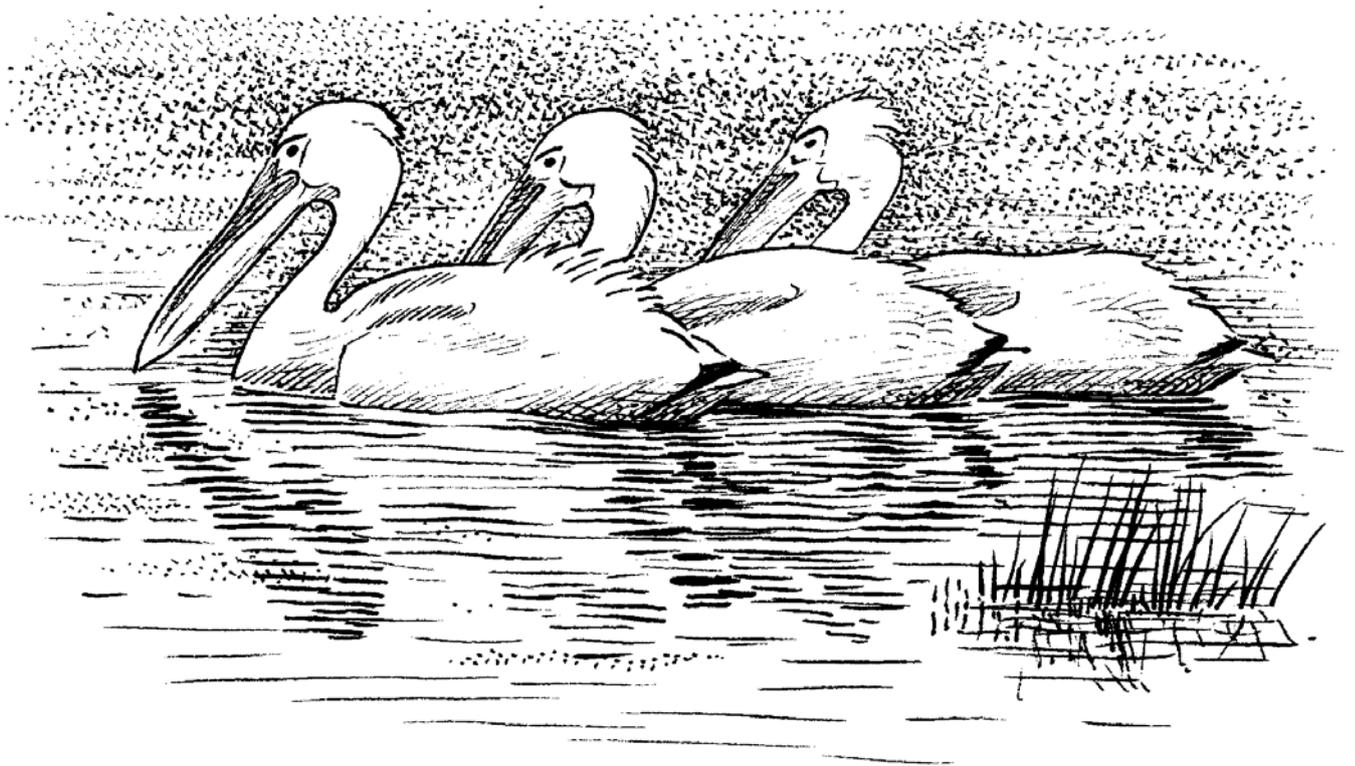


# Honeyguide

**WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS**

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**Lesvos**  
**20 – 27 September 2007**

**Lesvos**  
**20 – 27 September 2007**

**Holiday participants**

John Rumpus  
Rosemary MacDonald

Marion Hession

Hilary MacBean

John Durdin

**Leader**

Rob Lucking

Our hosts at Madonna Apartments in Vatera: Dimitra & Vaios Balkizas.

[www.vatera-lesvos.co.uk](http://www.vatera-lesvos.co.uk) and [www.lesvos-ecotourism.com](http://www.lesvos-ecotourism.com)

Report by Rob Lucking.

Middle spotted woodpecker illustration by Szabolcs Kokay from Gerard Gorman's *Woodpeckers of Europe* (Bruce Coleman Books) and reprinted here with their kind permission.

Other illustrations by Rob Hume. Front cover: white pelicans.

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As with all Honeyguide holidays, £25 of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case to Friends of Green Lesbos, from which we were pleased to meet John Bowers during the course of the holiday. The conservation contribution this year of £25 per person was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust and unspent conservation money carried over from the 2006 holiday, leading to a total of £435 given to John Bowers for Friends of Green Lesbos, from whom a thank-you letter appears at the end of this report.

The total for conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays since 1991 was at £48,013 at the end of September 2007.

## **Lesvos** **20 – 27 September 2007**

### **Itinerary**

#### **Thursday 20 September**

Morning flight from Gatwick to Mytilene & transfer to Vatera  
After lunch, local birding around Almiropotamus river, Vatera

#### **Friday 21 September**

Morning birding around Polichnitos Salt Pans,  
Lunch at Achladeri pinewoods and return to Vatera via Polichnitos Salt Pans

#### **Saturday 22 September**

Western Lesvos.  
Stop en route at the 'Grand Canyon' near Vatousa, Petrified Forest Museum in Sigrí  
Lunch and afternoon walk at Petrified Forest Park then return via Ipsilou Monastery

#### **Sunday 23 September**

Morning walk at the eastern end of Vatera Bay  
Lunch in pinewoods between Kato Stavros & Ambeliko  
Afternoon birding at Kalloni Salt Pans & Achladeri

