

WESTERN TURKEY BIRDS AND HISTORY

APRIL 11 - 25, 2011

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Every year, tens of thousands of raptors migrate between Eurasia into Africa via the narrow Bosphorus Straits—Eurasian Honey-buzzards, Eurasian Buzzards, Booted and Lesser spotted eagles, Eurasian and Levant sparrowhawks, along with huge numbers of White Storks and smaller counts of Black Storks. The migration takes place in a magical setting overlooking one of Eurasia's most exotic cities: Istanbul, the former Constantinople, crossroads between Europe and Asia. This tour offers birders who are also intrigued by the ancient history of the Greek, Byzantine, Roman, and Ottoman empires a wonderful opportunity to combine both interests.

Farther afield from Istanbul on the Aegean coast at İzmir, Kusadasi and the Ephesus area of western Turkey, we will find ourselves amidst yet another wonderful array of eastern Mediterranean specialties such as Dalmatian Pelican, Spur-winged Plovers, Syrian Woodpecker, Masked and Lesser Grey shrikes, Eastern Olivaceous, Eastern Orphean and Rueppell's warblers, Sombre Tit, Rock Nuthatch, Finsch's Wheatear, and Cretzschmar's buntings. These, along with a wide variety of more widespread southern European birds, can be viewed amidst further fabled relics of bygone millennia. Roman amphitheaters and aqueducts, Greek temple ruins, and Islamic mosques liberally dot this lovely landscape, which has been at the center of civilization for over 3,000 years.

The tour is timed to be in Turkey at the height of spring migration, with breeding birds on territory and in full song, and in cooler temperatures with fewer tourists than in midsummer. We will aim to combine great birding with great history, maintaining a flexible approach so that you can opt in or out of either historical or birding activities, depending on your particular interests. Much of the birding is close to or amongst famous historical sites, so it is often possible to have your cake and eat it too!

April 11-12, Days 1-2: To İzmir, Turkey. You should plan your flights to arrive İzmir Adnan Menderes Airport (ADB), Turkey by 2:00 p.m. on Day 2. After clearing customs and immigration, you will be met by our ground operator and expert local historian guide, then depart as a group towards Kusadasi Aydın. We may bird the nearby Menderes River delta for our first taste of eastern Mediterranean birds before going on to our hotel for a four night's stay.

NIGHTS: Airplane (Day 1)
Hotel Kalehan, Selcuk, Espesus (Day 2)

April 13-15, Days 3-5: The İzmir and Kusadasi Region. We'll have three full days in the İzmir/Kusadasi region to explore the many great birding and historical sites. We shall visit nearby Ephesus—the superb Roman relic that includes an ancient amphitheater, temples, and dwelling houses. Here we may also find some great birds such as Greater Short-toed Lark, Sombre Tit and Rock Nuthatches, Rueppell's, Eastern Orphean and Cetti's warblers, and Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin. Other historical sites scheduled are ruins of several great cities such as Priene and Miletus, dating back to the 4th century B.C. While here we can visit a traditional-carpet-weaving factory where we can learn about silk and cotton weaving, view some rare and antique carpets and make purchases if desired. These are close to fine birding areas such as the marshes, lakes, and river deltas of

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Karine Delta and Bafa Lake, which may hold Dalmatian and Great White pelicans; Yellow-legged, Slender-billed, Armenian, and Mediterranean gulls; Spur-winged Plover; Pygmy Cormorant; Ruddy Shelduck; and many migrant and resident shorebirds, herons, egrets, flamingos and waterfowl.

NIGHTS: Hotel Kalehan, Selcuk, Espesus

April 16, Day 6: Dalyan. We continue south along the Aegean coast today towards the Dalyan region. Here we hope to explore the Dalyan Delta and Köycegiz Lake and surrounding maquis scrub and farmland for species such as Squacco Heron, Whiskered Tern, White-tailed Eagle, European Roller, Black-eared Wheatear, Great Reed Warbler, Red-footed Falcon, Eurasian Hobby, and European Scops Owl.

NIGHT: Dalyan Rsort Hotel, Dalyan-Mugla

April 17, Day 7: Pamukkale. Today we'll make a journey inland to the magnificent hot springs of Pamukkale with their strange limestone cup formations. Close by is the huge city complex of Hierapolis with its amphitheater, baths and huge area of intricately carved sarcophagi. The area is good for Finsch's and Isabelline wheatears; Eastern Olivaceous and Rueppell's warblers; Long-legged Buzzard; Lesser Kestrel; Calandra Lark; Masked, Lesser Gray, and Woodchat shrikes; Syrian Woodpecker; Spanish Sparrow; and Cretzschmar's buntings.

