

Birding at the edge of the Western Palaearctic – Between Euphrates and Taurus Mountains

By Christoph Moning & Gerlinde Taurer

September 2009

South-eastern Turkey between the Goeksu-Delta and the Euphrates offers easy access to some of the most sought after species of the Western Palaearctic. The majority of visiting birders will confirm: The region is among the most rewarding bird-watching areas in the Western Palaearctic and a must for all those who want to enjoy the whole diversity of Western Palaearctic bird life. However, when preparing a trip to the region, one will discover that information on birding sites is scattered throughout the World Wide Web and those found in various print media are regularly out of date. This article summarises and updates the information for some of the most important birding sites in the region.

Birding in Turkey

The best time for birding in Turkey is May to July, when all special summer visitors such as White-throated Robin, *Hippolais*-Warblers or Pale Rockfinches are present. But, also from April to September, it is possible to find most of the special species. Travelling the region during this period, one can expect to observe more than 200 species on a two-week trip at a relatively leisurely pace. The migration periods add further interesting aspects such as migrating raptors, storks and European Bee-eaters, especially at the Gulf of Iskenderun, and also the wetlands hold a rich array of species during this period.

Travelling in Turkey is relatively easy. For a visit of the South-East of the country, the city of Adana at the Gulf of Iskenderun or Gaziantep, a city located around 220km further to the East (2.5 hours by car), are good starting points. Both are readily reachable from UK Airports, mostly with a transfer necessary.

The easiest way of transport within the country is to rent a car, which is best booked in advance. Generally, there is no need for a 4 x 4 vehicle, as streets in the South of Turkey are in a quite good condition. Petrol stations are very densely distributed, but petrol prices are relatively high, similar to those of Central European countries. Highways are excellent. In some regions, streets and highways are being rebuilt, so delays and (even more than usual) dust must be taken into account. Traffic in the cities is quite chaotic, but manageable. Highways are nearly empty, with the exception of a few trucks. Pedestrians cross at every possible and impossible place, but respect the larger get the right of way.

Turkey is a country of vast dimensions! Even in the relatively small area between the Goeksu Delta and Nemrut Dağı, one can easily cover 2000-3000 kilometres within a two-week trip. Therefore, it has to be deliberated carefully whether a limited budget allows the time to travel to the Van region in the very East of the country, or the Caucasus Mountains. These are quite far off.

People are very friendly. As a traveller, you will permanently receive invitations to tea or coffee, even if – once again – you are caught trespassing private

property. Gestures and simple words in English usually suffice to make yourself understood, and a few words in Turkish will raise exclamations of joy.

During the summer months, it is hot, very hot, in the lower regions. Between June and September, the maximum temperature regularly exceeds 30°C; along the Euphrates temperatures around 40°C are typical!

The region's more than 6000 year-long history has left uncountable traces of colonisation, inviting travelling birders to combine their travel's first priority with some cultural activity. Besides remarkable archaeological sites such as the antique city of Diocæsarea/Olba (2nd century B.C.) near Silifke (Goeksu-Delta) and the late-Hittite castle Karatepe Arslantaş (8th century B.C.) close to Osmaniye, the impressive grave of King Antiochos I Theos (1st century B.C.) on top of the Nemrut Dağı offers a range of special birds.

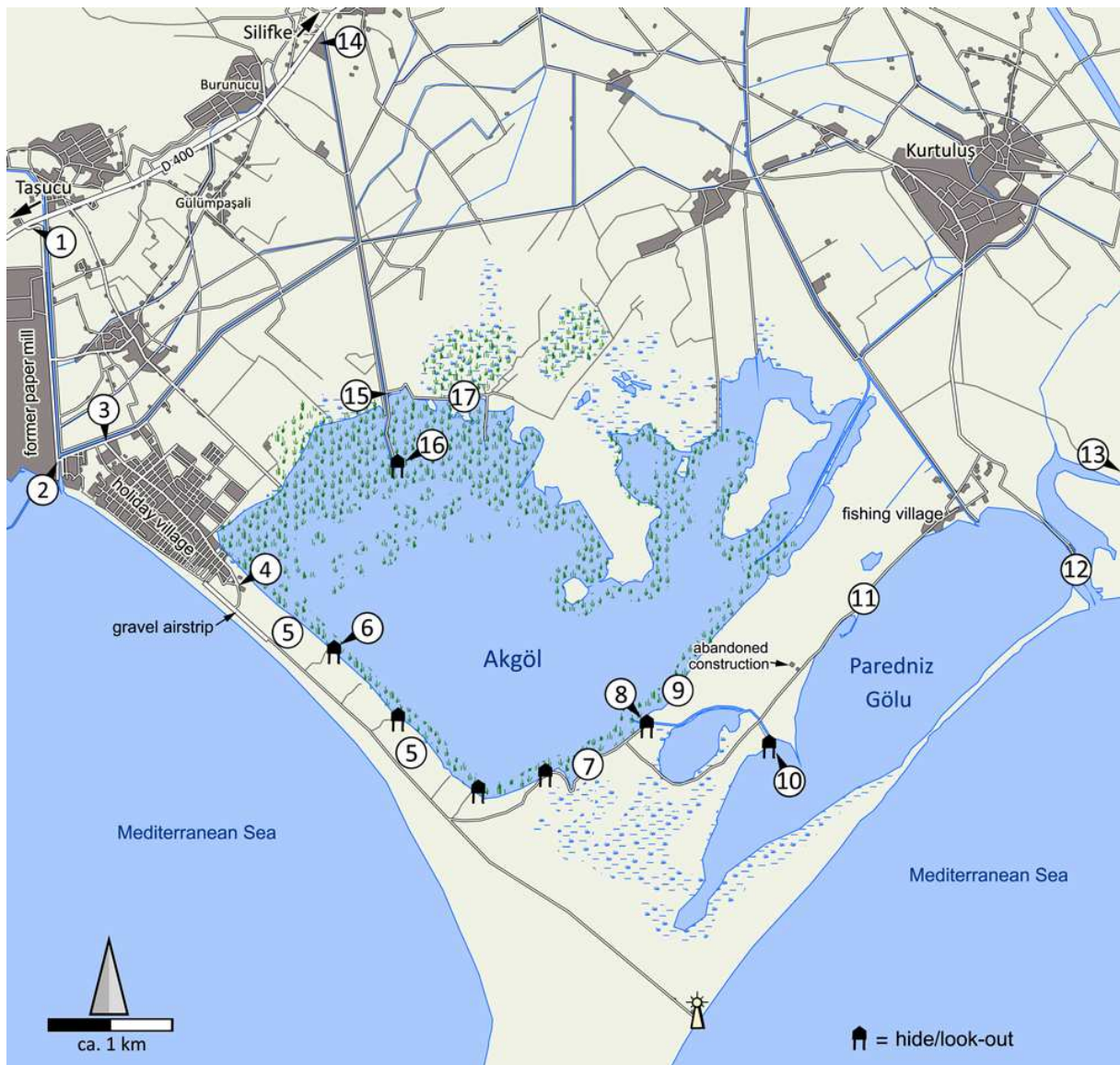
Some of the species of interest for bird-watchers from Central Europe are very frequent in lower regions. Among them are Laughing Dove, Crested Lark, Red-rumped Swallow, Eastern Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, White-spectacled Bulbul, Eastern Black-eared Wheatear, Spanish Sparrow and Black-headed Bunting. Also generally wide-spread and sometimes common are European Scops Owl, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Syrian Woodpecker, Tawny Pipit, Isabelline Wheatear, Sombre Tit and Western Rock Nuthatch. In wetlands of all types, Black-crowned Night Heron, Squacco Heron, Little Egret and Purple Heron, Common Kingfisher, Eurasian Reed Warbler (subspecies *fuscus*), Eastern Olivaceous Warbler and Graceful Prinia occur. For the latter, listen out for its calls from dense high grass.