#### **Monday 24 September**

Morning drive to the north coast and birding around Petra Reservoir  
Lunch at Skala Sikaminias & afternoon walk to Kagia. Return to Vatera via the Napi Valley

#### **Tuesday 25 September**

Morning walk around the sweet chestnut woodland at Agiassos  
Taverna lunch at Agiassos and return to Vatera via Polichnitos Salt Pans

#### **Wednesday 26 September**

Morning birding at Polichnitos Salt Pans  
Lunch at Monasteraki & afternoon birding below Panaghias Damandriou Monastery

#### **Thursday 27 September**

Morning transfer to airport via Roman aquaduct at Moria  
Afternoon flight Mytilene to Gatwick

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### **Daily diary**

#### **Thursday 20 September – Mytilene and Vatera**

The group met up in the early hours of Thursday morning at Gatwick Airport. Following a smooth check-in, our flight departed on time and we touched down at Mytilene airport at 12h30 local time. After collecting our baggage and loading the minibus, we transferred to Vatera (only missing one crucial turning!) and settled in to the Madonna Studios, our base for the week.

After a very welcome lunch of soup and Greek salad, prepared by Dimitra, we spent a pleasant few hours exploring the mouth of the Almiropotamus (*Almiro* = salty and *potamus* = river) River in the western end of Vatera Bay.

The first find was a whinchat perched up on the beachcrest vegetation and a steady trickle of swallows heading south was a clear indication of birds on the move. A juvenile black-eared wheatear and a female red-backed shrike were a good finds by Hilary perched up on a nearby fence. A nearby border of Zinnias attracted around 20 painted lady butterflies.

The lack of summer rain was evident by the state of the parched vegetation however the lower reaches of the river held water along with 40-50 Balkan terrapins and a single white wagtail. Red-veined

darters, a rare migrant to the UK but widespread in the Mediterranean region, perched obligingly in the bankside vegetation.

From the bridge a raptor was spotted circling over the valley and try as we might to make it into something interesting, we had to settle for common buzzard. Still, plenty of time yet!

Over the river, a fallow field proved to be full of migrating birds, primarily willow warblers, gleaning insects from wild fennel – just about the only plant with flowers! We spent a good while watching these migrants frantically feeding up for their long migration and at times oblivious to our presence. Among the feeding warblers were a good number of red-backed shrikes, a single chiff-chaff and a handful more whinchats. The star bird however was a cracking male Sardinian warbler that perched obligingly on top of a bush for all to see. Upon arriving back at the minibus a naked man was admired by some of the group. No names will be mentioned except to point out that the group leader wasn't one of them!

To round off a tiring but rewarding day we dined *al fresco* at Maria's Taverna Kallamakia on the beachfront at Vatera before turning in for an early night full of anticipation for the week ahead.

### **Friday 21 September – Polichnitos salt pans, Alikoudi Pool and Achladeri**

Our first full day on Lesvos dawned slightly cooler with a distant thunderstorm away to the northwest. A spot of pre-breakfast birding from the veranda revealed a blackbird, Sardinian warbler and spotted flycatcher.

After breakfast we loaded the minibus and headed off towards the Polichnitos Salt Pans, which we had heard the previous evening from Dirk Raes, a Belgian birder also staying at Madonna, held a good selection of waterbirds. A hasty stop by the side of the road just outside Vatera brought us a blue rock thrush, its speckled plumage indicating a 1<sup>st</sup> winter bird. We then carried on through Vrisa and the town of Polichnitos to Skala Polychnitou and the Polichnitos Salt Pans.



A large group of yellow-legged gulls loafed on a dried up patch of mud while in the salt pans themselves was a large group of greater flamingos. Across the entire salt pan complex we estimated at least 150 birds including a good 20 or so young birds. Whether these were born and bred on Lesvos or from one of the Turkish colonies was uncertain. A good selection of waders was also present including over 50 redshanks with a single spotted redshank among them, 5-6 marsh sandpipers, a similar number of greenshank offering good opportunities for comparison and a flock of 58 avocets. Smaller numbers of little stints, curlew sandpipers, ringed plovers, Kentish plovers and black-tailed godwits made up the supporting cast. A light-phase Eleonora's falcon flew over, panicking the feeding waders.

Among the larger water birds were eight immature spoonbills, 6-7 great white egrets, 20+ little egrets, at least eight black storks and a single white stork while more than 20 Mediterranean gulls loafed on the low bunds separating the pans.

Moving on from the salt pans, we headed towards Alikoudi Pool where we intended stopping for lunch but a combination of a dry pool and a stiff onshore breeze encouraged us to review this idea and we headed on towards Achladeri, although not before admiring a group of 15-20 blue-headed wagtails and a single cuckoo.

We ate our packed lunch in the Calabrian Pine woodland at Achladeri and then spent some time looking for Krüpers nuthatch, one of Lesvos's speciality species. The woods were very quiet and despite hearing the nuthatches, they failed to reveal themselves to us. A short-toed tree creeper provided some recompense and autumn squill was a new species for the Honeyguide Lesvos plant list. We then headed to the nearby taverna overlooking the Kalloni Gulf for refreshments. Here we had fantastic views of a hunting short-toed eagle and another Eleonora's falcon flew overhead. A patch of heliotrope was another new plant species for the list.

As the salt pans had proved so good in the morning, we decided to retrace our steps and return to Vatera via the same route. Some of the group saw a Persian squirrel as it crossed the road in front of the van. Returning via the salt pans proved to be a good plan when John R said “Are those pelicans over there?” Sure enough, nine immature white pelicans were sitting in the corner of one of the salt pans, an excellent sighting!<sup>1</sup> A winter plumage black-necked grebe was another trip tick.

On the way back to Vatera a flock of around 20 bee-eaters flew through near Vrisa.

