

# South West Turkey

## Trip Report

26 May – 1 June 2007

Mark Easterbrook



### References

*Collins Guide to the Birds of Britain & Europe with N. Africa & The Middle East.*  
*A Birdwatchers' Guide to Turkey* Ian Green & Nigel Moorhouse.  
*Finding Birds in Western Turkey* Dave Gosney

### **INTRODUCTION**

I visited Turkey in late May. My friend had moved there a while ago and asked if we'd like to visit. He owns a villa in Ovacik near to Hisannarou (a popular tourist area), which is about an hour from Dalaman Airport and two hours from the Korkuteli hills.

Due to the limited time available and the fact that there were other reasons for the trip apart from birding, I stuck to the sites in the books mentioned in the references.

I had lived in Cyprus for seven years, so the South Western Turkish specialities were the most sought after species.

The report will also act as an update to Dave Gosney's excellent paperback which gives details of the most productive sites.

## **DAILY ITINERARIES**

### **Day One**

We arrived in Dalaman at about 4 am. Our friends picked us up and we headed to Ovacik which was about an hour away. Several common species were seen along the road but nothing earth shattering. On arrival at the villa, Red-rumped Swallows drank from the swimming pool; which was a good start.

After a cup of tea and with my wife feeling the effects of the “red-eye” flight, she went to bed and I went for a walk to Kayakoy, walking the track mentioned in the Gosney Guide (page 17). Along the track marked “2” in the book were a pair of Kruper’s Nuthatch at the nest and a singing Cretzmars Bunting, a Short-toed Eagle also drifted past overhead. On arrival in the village (“3” in the book), a Finsch’s Wheatear and female Black-eared Wheatear were noted.

Later in the day around Ovacik a pair of Syrian Woodpeckers drummed and perched on nearby telegraph poles.

### **Day Two**

Babadag (Gosney: Page 17 site “4”), was only a short walk from the villa, so I ventured a fair way up the track on foot to see what was about in the early morning. Land Rovers constantly passed ferrying Parascenders to the top (a world renowned site for this), you could probably get a lift if you wished but the walk is probably more productive. Several more Syrian Woodpeckers were seen, a superb male Masked Shrike and the only Long-tailed Tits of the trip. In a gully not far up the track a cracking male Ruppel’s Warbler displayed, which was the first of many.

Further up the hill, Cretzschmar’s and Cirl Buntings were fairly common, as were Krupers Nuthatch and Turtle Dove. A Cuckoo was heard and a Bonelli’s Warbler sang and was seen. Two Mistle Thrushes were seen at the higher altitude and another Short-toed Eagle was seen. No Sombre Tits were encountered unfortunately.

### **Day Three**

I rode a bike to Kayakoy hearing Sombre Tits along the way but still not being able to see one. On arrival at the village, I paid the entrance fee to walk the ruins. Here I found another Cretzschmar’s Bunting, European Roller and a family party of six Western Rock Nuthatches along with a male Finsch’s Wheatear. Alpine swifts were also present overhead.

We visited the ruins at Dalyan – Kaunos (Green & Moorhouse: page 89) in the afternoon. Here we saw more Rock Nuthatches a Peregrine Falcon, White Storks, Long-legged Buzzards and a male Ferruginous Duck on a pond below the ruins.

### **Day Four**

A day of shopping and markets (great)! In any event, the only new species added was an Eastern Olivaceous Warbler from the villa garden, accompanied by the ever present Syrian Woodpeckers.

That evening we ate at the fish market in Fethiye (well worth a visit). On exiting I heard a Scops Owl calling from trees near to the central mosque. It soon appeared and perched on a nearby television aerial. Shortly joined by its mate, copulation was witnessed.

### **Day Five**

I hired a car for two days and this was the first. The must see bird of the trip for me was White-throated Robin. The timing of the trip could not have been better and I realised if I made for the right sites, I should connect with this much sought after chat.

An early morning start from Ovacik. I headed straight for the drinking trough to the east of Cavdir (Gosney: page 19 site "1" and arrived just before 7am.

After about five minutes the target birds appeared. The first was a striking Sombre Tit and then two female White-throated Robins. An Ortolan Bunting fed in the grass verge along with a Spanish Sparrow. Attention was soon diverted away from them upon the arrival of a fantastic male White-throated Robin. A female Rock Thrush also put in a brief appearance. Two Lesser Grey Shrikes were also seen here.

I headed back towards Cavdir and Sogut. Along the roads, Calandra Lark were common, a male Black-headed Bunting sat on telegraph wires and a Nightingale was heard and then seen in nearby bushes. A Hoopoe flew over the road along with some Common Swifts and an Orphean Warbler hopped through the vegetation.

At Sogut (Gosney: site "3") roadside cutting, two Isabelline Wheatears were seen along with a Rock Sparrow, Lesser Grey Shrike and Black-eared Wheatear. A grey looking Bunting was suspected of being a Cinereous, however closer inspection revealed, a yellow wash on the under tail coverts which led to it going down as a female Black-headed. At (Gosney: site "4") Short-toed, Calandra and Crested Larks were seen and a Long-legged Buzzard soared above me.

Before heading to Korkuteli for an enjoyable, cheap, authentic Turkish Kebab for lunch we stopped at (Gosney: site "5" – still on page 19). I spent along time here walking the hills to the summit. However the Red-fronted Serin and Crimson-winged Finch did not reveal themselves; so another visit is in order. Despite this a pair of Red-backed Shrikes, several pairs of breeding Isabelline Wheatears, a beautiful male Rock Thrush, another male White-throated Robin and numerous Linnets were observed. All in all a really enjoyable day out!

### **Day Six**

I headed to Koycegiz Lake (Green & Moorhouse: page89). On route I stopped at Calis beach (Gosney: page 17 site "5"). Here I added *feldegg* Yellow Wagtail, Reed Warbler, Sandwich Tern and heard Cetti's Warblers.

South of the village of Koycegiz along the road at Bayobast, I encountered the surprise of the trip a male Levant Sparrowhawk being mobbed as it crossed the road above me.

The reeds bordering the lake itself produced Fan-tailed Warbler, Corn and Black-headed Bunting and more Yellow Wagtails with Great Reed Warbler being heard. However generally I concur with whoever wrote that it was "depressingly devoid of birds".

A Scops Owl perched on the villa roof in the evening at about nine o'clock, with several others heard nearby.

### **Day Seven**

The last bird was a Red-rumped Swallow as we boarded the aircraft for the early morning (delayed) Onur Air flight to Gatwick.

### **SUMMARY**

An easy, inexpensive place to get to, with some excellent birds, good food, fine weather, easy driving and not a "Turkish Tummy" in sight. It's not too hot at this time of year and the birds are singing and displaying, perhaps not the best time for the Serin and Finch as they have probably ascended to breed.

Why not go and see for yourself? Soak up some sun and have a Turkish bath and a shave?