

# BirdWING News - Keeping you in touch with birds in Greece

Issue 16 Autumn/Winter 2013

## In this issue news from:

- Lake Kerkini
- Evros Delta
- Axios/Aliaikmon/Loudias
- Dadia Forest
- Vistonidis/Ismarida/Nestos

[www.birdwing.eu](http://www.birdwing.eu)



## New-look newsletter

We're happy to be bringing you our news of birds in Northern Greece in a new-look newsletter this autumn.

For the first time we're also sending our main news stories in HTML form for those who prefer to access information via links directly to our website. Let us know what you think. See page 4.

### Welcome to our **new supporters!**

Birdwing is devoted to raising awareness of the birds in Northern Greece and protecting their habitats

## Do the right thing & give to Birdwing!

It's always very encouraging when our supporters give to Birdwing to enable us to continue with projects in Greece.

We're appealing for funding for new projects at Lake Kerkini. Donate via our website or if you prefer to make a bank transfer email us for details.



## New Birdwing projects at Lake Kerkini

We're excited to be announcing three new projects at Lake Kerkini!

The **first**, and smallest of the projects, is to fund some raptor posts in the inner part of the lake on the eastern side.

Some of the larger dead trees in the drowned forest have fallen and fewer of the kind of posts favoured by large raptors are available.

It is now several years since your donations paid for a breeding raft for Common Terns near the magical Mandraki. It is time for renovation and for the **second** of the new projects we have agreed to enlarge the raft considerably and to place the new platform a little closer to the shore, to make watching the terns more special.

The **third** of the projects is more ambitious as we seek to begin to reverse the loss of the large areas of water lilies (*Nymphaea alba*), that were formerly in the lake and which have now largely died out. As recently as 1990 the lilies covered an area of **330 hectares**, but by 2004 less than one half of a hectare existed!

The sharp increases in the height of the water level of the lake during the growing season means that the plants cannot keep up. The lily pads were vital for the breeding of Whiskered and other marsh terns, together with Black-necked Grebes.

The new project, which includes a trial-phase, aims to provide submerged suspended platforms for the lilies to grow on, at a suitable height below the surface. The platforms will rise and fall with the fluctuating levels of the lake, providing sufficient stability for the growing lilies.

Support us in these actions! Click [here](#) and use the donate button on our website to give.



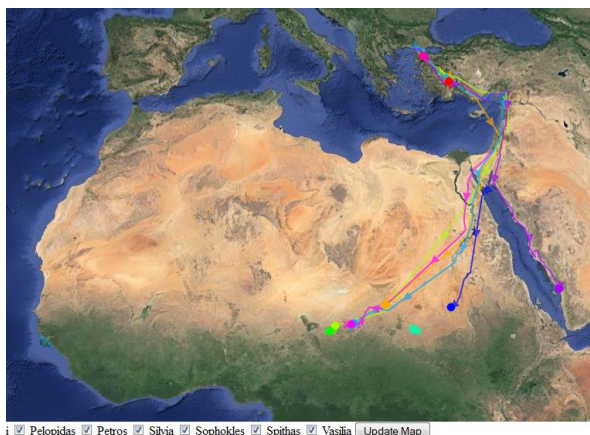
Donate

## Greek birds Satellite-tagged

This summer a number of birds have been satellite-tagged in Greece and their migration progress can be tracked online.

White Stork chicks from Northern Greece were tagged and those tagged near the Evros Delta can be followed here:

<http://www.evros-delta.gr/map.html>



Also as part of 'The Return of the Neophron' project Egyptian Vultures (*Neophron percnopterus*) from Bulgaria and Greece were tagged. Follow their progress here:

<http://lifeneophron.eu/en/Tagging.html>

## Donation thanks!

Many thanks to David Tomlinson from Gourmet Birds for the generous donation to Birdwing following successful trips to Greece this year. Thanks also to NG, RB, SM, TM, TC, PC and MWW for your ongoing regular support, which serves as vital encouragement to us in times of frustration! Many thanks also to Athanasios Tsoukas, from the Hotel Fanari, for his donation to Birdwing. We are very grateful to all of you for your support.



