

# Turkey

South and east  
15-29 May 2004

## Participants

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## Introduction

In two weeks we undertook a standard itinerary across the southern and eastern parts of Turkey with start and finish in Antalya. As the distances are great we found ourselves on the road a lot. Fortunately the countryside was mostly spectacular. We had an eight-seat ford transit pre-booked on the Avis website waiting at Antalya airport. The car performed excellently all the 4970 km and was well worth the 730 USD. The main roads are fairly good and the smaller ones driveable. Three nights we stayed under open sky, two at the scenic Akseki "new site" and one in the valley below Durnalik. Otherwise we stayed at budget hotels which was generally good value for the money. We had no problem finding ATM cash machines in larger cities. Gas stations are abundant. The weather was nice and sunny during our visit except from one day of heavy rain and snow in the far east. If you visit Turkey in the spring like we did there is a fair chance you will encounter snowfall in the mountains even in the south. This was a tick-and-go trip which left very little time exploring for new sites. By the way it took only one close encounter with the countryside dogs to convince us that they are not to be mistaken for pets.

## Itinerary

15/5 Copenhagen - Antalya - Akseki.

16/5 Akseki "new site" (0500-0810), Akseki graveyard (0830-0940), Walled Plantation (0950-1115), long drive Akseki - Durnalik by Konya and Eregli.

17/5 Durnalik (0500-0900), Isikli (0915-1100), Birecik (1400-2200).

18/5 Long drive Birecik - Van Town, south Van marshes (evening at site 1).

19/5 South Van marshes (site 2, 0530-0645), Van - Ercek Gölü, small roadside lake by the southern shore of the Ercek Gölü (0730-0930), Van hills (1000-1030), drive Van hills - Bendimahi marshes-Selale Waterfalls - Ishak Pasa/ Dogubayazit.

20/5 Ishak Pasa (0600-0930), Ishak Pasa - Serpmetas and back to Dogubayazit.  
21/5 Ishak Pasa (0500-1330), drive to Erzurum.  
22/5 Erzurum - Gelinkaya (stop by bridge 0800-0900) - Maden Köprübasi (stop 1,5km east of town 1000-1100) - Ispir junction (stop at café by bridge 1130-1230) - Sivrikaya (lower areas).  
23/5 Sivrikaya (black cock site 0500-0900) - Ispir area (1100-1300) - Erzincan.  
24/5 Long drive Erzincan - Tüprüce Gölü (stop at roadside lake) - Sultan marshes/Yay Gölü-Nigde.  
25/5 Nigde - Demirkazik (0625-1500) - Demircili upper graveyard-Silifke.  
26/5 Silifke - Demircili upper graveyard (0600-0700) - Akgöl/Göksü delta (0800-1800).  
27/5 Long drive Silifke - Karaman - Kinikz village (stops 21 and 11 km before Bozkir) - Bozkir-Akseki old site (1700-1900).  
28/5 Akseki different sites (0500-1100) - Antalya.  
29/5 Antalya - Copenhagen.

### Species account

We logged 248 species. We got the wanted species at the well-known sites except from Semi-collared Flycatcher that eluded us at Gelinkaya and Ispir. We didn't go to Bulanik for the Demoiselle Cranes since two teams didn't see any earlier in May 2004. Cizre and the Red-wattled Plovers were excluded for various reasons.

We saw a few scarce migrants along the way: Steppe Eagle and Great Black-headed Gull at Lake Van and a Long-tailed Skua west of Antalya.

Notable sightings to future visitors include Levant Sparrowhawk near Ispir, Saker at Ishak Pasa and Demirkazik, Radde's Accentor in the NE and a very strong population of Olive-tree Warbler in the hills near Bozkir 1.5 hours drive from Akseki. The details of some of the less numerous species we saw are listed below. We use the site names from the "Finding Birds in..." by Dave Grosney. Drop me an email if you need further info: teortvad@tiscali.dk.

### Yelkouan Shearwater

25/5 18PM 2 Marsin, 29/5 1-3PM 10 east of Antalya. Less numerous than Cory's but not very difficult apparently.

### Pygmy Cormorant

17/5 20+ Birecik. 24/5 1 Sultan marshes.

### White-headed Duck

18/5 12 South Van marshes viewed from site 1. 19/5 1 roadside lake south of Ercek Gölü. 24/5 3 Nigde.

