



www.birdwing.eu

New developments – a wider voice

This year we are expanding the way we bring you news from Northern Greece. Thanks to so many of you for responding to our feedback survey. We received the clear message that most of you are happy to receive our news via our pdf newsletter, so we will continue to do this. However, we also received feedback on ways you think we can attract new supporters via HTML, blogs and through social media. We are excited to announce that we will be widening communications, with the help of several of our supporters.

Read more on page 5.



Birds of Greece Playing Cards

To further Birdwing's educational aims, we have published packs of playing cards for Greek children and young people, to encourage an early interest in birds. Pack 1 includes a range of the more familiar and common birds together with many of the beauties! Names are given in Greek, English and Latin and packs will be given to school children and sets of them can be purchased via our website www.birdwing.eu. See page 3 for more information.

Donation thanks

Again, we would like to express our thanks for recent generous donations from supporters. Without your help we would not be able to fulfil our aims to:

- raise interest in and awareness of issues affecting birds in Greece
- undertake direct habitat improvement to help birds and wildlife whose habitats are at risk
- to build a membership with a collective voice on conservation issues

Particular thanks to JL, TVS, DP, JL, JW and KM for your recent support.

If you agree with our aims and wish to support us, click here and the donate button on our website.





New bird-list Free download!



Now available on our website for free download – a bird-list with names in Greek, English, German and Latin.

Thanks to Alex Wirth for updating this list and adding the German names! Click the arrow above to go to the Resources page of our website to download it.

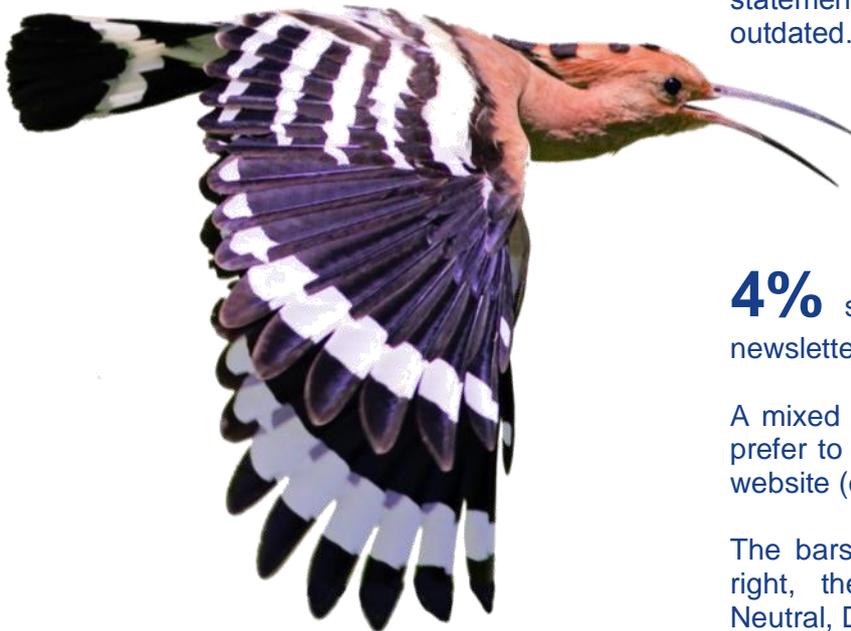


Photo appeal

For the second pack of playing cards we want to include three photos submitted and voted for by you! The three chosen birds are the:



Ace of Spades: **Black Stork**
Ace of Clubs: **Osprey**
King of Hearts: **Golden Eagle**

Do you have a suitable photo? Submit it by uploading it to our **Friends of Birdwing** facebook page [here](#) or by emailing it to cards@birdwing.eu.

Each photo must show the full bird (not cropped) in a typical (rather than unusual) position that could have the background removed. You must agree for the photo to be used for this purpose and to allow it to be seen by others for voting. For further details see www.birdwing.eu.

Feedback – the numbers!

Thanks to those of you who took part in our survey!

93% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Birdwing website was appealing and inviting!

85% agreed with the statement 'The website www.birdwing.eu is easy to navigate and access information from.'

