

BirdWING Newsletter

Issue 12 Spring 2012

In this issue news from:

- Axios/Aliakmon/Loudias
- Lake Kerkini
- Evros Delta
- Porto Lagos/Nestos



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.

News!

We are pleased to announce that Birdwing has funded a second tern platform in the National Park Axios - Loudias - Aliakmonas.

The similar Birdwing raft, at Mandraki, Kerkini, has been successfully used by Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) for the last three years since its construction. The new platform is sited in the Gallikos estuary and only a week after it was finished has already been adopted by 30 Common Terns. Many thanks to all of you for helping this to happen through your donations and book sales.

Read more about this on page 7.



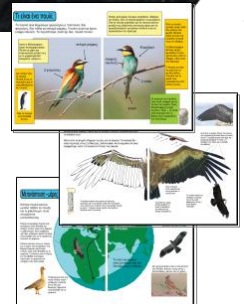
We are also pleased to announce the launch of the **new Birdwing website!**

We hope that the new site will be more accessible to our supporters and we are excited about new features we have been able to include. Find out more on page 3.



Birdwing books for Greek schools

In our last issue we advertised 'Free books for schools'. Since then we received nominations from [surprisingly] only three of Birdwing's supporters and have sent out free copies of *Ο παιδικός οδηγός για τα πουλιά της Ελλάδας* (The Children's Guide to Birds of Greece) to schools in Kilikis, Samos and Prespa. Read more about this on page 3.



Birdwing winner!

We are pleased to announce the winner of the prize draw as **Heidi Braatz** from Marathon, Greece. She wins an original painting by famous wildlife artist, Paschalis Dougalis. Thanks to her and all other entrants for their generous donations.



Bird news round-up

March at **Lake Kerkini** saw the departure of the Cranes (*Grus grus*) in mid-month, their numbers having reached an impressive 34. With their departure came the first of the spring arrivals - White Pelicans (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*), Hoopoes (*Upupa epops*), White Storks (*Ciconia ciconia*), Black-tailed Godwits (*Limosa limosa*), Little Ringed Plovers (*Charadrius dubius*), Black Storks (*Ciconia nigra*) etc. From 17.00-18.00 on the 14th more than 1300 Ruffs (*Pugnax pugnax*) were in flight along the river. By the end of the month Caspian Terns (*Sterna caspia*), Purple Herons (*Ardea purpurea*), Black-winged Stilts (*H. himantopus*), Squacco Herons (*Ardeola ralloides*), Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) etc. as well as an early Woodchat Shrike (*Lanius senator*) on the 9th arrived at the lake.

The first Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*) arrived on the 20th, joining 5 White-tailed Eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), together with the regular pair of Golden (*Aquila chrysaetos*), with subsequent arrivals of Short-toed Eagles (*Circaetus gallicus*) and Honey Buzzards (*Pernis apivorus*). Spring passage continued in **April**, with 3 Montagu's Harriers (*Circus pygargus*) on the 13th, together with 2 Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) and 2 Masked Shrikes (*Lanius nubicus*), while the following day saw the arrival of a Booted Eagle (*Hieraaetus pennatus*), 2 Caspian (*Sterna caspia*) and an early White-winged Tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*). In early **May** Black-necked Grebes (*Podiceps nigricollis*) were much in evidence,



Lesser Grey Shrikes (*Lanius minor*) were busy nest-building and Olive-tree Warblers (*Hippolais olivetorum*) were singing near Himmaros.

April at the **Evros Delta** brought 4 Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*), 1030 Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), 500 Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*), 210 Gull-billed Tern (*Sterna nilotica*), 210 White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) and plenty of waders, including 39 Spur-wings (*Vanellus spinosus*), 298 Ruff (*Pugnax pugnax*), 270 Spotted Redshank (*T. erythropus*), 198 Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*), 229 Black-winged Stilt (*H. himantopus*), 198 Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*), 365 Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*), 250 Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*), 840 Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), 78 Marsh Sandpiper (*Tringa stagnatilis*), 14 Collared Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*) and the first Isabelline Wheatear (*Oenanthe isabellina*) of the year on the 5th.

May has begun with plenty of good birds at Evros, including Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*), Red-footed Falcon (*Falco tinnunculus*), Long-legged Buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*), Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), Collared Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*) and Red-throated Pipit (*Anthus cervinus*).



