

Western Greece – Wildlife & History

Naturetrek Tour Report

1st – 8th May 2026



Common Tern



Stone Curlew



Peloponnese Wall Lizard



Lesser Kestrel

Tour report by Giorgos Kouthouridis



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Summary

Early May offered an excellent opportunity to explore the rich wetlands, lagoons and coastal habitats of western Greece during the spring migration. Beginning in the remarkable mosaic of lagoons, dunes and pine forests around Strofilia National Park and continuing north to the lagoon systems of Messolonghi, the week combined relaxed birdwatching with spectacular scenery and a great diversity of wildlife. The weather was somewhat variable for the season, with periods of cloud, strong winds and occasional light rain during the first days, gradually giving way to calmer and brighter conditions later in the week. Highlights included huge concentrations of waders, some in breeding plumage, lots of singing warblers and raptor colonies including Lesser Kestrels and Griffon Vultures.

Day 1

Friday 1st May

After our afternoon arrival in Athens, we headed westwards to Kalogria. Although the weather conditions were not ideal, the journey offered the first glimpses of the Peloponnesian coastline. After settling in, we took a short drive towards a restaurant where we had our dinner. On our way back to the hotel we heard our first owl species, a Little Owl calling and a Scops Owl singing.

Day 2

Saturday 2nd May

Our first full day was spent exploring the remarkable habitats of Strofilia National Park, beginning at Prokopos Lagoon and continuing through Mavra Vouna, Kalogria Lagoon, the Strofilia Pine Forest and finally Kalogria Beach. The sheer beauty and diversity of the landscape made a lasting impression. We enjoyed large numbers of herons, egrets, gulls and terns moving constantly over the lagoons. The flooded lagoon edges supported numerous waders, including Little Stints and Collared Pratincoles. The atmospheric Stone Pine Forest of Strofilia provided a striking contrast to the open coastal lagoons and sandy coastline. While we were having our lunch break, we heard Short-toed Treecreepers, numerous Sardinian Warblers and large numbers of finches singing. At Kalogria beach, we took a short walk at the sand dunes, and we came across a pair of Kentish Plovers with their small chicks feeding along the shoreline.

Day 3

Sunday 3rd May

Today combined culture and birding with a morning visit to Ancient Olympia before heading north to the Lechaina salt pans during the afternoon. The archaeological site was alive with both breeding and migrant passerines, with the highlight being a superb singing Icterine Warbler. The combination of ancient monuments and flowering vegetation created great scenery and at the ruins of the archaeological site we saw at least three Peloponnese Wall Lizards, an endemic species of the peninsula. Later, at Lechaina Salt Pans, large numbers of waders were seen feeding across the shallow waters. The highlight was a striking Grey Plover in full breeding plumage, while Glossy Ibis and other wetland species were feeding. An unexpected male Pintail added further interest among the more typical wetland species.

Day 4

Monday 4th May

We spent the day gradually travelling north toward the Messolonghi wetlands, driving first through Prokopos Lagoon before continuing to Lamia Marsh and then having our lunch at Agyia Marsh in Patra where we took a short walk to enjoy the view of Charilaos Trikoupi's bridge that connects Rio-Antirio. After our arrival in Messolonghi we enjoyed an evening visit to Kleisova Lagoon where we saw one of the most impressive spectacles of the tour. Huge numbers of waders shimmered across the mudflats and shallow pools, constantly shifting in the sunset light while large numbers of terns passed overhead.

Day 5

Tuesday 5th May

Our exploration of the Messolonghi region began with a short check at Plostena Lagoon before visiting the National Park Information Center in Aitoliko lagoon and the Finikia Marsh after. From there, we continued inland towards Kleisoura Gorge where we came across soaring Griffon Vultures, singing Blue Rock Thrush and the tour's only Blackcap. We stopped for lunch beside Aitoliko Lagoon, before birding along the Acheloos River, Lesini Village and finally Fraxos Forest. The Lesser Kestrel colony at Lesini village proved especially enjoyable, with birds constantly circling over rooftops, calling noisily and engaging in courtship activity around their nesting sites. The villagers were particularly welcoming and clearly proud of the Lesser Kestrels nesting among their houses and they informed us about their status during the last years. Later, the visit to Fraxos Forest provided a complete contrast to the open wetlands of the previous days. In the mature oak tree woodland we saw at least two Middle Spotted Woodpeckers, a pair of Levant Sparrowhawks calling in their territory and our first tortoise, a Hermann's Tortoise.

Day 6

Wednesday 6th May

Today we explored the western part of the wetland complex, including Aitoliko Lagoon, Louros, Dioni and the Acheloos River Estuary. One of the major highlights came early in the day when a Golden Jackal was seen running in a field in the Louros area. In the same place we had excellent numbers of larks such as Calandra, Greater Short-toed and Crested Lark displaying high above our heads. Further down we encountered a singing Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin which was a particularly notable moment. After Louros, we headed back to Aitoliko lagoon where we enjoyed a relaxed homemade lunch at a friend's house overlooking the lagoon. Next, we visited Acheloos river estuary and Dioni beach. The mixture of river channels, mudflats, reedbeds and open coastal lagoons created a spectacular backdrop for birdwatching, while Marsh Harriers, large numbers of herons & waders and even a Caspian Tern were seen.