NIGHT: Richmond Hotel Pamukkale, Pamukkale

April 18, Day 8: To Pergamon. We make an early start to drive via İzmir to Pergamon, one of the most famous historical sites in Turkey—with its Acropolis, temples of Trajan and Dionysus, and monumental Altar of Zeus—all on a hill above the modern town of Bergama. We'll aim to include some birding en route, depending on time and the wishes of the group, and which species we are still missing from our list.

NIGHT: Berksoy, Bergama

April 19, Day 9: Lake Manyas and Bursa. We continue north and east to visit some of the lakes and nature reserves close to the coast of the Sea of Marmara, such as Manyas and Uluabat—famed for large nesting colonies of pelicans, herons and other waterbirds—and, at this time of year, good sites for finding migrants resting en route north. Northern shorebirds should include Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Little Stint, Wood, Green, Curlew and Common Sandpipers and Ruff; and we've often found Armenian Gull and White-winged Tern here. In the afternoon we'll reach the ancient city of Bursa, with time for visits to some of the many historical sites, particularly mosques and mausoleums from the Ottoman period of the 14th century onwards.

NIGHT: Kervansaray Hotel, Bursa

April 20, Day 10: Mt. Uludag to Istanbul. We will make an early visit from Bursa to nearby Mt. Uludag (Mt. Olympos of Mysla), standing at over 7,500 feet. This will offer us reasonable chances of finding several exciting and additional birds such as Short-toed Treecreeper, woodpeckers, Water Pipit, Black Redstart, Fire-fronted Serin, White-throated Dipper, and more. Later in the day we'll continue by ferry across the Sea of Marmara to Istanbul.

NIGHT: Eresin Crown Hotel, Istanbul

April 21-24, Days 11-14: Istanbul Region. We have four full days based in Istanbul, where we can visit the Asiatic side of the city to watch raptor migration from the Çamlıca Hills and visit the many historic attractions—the Dolmabahçe and Topkapı Palaces, the Sultan Ahmet Camii or Blue Mosque, the Byzantine Basilica of Aya Sophia, and the various bazaars and markets, barely changed in a thousand years. Our boutique hotel is walking distance from most of these sites and has the only European breeding Laughing Doves viewable from the roof terrace!

Spring migration of raptors over the Bosphorus is not always as intense as that in fall, but our local network of birding contacts will advise us of any hotspots and action. This can be a wonderful opportunity to learn European raptor identification—we may go from perplexed beginners to picking out the occasional rarity and scarcer species in the huge mixed species flocks soaring and thermaling overhead. Possible species include White and Black stork; European Honey-buzzard; Black Kite; Western Marsh, Montagu's and Pallid harriers; Lesser Spotted, Short-toed, and Booted eagles; Eurasian Buzzard; Eurasian and Levant sparrowhawks; Eurasian Hobby; and Red-footed Falcon. Many other species are possible, and the area attracts passerine migrants as well, such as Pied, Collared and Red-throated flycatchers; swallows; martins; swifts; and warblers. We watch from a delightful location on a hilltop with restored terraces and an open-air café overlooking the Bosphorus and Istanbul below. We'll also have the option of birding nearby forest (good for Lesser, Middle and Great Spotted plus Gray-faced woodpeckers) and wetland reserves to boost our bird total, see the Yelkouan Shearwaters passing throughout the straights to the Black Sea, and include additional historical sites and museums, depending on your interests.

NIGHTS: Eresin Crown Hotel, Istanbul

April 25 Day 15: Heading Home. The tour ends today with a transfer to the Istanbul Ataturk Airport (IST) in time for flights departing between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Transfers for flights departing at other times can be arranged in advance at an additional charge.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 14 participants.

TOUR LEADER: Brad Schram, assisted by a local guide.