March at **Axios** saw the arrival of over 50 Garganey (*Anas querquedula*), along with the first Little Ringed Plovers (*Charadrius dubius*) and Lesser Spotted Eagles (*Aquila pomarina*). Some 800 tringa sp. waders were on the shore and 2500 Med Gulls (*Larus melanocephalus*) were counted. **April** sightings include Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), Spur-winged Plover (*Vanellus spinosus*), Pygmy Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pygmeus*), Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*), Marsh Sandpiper (*Tringa stagnatilis*), Slender-billed Gull (*Larus genei*), Caspian (*Sterna caspia*) and Gull-billed Terns (*Sterna nilotica*) on the 12th. Three Stone Curlew (*Burhinus oedipnemos*), Short-toed Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*) and Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) had arrived on the 17th.

Photos by Steve Mills

Thanks to the Evros, Kerkini and Axios Management Bodies for providing additional data.

Keep up to date with sightings at our website, www.birdwing.eu



Find us on Twitter!

If you are on Twitter, follow us at [www.twitter.com/birdwingeu](https://twitter.com/birdwingeu)

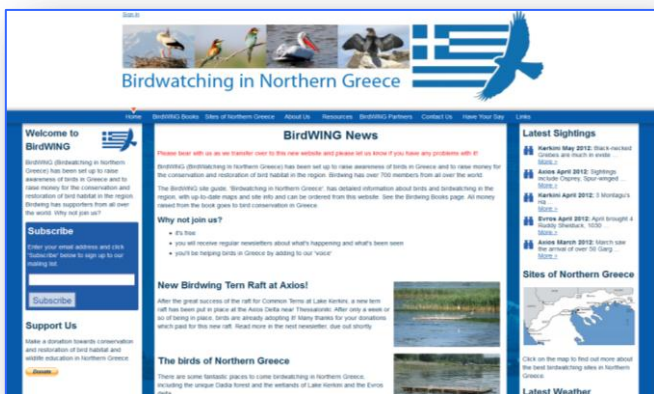




New Birdwing website

We are pleased to announce the new Birdwing website which went online this week. The site has new features including 'Have your say', 'Latest sightings', an interactive map and a new area for Birdwing Partners, together with closer links to social networks. It also shows the global locations of visitors to our site from all around the world.

We have already received a lot of positive feedback about the site and would value any further comments you have.



Go www.birdwing.eu to see the new site!

Children's Guide to the birds of Greece

This photo shows the 6th Primary School of Kilkis with their free copies of the Birdwing book *Ο παιδικός οδηγός για τα πουλιά της Ελλάδας* (The Children's Guide to Birds of Greece)

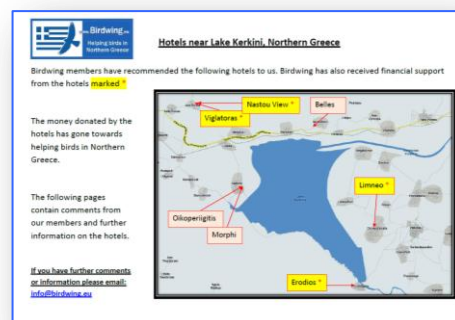


Going to Lake Kerkini?

If you are travelling to Lake Kerkini and are looking for a hotel, we have a new leaflet giving our supporters' feedback on local hotels and providing information about those hotels that have supported Birdwing.

Go to our Resources page on our new website and download the pdf leaflet. If you have further information on any hotels you have stayed at, either at Kerkini or elsewhere, please let us know so that we can keep the leaflet as updated as possible and create others.

www.birdwing.eu/resources



Own an original painting by Paschalis Dougalis!

Wildlife artist, Paschalis Dougalis, has made a generous donation of some of his original bird paintings to Birdwing to help us raise money for future conservation projects.

In order to gain maximum benefit from his generous donation we would like to run an auction for the three paintings shown here, which we will supply framed.

It would be wonderful, dear friends, if you would be willing to make a bid for one or more of these original paintings.