Goeksu-Delta – Farewell to a birder’s paradise?

Situated in western Cilicia, the delta of the River Goeksu stretches across a huge region between the Cities of Taşucu and Silifke to the North and the Mediterranean to the South. Like with many other river deltas in Turkey the wet lands of around 15000 hectares resulted from the deforestation of Anatolia and the increased charge of erosion of rivers connected therewith. The Goeksu-Delta with its huge lagoons Akgöl (1100 hectares, white lake) and Paradeniz (400 hectares, silver sea) is known as one of the most important breeding grounds in the eastern Mediterranean region. Besides the lagoons and the reed areas, the vast stretches of dunes and the flat wetland areas with salt vegetation are the dominating habitats. Over 300 bird species have been recorded over time within this National Park, which is also a Ramsar-site. Among the more interesting species for the birder from more western regions are Marbled Teal, Ferruginous Duck, Lanner Falcon, Black Francolin (in the dune vegetation), Purple Swamphen (subspecies *caspicus*), Spur-winged Lapwing, Slender-billed Gull, Audouin's Gull, Gull-billed Tern, White-throated Kingfisher, Greater Short-toed Lark, Moustached Warbler, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler und Graceful Prinia. Many migrating birds take advantage of this area, among them, on a regular basis, Pelicans, Montagu's Harrier and Pallid Harrier as well as ducks and waders - with Broad-billed Sandpiper, Terek Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper and Greater Sand Plover among the regulars. Besides, this is an important reproduction site of the Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and, during dusk and dawn, there are good chances to encounter Golden Jackals (*Canis aureus*).

In the past years, the Goeksu-Delta, like many wetland areas in Turkey, has drawn attention through bad press. Huge parts of the alluvial soils have been drained, partly illegally, and are being used for agricultural purposes. The salt marshes close to the sea are being used as pastures; illegal hunting is widespread, frequently scaring the visitor with the sound of shotguns close-by. For these reasons a number of travel reports have voiced their disappointment about the few species seen. Nevertheless, we found a very species-rich, diverse wetland area, in which many of the special species can still be observed.



Map description:

1: Coming from Taşucu, follow road D 400 towards Silifke. After passing an old paper factory on your right-hand side, just before a bridge crossing a big channel, turn to the right (direction *Sekeli Mani*) and follow the canal to the South.

2: Cross the second bridge to the left, then again turn left and immediately after that turn right, following another canal.

3: At the next real opportunity turn right and then continue straight through the Holiday village.

4: For some time keep going straight, till you have left the housing area; when you see a single house/property on your left-hand side, turn right and continue on a gravel path. After a short while you arrive on a gravel runway, keep following this to the left (on your right-hand side you will see the Sea).

5: The dunes to the left are good for Black Francolins, especially at the break of dawn when they start to sing.

6: Rewarding, well-described bird observation tower. Park along the track some 50m before the tower and continue on foot, as, otherwise, you might get stuck in the sand. Ducks, reed-dwelling birds, terns etc.

7: Very good section; watch waterfowl directly from the car.

8: Excellent bird observation tower. Numerous waterfowl, among them Marbled Teal, Purple Swamphen, herons, waders etc. Best visited during dusk or dawn.

9: Crossing a ramshackled little bridge, you can continue further north and will have further great views. Be aware that the waterfowl are very shy towards pedestrians.

10: Another excellent bird observation tower: Gulls, waders, shrikes etc.

11: From the gravel path very good view onto the Paradeniz Gölü (lake).

12: Private property; after asking for permission, good opportunity to watch ducks and waterfowl.

13: Gravel path. When the surrounding salt marshes are humid, there are good possibilities to observe waders. The path ends at the Goeksu River. Following from there on foot around 20 minutes to the South you will get to the river mouth. This stretch is quite muddy. Here you can regularly find Audouin's Gulls and waders.

14: Driving from Taşucu in the direction of Silifke, immediately after (east of) a garage/petrol station, but before the sign *Ülügöz*, turn right onto a gravel path heading south alongside a channel.

15: Fishing hut. It is advisable to park here, as at (16) there is no possibility to reverse the car.