Being Friday, fish dominated the evening menu at Maria’s with starters of taramasalata with freshly grilled sardines for main course and ice cream for desert.

### **Saturday 22 September – Petrified Forest and Ipsilou Monastery**

A prompt departure after breakfast today for the long drive over to the west of the island and the Petrified Forest.

To break the drive, we stopped in a rocky gorge, christened the Grand Canyon by Richard Brooks in his book *Birding on the Greek Island of Lesvos*, between Vatousa and Andissa. The change in vegetation was noticeable as we left the olive groves behind and moved into oak country. Two species dominated – Hermes Oak with its holly-like leaves and Valonia Oak with its distinctive acorn with long, fleshy scales on the cup. A third species, Gall Oak, was identified later from a leaf. A flock of at least 20 crag martins gave good views as they hawked for insects in the valley showing clearly the diagnostic two small white squares on the tail. A distant blue rock thrush patrolled the tops of the crags. A loud call, reminding us of wood warbler, confused us for a while until we linked it with at least two western rock nuthatches hopping along the cliff face. Two sombre tits were also a good find.

Pushing on, we made Sigri by midday and visited the excellent Natural History Museum of the Petrified Forest of Lesvos. The Petrified Forest on Lesvos is the remains of a sub-tropical forest found in the Aegean over 20 million years ago comprising palms, pine trees and relatives of the Giant Sequoia. Pyroclastic flows from a volcanic eruption covered the forest and over time the organic material of the trees was replaced by silica molecules perfectly fossilising the trees in situ. We listened to an informative presentation and looked at the museum exhibits before moving on to the Petrified Forest Park itself for lunch and a walk round.

During lunch we watched a family of black-eared wheatears foraging in front of us. After lunch we made a bee-line for the largest of the petrified trees in the park, a 7m high Sequoia with a girth of over 8m. The detail of the bark and the structure of the wood was quite incredible. Bird-wise, the park was very quiet with Eleonora’s falcon and western rock nuthatch the only birds of real note.

After the Petrified Forest, we drove the short distance to Ipsilou Monastery built on the top of an extinct volcanic dome. Some of the group visited the small museum set up by the resident monks to display the various religious artefacts held by the monastery. Again, birds were few and far between but a chukar was the first for the trip and we had excellent views of another western rock nuthatch taking seeds and breaking them against a rock just several metres below us.

Another delicious meal at Maria’s with vegetable soup and stuffed vegetables. No-one could manage the cake for desert!

### **Sunday 23 September -Vatera Bay, Kalloni salt pans and Achladeri**

After yesterday’s travelling, we started the day locally at the eastern end of Vatera Bay. We found a good selection of the usual migrants feeding around the areas of cultivation including at least 3 whinchats, two red-backed shrikes and a number of spotted flycatchers. An immature woodchat shrike and a female Sardinian warbler were probably resident birds. We also saw our first circling bunting of the trip, a flock of 21 bee-eaters flew over and a blue rock thrush was the only inhabitant of an abandoned

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<sup>1</sup> We later discovered that Dirk Raes saw 11 pelicans flying into the salt pans earlier that afternoon and up to 18 were present later in the week. According to John Bowers, this was probably the largest flock of white pelicans recorded on Lesvos for 20-30 years.

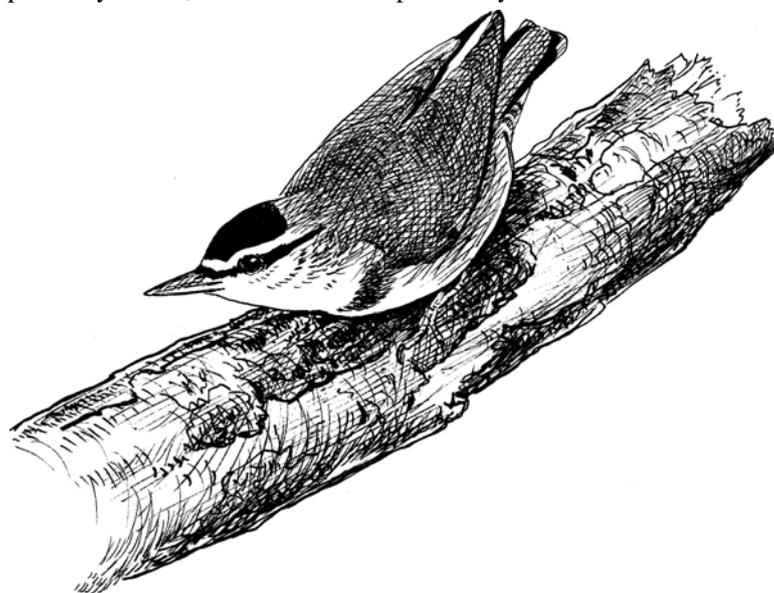
hotel project. The star bird of the morning however was an adult lesser spotted eagle which steadily flew east past us before disappearing over the wooded ridge. Of the butterflies, small heath and Lang's short-tailed blue were new species. Before moving on, we retraced our steps back down Vatera Beach to admire the small clumps of sea daffodil growing at the top of the beach.

Our quest for Krüper's nuthatch continued as we drove up the pinewoods between Kato Stavros and Ambeliko and located the water storage tank where the nuthatches had been seen drinking the day before. As it was a nice spot for lunch, we climbed the hill behind the water tank and settled down with our packed lunches and with a good view over the tank. No nuthatches though!