Simply email us simply stating your bid for:

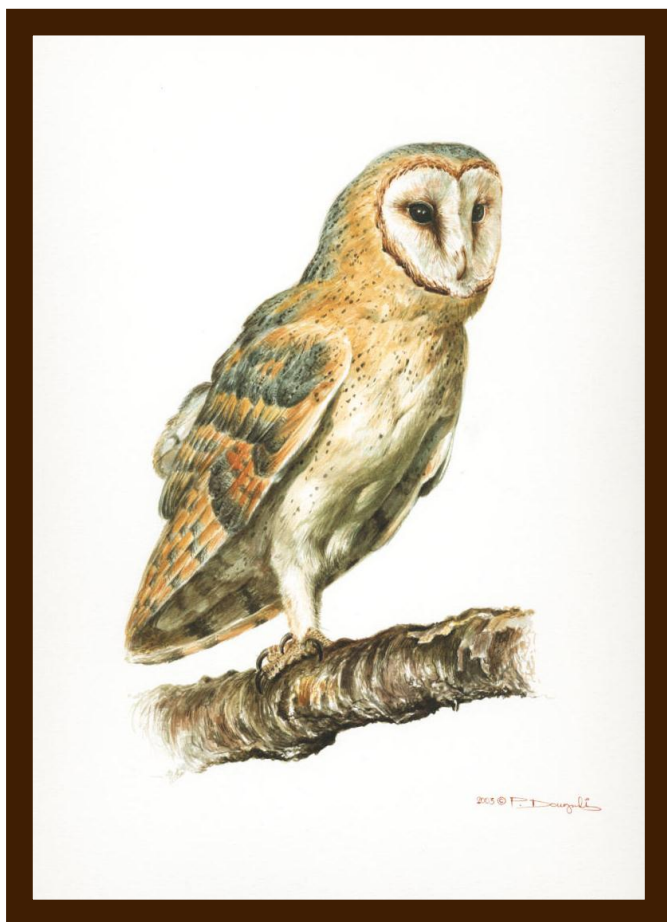
**Painting 1 (Common Buzzard),
Painting 2 (Barn Owl)
or Painting 3 (Goldcrests)**

We have already had a bid of £30 for one of the pictures. So please be generous and we look forward to your bids as soon as possible.

A perfect gift for a loved-one, perhaps, whilst helping birds and their habitats in Greece.



Picture 1 (Common Buzzard)



Picture 2 (Barn Owl)



Picture 3 (Goldcrests)

Bence Máté

During a visit to Kerkini in February we were lucky enough to meet up with **Bence Máté**, the world famous wildlife photographer from Hungary. We'd met before, at the Wildlife Photographer of the Year awards in London in October, where both Bence and Steve were winners. It's always good to see a top photographer in action, and Bence is one of the very best.

For many photographers just wandering around, hoping to chance upon opportunities, is enough, but not for Bence. He always has a plan. Last year, for example, also at Kerkini, he set out to get shots of Dalmatian Pelicans lunging towards the camera and one of these shots formed part of his winning portfolio in London.



This year he aimed take this shot one step further and so set out from Hungary by car carrying an inflatable dinghy, outboard motor, inflatable swimming pool, carbon filtration equipment, generator and a home-made underwater camera system. Problems started immediately when, at the border, his explanation of what he was doing wasn't accepted and he was refused access into Serbia. This meant two whole days spent heading east through Romania trying to find a way across the frozen Danube!

On arrival at Kerkini his intention was to photograph the pelicans when they were taking fish from beneath the surface of

the water. This involved towing out the pool and filling it with cleaned water, getting the underwater lighting and camera in place, attracting the pelicans into the pool and getting pictures as the birds reached down to take fish he was providing through a pipe. This, it seems to me, is pretty serious dedication.



Initially hoping to attract just a couple of birds, and perhaps even then only after they had spent time becoming familiar with the strange floating pool, Bence hadn't reckoned on Kerkini's pelicans. These birds have become used to feeding on fishermen's discards in close proximity to people. Within seconds the pool was a thrashing mass of birds with the result that the water was turned into a cauldron of foam and almost immediately became too dirty to take underwater pictures. And each change of water then took 18 hours! This was indeed a labour of love which ultimately took several weeks, but it shows both the dedication and lengths to which top photographers will go to for the shots they want.