16: Bird observation tower; excellent at dawn for herons and rails, especially Purple Swamphen and Little Crake. In the canal before the tower, you can regularly observe White-throated Kingfisher.

17: Humid fields, eucalyptus stand and reed patches. Good for reed-dwelling species, Spur-winged Lapwing and White-throated Kingfisher; during the breeding period also Collared Pratincoles and Calandra Larks.

A good vantage point for birdwatchers at the north-western edge of the Goeksu-Delta is the Lades Motel in Taşucu (www.ladesmotel.com, nurullah.cinar@ladesmotel.com, +90 324 741 4008). The owner offers detailed information and a brochure for birdwatchers with an outline of how to get to the best observation spots and a number of ornithological trip reports.

For those who are looking for a bit of diversion around the Goeksu-Delta, there are good opportunities in the antique cities of Olba and Diocaesarea near Uzuncaburç. They are around 45 minutes drive (40km) north of Taşucu. On the way, in the maquis-like vegetation, you can observe species such as Eurasian Jay (subspecies *atricapillus*), Masked Shrike, Sombre Tit, Rüppell's Warbler and Cretzschmar's Bunting. An example for a good spot is "Kilometre 21" (check milestones along the road).

A few kilometres before you arrive at Uzuncaburç, you will pass through an area of pinewood forest, in which Krüper's Nuthatch is common. Good spots are the

picnic area in the centre of the forest or a track which, immediately after the picnic site, diverts to the right just before an unobtrusive fire brigade building.

Taurus-Mountains – Alpine birds with Central-Asian roots

The Taurus-Mountains constitute the south-eastern borderline of the Anatolian highland, from which the Euphrates flows into the plains of Syria. Also the Goeksu and the Tigris rivers originate from the Taurus-Mountains, which stretch over more than 1000km from the Eğirdir Lake in the west to the Euphrates in the East. A number of mountains reach heights of 3000 to 3700 metres.

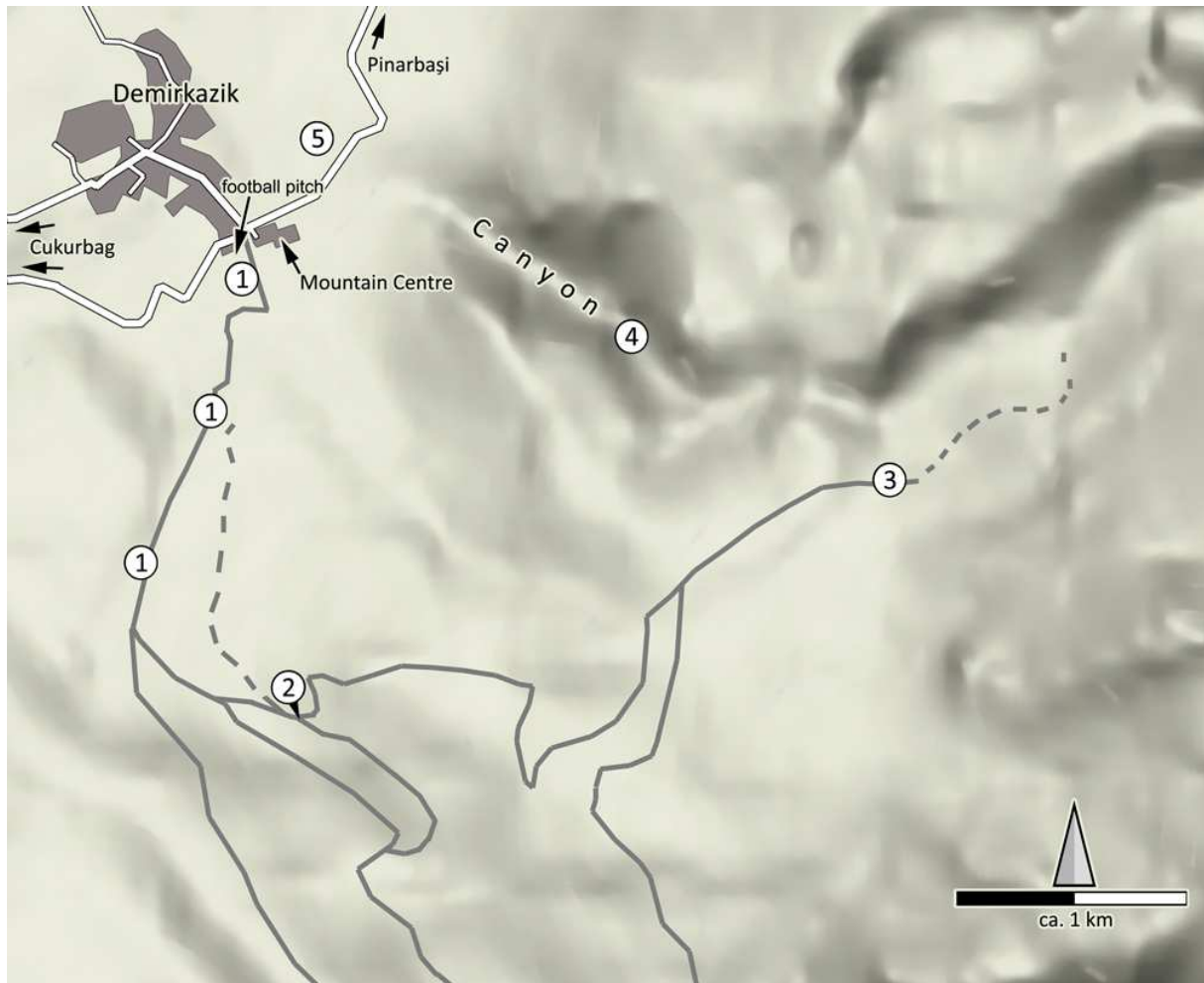
These alpine regions are home to numerous species of Central-Asian origin. Among the interesting species are Bearded Vulture, Golden Eagle, Caspian Snowcock, Chukar Partridge, Horned Lark (subspecies *penicillata*), Alpine Accentor, Radde's Accentor, Finsch's Wheatear, Western Rock Nuthatch, Wallcreeper, Alpine Chough, Red-billed Chough, White-winged Snowfinch, Red-fronted Serin and Crimson-winged Finch.

