

WESTERN TURKEY BIRDS AND HISTORY

AUGUST 25 - SEPTEMBER 8, 2008

LEADERS:

**Peter Roberts (Birds)
Umit Ozaydin (History)**

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This was our sixth Birds & History tour in Western Turkey. Our tour was co-led by my good friend, knowledgeable historian, and great raconteur, Umit Ozaydin. The weather started out hot, but cooled down to something quite pleasant. I was glad to see good water levels at our various wetland birding sites, making for some excellent short excursions full of shorebirds and other waterbirds.

We found most of the more special and hoped-for species from the start, with Syrian Woodpeckers in the hotel garden at ancient Selcuk. A lovely scaly, immature Masked Shrike and a bright Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin were found at the marvelous Roman site of Miletus. A bright male Rueppell's Warbler popped up in the glorious mixed scrubby hills of Samsun Dag National Park. The sweltering salt pans at Camalti were memorable for the great views of Pygmy Cormorants—sitting side by side with Great Cormorants to convince us of their diminutive size. Sombre Tit, Isabelline Wheatear, Long-legged Buzzard, and (all-too-briefly) Cretzschmar's Bunting were found in the wild rocky landscapes en route to Dalyan. Kreuper's Nuthatches were "a dime a dozen" in the pine forests near Agla, while virtually every amazing Roman and Byzantine ruin visited had a pair or two of Rock Nuthatches. The stunning fields of carved rock sarcophagi at Pammukale were a dramatic backdrop for great looks at the dapper and very localized Finsch's Wheatear.

Lake Manyas was lively and abundant with birds including record numbers of Dalmatian Pelicans and Ruddy Shelducks. Above the Ottoman city of Bursa, in that brash ski resort (but wonderfully clear air) at Uludag, the very special Fire-fronted Serin did us proud this year with long, slam-dunk scope views for all. And what more dramatically historic setting could there be for a seabird than the Bosphorus and ancient Istanbul, with those dashing flights of Levantine Shearwaters? The rich deciduous forests around Istanbul hosted Gray-faced Woodpecker, while even at our historically-sited hotel in Istanbul we were treated to daily views of Europe's only Laughing Doves. The raptor and stork migration over the Bosphorus was not remarkable this year, but one or two thermals of European Honey-buzzards and a single group of Black Storks saved the day.

With always far more to see and do, more wonderful historic places to explore, and more birds to find than we could ever fit into a two-week tour, we were never wondering what to do next. There was a constant mix of birding and amazing historical sites, explained so richly by Umit—a fount of historical knowledge. He made the 3,500 or so years of history—Byzantine temples, ancient Roman libraries and baths, vast amphitheatres, carved tombs and sarcophagi, dazzling Ottoman mosques, and lavish Turkish palaces— all come alive.

As a fall tour, with all the surprises that watching birds on migration can bring, each Western Turkey: Birds & History tour ends up pleasantly different from the previous one, yet some wonderful aspects thread themselves reassuringly into every year, making it always an exciting adventure. I certainly have not tired of revisiting these great historical locations spanning thousands of years of civilization, and pondering, “What did the Romans ever do for us?”

ITINERARY

25 August: Depart USA/UK, some of us setting out earlier and arriving into Izmir this evening.

26 August: Meet at Izmir airport. Afternoon birding Kuçuk Menderes delta. Overnight Selçuk.

27 August: Birding the Buyuk Menderes delta in the morning, then to Miletus. Lunch and visit to Didyma followed by birding at Lake Bafa. Overnight at Selçuk.

28 August: At Ephesus in the morning, then via Izmir to Çamalti salt pans and nature reserve for birding and lunch. Overnight Selçuk.

29 August: Birding in morning at National Park of Samsun Dag. Return to Selçuk for the Museum and St. John's Basilica. Lastly to the Shrine of Virgin Mary near Ephesus. Overnight Selçuk.

30 August: Drive to Dalyan via Roman Bridge near Çine and Mugla. Birding/sightseeing at Dalyan (boat trip downriver), Kaunos cliff cemetery and hilltop Byzantine ruins in afternoon. Overnight Dalyan.

31 August: Birding on Lake Koycegiz pre-breakfast, then birding near Agla. Drive to Pammukale/ Hierapolis for early evening birding/sightseeing. Overnight Pammukale.

1 September: Drive to Bergama with birding en route at Lake Marmara. Lunch and visit to carpet makers followed by visit to Aesclepion at Pergamon. Overnight Bergama.