## Butterfly focus

### Little Tiger Blue (*Tarucus balkanicus*)

The Little Tiger Blue is the only member of the Tiger Blue (*Tarucus*) family in Greece, which makes identification relatively easy. The only real possibility for mistaking it with another species is the moderately similar Lang's Short-tailed Blue, but really, only the untrained eye would actually confuse the two!

It is very small, with a wingspan of just 10-20mm. It also has a tendency to fly low and fast, which can make observing it quite a challenge. This, according to eminent Greek lepidopterist Lazaros Pamperis, is believed to be a possible contributing factor to its fairly narrow known distribution in Greece. North Greece is the best place to see it, so wherever you travel in the region it is worth keeping an eye out for.



The male has a violet-blue upperside, whilst the female upperside is brown with some blue on the wing bases. Both sexes have small tails. The underside of both sexes are white and sport the striping which gives it the 'tiger' name, along with the attractive jewel like studs on the hindwing, akin to those adorning the Silver-studded Blue.

If you want to see it the adult is on the wing between April - October and has two generations. The habitat to search is grass and scrub filled places where the larval food plant is present - *Paliurus spina-christi* commonly known as Christ's Thorn or Crown of Thorns. This is often to be found at fairly low altitude such as foothills to mountains. Despite the often high accumulation of food plant at a given location, the butterfly is never seen in high numbers and a sighting is therefore always a joy!

Thanks to Matt Berry from Greenwings Wildlife Tours for this article. [www.greenwings.co](http://www.greenwings.co)



## Special sightings in Greece



These snatched photos below show a Golden Eagle dropping a tortoise from a great height and following it down as it fell at exactly the same pace. The bird, watched by its mate skillfully pulling out of the dive as the tortoise hit the ground and was smashed. Tortoises are a common food for Golden Eagles who access the meat in this way.



During late spring we witnessed a surprising moment of a Levant's Sparrowhawk having snatched a Golden Oriole chick from its nest, being frantically mobbed by its distressed parent.



This Little Bittern found was feeding on large tadpoles in a channel not far from the Limneo hotel, Lake Kerkini. See more images at [stemills-birdphotography.com](http://stemills-birdphotography.com)

Why not send us your own special sightings for the next newsletter? We'd love to see them! [info@birdwing.eu](mailto:info@birdwing.eu)

## Last issue's quiz!

Picture A is a Collared Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*) and picture B a Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella brachydactyla*).

Congratulations to those who sent in correct entries.



# We need your feedback!

We would like your help in giving us feedback on the Birdwing website and our newsletter. Either email us your responses, e.g. 1B, 2C etc. to [feedback@birdwing.eu](mailto:feedback@birdwing.eu) or go to [www.birdwing.eu/newsletter16](http://www.birdwing.eu/newsletter16) to complete the survey online.



[www.birdwing.eu](http://www.birdwing.eu)

## Birdwing website:

7000 visitors from 85 countries since May 2012

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree strongly
1. The initial look is appealing and inviting	A	B	C	D	E
2. It is easy to navigate and find information	A	B	C	D	E
3. The look is old-fashioned and outdated	A	B	C	D	E
4. The content is useful and interesting	A	B	C	D	E

### Frequency of visiting the website

	less than once a year	quarterly	monthly	weekly	daily
5. I typically visit the website;	A	B	C	D	E

If you are able, please also let us know what would make you visit the website more often and what you would like to see changed to improve the website.

## Birdwing newsletter:

We need your views on how you would most like to receive our news. The more information we have from you the better we can tailor things to suit you.



	Agree strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree strongly
6. I like to read Birdwing news as a pdf (in the form currently sent)	A	B	C	D	E
7. I prefer to read articles via links to websites (e.g. via HTML email)	A	B	C	D	E
8. I prefer to read news on social media sites	A	B	C	D	E

We look forward to receiving your responses.



