

The Birds of Cyprus

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UPDATING AN ISLAND AVIFAUNA

The third largest island in the Mediterranean, with habitats ranging from snow-capped peaks and pine forests to scrub and salt lakes, Cyprus is perhaps best known for its select suite of endemic breeding birds. As this latest checklist reveals, however, its geographical location relative to mainland Europe, the Middle East and Africa means that migration is actually its most prominent ornithological feature.

The Introduction reveals that no fewer than 380 of the 404 bird species recorded in Cyprus are wholly or partly

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migratory. That overall total has risen significantly since the last checklist was published in 1992, with 347 being the total number then recorded. Most of the subsequent additions relate to first records of vagrants, but a few involve taxonomic changes, one being that Cyprus Scops Owl is now considered a ‘full’ species. Along with Cyprus Warbler and Cyprus Wheatear, it is one of a trio of endemic breeding species.

Other introductory sections cover topics such as climate, vegetation, the avifauna generally and conservation, this last with background on threats (notably shooting and trapping) and the excellent work of BirdLife Cyprus and others. The meat of the book, however, is the 342-page Systematic List, with detailed accounts for each species recorded on the island. These range from shorter paragraphs for vagrants up to almost two pages of informative text for well-studied species.

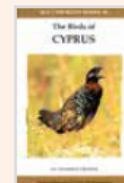
Within the same section are almost 70 colour photos depicting the island’s key sites, habitats and species. The 43 images

of birds are all first rate; personal favourites include the male Caspian Plover, pair of Cyprus Scops Owls, male Amur Falcon, male Cyprus Warbler and Wallcreeper.

The concluding sections include a welcome new appendix detailing 125 sites of ornithological interest. This takes the overall page count to 492, dwarfing the 234 pages of the previous checklist; authors Peter Flint and Colin Richardson should be congratulated for producing such a readable and comprehensive update. ■

REVIEWED BY Dominic Mitchell

THE BIRDS OF CYPRUS



by Peter Flint and
Colin Richardson /
British Ornithologists'
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