After lunch we drove up to the Kalloni salt pans on the northern shores of Kalloni Bay. From the new EU-funded hide we had a good view over the salt pan complex and estimated over 400 greater flamingos. Unfortunately that was about the sum total of birds on the salt pans as the water levels were too high for smaller wading birds so we quickly left the salt pans and headed back to a promising looking area near Achladeri where a river entered the gulf. Here at least five kingfishers noisily flew up and down the river obligingly perching on the remains of an old river bridge and a flock of 20 bee-eaters gave excellent views as they took bees from the beehives nearby. Two little grebes were new for the trip list as was wood grayling butterfly.

We then had another crack at the Krüper's nuthatch at the pine wood site we visited two days ago. The woods were again very quiet yielding only spotted flycatcher, short-toed tree creeper and fly-over short-toed eagles and black stork. Eventually after an hour and a half searching and just as panic was beginning set in first one, then two Krüper's nuthatches were located quietly feeding in the tree tops and everyone enjoyed good views of this enigmatic little bird.

On the way down to Maria's for our evening meal we heard two birds flying overhead making a croaking call. One bird was seen silhouetted against the night sky and it was a medium sized bird with broad, rounded wings. We later concluded that they were night herons. Dinner tonight was stuffed vine leaves (dolmades) for starters and goat casserole for main course.



#### **Monday 24 September – northern Lesvos**

A trip up to the scenic north of the island today took us back past Achladeri where the army was setting up camp in force. Good job we saw the Krüper's yesterday!

On the north coast, a quick look out to sea between Petra and Molivos revealed little of note except good views of a minaret in nearby Turkey! Next stop was Petra reservoir only to find that the reservoir was completely dry! Disappointed but undaunted, we birded around the reservoir finding only a selection of commoner migrants although kestrel and Cetti's warbler were new for the trip. We also added a few new butterflies – clouded yellow, common blue, grayling and meadow brown. Joint-pine was a new plant and some of the group watched a large green lizard.

We then headed off to the picturesque fishing village of Skala Sikaminias for lunch and walked across the nearby headland to the bay of Kagia. A grey wagtail was a new species and starred agama lizards, a species with a restricted range in Europe, appeared quite common. Back in Skala Sikaminias we had a drink in one of the tavernas surrounding the village square. Unfortunately we couldn't count the scarlet macaw on our list! A cardinal butterfly, one of the largest fritillaries in Europe, was a new species with a rather worn individual frequenting a *Lantana* plant in the centre of the village. An Egyptian locust was also found nearby.

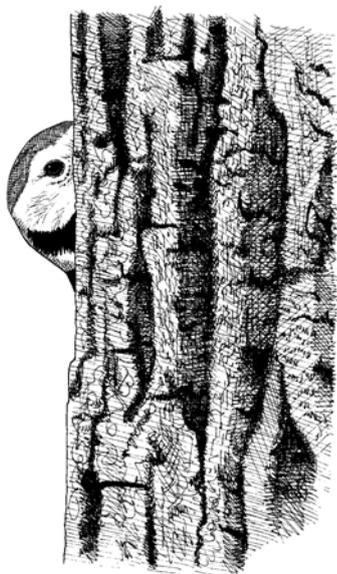
On the drive back via Mandamados, the Napi Valley proved our salvation with a good selection of birds feeding around a sheep field. At least three western rock nuthatches fed along a stone wall and two sombre tits gave good views. Two middle spotted woodpeckers were seen flying through the olives although we never got good views of them at rest. Cirl bunting, garden warbler, blackcap, spotted flycatcher, lesser whitethroat, whitethroat and redstart made up the supporting cast.

We arrived back in Vatera to find the whole island in darkness following a power cut making showering and interesting affair! Down at Maria's we netted a large convolvulus hawkmoth which we took back for photographing to identify back in the UK and Dirk amused us all by leaping about in the middle of the road to catch a large black house cricket!

Another excellent meal of deep fried courgette slices for starters, mousaka for main course and fruit for desert.

### **Tuesday 25 September – Agiassos, the foothills of Mount Olympus**

Today's excursion took us to the mountain village of Agiassos, nesting in the shadow of Mount Olympus, the highest peak on Lesbos. To work up an appetite we did a circular walk through the sweet chestnut woods just to the east of Agiassos. Walking through the village to the start of the walk we stopped at the church of Zoodochou Pigis (Spring of Life) with its bell and clock tower and then made our way up the Kaldirim paths into the woods. The mauve flowers of autumn crocus *Colchicum* sp. speckled the woodland floor.



Many of the birds we saw and heard were familiar to us all – blackbird, robin, wren, blue and great tits. Brief but excellent views were had of a hawfinch as it sat out in the open atop a dead tree and a big female goshawk ducked through the trees at the bottom of the valley. A Persian squirrel and fleeting glimpses of a middle spotted woodpecker reminded us that we were in Greece.

Crossing the head of the valley we came across the black and red seed heads of peonies and a large shaggy inkcap. A steep climb back up the valley brought us back into Agiassos and to our meze lunch in a taverna at the top end of the village. After lunch we wandered leisurely back down to the van stopping in the various shops lining the street. Some of the group visited the church of Panayia Vrefokratoussa with its improbable number of hanging oil lamps.

After Agiassos, we paid another visit to Polichnitos Salt Pans, this time walking along the track between the pans and the beach with the sun behind us. We saw much the same range of birds as before with 10 black storks and singles of spoonbill and white pelican. A flock of 19 Sandwich terns was new and a very confiding juvenile woodchat shrike gave excellent views.

At dinner tonight, John Bowers joined us and gave a very informative overview of the activities of the Friends of Green Lesbos, a local group set up to lobby for the better protection of the important sites for nature conservation on the island. This year's donation from the holiday was given to the Friends of Green Lesbos and it was reassuring to know that this small but influential group is working hard to protect this beautiful island.