Day 7

Thursday 7th May

Our final full day began at the ancient site of Oiniades before continuing to Agia Triada Lagoon during the midday. Oiniades proved to be a fascinating combination of archaeology and wildlife. The old theatre and fortifications overlooked lush wetland habitats alive with amphibians, terrapins, insects and birdlife, creating a wonderfully peaceful atmosphere for our morning exploration. We saw both European Pond Turtles and a Balkan Terrapin while Marsh Frogs were continuously calling. In Agia Triada Lagoon, we had our memorable finale for the week. Stone-curlews showed particularly well around the saltmarsh edges, while Ruddy Turnstones fed along the shoreline among large gatherings of other waders. It was

exciting to see several Dalmatian Pelican fledglings, numerous pairs of Common Terns, Yellow Wagtails and a Tawny Pipit, feeding among Crested Larks. A great way to end a memorable week in the wetlands of western Greece.

Day 8

Friday 8th May

After breakfast we began our journey back toward Athens, stopping for lunch at the Corinth canal. Even during the transfer day there was still time for wildlife highlights, the best coming from the known colony of Lesser Kestrels inside the rocks of the Isthmus. Several birds were watched at close range, including a pair engaged in copulation. We grabbed a coffee after taking some photos of the canal and then we headed towards the airport.

As spring migration continued across western Greece, the week ended with unforgettable memories of glowing lagoons, calling waders, soaring raptors and the remarkable diversity of life found in these unique wetlands.

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Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	May 2026							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>						✓		
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>			✓					
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓		
Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>		✓						
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		✓		✓				
Feral Rock Dove - I	<i>Columba livia</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>			✓	✓				
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		✓			✓	✓		
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	
Eurasian Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>						✓	✓	
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>				✓				
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>				✓	✓		✓	
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>			✓			✓		
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓	
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>					✓			
Kentish Plover	<i>Anarhynchus alexandrinus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Eurasian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>				✓				
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>				✓				
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		✓		✓		✓		
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>			✓					
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>			✓	✓			✓	
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>				✓				
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>			✓			✓		
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>			✓	✓		✓		
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>			✓	✓				
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>			✓	✓		✓		
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>				✓				
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>		✓				✓	✓	
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>				✓				
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>						✓		
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Slender-billed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>					✓			
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		✓						
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>								
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>					✓			
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo pygmaeus</i>		✓					✓	
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	

Common name	Scientific name	May 2026							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓							
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓				✓	✓	
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>		✓	✓			✓		
Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>								✓
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>					✓			
Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>		✓				✓	✓	
Levant Sparrowhawk	<i>Tachypiza brevipes</i>					✓			
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓						
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	H			✓				
Eurasian Scops Owl	<i>Otus scops</i>	H			H	H	H	H	
Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓		
European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	✓							
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocoptes medius</i>					✓		H	
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>					✓			✓
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Red-Footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>			✓					
Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>							H	
Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>			✓					
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓			✓	✓		
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>			H		✓		H	
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>				H	H	✓	✓	
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>						✓	✓	
Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>						✓	✓	
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		✓		✓				
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
European Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis rufula</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>		H	H	H	H	H	H	
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			H					
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>					✓		✓	
Common Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>				✓		✓	✓	
Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Iduna pallida</i>		✓		✓		✓		
Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>			✓					
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Common name	Scientific name	May 2026							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>					H			
Eastern Orphean Warbler	<i>Curruca crassirostris</i>							H	
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Western Rock Nuthatch	<i>Sitta neumayer</i>		H						
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>		H	H					
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>				✓				
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas galactotes</i>							✓	
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	✓			✓				
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	✓		✓					
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓		
Eastern Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe melanoleuca</i>					✓			
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>				✓				
Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>			✓		✓	✓		
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓	
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>				✓		✓	✓	
Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>							✓	
Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>		✓						
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓		
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓		
Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirius</i>		✓	✓				✓	
Black-headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>						✓	✓	

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	May 2026							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>					✓			

Reptiles & amphibians

Common name	Scientific name	May 2026							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
European Pond Turtle	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>			✓				✓	
Balkan Terrapin	<i>Mauremys rivulata</i>			✓				✓	
Balkan Green Lizard	<i>Lacerta trilineata</i>							✓	
Marsh Frog	<i>Pelophylax ridibundus</i>						✓	✓	
Peloponnese Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis peloponnesiacus</i>		✓						
Hermann's Tortoise	<i>Testudo hermanni</i>				✓				
Marginated Tortoise	<i>Testudo marginata</i>					✓			
European Green Toad	<i>Bufo viridis</i>	✓							