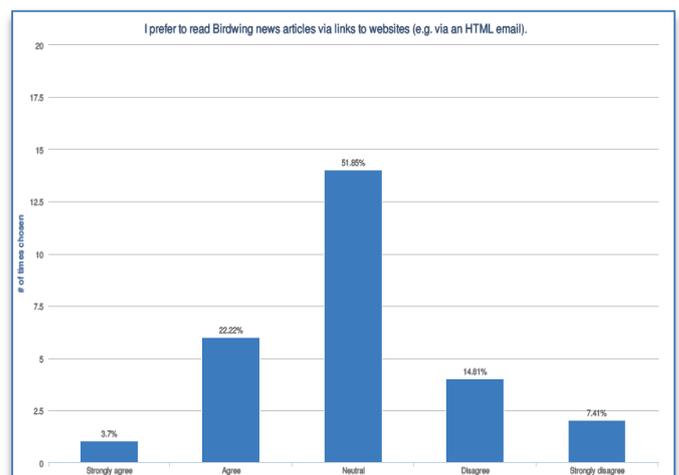
7% responded in agreement with the statement 'The website looks old-fashioned and outdated.'

100% agreed or strongly agreed that the website was 'interesting and useful'.

4% stated that they did not like to read the newsletter as a pdf.

A mixed response was given to the statement: I prefer to read Birdwing news articles via links to website (e.g. via an HTML email).

The bars in the chart below show, from left to right, the responses Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly disagree.



92% chose neutral, disagree or strongly disagree to the statement 'I prefer to read Birdwing news on social media sites' with half of all respondents choosing the strongly disagree category.

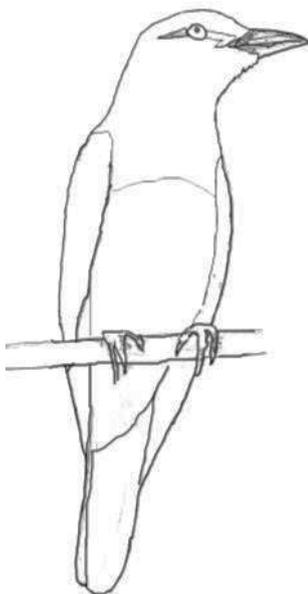
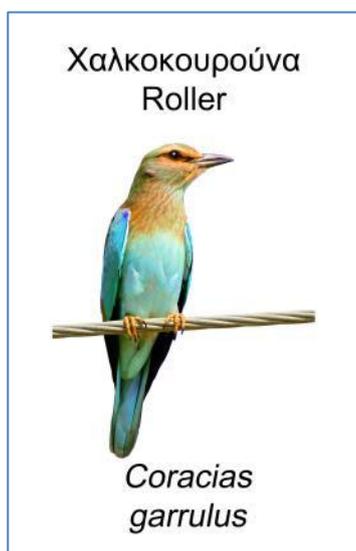
Playing cards

If you are interested in buying packs of the new Birdwing playing cards, they will soon be available via our website www.birdwing.eu.

A supporting page on our website will encourage children to interact with the images on the cards, for example, asking children to find:

- a bird with a spoon-shaped bill
- a yellow bird
- a pink bird
- a bird who eats bees

We also plan to provide black and white outlines of the birds that can be printed. Children can then use them for colouring activities, using the playing cards as a colour guide.



We will send an email to our supporters, shortly, when it becomes possible to order packs of the cards online.

Last issue's quiz!

Not many correctly identified these two birds from the last issue. Picture A is a Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) and picture B a Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*)!

Try the quiz on page 6 and see if you can identify the two birds this time!



Wildlifevideos.net

I'm Malcolm Rymer – a naturalist, a life-long birder and these days a freelance wildlife film-maker. I'm passionate about wild, unspoilt habitats, regions teeming with wildlife.



To date I've filmed and produced 35 travelogue / documentary wildlife films from many parts of the world - Central and South America, Africa, the Indian Sub-Continent, Australia, the Himalayas and many wildlife regions of Europe including Spain, Bulgaria, Sweden, Israel, Cyprus and, of course, Greece. My work is featured online at www.wildlifevideos.net and each August at the British Birdwatching Fair.

It was at this prestigious birding hotspot that I first met Nikos Gallios, a young man from Serres. He owns the Hotel Limneo in Chrysochorafa, a village near Lake Kerkini.

"The lake is very beautiful," he says proudly. "There are many birds. You'll have to come out and see for yourself."

I did, or rather WE did. Yes, it is very beautiful and there are incredible numbers of birds.

