

# BirdWING Newsletter

Volume 1 Issue 8 Autumn/Winter 2010

In this issue news from:

- *Axios-Aliakmon-Loudias*
- *The Evros Delta*
- *The Keramoti Centre*
- *Lake Kerkini*



Bird Watching In Northern Greece

## The Birdwing Newsletter

...brings you regular news about birds and issues affecting them in Northern Greece. The newsletter is published in English and Greek and is distributed via email. Visitors' Centres print copies to be given to visitors.

**We hope you will forgive us** that this issue of the newsletter has been delayed and is not as full as we had hoped. We have been so busy writing the next edition of the book (see below) that something had to give! We promise that the spring edition will be fuller and more detailed to make up for it!

## Which cover won?



During the summer and autumn we have been busy writing the second edition of 'Birdwatching in Northern Greece'. This edition is much expanded from the first edition and has involved extensive travelling, lots of measuring, drawing maps, writing and checking. In order to decide on the cover photograph, we asked our members to vote.

Over **150** members voted and the voting was extremely tight. Two covers received almost identical numbers of votes! Find out on page 3 which shot won and now takes pride of place on the cover of the new book.

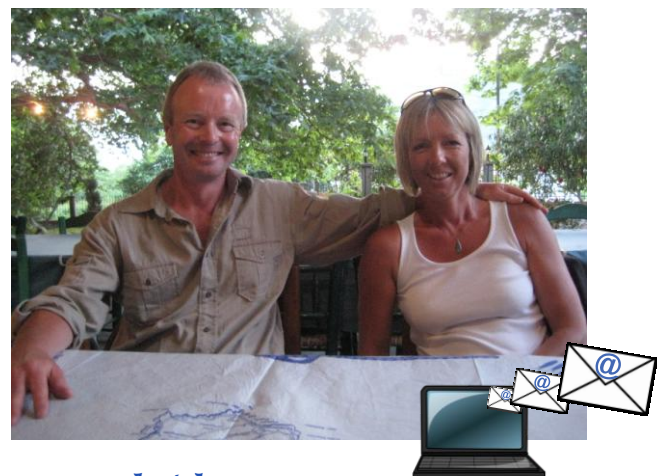


**See page 3 for more information on this and how to order your copy of the book.**

## Feedback!

We'd like to know your opinions about some of the issues in this newsletter. We outline several ideas for which we need the support of our members. We freely send out this newsletter to you, without asking for a subscription or membership fee, but we really would appreciate some feedback from you! A *quick email reply* to give your thoughts would be really valuable to us and enable us to move Birdwing forward in the direction that you all think is best.

Please read our **Birdwing Outlook** on page 5 and let us know your thoughts. Many thanks, as always, for caring about Greek birds and for supporting our work.



Steve and Hilary

[info@birdwing.eu](mailto:info@birdwing.eu)

## Hotel donations

The owners of a number of hotels recently made kind donations to Birdwing. We are grateful to Stergios and Filly from the Hotel Viglatoras, Ano Poroia, near Kerkini ([www.viglatoras.com](http://www.viglatoras.com)); to Makis Zefkidis from the Hotel Kyveli in the protected village Karyofyto in the Northern Nestos region ([www.kyveli-hotel.gr](http://www.kyveli-hotel.gr)); to Nectaria Nastou from the Nastou View Hotel, Ano Poroia, near Kerkini ([www.nastouview.gr](http://www.nastouview.gr)) and to the Hotel Petrinos Lofos near Mandra, Porto Lagos ([www.petrinoslofos.gr](http://www.petrinoslofos.gr))

Many thanks to you all!

## Autumn migration

This autumn saw a number of rare birds spotted in Northern Greece, including Terek Sandpiper (*Xenus cinereus*), Grey and Red-necked Phalaropes (*Phalaropus fulicarius* and *P. lobatus*) at the Axios/ Aliakmon/Loudias region. At the Evros Delta the ringing programme discovered Barred and River Warblers (*Sylvia borin* and *Locustella fluviatilis*) and a Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*), large numbers of Glossy Ibis (616), White Pelicans (550) and Ruddy Shelduck (30) were also counted at the Delta.