## Birdfair success!

It was excellent to meet so many friends, supporters and potential new visitors to Greece at this year's British Birdfair at Rutland, England. We joined our friends from the Lake Kerkini, Koronia and Axios Management Bodies and met with staff from several hotels near Kerkini. It was also good to see our friends from Greenwings, the wildlife holiday company who are great supporters of Birdwing. We had many opportunities to talk to visitors about the wonders of Northern Greece and have already helped others with planning their trips there. Money was raised through book sales and we have a good number of new supporters. It was also positive to make contacts with other organisations and to talk to people involved in conservation work in other areas.



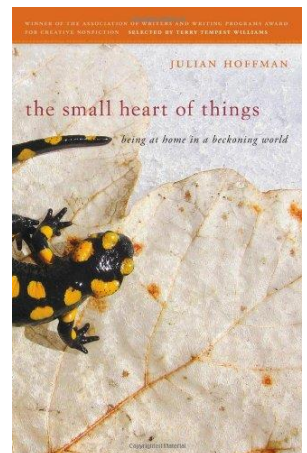
## Twitter thanks!



We are very grateful to Julian Hoffman, the award-winning writer from Prespa, who has agreed to work with Birdwing to develop our online presence more effectively.

He will be posting regular tweets and helping to keep you up-to-date with news and reports related to birds and Greece.

Julian is also busy with the launch of his new book 'The Small Heart of Things – at home in a beckoning world'. The book, which won the 2012 AWP awards for Creative Nonfiction, describes and explores nature and our relationship with it, set within the context of the wonderful Prespa region of Northern Greece, where Julian lives.



Watch the trailer for this award-winning book at

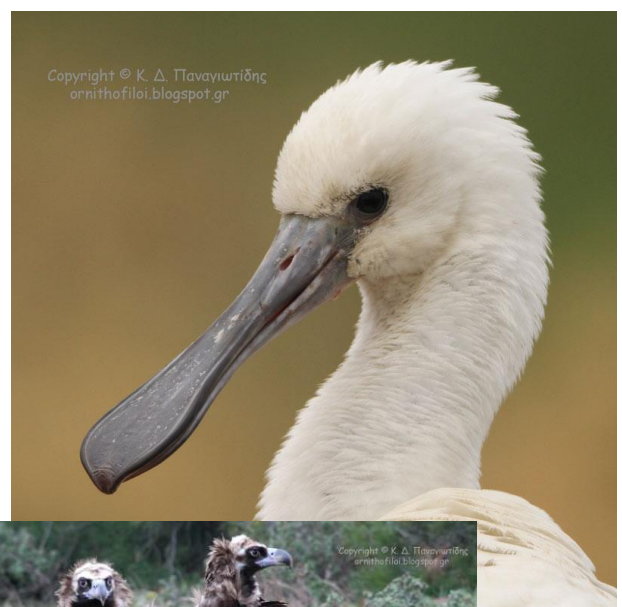
<http://youtu.be/TCYlfangaMI>

## Ornithofiloi

Kostas Panayiortidis was born in Alexandroupolis and earned his leaving as an Electronics Engineer, serving in Hellenic Air Force for 32 years. After retiring as a Brigadier General he started to visit his home town often and, by chance, visited the Evros Delta for first time. He was deeply impressed by the unique environment and the fascinating beauty of the winged world, that he hadn't imagined possible before. As a photo enthusiast, he was inspired to capture moments of wild birds' lives, mainly at Evros Delta, as with more suitable photography equipment became available.

He has decided to create a blog "Ornithofiloi" to make people aware of this unknown beauty nearby and to share with blog's visitors some of the unforgettable moments, he has managed to capture. He lives in Glyfada, an Athens' suburb area.