We, by the way, are the team. Rod Thorpe, Peter Swayne and myself – long-standing birding buddies, old friends who have deep-rooted natural history interests in common. Together we have undertaken birding/filming projects on several continents, including here in Greece at the Evros Delta, Dadia Forest and the Aegean Island of Lesbos.

After an initial recce and subsequent visits to Kerkini at different key seasons it was unanimously agreed that a film should be the natural outcome.

So, will: 'LAKE KERKINI - PORTRAIT of a WETLAND' become film 36 from wildlifevideos? WATCH THIS SPACE....

www.wildlifevideos.net

Birdwing pin-board

– a few memories from the last 5 years!



“It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can only do little. Do what you can.” Sydney Smith



ARCHIVES

March 2014

GALLERY



Birdwing.eu



<http://www.birdwing.eu>

BirdWING (Birdwatching in Northern Greece) has been set up to raise awareness of birds in Greece and to raise money for the conservation and restoration of bird habitat in the region. Birdwing has supporters from all over the world.

Since its formation, Birdwing has funded projects including building rafts for Common Terns at several locations, writing the first site-guide for Birdwatching in Greece to help attract eco-tourists to the region, producing and publishing a children's bird book in Greek



natural eyes – looking out for nature

We're excited to announce the launch of a new blog written by Steve Mills.

As part of our new communications strategy to widen Birdwing's footprint and to gain new supporters, Steve will be writing articles about birds and nature and the decisions humans make that impact on them.

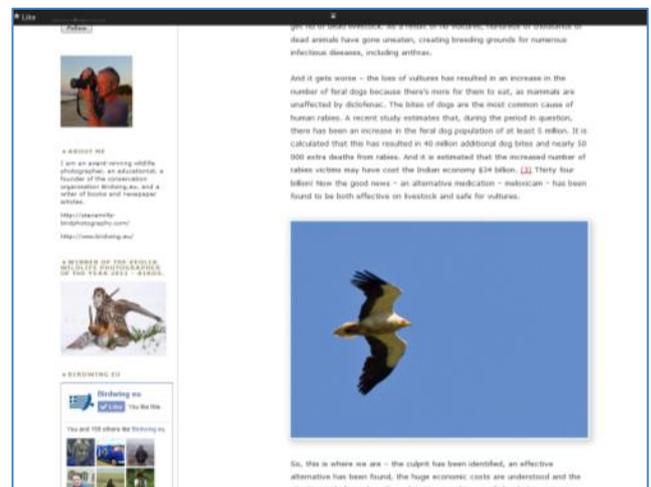
You may remember that Steve wrote a regular article about birds and issues relating to them in the Athens News newspaper before it closed in the crisis and prior to that wrote a regular column in a local newspaper in the UK.

The blog, entitled *natural eyes – looking out for nature*, can be found at www.stevemillsblog.wordpress.com

Please show your support by signing up and sharing the blog with your friends and colleagues!

The first article '*Collateral damage?*' exposes the ridiculous and dangerous decision by the EU to allow the drug diclofenac to be manufactured and used in Europe, despite its catastrophic damage to the vulture populations in India.

Click the image to read more.





A species can become extinct in a blink!

In the framework of the LIFE+ Lesser White-fronted Goose Project, the Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, together with the Hellenic Ornithological Society/ BirdLife Greece, produced a 3D animation TV spot, aiming to raise awareness regarding the threats that waterfowl and the LWfG in particular face during their migration journey, and urges the hunting community to pay particular attention to correct bird identification during hunting.

Please help us spread the message and share the link!

You can watch the spot here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaApzxQAwv0&list=UUo-4qzyfRAaljF0JIWBdplQ

This issue's quiz!

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

Bird A



Bird B



Email your entries to quiz@birdwing.eu

Spring 2014



The first Anti-poison Dog Units in Greece are ready!

As part of action against illegal use of poison baits as part of the LIFE+ Project "The Return of the Neophron", members of the Hellenic Ornithological Society/ BirdLife Greece and WWF teams were in Andalusia (Spain) to be trained as dog handlers for the future Anti-poison Dog Units.

The dogs, Kiko and Kuki (half German Shepherds-half Malinois), have been especially trained to search and detect poison baits and poisoned animals. Thus, the objective of the Anti-poison Dog Units is to create, as far as possible, poison-free areas and to deter people from using this illegal method.