We were together during the early stages of this project and haven't seen the results, but, if they match the perseverance and commitment that went into it, they will be spectacular.



For more of Bence's work see:

www.matebence.hu/

www.hidephotograph.com

www.nhm.ac.uk/visit-us/whats-on/temporary-exhibitions/wpy/photo.do?photo=2684&category=15&group=3

Bence and his team were at the Hotel Limneo in Chryshorafa for the length of their stay.

Shocking news about injured birds in the winter

On 10th February 2012 some Birdwing supporters visited Porto Lagos and discovered a collection of dead and injured birds, including Dalmatian Pelicans, Great White Egrets and Pygmy Cormorants. A shallow grave had been dug and contained bodies of dead birds. They inspected one of the injured Dalmatian Pelicans which was unable to move but no outward injuries were visible. They informed us and we sent the information and the photographic evidence to groups and organisations in Greece, who have been liaising with local fishermen to solve these problems. One of the injured birds was found to have been ringed as adult on 20th of December 1998, near the harbour of Lithotopos.

More incidents of poaching were observed in Evros Delta during 2011-2012 hunting season. At 15/12/2011, the guards of Evros Delta Management Agency found an injured Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) in Voidadiko, north of Drana lagoon. The bird was sent at the rehabilitation center in Thessaloniki (Action for Wildlife). It was x-rayed and shots were found in the wing.

In 2011, the Evros Delta Management Agency received 23 injured birds from Evros Delta and the area around Alexandroupolis of which 9 were shot (5 Buzzards, the Peregrine Falcon, 1 Sparrowhawk, 1 Little Bittern and 1 Shelduck – all of them non hunting birds).

In addition to these shocking and sad incidents there was a terrible case of poisoning in late February in the Nestos Gorge, in the ruins of an abandoned village. Staff of the west Rodopes National park authority discovered two dead horses, deliberately killed and laced with poison. The one that looked fresher was skinned skillfully and the poison was spread on muscles and soft tissues. The count of dead birds included at least 2 Griffon Vultures (with estimates that up to 40 could have been killed), 4 Golden Eagles, 1 Common Buzzard.

For further information go to:

www.europeanraptors.org/documents/Press_Release_Nestos_Poisoning_engl.pdf

These incidents alone show how important it is that organisations like Birdwing continue to grow in influence.

If you encounter any evidence of illegal injuries to birds please let us know as soon as you can so that we can take immediate action.



New Birdwing tern raft at Axios!

We're pleased to announce that Birdwing has funded a new breeding raft for Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) in the Axios region.



Assisted by people from Lake Kerkini and funded by your donations the raft was constructed and placed in the Gallikos estuary at the end of April.



Thanks to all the personnel of the Management Authority for their assistance in this project and to all those who made donations towards it. Already, in the first week of May, 30 Common Terns have already been seen on the raft.

Publication delay

Due to unforeseen circumstances, there has been a delay in the publication of Steve's new photography book which now looks set to be available in the autumn.

If you have any further comments on your favourite birdwatching sites in Northern Greece please contact us and we will try to include your comments.

Spring 2012



Editor's comment

It's been interesting to see the spread of locations of visitors to our new website over a couple of days! From as far afield as China, Turkey, Kenya and the US to European countries such as Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland, it seems that people from all around the world care about Greek birds.



1	Greece	May 13, 2012	50.46%	110
2	United Kingdom	May 12, 2012	33.49%	73
3	Germany	May 12, 2012	5.50%	12
4	Netherlands	May 10, 2012	1.83%	4
5	Slovakia	May 9, 2012	0.92%	2
6	Switzerland	May 9, 2012	0.92%	2
7	Spain	May 11, 2012	0.92%	2
8	United States	May 11, 2012	0.92%	2
9	Kenya	May 12, 2012	0.92%	2
10	Romania	May 6, 2012	0.46%	1
11	Malta	May 9, 2012	0.46%	1
12	China	May 10, 2012	0.46%	1
13	Austria	May 10, 2012	0.46%	1
14	Sweden	May 10, 2012	0.46%	1
15	Belgium	May 11, 2012	0.46%	1
16	Turkey	May 11, 2012	0.46%	1
17	Ireland	May 12, 2012	0.46%	1
18	Poland	May 12, 2012	0.46%	1

As our membership grows and we begin to contact more people through social websites etc. we're hopeful that more and more people will begin to add to our voice. Please pass on this newsletter or our details to those you know who are interested in Greece and nature. Let's see if we can gather even more support from all around the world!