At Lake Kerkini in October a very unusual Griffon Vulture (*Gyps fulvus*) spent four days here before sadly colliding with power lines. Also counted on the 25th were 3220 Flamingos, 134 Spoonbills, 68 White-fronted Geese, 33 Lesser White-fronts, 14 Greylags, 1000 Dalmatian Pelicans, 1520 Avocets, 12 Spotted and 2 Lesser Spotted Eagles. November brought 187 White-fronted Geese, (*Anser albifrons*) 53 Lesser White-fronts (*A. erythropus*), 15 Greylags (*A. anser*) and a variety of raptors, including 2 White-tailed (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), 8 Spotted (*Aquila clanga*) and a late Lesser Spotted Eagle (*A. pomarina*) and 2 Peregrines (*Falco peregrinus*).



## Axios News

The Axios - Loudias - Aliakmon Management Agency have introduced free guided tours around the National Park. These monthly trips began in October and are encouraging people from the region to get to know the Park better. The tour involves a guided trip by minibus to Kalochori lagoon, the Environmental Park alongside the Gallokos River and the coastal embankment from Kalochori back towards Halastra.

The response has been excellent, with a large number of bookings from the residents of Thessaloniki and there have been requests for participation from Eginio, Veria, Katerini and elsewhere. The response has been so positive that, within a few days, all the places available for the coming months have been filled. There are plans to continue the initiative through next year and so the Agency invites anyone interested to send their application via the website of the Management Body ([www.axiosdelta.gr](http://www.axiosdelta.gr)), to book a place.

"The interest is pleasing and it also shows a new tendency of people living in urban areas to recognize the value of natural ecosystems that are found close to them. They want to learn more about these things and enjoy the beauty they offer. It was for us a very pleasant surprise," said Communications Manager of the Management Agency, Lia Papadranga.

## Tern raft thanks

We, as representatives of Birdwing, received this message of thanks from the National Park of Kerkini Lake and felt we must pass it on to all of you who have made donations and bought our books. Given the success of the raft this year with the breeding of at least 14 pairs of Common terns (*Sterna hirundo*) we hope to pay for further rafts in the future.

Kerkini, 17-11-2010

Dear Mr. Mills and Mrs. Koll,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Management Authority of Kerkini Lake, I would like to express my sincere thanking for your donation concerning the tern raft for the Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) which was installed at Mandraki and your help during the 22<sup>nd</sup> BirdFair in UK.

Hoping that our collaboration will continue in the future, you can rely on the support and good willing of the Management Authority towards your efforts.

Sincerely

Artemios Chatziathanasiou  
Head of the Board of Directors



## Bird Festival 2010

The sunny weather helped this year to make the Bird Festival in Nea Agathoupolis a great success. Dozens of young children enjoyed the games and activities, watched the wetland birds, and participated in raffles in aid of the Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS).

The Bird Festival is held every first Sunday of October at the purpose-built observation tower at New Agathoupolis and is organised by the Management Body of Axios - Loudias - Aliakmon and the HOS, with support from the Municipality of Methoni. It is an annual event that takes place in 24 European countries coordinated by Birdlife International.





# Birdwatching in Northern Greece – second edition

It was amazing to watch how the voting went as both cover 1 and 2 received an almost equal number of votes throughout much of the voting time, with **Cover 1** just squeezing ahead towards the end!

The voting:

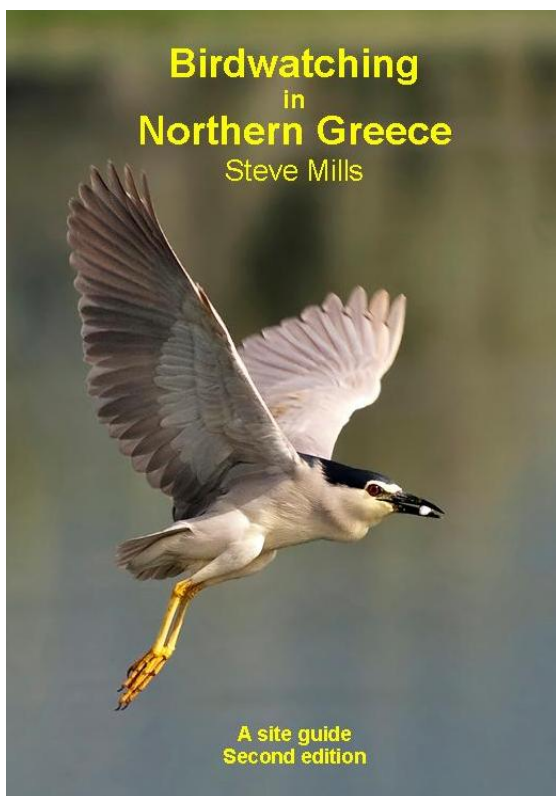


votes: 76                      71                      21

We hope those of you who voted for the others will not be too disappointed with the decision. Many of you gave valid reasons for choosing cover 2 and you will be pleased to know that the photo has been included inside the book.