The western slopes of the highest peak, the summit of the Demirkazik (3767m) near Niğde, constitute a renowned birding area which is situated close to the villages of Çukurbağ and Demirkazik: the Aladağlar Mountains. Here all of the above-mentioned species can be found. However, it has to be borne in mind that depending on the snow situation many of the species can, at times, rather be found at lower altitudes near the villages. In September, one has to follow them high up to the mountain peaks.

The undisputedly top species on the wish list of most bird-watchers is the Caspian Snowcock which is not at all rare in some of the alpine stretches of the Aladağlar Mountains. The problem is to be up there (that is at 3200m altitude) already at the break of dawn, when the Snowcocks are at their most active. That challenge, however, can easily be solved by engaging Hassan Şafak, who runs a guesthouse in Çukurbağ together with his brother Çavit, and specialises in hosting and guiding bird-watchers (www.safaktravel.com/ing/index.html, info@safaktravel.com, +90 388 7247039). His other brother, Ali, who was also well known in this business, has just recently died in a traffic accident. Hassan, who knows the birds of his home country very well, drives birders up to the highest mountain-ranges in his tractor. His service is most reliable, although not cheap (80 EUR p.P.) and should be negotiated beforehand.

Dave Gosney (1992, see below) has described in detail some good birding spots in the Aladağlar Mountains. In addition to those, there are a number of very rewarding places. Especially during springtime, the road from Demirkazik into the Aladağlar Mountains is most worthwhile. Above that, the Israeli couple Gancz (2000, see below) have detected a reliable spot for Caspian Snowcocks behind the village Pınarbaşı in the vicinity of an abandoned chrome-mine (see map for details).

Between the Mountain Centre and the football pitch south of Demirkazik, a gravel road leads up the mountain. This is easily manageable by a normal car. Along this road, you can expect to see Bearded Vulture, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Alpine Swift, Horned Lark, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Western Rock Nuthatch, Isabelline Wheatear, Red-billed Chough, Alpine Chough and Rock Sparrow.



Map description:

1: Drinking troughs, which attract many birds such as Horned Lark and Crimson-winged Finch. Finsch's Wheatear is quite common around here.

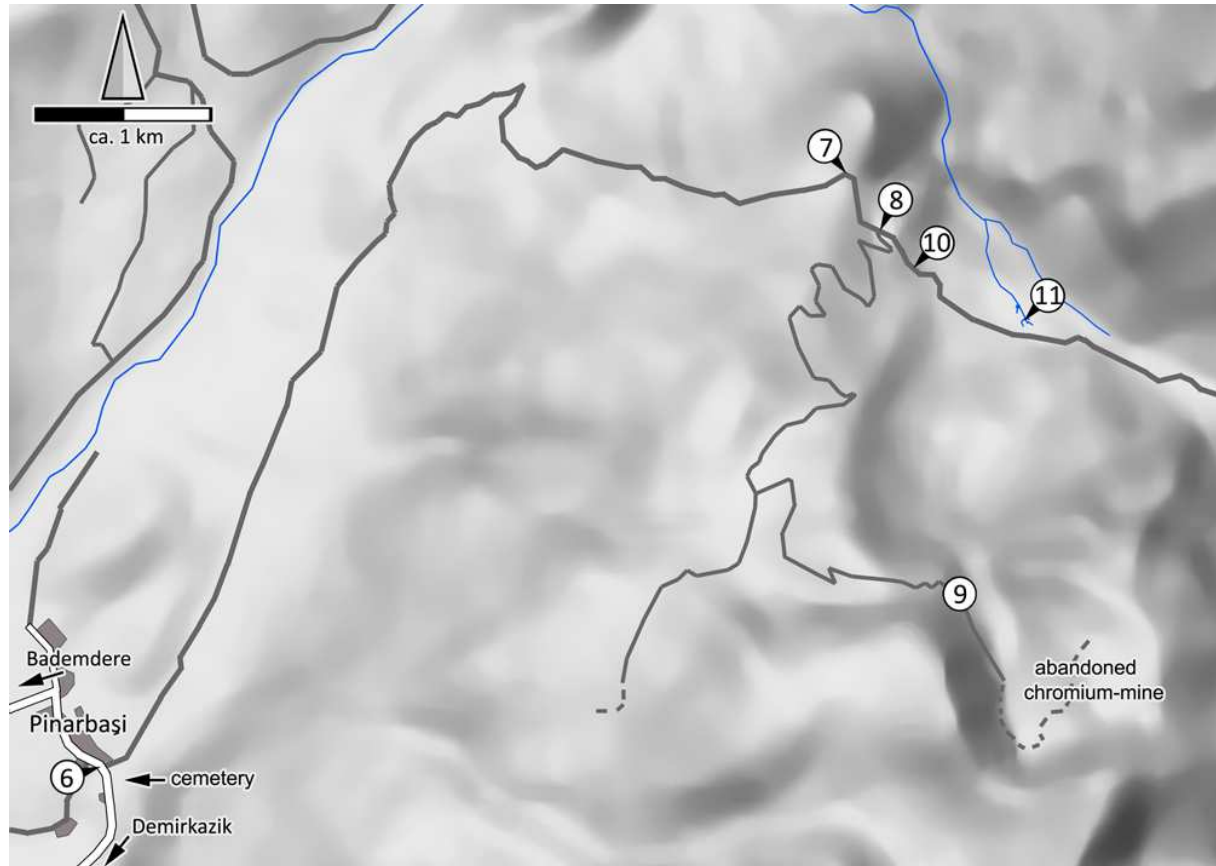
2: Up to here it is possible to drive by car; it is advisable to continue on foot, following the way left up the mountain. To get point 3 (below), it takes about 1 to 1.5 hours walking time, on an easy track leading through a great landscape, starting at an altitude of 1800m and ending at 2300m.