### **Wednesday 26 September – Around Polichnitos**

In the morning a return visit was made to Polichnitos Salt Pans where we heard the night before that two broad-billed sandpipers had been seen earlier in the week. Sadly we didn't find the broad-billed sandpipers but were treated to the amazing spectacle of a feeding frenzy of 11 black storks, 11 grey herons, 10 little stints, three great white egrets and at least 50 black-headed gulls all feeding in one ditch where we presume a school of fish had been isolated. A single Eleonora's falcon shot through and Marion picked up a single black-winged stilt – the first of the trip and in spring one of the commonest (and noisiest) waders on the island.

By late morning the heat haze made viewing over the salt pans difficult and many of the group turned to beachcombing finding an impressive selection of shells! Two gulls flying away from us of the Gulf of Kalloni were probably slender-billed gulls.

After a drink stop at the side of the harbour at Skala Polychnitou, we followed directions given to us by John Bowers the previous night to a small chapel at Monasteraki overlooking the mouth of the Gulf of Kalloni. With its spring of freshwater (housing a fat marsh frog), seating and table it proved to be an ideal picnic spot and we whiled away a few hours in the heat of the day watching to see what came in to drink. A hobby overhead was a new species and a selection of commoner birds visited the spring including blackcap, garden warbler, spotted flycatcher and fleeting glimpses of a middle spotted woodpecker. On the walk back to the minibus, a praying mantis was spotted crossing the track. This was duly photographed from all angles after which it was picked up and placed in the vegetation by the side of the path out of harm's way.

We then visited another site suggested to us by John at the monastery of Panaghias Damandriou where another small spring emerged from just below the monastery. There were not many small birds there although this was compensated for by superb views of a short-toed eagle carrying a snake.

The final destination of the day was the Polichnitos thermal springs where, due to volcanic activity, hot water bubbles up to the surface and is piped off into a nearby thermal spa. A stonechat was a new species for several people.

After a quick shopping trip to Polichnitos to pick up some of the local specialities (baklava and cheese mainly!), we returned to Vatera and a splendid meze dinner at Maria's including the local speciality dish *sardhelles pastes* – fresh sardines preserved in salt for around eight hours.

#### **Thursday 27 September – Mytilene and home**

Our final morning on Lesvos and we finished in style by picking up a small number of Cory's shearwaters from Dimitra's patio. After our final breakfast and farewells to Dimitra and Viaos, we drove to the airport via the remains of a second-century AD Roman aquaduct on the outskirts of the village of Moria near Mytilene. And what an adventure that proved to be! Diligently following the signs to the aquaduct through the village, we were perplexed by a number of locals waving and gesticulating but ignored them and drove on by. After a slight delay, while we negotiated our way around a car parked on the side of what was probably the narrowest part of the street and found our way to the aquaduct. Home to a large number of house sparrows, we marvelled at its impressive construction and remarkable condition.

On the way back the fun really started when we discovered the road we needed through the village was blocked. A kindly man jogged in the front of the minibus leading us through the narrow backstreets of Moria. John D pointed out that he'd never been so close to a wall as we drove through one street with millimetres to spare! Arriving back in the centre of Moria we understood what the waving, gesticulating locals were trying to tell us earlier. A huge cement lorry was completely blocking the main road through the village. We thanked our guide and continued our onward journey to the airport.

Our passage through check-in was uneventful although seating in the airport departure lounge was not really sufficient to cater for the three planeloads of passengers waiting to depart! Our flight departed more or less on schedule and we made good time arriving back at Gatwick at 15h30.

## Systematic lists

### Birds

**Little grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Two near Achladeri 23 September

**Black-necked grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*

One winter plumage bird at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 & 26 September.

**Cory's (Scoppoli's) shearwater** *Calonectris (diomedea) diomedea*

At least 6 flying east off Vatera on 27 September.

**Shag** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Seen almost daily around the coast with a notable count of 19 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September with 11 there on 25 September

**White pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

Nine immatures at Polichnitos Salt Pans on the afternoon of 21 September; one immature at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 25 September

**Night heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Two flew over Vatera after dark on 24 September, identified by their croaking call.

**Little egret** *Egretta garzetta*

Up to 20 at Polichnitos salt pans throughout. Also seen in small numbers from the bus when passing Kalloni Salt Pans.

**Great white egret** *Egretta alba*

Six at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September; 2 at Kalloni Salt Pans on 23 September; 2 near Achladeri on 24 September; 18 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 25 September and 3 there on 26 September.

**Grey heron** *Ardea cinerea*

One at the mouth of the Almiropotamus River on 20 September; around 6 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September; 2-3 near Achladeri on 23 and 24 September; 18 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 25 September with 11 there on 26 September.

**Black stork** *Ciconia nigra*

At least eight at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September; one over Achladeri on 23 September; 10 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 25 September and 11 there on 26 September.

**White stork** *Ciconia ciconia*

One at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21, 25 & 26 September

**Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*

Eight at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September; 1 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 25 September

**Greater flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber*

Around 150 at Polichnitos Salt Pans throughout; at least 400 at Kalloni Salt on 23 September;

**Short-toed eagle** *Circaetus gallicus*

One at Achladeri on 21 September; one near Vatousa and two at the Grand Canyon on 22 September; 1 at Achladeri on 23 September; 1 near Petra on 24 September; 1 at Monasteraki and 1 at Panaghias Damandriou Monastery on 26 September.

**Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*

One female at Agiassos on 25 September

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

One at eastern end of Vatera Bay & 1 in pine woods between Kato Stavros & Ambelico on 23 September; 1 near Petra on 24 September; 3 at Agiassos on 25 September

**Common buzzard** *Buteo buteo*

One at Vatera on 20 September; five over the eastern end of Vatera Bay on 23 September; one in the Napi Valley on 24 September; 1 at Agiassos on 25 September

**Lesser spotted eagle** *Aquila pomarina*

One over the east end of Vatera Bay on 23 September.