The training has been difficult and demanding for the guides. Learning and putting in practice the methodology used to carry out a search for poison baits is not at all easy. On the one hand, it requires full understanding of dog behaviour, but also special insight to human behaviour, namely that of the poisoner's mind and objectives. In addition, a search also requires careful preparation and planning of the visit, taking into consideration different factors such as topography, weather conditions, ownership of the land, etc.

The training of the Anti-poison Dogs Unit has come to an end after several weeks of work. Both dogs and guides have returned to Greece and already started working on real cases. Even at the first day of work, the HOS Dog Unit working in the area of Meteora, Mount Koziakas and Chasia - Antichasia Mountains found 5 poisoned dogs in one of the last territories of the Egyptian Vulture in the region.

For more information visit:
www.lifeneophron.eu/

Birdwing News – 6

Projects at Kerkini Lake

We are pleased to announce that a range of exciting new projects are underway at Lake Kerkini to provide more breeding areas for birds and to try to regenerate parts of the drowned forest. The forest is the crown jewel of the area providing safe nesting for thousands of birds but it has been steadily dying as trees finally give up the fight against an annual water level change of several metres. Aerial photos comparing the forest now and two decades ago show the scale of the loss and, unless action is taken, there's no doubt it will be lost entirely in decades to come.



So, great credit is due to the Management Body of the National Park who, when water levels are low the autumn, have secured funding to create several new islands in the lake. These will raise the planting height of new trees to help them cope with the changing water levels. It is also hoped, at the same time, to create more permanent nesting areas for the Dalmatian Pelicans. Areas have already been fenced off to protect the future islands from animal stock and over-grazing.



Thanks to the Management Body for the photos.

After some delays, work is nearly completed in rerouting the Strimon River along its pre-2010 course at Lake Kerkini. The flooding of that winter caused the river to break through the embankment and enter the lake in the north-east corner, causing various problems.

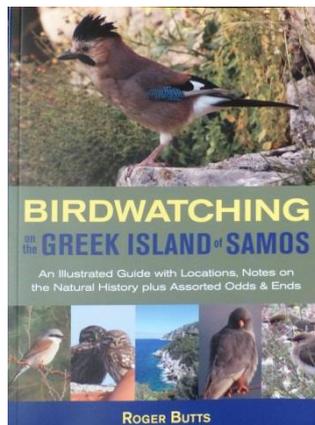
Once the river is returned to its pre-2010 course it will be interesting to see the changes.



New Samos Guide

Long-time supporter of Birdwing, Roger Butts, has recently published a Birdwatching Guide to Samos. This essential detailed guide to the birds and sites of Samos island is packed with directions and useful information.

If you are interested in purchasing a copy, go to: www.samosbirding.com/



LWfG video

During February, staff from the management bodies of Lake Kerkini and the Evros Delta together with Steve and Hilary from Birdwing and people from other local organisations, were filmed as part of a documentary video about the **Lesser White-fronted Goose**.

Commissioned by the HOS, the video explored all sides including the opinions of hunters at the Evros Delta. It will take time for the video to be edited and finalised and we will let you know when we hear of its completion.



Leaving is Living!

by Malamo Korbeti

Migration is a phenomenon not yet fully understood: how exactly does this huge transfer of biomass from one place of the earth to the other occur? However, it is true that the most amazing and fascinating thing about birds is their ability to travel thousands of miles every year. We know that they undertake this epic journey to spend their winters and summers in places on Earth more suitable to their feeding and nesting needs. Migration is therefore not only a matter of instinct: it's the most important journey of their life.

Spring migration is particularly important as birds travel to their nesting places, many making the 2,000 km Sahara-Mediterranean crossing. During this journey a significant percentage of migratory birds die due to exhaustion, starvation, predators and collisions with wind farms and other man-made barriers to migration. This is why it is necessary that the sites where birds stopover to rest and feed are safe. The Greek Ionian Islands provide refuge and food for the arriving birds which are particularly vulnerable. Research by the Technological Educational Institute of the Ionian Islands has shown that the Turtle Doves (*Streptopelia Turtur*) that land in the Ionian Islands have below average body masses compared with those arriving in other parts of the Mediterranean in the same period, due to the longer distance they have to cover in reaching the east Mediterranean.