### Marbled Duck

26/5 10+ Akgöl.

### Lammergeier

21/5 1 Ishak Pasa. 22/5 + 23/5 1 Maden Köprübasi 20 km west of Ispir. 22/5 1 Sivrikaya. All adults.

### Levant Sparrowhawk

22/5 + 23/5 2+ (adult male + 1) 1.5 km east of Maden Köprübasi along the main road. We stopped to look for two Sakers seen there a week before. We didn't see the falcons but were compensated by great views of two Levant Sparrowhawks one being an adult male carrying prey eastwards. 22/5 1 male sitting in a tree and another bird in the air by the bridge across the river towards Ispir from the main road to Sivrikaya. Presumably it was breeding close by. On the return we stopped east of Maden Köprübasi and again had an adult male and a female circling together above the valley. Note that Sparrowhawks occurred in the same area.

### Steppe Eagle

18/5 1 immature Van Gölü.

### Golden Eagle

Common in mountains.

### Saker

21/5 1 passed Ishak Pasa early afternoon. 25/5 1 at noon Demirkazik seen from the hill above the gorge. Unfortunately none of the birds lingered. Peregrines are widespread and not uncommon.

### Caucasian Black Grouse

22/5 3 males 4PM Sivrikaya from the road. 23/5 31 males + 2 females Sivrikaya on both sides of the valley. The grouse are apparently very easy at Sivrikaya in the spring. The males sat exposed on the steep grassy slopes between remaining snowfields and patches of dwarf rhododendrons. They could be found in numbers on both sides of the main valley. Telescope the slopes on the opposite side of the valley from the road about 1000 m above Sivrikaya village or walk the winding jeep track above the village (or other tracks) if you want better views.



Sivrikaya - Caucasian Black Grouse and view to the south from the forest above the village.

### Caspian Snowcock

22/5 1 singing 3PM out of view 1 km down the road towards Sivrikaya from the pas. 23/5 2 seen and 1-2 heard Sivrikaya. We scanned the ridges from the main road above Sivrikaya and eventually found two very distant birds near the top of the mountain on the opposite side on the valley.

25/5 4 seen and heard Demirkazik from the water pump above the gorge. The Snowcocks sang from the ridges until around noon and also sporadically so in the afternoon. In the spring at least it appears you don't necessarily need to be up there at sunset to see and hear the Snowcocks. We arrived around 9AM and had no problems locating them.

### Chukar

21/5 4 Ishak Pasa. 25/5 5 Demirkazik.

### Black Francolin

17/5 1 singing fields north of Birecik. 26/5 4 singing Akgöl by the watchtower. Only heard.

### See-see Partridge

17/5 10+ Birecik main wadi. We found a few flocks by walking along the upper edges of two minor wadis running north from the main wadi. The partridges were found along the wadi edges. They took off when approached and could be a little tricky to relocate. Don't panic if you don't see them right away, they are there.

### Crane

24/5 2 Tüpürce Gölü and two by lake just west of.

### Purple Gallinule

26/5 10+ Akgöl. It is now possible to drive all the way around the lake by the way.

### Collared Pratincole

26/6 5 Göksü delta.

### Greater Sand Plover

24/5 23 Sultan marshes site 8 gave good views from the canal.

### Long-tailed Skua

29/5 1 adult west of Antalya. The Skua flew slowly westwards along the coast.

Great Black-headed Gull

19/5 1 first summer South Van marshes.

Slender-billed Gull

24/5 2 Tüprüce Gölü. 26/5 2 Akgöl.

“Armenicus” Yellow-legged Gull

17/5 200 east side of Van Gölü, 200 Van marshes. 18/5 200+ between Van and Ercek Gölü. Predominately immatures.

Striated Scops Owl

17/5 1 adult blue-fountain-café Birecik. We paid two men at the shut down café 20 mill to show us the owl. It was sitting just five meters up a dense tree just a couple of meters from the fountain. We were told that it was breeding at the café ground and that it began to sing only when the noise from the traffic had cease around midnight.



Striated Scops Owl - Birecik

Pied Kingfisher

1/5 1 Birecik.

White-breasted Kingfisher

26/5 1 Akgöl. On wires by the road along the paper factory.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker

16+28/5 2 Akseki new site. 27/5 1 21 km east of Bozkir.