Currently the manuscript is at the printers and copies are due to be sent to us before the end of December. We will let you know **as soon** as they arrive, so please be patient until we let you know!

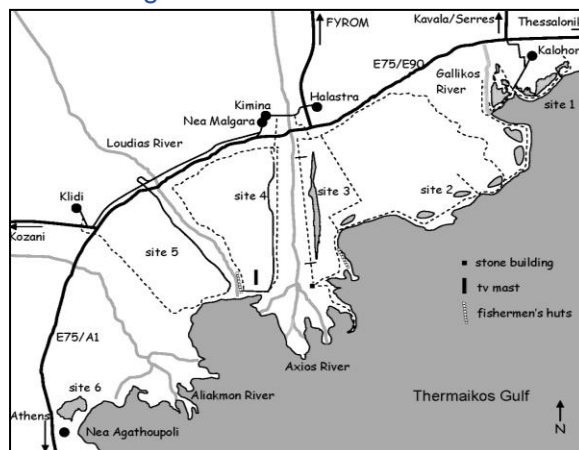
Thanks to all of you for voting and we hope you like the new edition.



The new edition of the book is a much enlarged book covering both North-eastern and North-western areas.

Here's a quick summary of the highlights of the new edition that has 75% more pages:

- Detailed information on the Amvrakikos, Kalamas and other sites on the Western Coast
- A large detailed section on the wonderful Prespa Lakes
- Better quality printing and binding (the last time we printed the books from our own office!)
- Detailed maps and descriptions of the areas around Thessaloniki, including the Axios-Aliakmon-Loudias region, Alikes Kitrous, Nea Agathoupoli and (on the eastern shore) Angelohori and the Epanomi lagoons
- GPS (Global Positioning System) data to be used by those with SAT NAVs or GPS equipment, such as those on mobile phones
- Information on Mount Pangeo (Pangaion) near Kavala and Lakes Koronia and Volvi
- 10 more sites in the Kerkini area and new sites in the Evros Hills
- Extended sections for Porto Lagos and the Nestos region
- Additional sites, including Mount Olympus, Lake Karla, the Rodopi and the Pindos Mountains.
- More detailed maps and directions throughout



Remember – all proceeds go towards helping birds in Northern Greece – so, if even if you've got a copy of the last book, don't miss out – buy this one too. The birds will appreciate it and you'll have many more places to explore on your visits to the special areas of Northern Greece.

We'll email you when the books become available. They will be available via our website at [www.birdwing.eu](http://www.birdwing.eu) at £18.99 plus £1 postage (from UK) or 22€ plus 1.20€ postage.

## Members' area

Here are a couple of websites that you might enjoy looking at:

- Thessaloniki-based Odysseus Tzimoulis has a blog at <http://nagr.blogspot.com> As a regular visitor to the Axios region Odysseus has made the initial sightings of several of this year's rarities, such as the Grey Phalarope earlier in the autumn and the recent Common Eider also seen there.
- Petros Petrou has an excellent photography blog at [www.ppetrou.gr](http://www.ppetrou.gr) He recently captured photos of the Common Eider at Axios and took pictures of the Grey and Red-necked Phalaropes there earlier in the autumn.



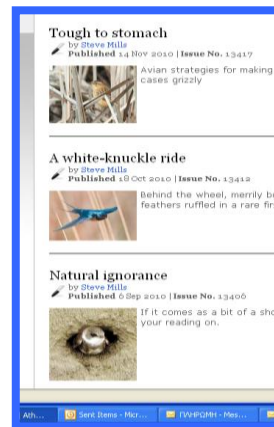
by Petros Petrou

## Keramoti Centre

In recent months the Information Centre in Keramoti, Nestos, has reopened. It is located behind the schools in Keramoti, near the water tower. We recently visited the staff there and would like to wish them all the best with their work. They are involved in working with local school children to help promote awareness of the local environment and in providing information to visitors to the area.



## Athens News



Many of you will know that Steve writes Birdwatch articles for the Athens News English-language newspaper. These are regular feature articles about birds in Greece. The paper has recently launched a new website and Steve's articles are currently available to be read for free.