Unfortunately, the Mediterranean region hosts some of the deadliest stop-over sites on Earth! In the Ionian Islands in particular, the spring hunting ban brought in in 1985 has never been implemented. Every year, thousands of poachers shoot approximately (from informal records) 200,000 Turtle Doves in Zante, Corfu, Paxoi and Othonoi, as the islands are situated along the main spring migratory route. Of course, during the illegal spring killing several other species of migratory raptors and herons are shot. This has to stop, as scientific data from the Pan-European Monitoring Scheme show a 70% decrease of the European population and illegal hunting cannot be called a "tradition" anymore. It is an unnecessary and illegal pressure on the population's ability to reproduce.



An illegally shot Osprey found in October 2009.

Photos: Steve Mills

We want to put an end to the indifference shown by the authorities and the hunting community to this blatant law-breaking. That is why, HOS together with the BirdLife partners in Italy and Spain (LIPU and SEO), is running the 3-year campaign "**A Safe Haven for Wild Birds**", with the support of the EU LIFE programme (LIFE+11 INF/IT/000253). The campaign will raise awareness amongst hunters, local authorities and the local communities via brochures and summer information kiosks. It will produce an education package for school children and train teachers to implement it. It will also produce a documentary which will tour across Greece and will organise an international conference on illegal shooting in Zante. These actions aim at radically changing today's attitudes towards illegal killing in Greece.

BirdWing recently financially supported this campaign, showing its belief in educating and raising awareness as tools for social and environmental change. Without contributors like *BirdWing* to support this cause, migratory birds will have no one to defend their right to a safe migratory journey!

You can follow the campaign's actions by visiting the website:

www.leavingisliving.org

and via our facebook group:

www.facebook.com/safehavenforwildbirds

Birdwing's contribution to this project, and others like it, are made possible only through your donations. If you are able to give something, however small, do so now.

Click the donate button on the left of our home page.



Monthly payments can also be set up here.



Bird news roundup

At **Evros** the mild weather throughout much of the winter kept bird numbers lower than in recent, colder winters and many wildfowl and raptors chose to stay further north. That said, over 20 Spotted Eagles were on the delta, with 5 or 6 White-tails and an immature Eastern Imperial. Hen Harrier numbers were lower than normal, in single figures, but Black Kites, presumably in response to the weather conditions, were more numerous. Over 2000 mixed swans were spread across the delta, alongside several hundred Ruddy Shelduck. The regular flock of Lesser White-fronted Geese reached 57 before leaving for Kerkini on February 16th. Mingling amongst the Lessers and Greater White-fronts were 20 Red-breasteds.

March brought the first signs of spring, with 18 Short-toed Eagles, 200 Ruff, 430 Spotted Redshank, 135 Greenshank, 100 White Pelicans, 380 Black-tailed Godwit, 80 Garganey and the first Spur-wing Plovers of the year which so far number 13.



Spring is underway at **Kerkini**, where the White-tailed Eagles are to be seen around or in their nests. The Golden Eagles are renovating the same breeding nests as in previous years and the Peregrines are considering taking back the nest they had used for years before the crows stole it last year. The Dalmatian Pelicans have already occupied the breeding platforms and the Cormorants and first Grey Herons are already incubating in the riparian forest. The first White Stork arrived on 21st Feb. The Cranes increased to 29 on the 24th Feb. when a new group of 13 birds joined the initial flock. On 17th Feb., 57 Lesser White-fronted Geese arrived from the Evros Delta as a precursor to their big return journey to northern Norway.

Spring 2014

They left on the 12th March and were next noted at the Hortobagy in Hungary on the 20th. Good luck to them. Apart from birds it's worth mentioning that a family of otters has been appearing regularly in the north-eastern part of the lake while in the lower parts of Krousia mountain various mammals have been in evidence, including roe deer, wild boar and wildcats.

Thanks to the Management Authorities of Evros and Kerkini for this data.

Site guide – April 2014 update!!!

Things are constantly changing out there - directions to places, value of sites, access alterations, not to mention a river changing course! If you have the 2nd edition of the site guide there is an update to download to help bring things up to date. You'll find it in the Resources section of our website or click [here](#) to download.



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, **Malamo Korbeti** and **Roula Trigou**, from the HOS, **Alexander Wirth**, **Malcolm Rymer** 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.

And finally...

Since our last newsletter Nikos and Melina (from the Hotel Limneo) have had their first son, Yiorgos. We wish them many congratulations and good wishes for a happy future.