2 September: Morning visit to Acropolis at Pergamon, then drive with birding stops en route in morning, via Balikesir to Susurluk. Birding at Lake Manyas in the afternoon. Overnight Bursa.

3 September: Full morning birding at Mt. Uludag above Bursa. Lunch and sightseeing in Bursa mid-afternoon. Drive to Istanbul via Yalova ferry later. Overnight Istanbul.

4 September: Sightseeing in morning at Hippodrome, Blue Mosque, Basilica Cistern, Aya Sophia. Mid-afternoon visit to Çamlıca hills. Overnight Istanbul.

5 September: Morning birding on Çamlıca hills. Return to Istanbul for Sulemaniye Mosque and Topkapi Palace. Overnight Istanbul.

6 September: Early morning birding Belgrade Forest, lunch in Istanbul followed by visits to the Spice Bazaar and Grand Bazaar. Overnight Istanbul.

7 September: Morning drive around city walls of Istanbul followed by visit to Dolmabahçe Palace. Cruise on the Bosphorus followed by lunch and afternoon on Çamlıca hills. Overnight Istanbul.

8 September: Departures for most from Istanbul on homeward journeys.

Note: The following checklist gives approximate daily counts of birds seen. * = seen commonly, not counted. H = heard only.

	SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Grebes	Podicipedidae													
1	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		30			1	*		*				10	
2	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			1					*					
	Shearwaters & Petrels	Procellariidae													
3	Levantine Shearwater	<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>											10		60
	Pelicans	Pelicanidae													
4	Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>								12					
5	Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>		25	*					*					
	Cormorants	Phalacrocoracidae													
6	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	2	2	*		5	*	*	5	2	10	*	*	
7	European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>											6	3	10
8	Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax pygmaeus</i>			*					5				6	
	Hérons & Egrets	Ardeidae													
9	Gray Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		20	*		h	3	*	*				3	
10	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>						1							
11	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		*	*		10	5	*	*					
12	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>							1						
	Storks	Ciconiidae													
13	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>												1	20
14	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>		2	1	1							1		
	Ibises & Spoonbills	Threskiornithidae													
15	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>			1										
16	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>			12										
	Flamingos	Phoenicopteridae													
17	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>		*	*				2	10					
	Ducks, Geese & Swans	Anatidae													
18	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>							50	120					
19	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		*					20	*					
20	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>								*				10	
21	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>		2					12	5					
22	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>								10					
23	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>								*					
	Hawks, Eagles & Kites	Accipitridae													
24	European Honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>								40			50		
25	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>		1											
26	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>											3		
27	Western Marsh-Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		1			1		1						
28	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>						1							
29	Eurasian Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>							1	2	1				
30	Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>					1								
	Falcons & Caracaras	Falconidae													
31	Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>		1											
32	Eurasian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>					1	1							
33	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>								2		2	2		

	SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Pheasants & Partridges	Phasianidae													
34	Chukar	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>					1								
	Rails, Crakes & Gallinules	Rallidae													
35	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>					1								
36	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>						4		2					6
37	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>					1	5		*					
	Avocets & Stilts	Recurvirostridae													
38	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		4	2				6	6					
	Thick-knees	Burhinidae													
39	Eurasian Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>	10												
	Plovers & Lapwings	Charadriidae													
40	Black-bellied Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>		15	5										
41	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		5	5				*	5					
42	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>		2						10					
43	Snowy Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>		*	*				*						
	Sandpipers	Scolopaciidae													
44	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>								12					
45	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		2						2					
46	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>			3										
47	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		1											
48	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>		10						1					
49	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		2	2										
50	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>		*						2					
51	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>							h	15					
52	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		*	*										
53	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>		*	*				10	15					
54	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		4	3										
55	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>		6					2	3					
	Gulls	Laridae													
56	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	*	*	*	*				*	*	*	*	*	*
57	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>		*	*				*	*	*				
58	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>		1	*										
59	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>									8				
60	Little Gull	<i>Larus minutus</i>								5					
	Terns	Sternidae													
61	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>			*										
62	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>		6					2	1					
63	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>			1										
64	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>						4		*					
65	White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>								5					
66	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>		3	10				5	*					
	Pigeons & Doves	Columbidae													
67	Rock Pigeon (I)	<i>Columba livia</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
68	Common Wood-Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>				2									
69	Eurasian Turtle-Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	6				2	5		2					
70	Eurasian Collared-Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
71	Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>										5	2	2	4
	Parrots	Psittacidae													
72	Rose-ringed Parakeet (I)	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>										*	*	10	
	Owls	Strigidae													
73	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>			1		h	h							