If you would like to view these follow the link below and click to view each article:

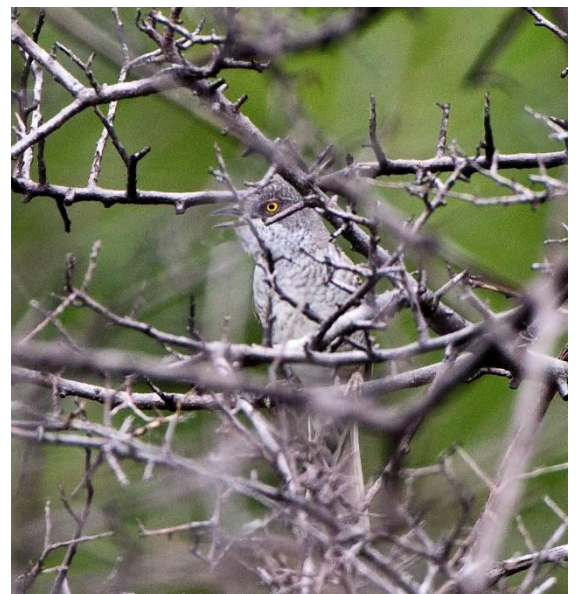
<http://www.athensnews.gr/author/2209>

## Last issue's quiz!

Bird A was a Spur-winged Plover (*Vanellus spinosus*).



Bird B, was a Barred Warbler (*Sylvia nisoria*) photographed at Prespa in the spring.



See page 6 for this issue's quiz!

Well done to Stefan Wegleitner, Roger Butts, Paschalis Dougalis, Sasa Michailidou, Michalis Kotsakis, Leo Tukker, John Barclay, Katherine Kyparissou and Yiannis Kakaletsis for their correct entries.





# Birdwing outlook

When we set up Birdwing, a little over 2 years ago, we did so with the following aims:

## 1) Raising awareness



- to bring more eco-tourists to the important birds areas of Northern Greece so that they become more valued and therefore protected
- to provide education for children and local people about birds

## 2) Raising money



- for direct habitat improvement to help birds whose habitats are at risk

## 3) Speaking out



- to publicise issues impacting on birds in Greece (strengthened by developing a large membership base)
- by writing to and emailing decision-makers

So, with these aims still at the centre of our decision-making we are keen to move forward with Birdwing and to develop a longer-term plan.

One option is to become a **registered charity**. The advantages of this are that we could approach larger businesses and a wider range of individuals for contributions and it would provide the organisation with a special tax status.

To become a UK charity an organization should show that they have an income of £5000 and have a board of trustees with a strong personal commitment to the charity's aims.

For Birdwing to move in this direction we think it would be necessary to have some degree of regular donations from members, such as a small annual donation of €10 or so. This, combined with income from book sales and other fund raising events, would ensure that we had a stable financial base.

## Just to remind you of some of Birdwing's achievements so far!

- a) producing eight Birdwing newsletters
- b) building a membership of over 500 supporters
- c) setting up and managing the Birdwing website, keeping it up-to-date with news and sightings



- d) writing, publishing and selling the book Birdwatching in Northern Greece
- e) building links with staff at Visitor Centres and with other environmental organizations
- f) conducting a questionnaire about action that should be taken to help Greek birds

- g) writing, designing & selling the 'Ο παιδικός οδηγός για τα πουλιά της Ελλάδας' book (The Children's Guide to Birds of Greece)



- h) continual lobbying through letters and emails to MEPs, Greek governmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals

- i) writing over 50 bird articles for the Greek Athens News English language newspaper



- j) being interviewed and appearing on ET3 TV news about illegal hunting
- k) attending British Birdwatching Fairs
- l) running a photography competition
- m) providing continual support and information to birdwatchers planning a visit to Greece
- n) paying for the construction of a Tern raft at Lake Kerkini

- o) appearing in a feature article in New York's 'National Herald' newspaper



- p) raising money for future projects through donations and book sales
- q) developing a **facebook** presence
- r) writing and publishing the second edition of Birdwatching in Northern Greece

*Is this a direction you think Birdwing should move towards? Would you be prepared to give a small annual (non-compulsory) donation towards helping Greek birds?*



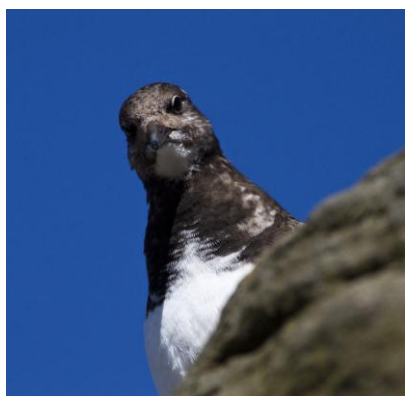
[info@birdwing.eu](mailto:info@birdwing.eu)

*We've only just begun but we need your help to make Birdwing grow more! Let us know of ways you think you could help and support us.*

## This issue's quiz!

Can you identify Bird A or Bird B or both?  
Email your entries to [quiz@birdwing.eu](mailto:quiz@birdwing.eu)

**Bird A** is a fairly common migrant to Greece.



The answers to last issue's quiz can be found on page 4.