[http://ornithofiloi.blogspot.gr/p/blog-page\\_5516.htm](http://ornithofiloi.blogspot.gr/p/blog-page_5516.htm)







## Enjoy nature

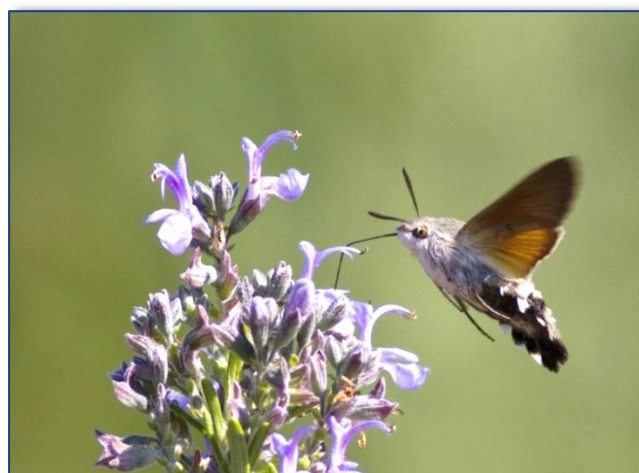
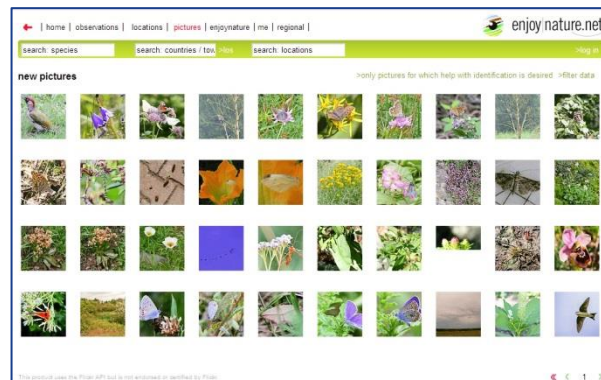
Birdwing recently announced a new feature available to our supporters called **Enjoynature.net**. This is a free online database for making observations of the sightings you see when in Greece or anywhere in the world.

The site contains thousands of images and information about all types of wildlife, including plants, animals, butterflies, birds, dragonflies, amphibians, insects and so on.



The **Birdwing** section allows you to see news of sightings of birds in Northern Greece.

There are many exciting features that we would like you to explore. We have written an easy guide to the site and its features, so take a look and find out how you can be involved. Click on the image above and download the introduction to see what it offers!



We would like to express our thanks to Alex Wirth, from Germany, who has made this happen and who has agreed to be the administrator for the site for Birdwing. We hope that this will become a valuable tool for visitors to Greece.

**[www.enjoynature.net/birdwing](http://www.enjoynature.net/birdwing)**



Are you looking for a winter or spring trip to Northern Greece? Check out next year's tours to

be run by Greenwings Wildlife Holidays. Go to **[www.greenwings.co](http://www.greenwings.co)** and find out more.



## Bird news roundup

Two pelican records were broken at **Lake Kerkini** this summer!



Some 190 Dalmatians were born in the 130 nests counted on the artificial platforms built and recently enlarged by the Management Authority. This is great news as it is the largest total since the birds first used the original platforms in 2002. The second event occurred in late September when around 3000 White Pelicans were counted on the lake. This is believed to be the highest number of White Pelicans ever recorded in Greece. We were at the lake at this time and being able to watch squadron after squadron leave on their journey towards Istanbul and East Africa was a special privilege. Other breeding matters of note included at least 9 pairs of Common Terns on the Birdwing tern raft and, at a rather higher elevation, a pair of Golden Eagles raised one chick in the same nest as previous years. Other summer counts at the lake included over 550 Dalmatian Pelicans, around 650 Pygmy Cormorants, at least 20 Cattle Egrets, some 1500 Little Egrets, 250 Great White Egrets, 40 Purple Herons, 300 Grey Herons and 800 Spoonbills. Breeding birds of prey included Short-toed, Lesser Spotted, Booted and White-tailed Eagles.