3: Spring with drinking trough. During springtime, this area is a good spot for Caspian Snowcocks. Besides the species mentioned above, Chukar Partridge, White-winged Snowfinch and Radde's Accentor can also be seen.

4: The Canyon offers good opportunities to see Wallcreeper (irregularly) and, further up along a trickier stretch, Radde's Accentor. Besides the common

species, you can also observe Eurasian Crag Martin, Blue Rock Thrush, White-winged Snowfinch and Ring Ouzel.

5: In the bushes, in front of the canyon, White-throated Robin and Cretzschmar's Buntings could also be observed at various intervals.



Map description:

6: About 3 km north of the Mountain Centre, along the street from Demirkazik to Pinarbaşı, immediately when entering Pinarbaşı, straight after the cemetery to the right but before the first houses follow a gravel road to the right.

The area surrounding the cemetery and the beginning of the road are excellent for Finsch's Wheatear. The gravel road is manageable with a normal car with some caution. It meanders uphill, first gradually, then steeper. Along the way, typical alpine species can be observed.

7: After about 6.5km, at an altitude of around 2200m, you will reach a saddle, from which the road continues downhill.

8: After 6.9 km from the junction in Pinarbaşı, a road diverts to the right, up the mountain. It eventually ends at an abandoned chrome-mine, around which the chances are good to observe Caspian Snowcocks. The road cannot be travelled with a normal car. Hassan Şafak (see above) provides transport at dawn. On foot, it would be approximately two hours walking time up to the chrome-mine, starting from the junction at 2200m altitude.

9: Shortly before arriving at the abandoned chrome-mine, you traverse a small ravine. Directly behind it, there is a good spot for observing Caspian Snowcocks.

This area and the area behind it offer, among others, Wallcreeper, Western Rock Nuthatch, Eurasian Crag Martin, Alpine Accentor, Red-fronted Serin and White-winged Snowfinch.

10. Around 7.2 km after the junction in Pinarbaşı, you traverse a spring, which invites birds to drink and bathe. In the surroundings, Chukar Partridges can typically be found.

11. About 7.9 km after the junction in Pinarbaşı on your left, a system of brooks emanates, which is attractive for Horned Lark, Ring Ouzel, Radde's Accentor, White-winged Snowfinch, Red-fronted Serin and Crimson-winged Finch, among others.

Durnalik – A garden for eastern-Turkish specialities

Situated just about half an hour by car north of the City of Gaziantep, close to the D400, which is the former main connecting road between the cities of Osmaniye and Gaziantep, is the village of Durnalik. Maybe discovered by pure coincidence, the gardens in the valley south of the village have proven to be a most reliable spot for Long-legged Buzzard, Eastern Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, White-throated Robin, Blue Rock Thrush, Eastern Orphean Warbler, Olive-tree Warbler, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler and Upcher's Warbler, Pale Rockfinch, Sombre Tit, Western and Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Cinereous Bunting (subspecies *semenowi*) und Cretzschmar's Bunting; and also Levant Sparrowhawk (migration), Chukar Partridge and Desert Finch can occasionally be observed. With some luck, Red-tailed Wheatear can be found here, at the westernmost limit of their range. They have been repeatedly spotted at Durnalik as well as at Işikli. However, those travelling also to the Nemrut Dağı (see further below) do not need to spend much time on searching this species, as it is very common there.



Map description:

1: Gardens on the valley floor. The best spot here is a little creek, which follows a path leading westwards. Here, among other species, White-spectacled Bulbul, Eastern Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, White-throated Robin (end of April to August), Sombre Tit, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Desert Finch, Cretzschmar's Bunting, Cinereous Bunting and Black-headed Bunting appear to drink. In the surrounding bushes, Eastern Orphean Warbler and Barred Warbler can be found.

2: Gardens at the upper valley floor holding Eurasian Golden Oriole, shrikes, White-spectacled Bulbul, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Upcher's Warbler and Common Rosefinch.

3: Rocky slope along the road leading to a quarry. Expect Long-legged Buzzard, Eastern and Western Rock Nuthatch, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Blue Rock Thrush, Desert Finch, Cinereous Bunting and Cretzschmar's Bunting.

4: Upper area of the valley. In the rocky parts Pale Rockfinch. Also Olive-tree Warbler and Upcher's Warbler occur.

5: Watering place invites birds to drink.

6: Gardens with Upcher's Warbler and Desert Finch, among others.

7: Follow track by walk: Gardens with Sombre Tit, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Eastern Orphean Warbler, White-throated Robin, Upcher's Warbler and Desert Finch.

8: The track leads steeply uphill and ends in kind of a moonscape. Cinereous Bunting and Pale Rockfinch are relatively common here. In addition, Peregrine Falcon, Western and Eastern Rock Nuthatch occur. With some luck, Red-tailed Wheatear can be observed.