White-backed Woodpecker



27/5 1 male Akseki site 3 the 7.9 km lay-by. After dipping at Akseki new site at the beginning of the trip we were relieved to get it at this site in the end. The wood was indeed very quiet when we arrived at around 4PM but. This quickly changed when we pushed “play” on the CD. We played the sounds only a couple of minutes in order not to disturb too much. After we stooped playing the bird that had come retrieved to the deep forest and kept silent.



Akseki - site 3

Lesser Short-toed Lark - of various kinds.  
16/5 5 south of Konya. 19/5 1 Van Hills. 24/5 10 Nigde.

Bimaculated and Calandra Larks  
Both are widespread and common at right habitats.



Bimaculated Lark at Ercek Gölü

Desert Lark

17/5 1 main wadi Birecik.

Citrine Wagtail

19/5 10 South Van marshes site 2 and 1 Bendimahi marshes. 20/5 3 Serpmetas west of Caldiran. 24/5 2 Tüprüce Gölü.



Citrine Wagtail - One of many charming males at South Van Marshes

Alpine Accentor

22/5 4 at the Sivrikaya-pass.

Radde's Accentor

20/5 1 west of Serpmetas west of Caldiran. 25/5 2 Demirkazik near the upper entrance of the gorge and one by the water pump above.



Radde's Accentor near Serpmetas west of Caldiran

Rufous Bush Robin  
Common in the south.

White-throated Robin

17/5 very common Durnalik. 20/5 2 Serpmetas west of Caldiran. 27/5 10 hills 21 km northeast of Bozkir coming from Karaman.



White-throated Robin 21 km northeast of Bozkir

Bluethroat

20/5 4 red-spotted around Serpmetas west of Caldiran. 22/5 1 singing seemingly unspotted (ssp magna) by river between Ispir and Sivrikaya.

Stonechat - of various kinds

16/5 1 roadside in Anatolia, 20/5 1 Serpmetas west of Caldiran, 27/5 3 between Bozkir and Akseki.

Finsch's Wheatear

20/5 4 Ishak Pasa. 20/5 1 Serpmetas west of Caldiran. 21/5 2 Ishak Pasa. 25/5 3 Demirkazik.

Red-tailed Wheatear

17/5 1 pair with tree young's Isikli just below the scree slope.

Rock Thrush

19/5 1 north of Caldiran. 20/5 50+ around Serpmetas west of Caldiran - the birds had some down to the bottom of the valley because of snowfall in the hills above. 21/5 3 Ishak Pasa. 22/5 1 Sivrikaya pass. 25/5 2 Demirkazik.

Moustached Warbler

24/5 2 Tüprüce Gölü. 24/5 2 Sultan marshes.

Paddyfield Warbler

19/5 5 singing South Van marshes site 2. They were found in degraded reeds just south of the main reed bed. Sedge and Reed Warblers were both common but were not found in the sub-habitat inhabited by the Paddyfields. 19/5 10+ in a small roadside lake on southern side of Ercek Gölü - can't miss it. Here too only found in degraded broken reeds where they gave brilliant views at close range.





Paddyfield Warbler - Ercek Gölü

#### Olive-tree Warbler

26/5 4 (two pairs) Demircili upper graveyard. After dipping at Akseki graveyard at the beginning of the trip we were gratified it was still residing at Demircili. This tiny old graveyard above the village really does not look like a place you would care to stop had it not been a regular site for the Olive-tree Warbler. One wonders if this place is only one of many such places near the coast that holds this species.



The upper graveyard at Demircili



27/5 50 singing in hills east of Bozkir. From Göksü delta we drove inland back towards Akseki and Antalya. Going from Karaman to Bozkir we passed by a village by the name of Kinikz at the 21 km mark before Bozkir. The next 11 km the hills by the road is covered by rather old oaks which apparently is just what the Olive-tree Warbler wants. We spent just two hours around noon and made stops at 21 and 10 km before Bozkir (every 10th km are marked by signs) and we were stunned by the numbers at Olive-tree Warbler. When walking about in the woods we constantly could hear its low-pitched Great Reed Warbler-like song. The woods visible from the road was likely to have held hundreds of pairs and we can't say how far from the road the woods reached. In any case, if the numbers in "BWP Concise Edition" is true (1000-10000 pairs in Turkey), this place will be important to the Olive-tree Warbler of Turkey.