Return wader passage at **Evros** was in full swing during the first week of July, with impressive totals, including 1069 Marsh Sandpipers, 337 Greenshanks, 1355 Spotted Redshanks, 845 Black-winged Stilts and 1010 Black-tailed Godwits. Almost 1300 Glossy Ibis were on the delta, together with 403 Spoonbill, 68 White Stork and 453 White Pelicans. By the 18<sup>th</sup> Greenshank numbers had risen to 844 and Spotted Redshanks to 1616. Other totals of note included 64 Black Stork, 380 Little Stint and 1135 Wood Sandpipers. The late summer

feel on the delta of 'Redshanks everywhere' was evident in early August, with 1300 on the 6<sup>th</sup>, when other large totals included 1017 Little Egrets, 1280 Glossy Ibis and almost 500 Spoonbills. Up to 5 Broad-billed Sandpipers were also present.



With much of the area at the Delta sadly bone-dry, despite the huge amount of fresh water channelled straight to the sea, September typically sees bird numbers fall before the autumn rains arrive. This year was no different with the only interesting records being a total of 2536 Flamingos, 101 Dalmatian Pelicans, 2064 Teal, 276 Sandwich Tern and a single Terek Sandpiper.

Despite the baking summer heat of August, there were still plenty of birds to be found on the **Axios/Aliaqmon** complex west of Thessaloniki. Herons and egrets were well represented with 28 Night Heron, 40 Squacco and 18 Purple, 12 Great White, 224 Little and 14 Cattle Egrets. Over 1300 Flamingo, 55 Glossy Ibis, 28 Spoonbill were on site and a hundred White Pelicans stopped over on their way to the Bosphorus. Waders included 153 Stilts, 28 Stone Curlew, 13 Spur-wings, 21 Ruff and 65 Kentish Plovers. As the formerly wet areas dry out the birds become more concentrated - at Kalohori, along the east bank of the Axios and at Alikes Kitrous. September numbers included a record 1803 Flamingos at the latter site, as part of an area total of 2565, 59 Great White Egrets, 14 Purple Herons and 228 Dalmatian Pelicans. Representing the raptors were 2 White-tails and 2 Short-toed Eagles, 3 Ospreys and 17 Marsh Harriers. Numbers of waders fell during the month, with peaks of 73 Avocet, 107 Curlew and 6 Spur-winged Plovers.

[www.birdwing.eu](http://www.birdwing.eu)



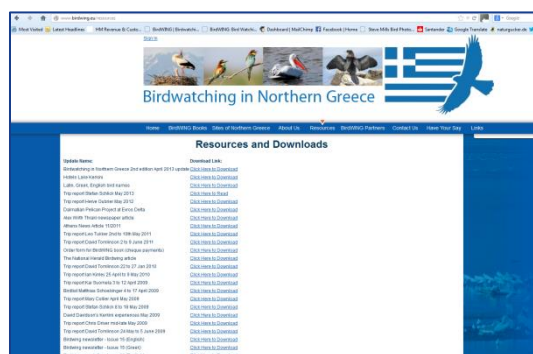


## What's found at [www.birdwing.eu/resources](http://www.birdwing.eu/resources)

*How well do you know about the resources available at [www.birdwing.eu](http://www.birdwing.eu)?*

You will find useful resources including:

- A list of the common Greek bird names with their English and Latin equivalents (useful when chatting with other birdwatchers)
- Issues of all previous Birdwing newsletters (in both Greek and English)
- A 2013 update to the Birdwing site guide giving information on changes that have occurred since publication
- Information on hotels in the Kerkini area with reviews from Birdwing supporters
- Trip reports from birdwatching trips and tours.



## Birdwatching in Northern Greece site-guide

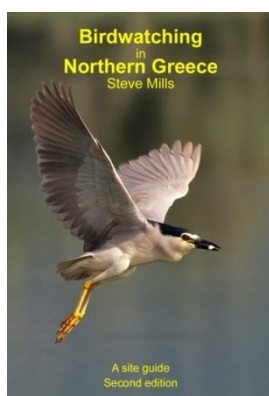
Don't forget, if you're travelling independently to Northern Greece, you need this book!

Go to:

[www.birdwing.eu](http://www.birdwing.eu)

and buy your copy there.

Remember, all monies raised go directly towards helping birds in Northern Greece. Quality information **and** you're helping the birds!



## Other Kerkini news

Work is currently underway to reroute the Strimon River along its pre-2010 course at Lake Kerkini.