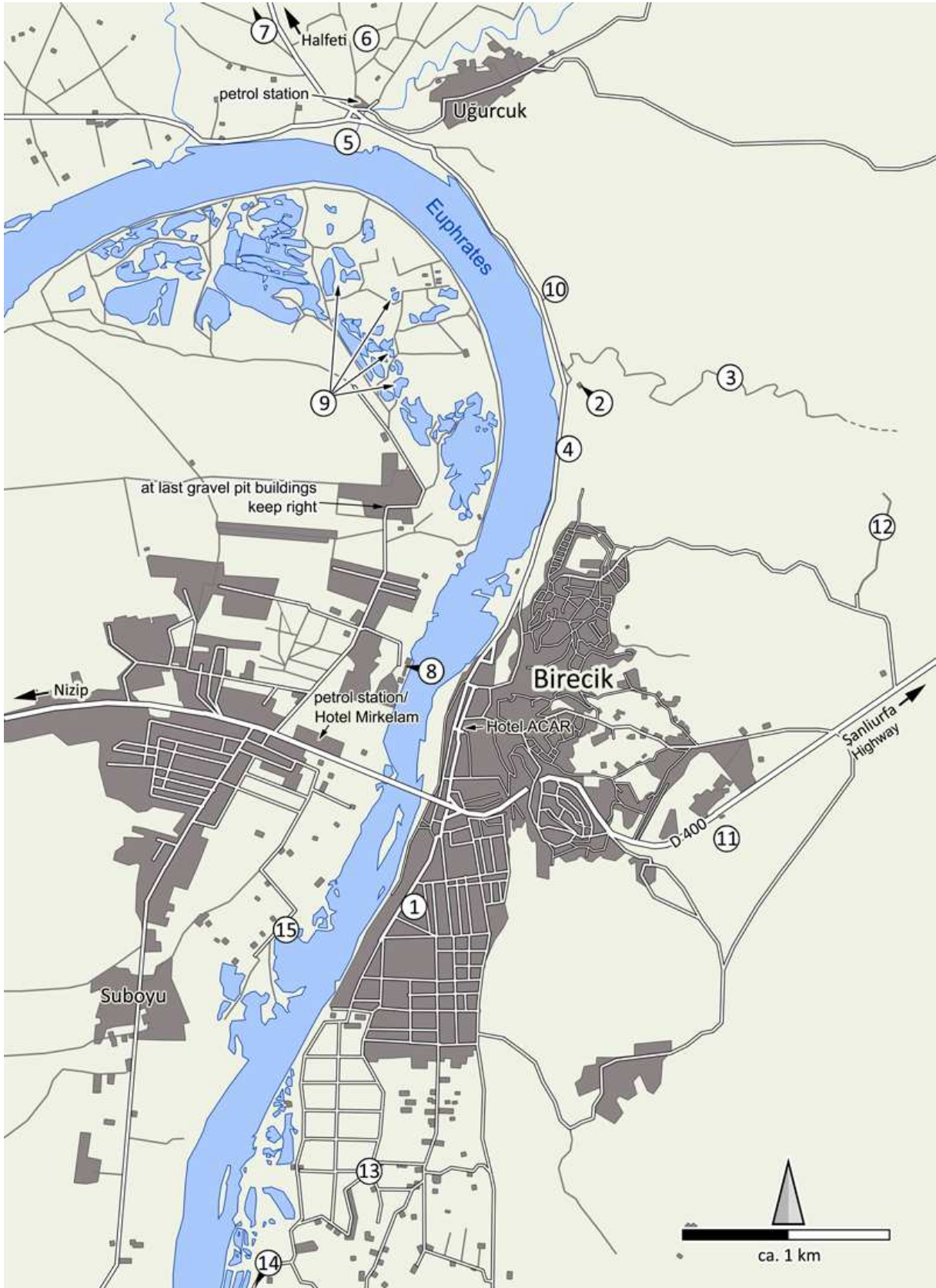
Birecik – vibrant City on the banks of the Euphrates

For many bird-watchers, the name of the town, Birecik, which is situated north of the Turkish-Syrian border at the Euphrates, is connected with some seemingly unobtainable species such as See-see Partridge, Pallid Scops Owl, Little Swift, Pied Kingfisher, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Menetries's Warbler, Upcher's Warbler, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Dead Sea Sparrow, Yellow-throated Sparrow and Desert Finch.

The town became famous as home of the last Northern Bald Ibis colony in the eastern part of the Western Palaearctic. Everywhere around the town, the Northern Bald Ibis can be observed as an image on house-walls, or as over life-size statues along the roadside. Unfortunately, the last birds living in freedom died in 1989. The population collapsed due to the nearby town growing fast – especially since a bridge was built across the Euphrates in the 1950s – and the excessive use of pesticides. At present, there is a colony with around 70-80 birds, that in summer can be observed flying freely around Birecik. They breed at the eastern bank of the Euphrates in the rock faces north of the town. There, also a Northern Bald Ibis Centre exists, where the birds can be observed in a large aviary, where they are kept during the winter to protect them from losses in their usual wintering grounds at the Arabian Peninsula and in Ethiopia. Only in 2002 another Northern Bald Ibis colony was detected, some 270km south of Birecik in the Syrian Desert town, Palmyra, which at present constitutes the remainder of the eastern population of the Northern Bald Ibis (Serra et al. 2004). Indeed, in 2009, this colony comprised not more than three adults and two sub-adults, so that, also in this case, an extinction of the species can be expected.

But the region does not only offer regression, but gives also positive surprises. In 2006, evidence of the Iraq Babbler as a new breeding bird in the area of Birecik caused a sensation and was the first breeding record for Turkey (Donaghy 2006, Kirwan et al. 2008a). Previously confined to the reed areas of Mesopotamian wetlands and thus to the region of south-eastern Iraq/south-western Iran, there was first evidence of the Iraq Babbler along the Syrian stretches of the Euphrates in 2001, and thus first proof for the Western Palaearctic region (Murdoch et al. 2002). Currently, its distribution in the Western Palaearctic is limited to the reeds along the Euphrates. In September 2009, we found it to be not uncommon in the abandoned gravel pits north and south of Birecik, with a maximum of nine birds in two groups north of Birecik.

Many waterfowl use the Euphrates as a navigation system for their migration. In September, we found hundreds of Armenian Gulls and also numerous herons, waders and ducks such as Ferruginous Ducks along the Euphrates; also other species such as Booted Eagle, Eurasian Golden Oriole and Citrine Wagtail can be expected during the migration periods. Pied Kingfisher and Pygmy Cormorant can be observed throughout the year in many spots along the river.



Map description:

1: The famous Owl Café; reliable spot for the Pallid Scops Owl. Driving the D400, take the first turnoff directly east of the bridge crossing the Euphrates. Follow

the street to the South. Take the first right in order to line-up parallel to the Euphrates. After a few hundred metres, you will find a walled park-like area with mostly dry fountains and a simple café/restaurant-building on your left-hand side. This place is known among birders as the Owl Café. You may enter and park on the northern side. The owls are resting in the densest trees during daytime, especially on the southern part of the walled area. You may find them hunting at night, in the light of the street-lamps, in the open park area south of the Café. Long-eared Owls can commonly be found too.