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

One at Petra reservoir on 24 September

**Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

One at Monasteraki on 26 September

**Eleonora's falcon** *Falco eleonora*

One at Polichnitos Salt Pans, two near Skala Vasilikon, two over Achladeri pine woods and one over the taverna at Achladeri on 21 September; one over the Petrified Forest on 22 September; one at Polichnitos Salt pans on 26 September.

**Chukar** *Alectoris chukar*

One at Ipsilou Monastery on 22 September;

**Black-winged stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*

One at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 26 September

**Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*

58 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September; 120 at Kalloni Salt Pans on 24 September; 68 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 26 September.

**Ringed plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

3-4 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21, 25 & 26 September.

**Kentish plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*

5 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September. Also present on 25 September with 16 there on 26 September.

**Little stint** *Calidris minuta*

2 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 & 25 September with 9 there on 26 September.

**Curlew sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*

2 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September with 1 there on 25 September and 4 on 26 September.

**Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*

1 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September.

**Black-tailed godwit** *Limosa limosa*

3 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September.

**Curlew** *Numerius arquata*

1 near Kalloni Salt Pans on 22 September; 2 at Kalloni Salt Pans on 23 September; 1 near Kalloni Salt Pans on 24 September

**Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

55 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September with around 20 there on 25 September and at least 60 on 26 September.

**Spotted redshank** *Tringa erythropus*

1 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September.

**Marsh sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis*  
5-6 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September.

**Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*  
5-6 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September; one near Kalloni Salt Pans on 22 & 24 September; 2 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 25 September with 7 there on 26 September.

**Common sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*  
Two at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 25 & 26 September.

**Mediterranean gull** *Larus melanocephalus*  
23 at Polichnitos Salt Pans and 1 at Skala Vasilkon on 21 September; 29 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 25 September; 3 at Skala Polichnitos on 26 September.

**Black-headed gull** *Larus ridibundus*  
Ca 20 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September; small numbers at Kalloni Salt Pans on 22 & 24 September; 29 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 25 September with over 50 there on 26 September.

**Slender-billed gull** *Larus genei*  
Two probables at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 26 September.

**Yellow-legged gull** *Larus cachinnans michahellis*  
Seen throughout. Significant counts of 100+ at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September with over 600 there on 25 September.

**Sandwich tern** *Sterna sandvicensis*  
19 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 25 & 26 September

**Rock dove/feral pigeon** *Columba livia*  
Seen daily – most more feral pigeon than rock dove!

**Collared dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*  
See daily throughout the island

**Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*  
1 at Alikoudi Pool on 21 September

**Common swift** *Apus apus*  
One at eastern end of Vatera Bay on 23 September;

**Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*  
One at eastern end of Kalloni Bay and five near Achladeri on 23 September

**Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster*  
Migrating groups seen or heard most days.

**Middle spotted woodpecker** *Dendrocopos medius*  
Two in the Napi Valley on 24 September; 1 seen and several heard in the sweet chestnut woods at Agiassos on 25 September; 1 at Monasteraki on 26 September and heard at Panaghias Damandriou Monastery the same day.

**Crested lark** *Galerida cristata*  
Common throughout the island

**Sand martin** *Riparia riparia*  
1 at Vatera on 20 September; several at Vatera on 24 September

**Crag martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*  
20+ at the Grand Canyon on 22 September; 3 near Vafios on 24 September

**Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*

Seen throughout with a marked southerly passage of migrating birds

**House martin** *Delichon urbica*

Common near Kalloni Salt Pans on 22 and 24 September

**Yellow wagtail** *Motacilla flava flava* (Blue-headed Wagtail)

15-20 at Alikoudi Pool on 21 September; one flew over Petrified Forest Museum on 22 September; several at the eastern end of Vatera Bay on 23 September

**Grey wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

One at Skala Sikiminia on 24 September; 1 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 25 & 26 September

**White wagtail** *Motacilla alba*

Seen in small numbers around all wetland habitats

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

2-3 in the sweet chestnut woodland at Agiassos on 25 September

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*

Two in the sweet chestnut woodland at Agiassos on 25 September & 1 at Panaghias Damandriou Monastery on 26 September.

**Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Two outside Madonna Studios on 23 September; 1 at Petra Reservoir & 2 in the Napi Valley on 24 September; several at Agiassos on 25 September

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra*

Seen daily in small numbers throughout. 6-8 at the mouth of the Almiropotamus River at Vatera on 20 September; 1 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 21 September; at least 3 at the eastern end of Vatera Bay on 23 September; 2 at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 26 September.

**Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata*

One at Achladeri on 24 September; one at Polichnitos Thermal Springs on 26 September.

**Black-eared wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanicus melanoleuca*

Small numbers seen throughout. Family group of 5 at Petrified Forest 22 September

**Blue rock thrush** *Monticola solitarius*

1 first winter near Vatera on 21 September; 1 at Grand Canyon on 22 September; one in the uncompleted hotel at the east end of Vatera Bay on 23 September; one at Petra Reservoir on 24 September; one on the church at Agiassos on 25 September

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

1 at Madonna Studios on 21 September; several at Grand Canyon on 22 September; several at Petra Reservoir and in the Napi Valley on 24 September; common in the sweet chestnut woodland at Agiassos on 25 September

**Cetti's warbler** *Cettia cettia*

One heard at Petra Reservoir on 24 September

**Sardinian warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala*

Singles at Madonna Studios most days. Also at Almiropotamus River mouth on 20 September and east end of Vatera Bay on 23 September.