In 2010 there were severe floods that caused the river to change course and to enter the lake at a much earlier point, slicing the 'Glossy Ibis strip' in two. The change of course of the river had a dramatic effect on different parts of the lake, causing low oxygen levels in some parts. From a birdwatching perspective the Eastern Embankment became less interesting in spring, as the spawning fish seemed to prefer the western part of the lake. The Eastern Embankment, however, became much more appealing to birds in late summer and autumn as the water levels began to drop, as seen below.



Once the river is returned to its pre-2010 course it will be interesting to see the changes again.

## Porto Lagos news

Following some delays, we are delighted to hear that the planned Birdwing tern raft has been given the necessary permissions in the Porto Lagos region. Three projects are planned for the area and we look forward to beginning the first of these as soon as possible.

Keep up to date with progress at: [www.birdwing.eu](http://www.birdwing.eu)





The Black Vulture starts building its nest in late January, lays only one egg, incubates it for 40 days and takes care of the hatchling until late August, when the youngster flies!

This year, for the first time, the Management Body of the National Park has actively participated in the long-term monitoring program of the Black Vulture breeding population that WWF has been carrying out for many years, in cooperation with the Department of Environment and Hydroeconomy of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Prefecture.

After a year of hard work the 2013 monitoring of the Black Vulture breeding population has reached an end, as the fledglings have left the nests. We recorded thirty pairs incubating in total, but only 16 fledglings finally made it and left their nests at the end of August.



Photo: P Babakas

Also, six youngsters were marked with rings and wing tags by WWF, with the participation of the Management Body and the Department of Environment and Hydroeconomy of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Prefecture personnel, in order to facilitate monitoring and investigate other aspects of population ecology and dynamics.

Due to the relatively low number of individuals of the species, as well as the low reproduction rate (almost half of the pairs that start incubating don't succeed in having a fledgling) the Black Vulture population is very sensitive to extrinsic mortality factors. Major threats include illegally-used poisoned baits, as well as the siting of wind farms in the wider area.

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

## Artwork of Ernest Leahy

Artists, birdwatchers, filmmakers and photographers all flock to Northern Greece, to be inspired by the wildlife there. One of Birdwing's supporters, Ernest Leahy, enjoyed his experiences at Kerkini and painted several pictures including this montage.

If you're proud of a photograph, painting or video you've take or made, we'd love to share it with others.

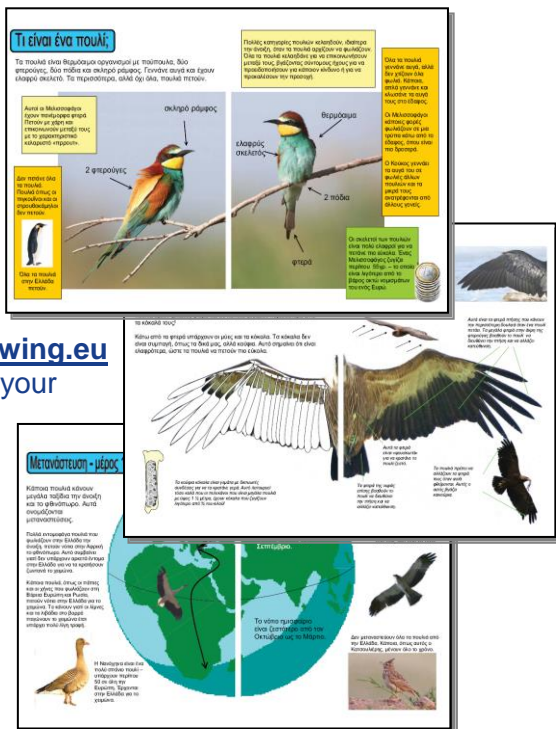
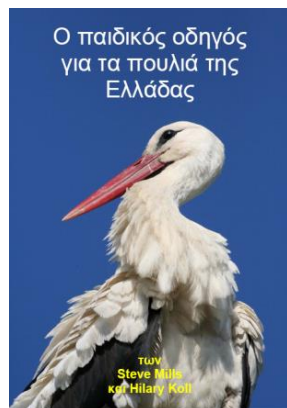
Email it to us at  
**info@birdwing.eu**



## Need a present for a Greek young person or child?

Ο παιδικός οδηγός για τα πουλιά της Ελλάδας (The Children's Guide to Birds of Greece) has been published and is selling well. The book, in Greek, is being used to help children understand more about birds and habitats. All funds go towards helping birds in Greece.