The photograph of **Bird B** was taken in West Wood, Porto Lagos in September.



## A challenge!

In the Birdwing newsletter recently we mentioned that we are planning to produce packs of bird playing-cards showing a photo with the Greek, Latin and English names of common Greek birds. These cards are now underway and we're challenging you to choose the birds that will appear on the cards!



Let us know which birds you think should appear on which playing cards – it's harder than you might imagine to narrow it down (but is much more fun than Sudoku)!

When making your choices, please consider the following:

- try to include birds that Greek children are likely to see and be able to recognise
- try to include birds that are found all over Greece
- and most importantly, include the birds that are interesting and are special to Greece!

Which birds would you include? Which would you leave out?

Then consider the order of importance – which of the birds should be your 'Aces', 'Kings' and 'Queens' and so on? You might also decide to group birds into suits in a particular way – it's up to you!

Our intention is to eventually produce 2 packs of cards, one for larger birds and one for smaller birds, so, to begin with try choosing what you think are the best 52 **larger** birds of Greece.

Here are some suggestions to get you started.

	<b>Hearts</b>	<b>Diamonds</b>
<b>A</b>	White Stork	
<b>K</b>		White-tailed Eagle
<b>Q</b>		
<b>J</b>	Great White Egret	
<b>10</b>		
<b>9</b>		
<b>8</b>	Eagle Owl	Kestrel
<b>7</b>		
<b>6</b>		
<b>5</b>		
<b>4</b>		Grey Heron
<b>3</b>		
<b>2</b>	Hooded Crow	

	<b>Clubs</b>	<b>Spades</b>
<b>A</b>	Black Vulture	Dalmatian Pelican
<b>K</b>		
<b>Q</b>		Short-toed Eagle
<b>J</b>	Flamingo	
<b>10</b>		
<b>9</b>		Buzzard
<b>8</b>		
<b>7</b>	Spoonbill	
<b>6</b>		Hoopoe
<b>5</b>		
<b>4</b>		
<b>3</b>		
<b>2</b>		

Email your list to us at [cards@birdwing.eu](mailto:cards@birdwing.eu)  
Feel free to send any explanations for your choices along with your lists.  
We look forward to receiving your entries!



## Environmental Education at Evros

The Evros Delta Visitor Centre has been in constant operation since 1997. Right from the first day it was considered vital to implement educational projects to raise public awareness for the protection of the environment and more specifically of the wetland of the Evros Delta.

At the beginning, the educational activities were very simple, providing information for students and teachers about the area and its important features, followed by a tour of the wetland.

Gradually staff at the Centre came to realise that to raise public awareness, especially in the local school children, the implementation of more complex activities and longer term projects were needed.

Here are some of the educational activities implemented as part of National and European Programs, or through the activities of the Evros Delta Management Body.

- **Creation of the “Suitcase for the Evros Delta”.** It was produced during the LIFE Project “Restoration and Conservation Management of Drana Lagoon” and contains educational activities for school children to be carried out in the Visitor Centre or in schools as it can be borrowed and sent all over the country.
- **Eurosite award.** In 2003 the Visitor Centre was awarded a prize for their educational projects during the celebration of “Green Days”. The prize was given for the final presentation of the yearly project that was implemented during 2002 – 2003 with four schools of the area with the title “Drana: The History of a Lagoon”.
- **EPEAEK Project.** For the school year 2007 – 2008 the Management Body was financed by the Ministry of Education to implement “Environmental Education Programs in the Protected Area of Evros Delta”. During this project children participated in daily or yearly projects of Environmental Education, while there was the opportunity to produce and print material such as a bird identification guide for children, a leaflet about the educational projects in Evros Delta and posters that were distributed in schools all over the country.