Steve Mills

Last issue's quiz!

Last issue's birds caused a great deal of confusion and many of the entrants only correctly identified one out of the two birds.

The first bird was a Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*). The second bird was a Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

Thanks to all entrants. Only three, however, got them both right!

Well done to:

**John Barclay,
Arno van Berge
Henegouwen and
Paschalis Dougalis**



See page 8 for this issue's quiz!

Birdwing News – 7

Simultaneous midwinter counts in the Greek and Turkish parts of the Evros Delta

After many years of midwinter counts of waterfowl in Evros Delta, it is the first time that this has taken place in the Greek and Turkish side simultaneously.

Notable observations on the Greek Delta were 18 Little Bustards (*Tetrax tetrax*), 39.000 Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), 1,500 Whooper Swans (*Cygnus cygnus*), 2.780 Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*), 11 Spotted Eagles (*Aquila clanga*) and 4 White-tailed Eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*).

Similarly, on the Turkish side 126 Dalmatian Pelicans (*Pelecanus crispus*), 3.300 Teals (*Anas crecca*), 8.500 Coots (*Fulica atra*), 3 Goosanders (*Mergus merganser*), 3 White-tailed Eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) and much to our surprise 1 Lesser Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus minor*) species, were reported.

Angelidis Marinos



Photo A Athanasiadis

OrnithoTopos Greek Worldbirds



Some of you may be familiar with this website at www.worldbirds.org/v3/greece.php

OrnithoTopos is an Internet-based spatial database about birds, their science and their distribution, that allows users from anywhere in the world to input and query Greek bird data. The system provides the facility to download data into Excel and analyse them for personal requirements.

Supported by Birdlife international, the RSPB and the Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS) it is a valuable tool for reporting sightings and sharing information.

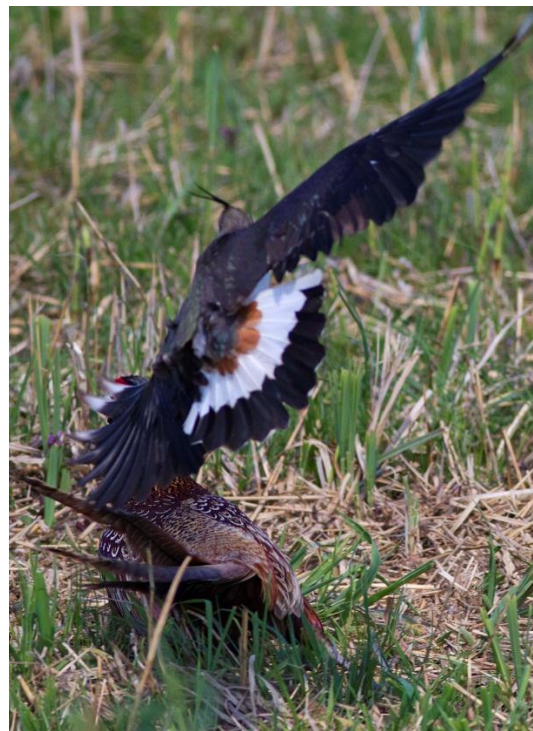
Birdwing News – 8

This issue's quiz!

Can you identify these birds taken in Greece? The first is a beautiful photo taken by Tasos Bounas, one of our supporters.



The second is a recent interaction between two birds. Can you name both of them?



Email us at quiz@birdwing.eu with your answers.

And finally thanks ...

Thanks to **Paschalis Dougalis** for his donation of paintings, **Lia Papadranga** from Axios, **Angeliki Dimaki**, **Kostas Papadopoulos**, **Theodoros Naziridis** at Kerkini, the staff of the SPP from Prespa, **Roula Trigou** from the Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS), WWF Dadia, **Eleni Makrigianni**, **Angelidis Marinos** and **Ioannidis Panagiotis** at the Evros Delta, and all the staff members at the Centres across Northern Greece who have provided us with information.

And, as always, thanks to anyone else we have failed to mention.
Spring 2012