2: Northern Bald Ibis Centre at the entrance to a canyon. Northern Bald Ibises can be watched here all year.

3: Canyon, also known as the Ibis Canyon (inconspicuous access left of the Northern Bald Ibis Centre). Especially in the early morning, you may expect to see See-see Partridges here, by walking slowly through the canyon. Also, these can be observed on the surrounding hilly plateau. You can leave the canyon at various spots to the North and so arrive at the plateau. Other possible species here are Eurasian Eagle-Owl (carefully scan the ledges along the rock faces), Menetries's Warbler, Eastern Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Rock Sparrow and on the plateau Bimaculated Lark and Desert Finch. The presence of Desert Larks is reported irregularly in the canyon.

4: In the cliffs at the east bank of the Euphrates, Little Swifts, among others, can typically be seen breeding. They can also be observed in the surrounding area.

5: Ravine with many bushes in which Menetries's Warblers and hundreds of Sparrows, among them Dead Sea Sparrows, may be found. There are a few special places for Dead Sea Sparrows around Birecik. You will find them dispersed all over the area among hundreds of Spanish and House Sparrows, especially near water.

6: Pistachio plantation with Desert Finches and Yellow-throated Sparrows (the latter from May to August only). Access: Beyond the petrol station follow the track uphill, left of the small cement works. These species may also be found along the road to Halfeti 1-2km north of the petrol station.

7: About 40km (45 minutes driving) north of Birecik, the village of Halfeti can be found, located next to the Euphrates. It offers good observation points for viewing Little Swifts. Between the village and about 2km before the village, the road passes the eastern slopes of the Euphrates. At various spots along this stretch, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Menetries's Warbler and Finsch's Wheatear have regularly been found.

8: Kiyi Restaurant offers excellent cuisine with a view over the Euphrates and Birecik, with terns and Pied Kingfishers hovering over the river. In the evening hours, Long-eared Owls hunt in the surrounding area.

9: Gravel pits north of Birecik: the arrows point out the spots for the Iraq Babbler. The area offers stop-over habitat for many migratory birds such as raptors, doves, European Bee-eaters, waders, wagtails etc, as well as Black Francolins, herons, Pygmy Cormorants, occasionally Spur-winged Lapwings, many Pied Kingfishers and Dead Sea Sparrows. In the morning hours, Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse appear sporadically to drink. In the summer, watch out for Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters.

10: Another wadi with See-see Partridges behind the restaurant.

11: The open terrain south of the truck stop/bus station 1.2km east of the tunnel in Birecik is another spot for See-see Partridges.

12: Waste deposal. During migration periods, hundreds of gulls appear in the early morning hours. Beware of dogs!

13: The gardens south of Birecik are good for Dead Sea Sparrows. Other species that occur here are European Roller, Eurasian Turtle Dove, Eastern Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, etc.

14: Follow the dyke towards the South: Good for ducks, herons, waders and reed-dwelling birds.

15: Reed with Iraq Babblers.

Nemrut Dağı Adiyaman – Bird watching at the mountain of the gods

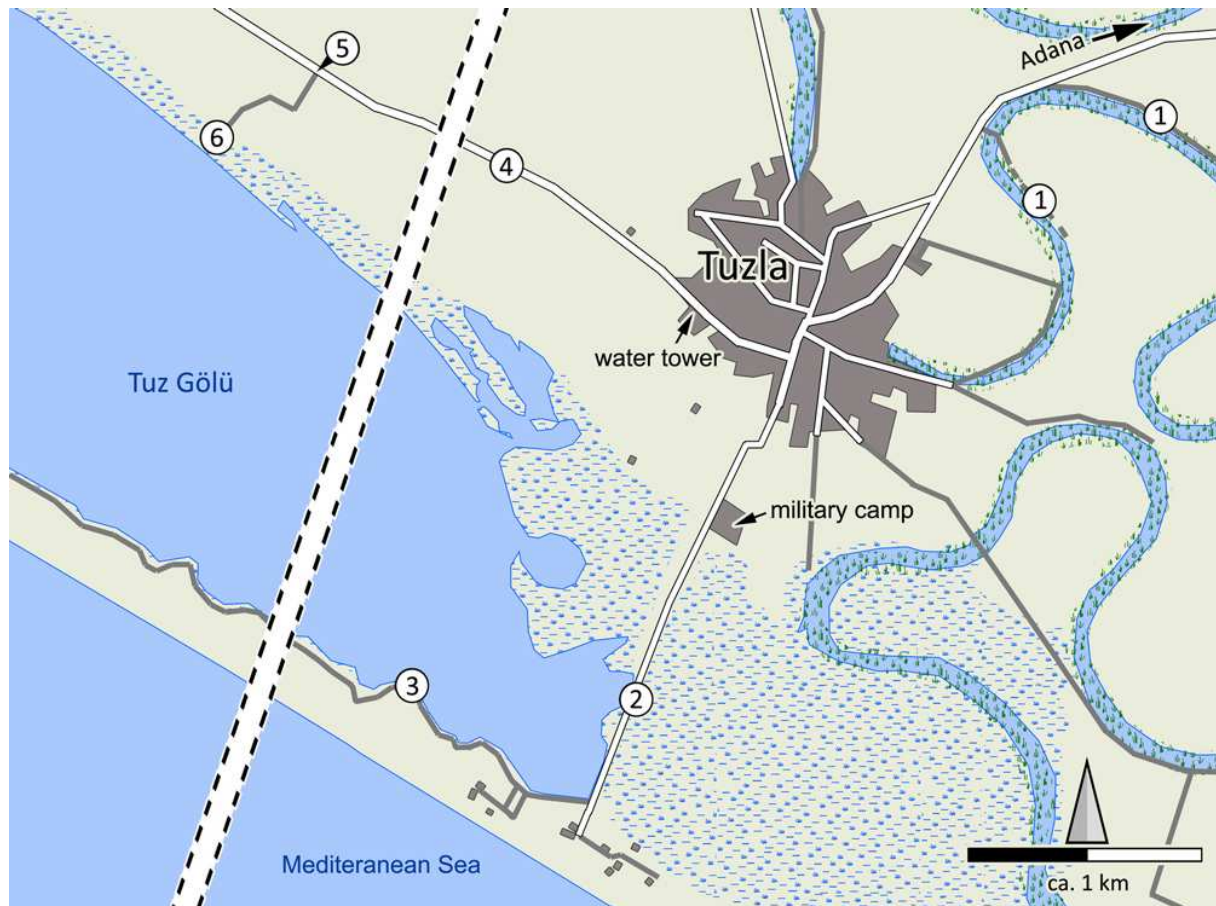
Those preparing an ornithological trip to Eastern Turkey may be confused about the fact that there are two places with the name, Nemrut Dağı: on the one hand, a volcano near Tatvan, west of the Van Lake, which is situated at the very East of Turkey, and, on the other hand, a mountain with the status of a World Cultural Heritage site in the province of Adiyaman. We are referring to the latter, which is about four hours drive from Birecik. As a part of the Taurus-Mountains, the 2150m high Nemrut Dağı is the highest peak of northern Mesopotamia. At its peak, a monumental combination of temple and tomb was built by king Antiochos I Theos of Kommagene (69-36 B.C.). Today, it is a popular tourist attraction, where marvellous sunsets und sunrises can be enjoyed. Nemrut Dağı, not only offers remarkable archaeological treasures, but also is home to large populations of much sought-after Red-tailed Wheatears and Cinereous Buntings (subspecies *semenowi*).

