

Translated from the German original.

The Birds of Cyprus. 3rd Ed. An Annotated Checklist. Peter Flint & Colin Richardson. BOC Checklist Series: No. 28. ISBN: 9780952288695 – Paperback. June 2024. 524 pages, 32 plates with 65 colour photos, 2 colour maps, 3 black and white illustrations and 13 tables. In English. Approx. €56.00.

Cyprus has long been more than just an insider tip for German ornithologists and bird watchers. The island has a lot to offer: more endemic species than any other island in the Mediterranean, it is a stepping stone, especially for eastern breeding birds on their way home and away, there are many culturally and historically interesting sites, a pleasant climate outside of midsummer and diverse landscapes. The island would probably be even more crowded if it weren't for the reservations given the political division (and left-hand traffic). The reviewer, who has travelled to both parts of the island around 10 times, considers Cyprus to be one of the most ornithologically interesting destinations in Europe (along with the Arctic).

Given the ornithological importance of the island, it is not surprising that there are numerous books about the avifauna of Cyprus, with one of the first coherent publications by A. Müller based on skins dating back to 1879 (On the ornithology of the island of Cyprus, *J. Orn.* 27 : 385-393). In 1958, W. Mary and David A. Bannerman published their comprehensive work on the Birds of Cyprus. Peter Flint, co-author since the first edition of “Birds of Cyprus” in 1983, with whom the reviewer had the pleasure of joint excursions to Cyprus on several occasions, is currently the doyen of the Ornithology of Cyprus. He is now presenting the 3rd edition (after the 2nd edition in 1992, which he wrote with Peter Stewart like the first), now together with Colin Richardson.

This 3rd edition is based on 65 years of systematic ornithological recordings in both parts of the island, which has been divided since 1974 but can also be easily visited by tourists in Northern Cyprus. Data are taken into account up to March 2023, with some significant observations even later. In addition to eBird and EURING, all accessible observations were evaluated. Rarities were only taken over if they were accepted by the respective rarities commission of the two parts of the country.

The book is divided into the following parts: After a foreword and extensive thanks to the numerous supporters etc. as well as an index of illustrations, plates and tables, there follows a multi-page chapter on the history of ornithological research on the island, including statements on ringing, geology, geography, climate, vegetation and the effects of climate change. A general overview is then given with reference to 404 reliably identified species (227 non-songbirds and 177 songbirds) and their distribution (regular breeders, migrants, winter visitors, etc.). Three additional species were accepted and included after the editorial deadline (p. 409). The small number of 58 regular breeding bird species and 34 isolated breeding migrants illustrates the great importance of the island for bird migration and wintering. The Cyprus scops owl (*Otus cyprius*), Cyprus warbler (*Curruca melanothorax*), Cyprus wheatear (*Oenanthe cypriaca*), Cyprus coal tit (*Periparus [ater] cypriates*) and the Cyprus jay (*Garrulus glandarius glaszneri*), the first of which are classified as endemic three at species level. This is followed by chapters on bird migration and winter visitors as well as a discussion of status changes. The number of migrants has declined sharply, especially since the early 1990s. In contrast, only a few species, especially breeding birds, have increased in number or even formed breeding populations. The book contains specific species-related overviews of the seven breeding bird species that have disappeared since 1957, as well as numerous breeding and migratory birds at species level. Suspected reasons for the respective developments are given and provide opportunities for comparison with domestic trends. Finally, the topic of protection includes an overview of the island's “Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas”. As expected, it also makes statements about hunting – a dark spot on the island. First, however, it is explained that climate change now represents the greatest challenge for the island's avifauna and no longer hunting with rifles or lime sticks. Statements that the

use of lime sticks in certain areas fell by 91% between 2002 and 2021 give reason to hope. In absolute terms, around 345,000 illegally killed birds are still estimated for autumn 2022. The EU Bird Protection Directive (2009/147/EC) does apply in the Republic of Cyprus. However, as a German lawyer who is used to implementation deficiencies being quickly recognized and punished by the EU, the reviewer wonders how such grievances can go so obviously unpunished. As for regular hunting, the situation is better. There is a ban on hunting in spring and strict hunting seasons in autumn and winter. According to Flint & Richardson, this is being adhered to in principle. They provide contact information where visitors can report illegal activity.

The systematic treatment of the species begins on page 75. It includes the English, Latin and local names, describes occurring subspecies and the status both summarized and, depending on frequency, generically or with individual references. Hikes and the historical situation are described. Each edit ends with a comment, for example on the suspected reasons for an increase or decrease. Depending on the frequency and importance of the species for Cyprus, the species edits range from half a page to three pages. In addition, nine species that have not yet been recognized by the commissions, but are not unlikely, are listed for the island (including, for example, the common scoter).

Finally, a series of appendices follow. They contain the geographical names mentioned in the book. The coordinates provided make it easier to find. A brief list of the plants mentioned in the work can be found as well as a list with the dimensions of birds ringed in Cyprus. The list with descriptions and coordinates of the areas of particular ornithological interest and the birds that can be expected there is particularly helpful (pp. 433-454). The reviewer already relied on this in the first edition - unfortunately, a number of the observation areas highlighted there have now been devalued. Tourism on the island has grown like everywhere else. However, there is hardly any mass tourism and the Turkish part in particular still offers secluded places. The northeastern Cape Saint Andreas at the end of the Karpas Peninsula is still one of the most interesting migration points (and is missing from Trektellen.org, proof that the island is still “underwatched”). At the end there is an extensive bibliography (pp. 455-478) and an index of English and Latin bird names.

If you want to travel to Cyprus if you are interested in birds or natural history, investing in this book is highly recommended. It provides the framework and information you want if you want to travel and observe in a previously unknown area. Looking at the pictures in the book made me want to look for (rare) migrants in April while smelling the blossoming orange trees at Cape St. Andreas and then in the evening review what I had seen in a tavern on the beach with fresh fish and raki allow. If you actually plan to do this, you can also use the Helm Field Guide “Birds of Cyprus”, also by Colin Richardson (but in collaboration with Richard Porter, 2020, approx. € 38). In addition to a small general section, it contains the usual drawings of the birds found in Cyprus as well as distribution maps. You can travel to Cyprus as an ornithologist without the Helm Guide - but not without the Flint and Richardson shown here.

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