- **Meetings for educators.** With the co – operation of the Ministry’s Local Departments of Primary and Secondary Education and environmental organisations, meetings were organised for the educators of the area and for the staff of the local Visitor Centres.
- **Celebration Days.** Each year the Visitor Centre celebrates with activities, in co-operation with Greek and International organisations: the World Wetlands Day, the Swallows Day (building of nests), the Green Days, the International Day for the Environment and the Birdwatching Fair.
- **Yearly Educational Projects.** These projects are designed for the schools of the area that are interested in Evros Delta and are implemented throughout the school year. They are adapted to suit the needs of each class. Many visits are made in the wetland and the children are able to learn about Evros Delta, through games, presentations, interviews with locals and also through team work.

Through this winter our work will continue with an Environmental Education Program for the children of 2<sup>nd</sup> Primary School of Alexandroupolis, as well as a daily program for visitors, while later one more meeting for the educators and the printing of educational material are scheduled.

*Eleni Makrigianni*

## Embankment repairs!

You’ll also be pleased to hear that the embankments at the Evros that were cut when there was extensive flooding last winter are currently being repaired. This will make getting around much easier again.





## Kerkini news!

This year's **Festival of Birds in Lake Kerkini** was successfully celebrated in October. Young and old gathered in the port of Mandraki for birdwatching. Many families visited and toured the area, went birdwatching with telescopes and binoculars and participated in the events prepared by the Management Authority of Lake Kerkini.

In the late summer the Management Authority of Lake Kerkini attended the **British Birdfair 2010**. We are the only Greek presence at the international exhibition held every year at Rutland Water in England. The presence of the Management Authority of Lake Kerkini in this global event is very important. Our staff provided information to visitors about Lake Kerkini as well as activities available in the area. For meeting birdwatchers this place is ideal. Our great joy was that so many English people have visited the region and many consider the region as one of the best in Europe for birdwatching. Our staff returned from England with very good impressions and experiences that will help us do our job better.

*Kostas Papadopoulos*

## Website links ...

Official websites of some of the important sites of Northern Greece:

Axios-Aliakmon-Loudias [www.axiosdelta.gr](http://www.axiosdelta.gr)

Evros Delta [www.evros-delta.gr](http://www.evros-delta.gr)

Kerkini [www.kerkini.gr](http://www.kerkini.gr)

Lakes Koronia and Volvi [www.foreaskv.gr](http://www.foreaskv.gr)

Dadia [www.dadia-np.gr](http://www.dadia-np.gr)

SPP at Prespa [www.SPP.gr](http://www.SPP.gr)

Prespa [www.fdedp.gr](http://www.fdedp.gr)

Amvrakikos [www.amvrakikos.eu](http://www.amvrakikos.eu)

Rodia Wetlands [www.rodiawetlands.gr](http://www.rodiawetlands.gr)

Nestos/Vistonidis/Ismarida  
[www.fd-nestosvistonis.gr](http://www.fd-nestosvistonis.gr)

Olympus [www.olympusfd.gr](http://www.olympusfd.gr)

Rodopi mountains [www.fdor.gr](http://www.fdor.gr)

## Appeal for help – Samos



One of our members, Phil Knott, has recently started a 3 month placement with Archipelagos, Institute of Marine Conservation at Ormos-Marathakampou on Samos. He has been asked to initiate bird surveys of Samos, to discover what is breeding on the island, what is wintering, and what is using the island to rest on migration.

Do you know of any keen birdwatchers on Samos, or where Phil can find information about the breeding birds here? If you can be of any assistance to him, please let us know.

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## Did you know...?

...that if everybody who subscribes to this free email were to donate 1€, once and only once, that sum would pay for the construction of a tern raft in one of Greece's wetlands? ...Or to pay for children in the Dadia region to be given educational books to help prevent vulture poisoning?

...that if everyone reading this gave 30€ a year Birdwing could begin to consider buying pieces of disused land at the Evros Delta to enlarge areas of wet meadows?

Do you have ideas for how we could be helping Greek birds? If you do, please let us know.  
[info@birdwing.eu](mailto:info@birdwing.eu)

## And finally thanks ...

As always we would like to thank those who helped us to produce this newsletter. Thanks to **Eleni Makrigianni** and **Ioannidis Panagiotis** at the Evros Delta, **Lia Papadranga** from Axios, **Angeliki Dimaki**, **Kostas Papadopoulos** at Kerkini, and all the staff members at the Information Centres across Northern Greece who have provided us with information. Thanks again to the people who have donated money and those who give us lots of support in what we are trying to do and to anyone else we have failed to mention.

We would also like to send a personal 'Thank you' to **Vasilis** and the staff at the Porto Lagos Centre for their invaluable help when our car recently broke down on a visit there!