Two roads are leading up to the top of the mountain. Most will take the new toll road from Narince via Karadut. Accommodation is available at Pensions in Karadut, such as *Karadut Pansiyon*, as well as at two hotels between Karadut and the toll gate (Hotel *Euphrat* is cheap, clean and homely). Red-tailed Wheatear, as well as Cinereous Bunting, may commonly be found along the rocky slopes and shallow valleys beyond the toll gate. Lower areas have scattered trees along the slopes. These are home to Olive-tree Warblers which may be found along the very steep old road, which connects the worth-while archaeological site of Arsameia with the new toll road. Other interesting species, which can be found between lower elevations and the top of the mountain, are Finsch's Wheatear, White-throated Robin, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Upcher's Warbler, Western and Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Pale Rockfinch, Rock Sparrow, Crimson-winged Finch and Cretzschmar's Bunting.

Tarsus Delta – Easy access to White-throated Kingfishers

For those who happen to have a few hours of spare time at the beginning or end of their journey, there is an easily reachable spot to view White-throated Kingfishers and Pied Kingfishers close to Adana. Starting from the huge, centrally located Sabanci-Merkez-Mosque (the biggest in Turkey), follow road 815 leading south, towards Karataş. After about 8km, not long after leaving the city, cross a large canal. Just before crossing, you will pass a Pepsi Factory on your left. After the canal, immediately turn right and follow the canal, which is now on your right. When the main road turns left, stay parallel to the canal. Along the way, which eventually ends in a private property with a few barking dogs and very friendly people, you will have a good view of the canal and the Kingfishers.

This observation spot already lies within the Tarsus-Delta, in which the River Seyhan leads into the Mediterranean. The delta covers an area equivalent to that of the Nile delta and holds many good spots for waterfowl. One rewarding area is the lagoon Tuz Gölü near Tuzla, about 45 minutes drive from Adana. From Adana, take the same way as above for viewing the White-throated Kingfisher, by following road 815 south, towards Karataş. Halfway down to Karataş, turn right, in the direction to Tuzla. Some very good spots are indicated on the map.



Map description:

1: Tracks alongside a reedy backwater: Among other species, good for *Chlidonias*-terns, Collared Pratincole, waders, White-throated Kingfisher, rails and herons.

2: Mudflats on the right and left of the road. Good for waterfowl such as Greater Flamingos and waders.

3. Partly very sandy track along the Tuz Gölü. Good for waders and herons.

4. Arable land with European Roller, Collared Pratincole, Spur-winged Lapwing and Greater Short-toed Lark.

5: After a few kilometres, take the first road left (dirt track).

6: Productive mudflats with many ducks, waders, Collared Pratincole, gulls, terns and Greater Short-toed Larks.

Literature and Travel reports

The following are very good travel reports:

Web address	Author	Period
www.fssbirding.org.uk/turkey2008trip.htm	F.Simpson & L. Ketchen	June/July 2008
www.club300.se/Files/TravelReports/Turkiet2005-07_KMO.pdf	K. Malling Olsen	May 2005, 2006 & 2007
www.camacdonald.com/birding/tripreports/Turkey00.html	A. & K. Gancz	Aug./Sep. 2000
www.travelingbirder.com/birdwatching/birding_Turkey.php	U. & C. Svane	Currently 165 travel reports on Turkey

Donaghy, N. (2006): Iraq Babbler – a new breeding bird for Turkey. – *Birding World* 19, 7, 283-284.

Gosney, D. (1992): Finding Birds in Turkey – Ankara to Birecik. – D. Gosney, 32 pages. – still essential.

Green, I. & N. Moorhouse (1995): *Prion Birdwatcher's Guide to Turkey*, 122 pages. – good overview.

Kirwan, G.M., M. Özen & B. Demirci (2008a): Turkey Bird Report 2002-06. – *Sandgrouse* 30, 166-189.

Kirwan, G.M, K. A. Boyla, P. Castell, B. Demirci, M. Ozen et al. (2008b): The Birds of Turkey. – Christopher Helm, 512 pages. – the avifauna.

Murdoch, D., I. Andrews & R. Hofland (2004): The Syrian Wetland Expedition 2004: A summary. – *Sandgrouse* 26, 94-104.

Occhiato, D. (2001): Nemrud Dagi, Adiyaman, Turkey. – *Birding World* 14, 343-344.

Serra, G., M. Abdullah, A. Assaed, A. Abdallah, G. Al Qaim, T. Fayad & D. Williamson (2004): Discovery of a relict breeding colony of Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* in Syria. – *Oryx* 38, 106-108.