Brad Schram became fascinated with birds as a child in the mountains of California, the start of an enthusiasm that has modified and enriched his life. He has birded on all the continents and scores of the world's oceanic islands. Since his early retirement from the business world in 1996, he has led birding tours in much of the American West, as well as Alaska, Antarctica and the subantarctic islands, Hawaii, Iceland-East Greenland, Kenya, and Trinidad and Tobago. While serving as bird-naturalist on adventure cruise ships, his travels have included Kamchatka, the Aleutians, and the Bering Sea; numerous islands throughout Micronesia, Polynesia, and Melanesia; the Canadian High Arctic; and Antarctic voyages. He is author of the latest edition of the *ABA/Lane Guide: A Birder's Guide to Southern California*. He lives with his wife Dianne in Arroyo Grande, California.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the tour is **\$6295** per person in double occupancy from İzmir, Turkey. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to dinner on Day 14, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to İzmir with return from Istanbul, airport departure taxes, passport or visa fees (if applicable), alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$715**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change

drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$250** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$250*
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person.

TRIP INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness.** VENT recommends *Travel Insured International* as our preferred insurance provider. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. Contact *Travel Insured International* prior to registration for details. Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than *Travel Insured International*, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

Medical insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the trip is also recommended for this tour. This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by *Travel Insured International*. A good website for information and acquisition of emergency evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

BAGGAGE: We request participants limit their baggage to one medium-sized suitcase and one carry-on, if possible, as space in the vehicles will be limited.

CLIMATE AND CLOTHING: Weather should be warm-hot and mostly dry; typical Mediterranean weather with temperatures in the 70-80's (occasionally over 90). However, it can be cooler, perhaps even with rain, so bring a waterproof jacket and a warmer layer for cooler days and our time at higher elevations. Because of Islamic tradition, it is customary and courteous to not wear short, skimpy, or revealing clothes in some public places, especially in mosques; elsewhere, however, shorts and t-shirts will be fine. Normal footwear such as light walking boots or tennis shoes will be adequate; there is little rough or long hiking anticipated. Several hotels have good swimming pools, saunas and Turkish Baths, so bring a swimsuit. Hotels will do laundry.

CURRENCY: Turkish Lira; Bring a small amount of USD cash with you for exchange into local currency although it should be possible to use credit cards and ATM cards for many purchases, such as alcoholic drinks, laundry or souvenirs.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure date from Turkey is required. Visas are required for entry by United States citizens and can be obtained upon arrival for a fee of USD \$20 (as of September 11, 2009 subject to change without notice). Non United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

EQUIPMENT: Pack a pair of binoculars in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, water bottle, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). Your leader will have a spotting scope; but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. Items such as toothpaste, soap, deodorant, cosmetics, sunscreen, sunglasses, etc. can be purchased in Turkey, but the cost tends to be higher than in the United States. Only 1-2 locations have mosquitoes, so bring a small amount of repellent with you.

HEALTH: If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots. Turkey is free of all the tropical diseases requiring inoculations. There should be plenty of bottled water available.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 877-FYI-TRIP (394-8747) or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

MISC: Departure Tax - None

Time - Turkey is 7 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Savings Time

Language - Turkish, although English and German is widely spoken

Electricity - 220 volts AC/50 Hz. all over Turkey. Plug: European round/2-prong plug.

PHOTOGRAPHY: There should be excellent scenic, cultural and historical shots, but bird photography may be limited. Bring all the film you think you will need, as it may not be easily obtained in the out-of-the-way places we will visit.

SUGGESTED READING: Our website, www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com which specializes in ornithology books.

Jonsson, Lars. *Birds of Europe: with North Africa and the Middle East*. Translated by David Christie. Princeton: Princeton University Press, c 1992. An excellent illustrated field guide, though any of the other European Field Guides will be adequate.

Porter, Willis, Christensen & Nielsen. *Flight Identification of European Raptors*. Berkhamsted, England: T & AD Poyser, 1976. Recently updated, a superb book for learning the finer points of separating the many species and plumages of the European birds of prey.

Porter, Christensen, Schiermacker-Hansen. *Field Guide to the Birds of the Middle East*. London: T & AD Poyser, 1996. A good, comprehensive and nicely illustrated guide to the area.

Svensson, Lars, & Dan Zetterstrom. *The Complete Guide to the Birds of Europe*. Princeton University Press, 2002. This is the latest of a huge range of fieldguides available on European birds. It has a great deal more up-to-date identification detail and illustrations than other guides and has received excellent/rave reviews. **Highly recommended if you do not already have one of the other guides listed.**

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect April 15, 2010 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.