to the central plain of Turkey. We saw it very well on one occasion, at the entrance to Emli Gorge, in the Aladag Mountains, near Camardi, and we saw a second bird, on telegraph wires, close to Van.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* This very beautiful species of shrike is an uncommon summer breeding visitor to southwestern Turkey, which is the stronghold for this species, in the entire world. We saw it very well on a few occasions.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* This even more attractive species of shrike is a fairly common summer breeding visitor to the southern half of Turkey, where we saw it well on several occasions.

CORVIDAE

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* A common and widespread resident of Turkey, which we saw very well on a few occasions.

Common Magpie *Pica hudsonia* Another widespread and common resident of Turkey, which we saw on almost a daily basis.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* A fairly common resident of the more mountainous areas of Turkey, we saw this species very well on Mount Demirkazik, in the Aladag Mountains.

Alpine Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus* An uncommon resident of the highest mountains in Turkey, we were fortunate to see it very well on a few occasions.

Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* A common and widespread resident, which we saw very well on many occasions.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* A common resident of the central plateau of Turkey, we saw large flocks on many occasions.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix* A very common resident of Turkey, which we saw on almost a daily basis.

Common Raven *Corvus corax* An uncommon resident of Turkey; we saw a pair very well in Emli Gorge, in the Aladag Mountains, close to Camardi, and this was followed by a second sighting of a pair of birds in the Goksu Delta.

STURNIDAE

Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus* This is one of the most beautiful birds in the world; in Turkey it is only an eruptive species, that is, it only erupts into Turkey in some years, and not in others. Fortunately for us, this was an eruptive year; in one day to the east of Lake Van, we saw up to 800 individuals, most in full breeding plumage. To see a flock feeding on the ground, just a few metres ahead of you is one of the most spectacular sights in the birding world.

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* A common resident throughout much of Turkey, which we saw on almost a daily basis.

PASSERIDAE

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* A very common resident of Turkey, which we saw on every day of the tour.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* An uncommon summer breeding visitor to Turkey, which we saw well on two separate occasions. Our first sighting occurred at the Kachar State Farm, near Topakkaya and the second sighting took place in the Cukurova Delta, south of Adana.

Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus* One of the most range restricted species of birds in the world and it is also one of the prettiest sparrows in the entire world. We observed a pair along the roadside, a little to the south of Birecik and we found a second pair nesting on the outside of a hooded crows nest, high in a tree, at a gravel pit south of Birecik.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* A patchily distributed resident, mainly to central Turkey; where we enjoyed a few good sightings.

Chestnut-shouldered Sparrow *Petronia xanthocollis* A very scarce summer breeding species, which is only known from two small areas in southwestern Turkey. We saw a pair by the roadside, a little to the south of Birecik, not far from the Syrian border.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia* A fairly common resident of southern Turkey, which we saw well on many occasions.

Pale Rock Sparrow *Carospiza brachydactyla* An uncommon summer breeding visitor to southeastern Turkey. We saw a pair very well indeed, in the Goksu Delta. This is a few hundred kilometres west of any previous sighting of this species. We enjoyed a second sighting of a pair of birds in the Isikli Valley.

White-winged Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis* A common resident of the higher mountains in south central and far eastern Turkey. We enjoyed many good sightings of this very beautiful species and I think one of the highlights of this tour, was to have White-winged Snowfinches performing their flight displays, within a few metres of us.

FRINGILLIDAE

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* A common and widespread resident of Turkey, which we saw well on a few occasions.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* A fairly common summer breeding visitor to northern and northeastern Turkey. We saw this species well on the outskirts of the small village of Serpmetas near Caliran and then we saw a few pairs at Guzeldere Pass, near Guzelsu.

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* A common resident of western Turkey, which we saw well on a few occasions.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* A common and widespread resident in Turkey, which we saw on almost a daily basis.

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris* An uncommon resident of eastern Turkey. An adult male was observed very well on the outskirts of the small village of Serpmetas, near Caldiran.

Common Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* A common and widespread resident, which we saw well on many occasions.

Red-fronted Serin *Serinus pusillus* An uncommon resident of southern and eastern Turkey. We enjoyed watching a large flock of this species in the Emli Gorge, in the Aladag Mountains, near Camardi,

European Serin *Serinus serinus* A fairly common resident of northern, eastern and southern

Turkey, we saw it well on a few occasions.

Crimson-winged Finch *Rhodopechys sanguinea* A fairly common resident of mountainous areas in central and eastern Turkey. Turkey is the world's stronghold for this species, we saw it well on several occasions and each time we admired its great beauty.

Mongolian Finch *Rhodopechys mongolica* A very rare breeding resident in the extreme far east of Turkey; it is estimated that less than 20 pairs breed in the country. It was rediscovered in Turkey in 1989. We found an adult male in the hills above the village of Serpmetas near Caldiran.

Desert Finch *Rhodopechys obsoleta* Another beautiful species, which is an uncommon resident in a small area of southeastern Turkey, centered on Birecik. We found a pair nesting in a rock face, close to the village of Isikli. This was our only sighting of this species.

EMBERIZIDAE

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* A fairly common summer breeding visitor, which we saw well on a few occasions.

Grey-necked Bunting *Emberiza buchanani* An uncommon breeding summer visitor to the far east of Turkey. We enjoyed great scope views of an adult male in full song, in a rocky gorge, south of Donenec.

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea* A fairly common but highly localised summer breeding visitor to southern Turkey. We saw it very well on many occasions, it was particularly common in the Isikli Valley.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* An uncommon summer breeding visitor to Turkey, which we saw well on several occasions.

Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia* An uncommon summer breeding visitor to southern Turkey. We enjoyed good looks at this species close to Demircili, in the hills above Silifke. We also enjoyed many good looks of this species in the Isikli Valley, where it was very common. Dr Philipp Jakob Cretzeschmar (1786-1845) was a German physician who taught anatomy at the Senckenberg Institute in Frankfurt. He was the founder and second director of Die Senckenbergische Naturforschende Gesellschaft, which was a natural history society and he was also a founder of the Senckenberg Natural History Museum.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* Turkey is the main stronghold in the world, for this very beautiful species of bunting, which we saw on a daily basis.

Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* In Turkey this species is a very uncommon bird, with scattered breeding sites throughout western Turkey, where the bird is resident, and the far east of Turkey, where the bird is a summer breeding visitor. We enjoyed really good looks at a couple of beautiful males in a large reedbed in the Van Marshes, close to the township of Van.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* This species is a common resident in western Turkey and a common summer breeding visitor to eastern Turkey. We enjoyed many sightings of this species, on almost a daily basis.

MAMMALS

Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus* One was seen running through farmland, on the second day of the tour.

Persian Squirrel *Sciurus anomalus* Solitary individuals were seen well on two separate occasions.

Asia Minor Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus xanthoprymnus* An abundant species throughout the central plateau of Turkey, which is undulating grassland.

Golden Jackal *Canis aureus* We were very fortunate to see this uncommon predator on two separate occasions. The second sighting, close to Lake Van was particularly rewarding, as we were able to watch it for quite some time.

Bezoar Goat *Capra aegagrus* This species is the ancestor of all domestic goats. However, in its native form it is a true mountain goat, which is very similar to the ibex group of goats. We enjoyed great scope views of this uncommon and very localised species, on the higher slopes of Mount Demirkazik, in the Aladag Mountains.