**Lesser whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*

One at Petra Reservoir and 1 at Napi Valley on 24 September

**Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis*

2-3 by Madonna Apartments on 23 September; 1 at Napi Valley on 24 September; 1 at Monasteraki on 26 September.

**Garden warbler** *Sylvia borin*

4 at Napi Valley on 24 September, 1 at Monasteraki on 26 September.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*

1 male in pine woods between Kato Stavros and Ambelico on 23 September; 1 female at Napi Valley on 24 September; several at Monasteraki and Panaghias Damandriou Monastery on 26 September.

**Chiff-chaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*

One near the Almiropotamus River mouth on 20 September.

**Willow warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Seen throughout with particularly large numbers near the Almiropotamus River mouth on 20 September.

**Spotted flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*

Seen throughout with particularly large numbers near the Almiropotamus River mouth on 20 September.

**Sombre tit** *Parus lugubris*

Two at Grand Canyon on 22 September; 2 at Napi Valley on 24 September

**Blue tit** *Parus caeruleus*

Common throughout

**Great tit** *Parus major*

Common throughout

**Krüper's nuthatch** *Sitta krueperi*

Heard at Achladeri on 21 September; two seen at Achladeri on 23 September

**Western rock nuthatch** *Sitta neumayer*

Two at Grand Canyon, one at Petrified Forest and one at Ipsilou Monastery on 22 September; 3 at Napi Valley on 24 September

**Short-toed treecreeper** *Certhia brachydactyla*

One at Achladeri on 21 September with two there on 23 September; two in sweet chestnut woodland at Agiassos on 26 September

**Red-backed shrike** *Lanius collurio*

Seen almost daily in small numbers throughout

**Woodchat shrike** *Lanius senator*

One immature at the east end of Vatera Bay on 23 September and one immature at Polichnitos Salt Pans on 25 September.

**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius atricapillus*

Seen or heard throughout. Notable sightings include a group of 7 near Alikoudi Pool on 21 September

**Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula*

Two at Sigri on 22 September.

**Hooded crow** *Corvus corone*

Common throughout the island.

**Raven** *Corvus corax*

A group of 8 near Sigri on 22 September with another group of 8 near Mandamados on 24 September

**House sparrow** *Passer domesticus*  
Common throughout the island.

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*  
Common throughout the island.

**Serín** *Serinus serinus*  
One at the eastern end of Vatera Bay on 23 September; 2 at Agiassos on 25 September.

**Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris*  
One at Vatera on 21 September; two at the eastern end of Vatera Bay on 23 September

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*  
Two near Sigrí on 22 September; several at Monasteraki on 26 September.

**Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina*  
One near Achladeri on 23 September

**Cirl bunting** *Emberiza cirlus*  
One at the eastern end of Vatera Bay on 23 September; around 6 in the Napi Valley on 24 September

**Total – 91 species**



## **Amphibians & reptiles**

**Marsh frog** *Rana ridibunda*  
One in spring at Monasteraki on 26 September

**Balkan terrapin** *Mauremys rivulata*  
Numerous at the mouth of the Almiropotamus River on 20 September

**Starred agama** *Agama stellio*  
Several seen between Skala Sikimínias and Kagia on 24 September

**Green lizard** *Lacerta viridis*  
Singles at the eastern end of Vatera Bay on 23 September and Petra Reservoir on 24 September.

**Lizard sp.**  
Many unidentified small lizards seen. Some may have been Balkan wall lizard, others juvenile green lizards.

**Dice snake** *Natrix tessellata*  
One dead hanging from fence at Polchnitos Salt Pans on 22 September.

## **Butterflies**

**Swallowtail** *Papilio machaon*  
1 at Petrified Forest Museum on 22 September

**Large white** *Pieris brassicae*  
Several in cabbage plots near Agiassos on 25 September

**Clouded yellow** *Colias crocea*  
One at Petra Reservoir on 24 September

**Painted lady** *Vanessa cardui*  
Seen daily. Commonest butterfly on the wing.

**Red admiral** *Vanessa atalanta*  
Seen nectaring on ivy flowers at Agiassos on 25 September

**Cardinal** *Argynnis pandora*

One worn individual frequenting *Lantana* flowers at Skala Sikaminias on 24 September

**Woodland grayling** *Hipparchia fagi*

Several near Achladeri on 23 September

**Grayling** *Hipparchia semele*

One at Petra Reservoir on 24 September

**Meadow brown** *Maniola jurtina*

Several at Skala Sikaminias on 24 September

**Speckled wood** *Pararge aegeria*

Several in the sweet chestnut woodland at Agiassos on 25 September

**Small copper** *Lycaena phlaeas*

One at the east end of Vatera Bay on 23 September

**Lang's short-tailed blue** *Syntarucus piriithous*

Several at the east end of Vatera Bay on 23 September

**Holly blue** *Celastrina argiolus*

Several among the ivy in the sweet chestnut woodland at Agiassos on 25 September

**Common blue** *Polyommatus icarus*

One at Petra Reservoir on 24 September

## **Moths**

**Convolvulus hawkmoth** *Agrius convolvuli*

One in Vatera on 24 September

## **Other insects**

**Red-veined darter** *Sympetrum fonscolombii*

Commonest dragonfly on the wing. Seen in most open lowland habitats, regardless of presence of water

**Egyptian locust** *Anacridium aegyptium*

One at Skala Sikaminias on 24 September

**Red-winged grasshopper** *Oedipoda germanica*

Seen in most open habitats

**Blue-winged grasshopper** *Oedipoda caerulans*

Seen in most open habitats

**Cricket** *Gryllus* sp.

Heard nightly in Vatera. Two captured at Maria's on 24 September. Identification not 100% but probably field cricket *Gryllus campestris*

**Praying mantis** *Iris oratoria*

1 at Monasteraki on 26 September

**Violet carpenter bee** *Xylocarpus violacea*

One at Agiassos 25 September

## **Mammals**

**Bat sp.**

Seen nightly at Vatera. Species unknown.

