Cyprus: An important place for birds

Cyprus lies on one of the major bird migration routes across the Mediterranean. Approximately 100 million birds pass through Cyprus during spring migration. Additionally, approximately 150 million birds pass through Cyprus during autumn migration.

Birdwatching in Cyprus: Introduction

There is something good on offer bird-watching in every season in Cyprus, but the autumn and especially the spring migration periods promise the greatest species diversity.

Cyprus is a popular destination for birdwatchers from northern Europe who often enjoy combining a holiday in the mountains or on the beaches with their birdwatching. It is a form of eco-tourism that can be combined with general nature tourism, agrotourism and walking holidays.

The position of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean with Turkey to the north, Syria & Israel to the east and Egypt to the south, places it on one of the major migration routes across the Mediterranean and makes it a key stop-off point for many species that travel between breeding grounds in Europe/Asia and wintering areas in Africa/Middle East each spring and autumn. The birds that occur regularly on passage form a large percentage of the Cyprus list that totals nearly 400 species. Of these, only around 60 species are resident and around 30 are migrant breeders who regularly or occasionally breed in Cyprus. The number of birds stopping over during the spring and autumn migration is impressive as literally millions pass through the island.

Spring migration gets underway in earnest in the middle of March, depending on how settled the weather is, and continues until at least mid-May. Autumn passage starts in early August – even earlier for some water species – and continues until mid to late October. Most years there is a noticeable raptor passage. Cyprus has around 130 species which overwinter; the most famous being the Greater Flamingo. Others include many common north European passmigrants.

Species highlights for each season

- **Spring**
  - Cyprus Warbler
  - Cyprus Wheatear
  - Black Francolins
  - Cretzschmar’s Bunting
  - Maitied Shrike
  - European Roller
  - Sparrow-wired Lapwing
  - Griffon Vulture
  - Pallid Harrier
  - Cirlne Wagtail
  - Broad-billed Sandpiper
  - Lesser Kestrel
  - Collared Pratincole
  - Ruppell’s Warbler
  - Great Spotted Cuckoo
  - Subalpine Warbler
  - Montagu’s Harrier

- **Summer**
  - Cyprus Warbler
  - Cyprus Wheatear
  - Cyprus Scops Owl
  - Cyprus Short-toed Treecreeper
  - Cyprus Jay
  - Continent’s Wheatear
  - Cyprus Coal Tit
  - Maitied Shrike
  - Sparrow-wired Lapwing
  - Eurasian Hoopoe
  - Alpine Swift
  - European Roller
  - Bonelli’s Falcon
  - Bonell’s Eagle
  - Black-headed Bustard
  - Black-winged Stilt
  - Long-legged Buzzard

- **Autumn**
  - Glossy Ibis
  - Purple Heron
  - Honey Buzzard
  - Red-footed Falcon
  - Demissielle Crane
  - Bonelli’s Eagle
  - Cyprus Coal Tit
  - Cyprus Short-toed Treecreeper
  - Cyprus Jay
  - Cyprus Scops Owl
  - European Bee-eater
  - Montagu’s Harrier
  - Squacco Heron
  - Gulf-billed Tern
  - Cirlne Wagtail

- **Winter**
  - Greater Flamingo
  - Waterpiper
  - Cyprus Short-toed Treecreeper
  - Cyprus Jay
  - Cyprus Coal Tit
  - Griffon Vulture
  - Long-legged Buzzard
  - Greater Sand Plover
  - Finsch’s Wheatear
  - Penduline Tit
  - Moustached Warbler
  - Blue Rock Thrush
  - Bluethroat

Endemic Birds of Cyprus

**Endemic Species:** Cyprus has two species of birds that breed only on the island and nowhere else in the world. They are what are known as endemic species. Having such unique birds is one of the things that show how important Cyprus is for birds worldwide.

**Cyprus Wheatear**

**Spiza ornithocephala**

**Cyprus Scops Owl**

**Ouls scops cuculoides**

**Endemic Sub-species:** Not only does Cyprus have two species that are unique to the island, it also has four other birds that scientists call endemic ‘sub-species’. This means that although you can find these species in other countries, those that are in Cyprus are significantly distinct from those on mainland Europe.

**Cyprus Coal Tit**

**Periparus ater cuculoides**

**Cyprus Jay**

**Garrulus glandarius cuculoides**

**Cyprus Short-toed Treecreeper**

**Certhia brachydactyla cuculoides**

**Cyprus Scops Owl**

**Ouls scops cuculoides**

**The Cyprus Tourism Organisation** is the authority responsible for the marketing and development of the tourism products of Cyprus. It has experienced staff in marketing, tourism strategy and quality control, whose aim is to ensure that Cyprus makes the most of its outstanding tourism assets and realises its potential. As part of its promotional activities, CTO provides information and expert advice to visitors and potential visitors alike, so they get the best out of their visit to the island and experience the variety that the island offers and the genuine hospitality. It works in close cooperation with industry partners both in Cyprus, which include private businesses, public agencies and local authorities, and abroad to help it the industry meet - and strive to exceed - visitors’ expectations.