A perfect gift for a name-day, birthday or Christmas and of interest to people of all ages – this book is packed with information about migration, beaks, feet, wings and feathers, habitats, food, birdsong and many other aspects of birds' lives. There is also a section containing fact-files about the most important and interesting Greek birds, including white storks, black vultures, flamingos, and so on.



Go to [www.birdwing.eu](http://www.birdwing.eu) and order your copy now!

Check out the Birdwing videos YouTube channel at:

[www.youtube.com/user/Birdwingeu/videos](http://www.youtube.com/user/Birdwingeu/videos)

## Safe Haven for Wild Birds campaign



You may remember that Birdwing donated €1000 to the Save Haven for Wild Birds project being run by the Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS), in conjunction with Birdlife organisations in Spain and Italy.

Keep up to date with how the money raised is being used to fund local and national actions to raise public awareness on spring illegal killing. Read more about the actions planned for Greece at:

[www.leavingisliving.org/life/index.php/en/campaign-3/actions](http://www.leavingisliving.org/life/index.php/en/campaign-3/actions)



Read this year's trip reports from two Wildlife tour companies, Gourmet Birds and Greenwings. Both companies generously donate a proportion of their profits to Birdwing, to help birds in Northern Greece. This allows us to undertake more projects in the region to help birds and their habitats. We are very grateful to them both for their support.

[www.birdwing.eu/resources](http://www.birdwing.eu/resources)



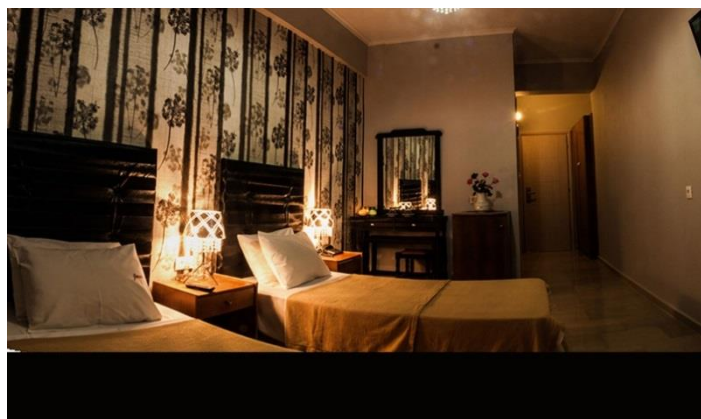


## Hotel Fanari

Many thanks to Athanasios Tsoukas, from the Hotel Fanari, for the generous donation to Birdwing. We are very grateful to Athanasios for his support.

If you are visiting the Porto Lagos, Lake Ismarida the Thracian Lagoons or are in the Rhodopes and are looking for somewhere to stay, try the Hotel Fanari.

[www.fanari-hotel.gr](http://www.fanari-hotel.gr)



For comfortable accommodation all our rooms provide TV, air-conditioning, fridge, telephone, music, WC, en-suite and hair dryer – and we give our visitors the chance to enjoy the view of the Thracian Sea.



A family owned hotel only 300m from the Thracian Sea, 200m from Xirolimni Lake and 2km from Vistonida Lake. Built in 1987, restored in 2007, it offers 30 rooms and 2 suites, for a comfortable accommodation.