10 km before Bozkir – A stronghold for Olive-tree Warbler

28/5 1 sang briefly behind the walled conifer plantation below Akseki just east of the main road. And still non at the graveyard. We imagine that the absence from Akseki graveyard could have something to do with the presence of Jays there. In Demircili we learned that it gets absolutely hysterical when Jays are around.

#### Upcher's Warbler

17/5 10 Durnalik mostly at the upper parts of the valley. Does Olive-trees Warbler really occur at Durnalik as is sometimes stated?

#### Rüppell's Warbler

16/5 1 Akseki Graveyard, 15 around Akseki walled plantation.

#### Ménétries's Warbler

17/5 2 gas station north end of Birecik and 5 at the entrance of main wadi.

#### Bonelli's Warbler

16+28/5 2 singing Akseki new site.

#### Willow Warbler

16/5 1 singing Akseki new site. Seems to be recorded regularly here.

#### Greenish Warbler

22/5 3 in mixed woods by the stream above Sivrikaya village.

#### Mountain Chiffchaff

22/5 5 singing Gelinkaya. We stopped at the bridge and immediately had several. Remarkable to hear how closely the song matched that of Common Chiffchaffs considering the high degree of song variation within the Chiffchaff complex. 22/5 3 Sivrikaya. We had Common Chiffchaffs here and there in eastern Turkey

### Sombre Tit

16/5 3 Akseki new site, 1 Akseki graveyard, 1 Akseki walled plantation. 27/5 5 21 km northeast of Bozkir.

### Kröpers Nuthatch

16/5 and 28/5 30+ Akseki new site. 26/5 1 Demircili graveyard.



Akseki new site

### Great Rock Nuthatch

17/5 common along the upper ridges of Durnalik and Isikli.



Great Rock Nuthatch - Durnalik

#### Wallcreeper

25/5 1 Demirkazik. We walked up the narrow gorge west of the mountain lodge ending below a cattle water pump. We scanned the rock face at the bottom of the gorge without seeing any but luckily came across a single bird in the last section of the gorge. It was sitting in a crag half way up face and revealed itself by voice. The upper section of the gorge is rather steep and might be a little difficult to descend. Going up like us you need to take the right turns – just use the force, it worked for us. The first one is to the right.

#### Dead Sea Sparrow

17/5 common north of Birecik.

#### Pale Rock Sparrow

17/5 common in the upper Durnalik valley. 1 Birecik main wadi.



Pale Rock Sparrow - Durnalik

#### Yellow-throated Sparrow

17/5 2 singing near gas station north end of Birecik.

#### Red-fronted Serin

19/5 1 north of Caldiran. 20/5 3 Ishak Pasa. 21/5 2 Ishak Pasa. 22/5 2 Sivrikaya. 23/5 5 between Ispir and Yusufeli. 25/5 14 Demirkazik.

#### Crimson-winged Finch

19/5 8 south side of Ercek Gölü. 19/5 3 north of Caldiran. 20/5 200+ around Serpmetas west of Caldiran. 21/5 4 Ishak Pasa. 25/5 5 Demirkazik.

#### Mongolian Trumpeter Finch

21/5 2-4 Ishak Pasa. Located around noon 100 m west of the upper café after some 10 hours of searching the area. Unfortunately they gave only brief views on the ground and was indeed not very cooperative. Seemed to favour the grassy hillside to the northwest of the café. On the 19/5 and 20/5 we searched hard without success around Serpmetas to the west of Caldiran and along the main road between Caldiran and Dogubayazit.





Ishak Pasa Palace at sunset

**Grey-necked Bunting**

20/5 and 21/5 1 pair Ishak Pasa. Surprised to find only one pair at this site. They were found some 300 m above the upper parking lot along the main dirt track. Hortulans were present there too. None were found at Van hills during a very brief visit.

**Cinereous Bunting**

17/5 common Durnalik area and only noted here.

**Remarks**

Another version of this report without any photos can be found at [www.Netfugl.dk](http://www.Netfugl.dk) at the following address:

[http://www.netfugl.dk/trip\\_reports/europe/TurkeyMay2004/TurkeyMay2004\\_TextVersion.pdf](http://www.netfugl.dk/trip_reports/europe/TurkeyMay2004/TurkeyMay2004_TextVersion.pdf)