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	Swifts	Apodidae													
74	Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>						25			*	*	*	*	*
75	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>									2		5		
	Kingfishers	Alcedinidae													
76	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			2		8	5		1				1	
	Bee-Eaters	Meropidae													
77	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>					h						3		
	Rollers	Coraciidae													
78	European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	2												
	Hoopoes	Upupidae													
79	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	1	2			1	1			1				
	Woodpeckers	Picidae													
80	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>												1	
81	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>									1			h	
82	Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>				1	1			1					
83	Gray-faced Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>												2	
	Larks	Alaudidae													
84	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>							*						
85	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>		5	3		5	*		*					
86	Wood Lark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>									2				
	Swallows	Hirundinidae													
87	Bank Swallow	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	10	*						1					
88	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
89	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	1	1		1	2	*	5						
90	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>						*	*	1	*				
	Wagtails & Pipits	Motacillidae													
91	Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>									*				
92	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		2											
93	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	2	*	5		4		5	5	5				
94	Gray Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>					1							h	
	Kinglets	Regulidae													
95	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>									6				
	Wrens	Troglodytidae													
96	Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>												4	
	Accentors	Prunellidae													
97	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>									2				
	Thrushes	Turdidae													
98	Blue Rock-Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>					1			3					
99	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>			2	h		3			2			2	
100	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>												2	
101	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>									6				
	Old World Warblers	Sylviidae													
102	Eurasian Reed-Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>						1							
103	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		1			1		2	10		h	6		
104	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>											1		
105	Greater Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>				1						1	1		
106	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>		5		5									
107	Rueppell's Warbler	<i>Sylvia rueppelli</i>				2									
108	Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>				4									
109	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>		1			3								

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	Old World Flycatchers	Muscicapidae													
110	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>		4			2		2	4	12		1	4	
111	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>									1				
112	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>										1	1		
113	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>												*	
114	Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin	<i>Cercotrichas galactotes</i>		1											
115	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>									4				
116	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>								1					
117	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>							2		2				
118	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>					1	2	2	5	3				
119	Finsch's Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe finschii</i>						5							
120	Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>		4	1		6	6		4					
121	Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>			4		2	6	6						
	Chickadees & Tits	Paridae													
122	Sombre Tit	<i>Poecile lugubris</i>					4								
123	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>												10	
124	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>				2					5				
125	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		2		2	1			1			4	*	
126	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		h		1	h				1		6	*	
	Nuthatches	Sittidae													
127	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>												6	
128	Krueper's Nuthatch	<i>Sitta krueperi</i>						10							
129	Rock Nuthatch	<i>Sitta neumayer</i>		1	4		6	6							
	Creepers	Certhiidae													
130	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>												4	
	Penduline-Tits	Remizidae													
131	Eurasian Penduline-Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>								8					
	Old World Orioles	Oriolidae													
132	Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>								1		1			
	Shrikes	Laniidae													
133	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	*	*	2	1	10	5	1	*	10				
134	Lesser Gray Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>		1	4		3	5	4						
135	Masked Shrike	<i>Lanius nubicus</i>		1											
136	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>					1								
	Crows, Jays & Magpies	Corvidae													
137	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			2	1			1	4	1	2	6		
138	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
139	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
140	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
141	Rook	<i>Corvus frugelis</i>							25						
142	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>								1					
	Starlings	Sturnidae													
143	European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>					1							10	25
	Old World Sparrows	Passeridae													
144	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
145	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>		4											
	Siskins, Crossbills & Allies	Fringillidae													
146	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>				h					*			*	
147	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>									10				
148	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>							h						

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149	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	10					5	*	*	*				
150	Eurasian Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>										5			
151	Fire-fronted Serin	<i>Serinus pusillus</i>										4			
152	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>										*			
153	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>										h			
	Buntings, Sparrows & Allies	Emberizidae													
154	Cretzschmar's Bunting	<i>Emberiza caesia</i>					5								
155	Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>					h								
	Other Wildlife														
	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>				1									
	Large Lizard sp.	<i>Lacerta sp.</i>		1			4	*							
	Tortoise sp.	<i>Testudo sp.</i>			1				2						
	Frog sp.								*	*					