**Persian squirrel** *Sciurus anomalus*

Singles near Achladeri on 21 September, near Kato Stavros on 23 September, at Agiassos on 25 September and en route to Mytilene on 27 September

**Red fox** *Vulpes vulpes*

Several road casualties

**Beech marten** *Martes foina*

Road casualty near Moria on 20 September

## **Plants**

Common plants from northern Europe generally omitted.

### **Trees and shrubs (except those noted in families below)**

**Calabrian pine** *Pinus halepensis* ssp. *brutia*

The trees in the pine forest to the east of Kalloni Bay confirmed by Dirk Raes to be *Pinus halepensis brutia*.

**Italian cypress** *Cupressus sempervirens*

Frequent and widespread; in both its 'normal' and columnar ('funeral cypress') forms.

**Sweet chestnut** *Castanea sativa*

The dominant tree above Agiassos, 9 April.

**Kermes oak** *Quercus coccifera*

Evergreen, with small holly-like leaves. A frequent component of the garrigue.

**Valonia oak** *Quercus aegilops*

Its acorn cups are unmistakable – large, with thick, flattened re-curved scales. Abundant in the 'Grand Canyon' area, west of Vatooussa, 10 April.

**Gall oak** *Quercus infectoria*

Its pale foliage contrasts with that of *Q. aegilops*. Also present in the 'Grand Canyon' area, west of Vatooussa, 10 April.

**Downy oak** *Quercus pubescens*

**Holm oak** *Quercus ilex*

**Hornbeam** *Carpinus orientalis*

**Fig** *Ficus carica*

**Oriental plane** *Platanus orientalis*

**Oleander** *Nerium oleander* subsp. *oleander*

**Joint-pine** *Ephedra fragilis*

### **Fathen family**

**Glasswort** sp. *Salicornia* sp.

Skala Polichnitos Saltpans, 8 April.

**Sea purslane** *Halimione portulacoides*

Skala Polichnitos Saltpans, 8 April.

### **Aizoon family**

**Red hottentot fig** *Carpobrotus acinaciformis*

### **Peonies**

**Peony** *Paeonia mascula* subsp. *arietina*

### **Poppies**

**Yellow-horned poppy** *Glaucium flavum* Vatera beach.

### **Rose family**

**Mediterranean salad burnet** *Poterium verrucosum* [*Sanguisorba minor* ssp. *magnolii*]

**Thorny burnet** *Sarcopoterium spinosum*

A widespread, frequently dominant component of the garrigue.

**Almond-leaved pear** *Pyrus spinosa* (*Pyrus amygdaliformis*)

Common and widespread.

**Pea family**

**False acacia** *Robinia pseudacacia*

**Spurges**

**Narrow-leaved glaucous spurge** *Euphorbia rigida*

**Greek spiny spurge** *Euphorbia acanthothamnus*

**Pistacio family**

**Turpentine tree** *Pistacia terebinthus*

A frequent component of maquis.

**Mastic tree** *Pistacia lentiscus*

A frequent component of maquis.

**Mallows**

**Common mallow** *Malva sylvestris*

**Rockrose family**

***Hypericum empetrifolium***

Vatera beach

**Umbellifers – carrot family**

**Thorow-wax** sp. *Bupleurum* sp. (Or **Perfoliate alexanders** *Smyrniium perfoliatum?*)

**Sea holly** *Eryngium maritimum*

**Giant fennel** *Ferula communis* subsp. *communis*

Conspicuous along many roadside verges.

**Fennel** *Foeniculum vulgare*

**Rock samphire** *Crithmum maritimum*

**Primrose family**

*Cyclamen* sp. Flowering cyclamen at Agiassos were probably *Cyclamen hederifolium*

**Thrift family**

**Winged sea lavender** *Limonium sinuatum* Vatera

*Limonium graecum*

**Borage family**

**Heliotrope** *Heliotropium europaeum*

**Verbena family**

**Chaste tree** *Vitex agnus-castus*

**Lantana** *Lantana camara*

**Vervain** *Verbena officianalis*

**Composites – daisy family**

**Carlina thistle** *Carlina corymbosa*

**Fleabane** *Pulicaria dysenterica*

*Cardopatum corymbosum*

**Lily family**

**Sea daffodil** *Pancratium maritimum*

**Autumn squill** *Scilla autumnalis*

*Colchicum bivonae*

**Grasses, rushes etc**

**Giant reed** *Arundo donax* Introduced.

**Common reed** *Phragmites australis*

**Reedmace** sp. *Typha* sp.

# Friends of Green Lesbos

<http://www.greenlesbos.com>

Chris Durdin  
Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays  
36, Thunder Lane  
Norwich NR7 0PX

6, Ashwood Terrace  
Leeds LS6 2EH  
UK  
10/10/07

Dear Chris

I am writing on behalf of Friends of Green Lesbos to thank you for your generous donation to our cause. It comes at a particularly crucial time for us since we find ourselves simultaneously fighting environmentally damaging schemes on the Gulf of Kalloni (six sites), the Gulf of Geras (Dipi) the pristine wetland of Tsihliiontas between Sigri and Eressos (threatened by a road scheme) and the river at Skala Eressou (flood protection) as well as publishing a book (The Dragonflies of Lesbos) written to raise money for conservation projects on the Island. I am unable at present to say exactly how your contribution will be spent but you may rest assured that it will be put to good use and that it will be accounted to you when it is spent.

Yours sincerely

**John Bowers**

John Bowers

President, Friends of Green Lesbos