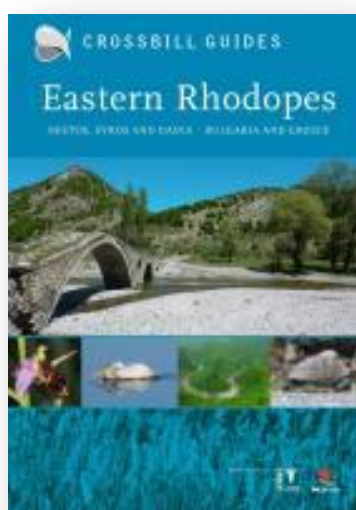
Our hotel includes restaurant, bar, lobby, room service, Internet access & Wifi (lobby area), dry-cleaning, medical centre (close by), doctor on call and free parking.

## Eastern Rhodopes Crossbill Guide

The new Crossbill Guide to the Eastern Rhodopes is now available. The Crossbill Guides Foundation is a non-profit organisation dedicated to increasing public involvement with nature conservation.

With high quality nature travel guidebooks they aim to show just how beautiful European natural areas are. The Eastern Rhodopes guide includes information on plants, reptiles, animals, birds and the general ecology of the region, covering both the Greek and the Bulgarian sides of the Rhodope Mountains.

To buy, go to:  
[www.crossbillguides.com/product\\_list](http://www.crossbillguides.com/product_list) or  
[nhbs.com/eastern\\_rhodopes](http://nhbs.com/eastern_rhodopes)



## Evros Delta news

The Evros Delta Management Authority implemented a migration ringing programme for passerines from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> of August in total 1247 birds from 35 species were ringed, reflecting the autumn migration. The most numerous species ringed were Sedge Warblers (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*), Eurasian Reed Warblers (*A. scirpaceus*) and Great Reed Warblers (*A. arundinaceus*). Ten birds had been previously ringed, of which a Great Reed Warbler had a ring from Italy, a Eurasian Reed Warbler from Bulgaria and 8 birds had been ringed at the Evros Delta in previous years.

Thanks go to the Hellenic Bird Ringing Centre for providing the rings and to Eli, Lila, Javier, Zeta, Constantina, Iakovos, Sara, Pierre, Tania and Katerina and the Evros Delta staff for making this happen. More ringing will take place next spring.

Keep up to date at:  
[www.evros-delta.gr/en](http://www.evros-delta.gr/en)

## Axios Delta news

This spring the Birdwing tern raft in the Gallikos river near Kalohori was used for breeding by 25 pairs of Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*). The Birdwing raft was repaired earlier in the year by staff from the Axios - Loudias - Aliakmons Management Authority.

Representatives from the same management body visited the British Birdfair at Rutland in August.

During October there have been a number of bird celebrations in the Axios region, with birdwatching, workshops and a range of children's activities.

One day of celebrations took place at the bird observatory in Nea Agathoupolis and another took place at the Gallikos river. Many birds were seen and new people have been introduced to the wonders of Greek birds.



## This issue's quiz!

Can you identify Bird A or Bird B or both?  
Both birds can be seen in Northern Greece. Let us know your ideas.

Bird A



Bird B



Email your entries to [quiz@birdwing.eu](mailto:quiz@birdwing.eu)



## Lesser White-fronted Geese

*One of the most threatened European birds*

The arrival of the first Lesser White-fronted Goose (LWfG) *Anser erythropus* to Greece has come early this year with 54 recorded at Lake Kerkini in mid-October. Follow their progress via this link:

[www.piskulka.net/](http://www.piskulka.net/)

or via the facebook group:

[www.facebook.com/LesserWhitefrontedGoose?hc\\_location=stream](https://www.facebook.com/LesserWhitefrontedGoose?hc_location=stream)



## And finally thanks ...

Thanks to **Lia Papadranga**, **Eva Katrana**, **Christos Panagiotidis** from Axios, **Angeliki Dimaki**, **Kostas Papadopoulos**, **Theodoros Naziridis** at Kerkini, **Julian Hoffman**, **Julia Henderson** and the staff of the SPP from Prespa, **Eleni Makrigianni** and **Ioannidis Panagiotis** at the Evros Delta, **Sylvia Zakkak** from the Dadia Centre, **Malamo Korbeti** and **Roula Trigou**, from the HOS, **Alexander Wirth** 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.