

Lesvos

Greece

Dates: 28 April – 5 May 2019

Leader: Led by Neil Gartshore

At this season on the island of Lesvos the mix of breeding birds and regular migrants is irresistible. In particular, we will be looking for Chukar, Little Crane, European Scops-owl, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Red-footed and Eleonora's Falcons, Lesser Grey and Masked Shrikes, Sombre Tit, Krüper's and Rock Nuthatches, Olive-tree Warbler, Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin and Cinereous and Cretzschmar's Buntings.

Day 1 Following our flight from London Gatwick to Mytilini and our hotel check-in, we may have time for some late-afternoon birding at the nearby marshes and river. Amongst the species we may see are Black and White Storks, Glossy Ibis, Little Bittern, a variety of passage waders including Wood, Green, Common and Curlew Sandpipers, Kentish Plover, Black-winged Stilt and Temminck's and Little Stints, Black, White-winged and Whiskered Terns and Cetti's and Eastern Olivaceous Warblers. Seven nights in Skala Kallonis.

Days 2–7 There will be no fixed itinerary as rare and uncommon migrants can turn up at any place and at any time. However, we will visit all the major habitats of the island to ensure that we see as many species as possible. The town in which our hotel is situated has a river on each side and is virtually surrounded by marshes that are highly attractive to birds. As well as the species already mentioned we may see Western Yellow (Black-headed) Wagtail, Garganey, Ruddy Shelduck, Purple and Squacco Herons, Black-crowned Night-heron, Collared Pratincole and Pied Avocet whilst Western Marsh-harriers and Montagu's Harriers regularly quarter the area. Smaller raptors can include Eurasian Hobby, Lesser Kestrel and Red-footed Falcon, while Lesser Grey Shrikes are very conspicuous as they perch on the telephone wires. Early morning or late evening we will look for crakes, which can include Baillon's, Little and Spotted Crakes, while some of the scarcer waders to be seen are Marsh and Broad-billed Sandpipers. One day we will visit the rocky hillsides at the extreme western end of the island where we will look for Rock Nuthatch, Blue Rock-thrush, Rock Petronia, Cretzschmar's and Cinereous Buntings, Isabelline and Black-eared Wheatears, Chukar and Short-toed Eagle. In the olive groves scattered



Krüper's Nuthatch

around the island we will search for Olive-tree Warbler (for a very large warbler it can be very skulking!), during which time we may see Sombre Tit, Masked Shrike, Long-legged Buzzard, Short-toed Treecreeper, Subalpine Warbler, Common Nightingale and Middle Spotted Woodpecker. Common species seen virtually anywhere include Crested Lark, Spanish Sparrow, Black-headed Bunting and Red-backed and Woodchat Shrikes, but we will make special efforts to see other specialities, including Rufous Bush Robin, Rosy Starling, Eleonora's Falcon and European Scops-owl, if they appear, together with the resident Krüper's Nuthatch in the coniferous forests. Regular passerine migrants include Collared, Red-breasted and Semicollared Flycatchers, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Barred and Eastern Bonelli's Warblers and Red-throated and Tawny Pipits. There is also a good chance that a rarity or two may turn up during our stay: White-throated Robin, Moustached Warbler, Great Snipe, Citrine Wagtail, Black-winged Pratincole and Spur-winged Lapwing have been seen on previous tours.

Day 8 After final early-morning birding in the marshes around the hotel we will return to the airport for an afternoon flight home.

General Information There are no special medical requirements. The climate should be quite pleasant with a temperature range of 15–30°C. Only a medium degree of fitness is required as there will be no long walks, although whole days will be spent in the field.

Group Size Minimum number for tour to go ahead: 6; maximum group size: 7 with 1 leader, 14 with 2 leaders.

Tour price: £1595

Air price: £200

Ground price: £1395

Single supplement: £190

Deposit: £250

Non-birding package available for partners: £990

Price includes flights between London Gatwick and Mytilini, accommodation in twin-bedded rooms in a medium-category hotel, breakfasts and evening meals, packed lunches, all transport on Lesbos and guiding services throughout. Excluded are alcoholic drinks, insurance, gratuities and items of a purely personal nature.

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