Southern Turkey 19th July-2nd August 2012

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Brown Fish Owl, nr Oymapinar 20th July 2012

This is a brief trip report of a family holiday based near Serik, between Antalya and Side on the southern coast of Turkey. We stayed at Villa Aden – for details see http://www.villaaden.com/. Car hire was arranged through First Rent-a-car – see http://www.firstrentacar.info/eng/.

Highlights included specialities such as Brown Fish Owl, Krüper’s Nuthatch and White-throated Kingfisher.

Brown Fish Owl:

We arranged an early morning trip with Özcan Kilic at Vigotours – see http://www.vigotour.com/?Brown_Fish_Owl

The tour cost us 500 TL (about £180), although Özcan informs me that increased permit costs may cause prices for subsequent tours to rise. However if you can find more birders to form a group then obviously it becomes more reasonable per person! We were picked up promptly by Hamza at 4am from the Total petrol station at the D400 Side junction, and after a brief stop to pick up breakfast we headed up to the Oymapinar reservoir. A Scops Owl was seen through the car headlights flying across the road just before the entrance gate to Oymapinar, and two Tawny Owls were heard at from the car park by the boat dock. Upon arrival at the “Grand Canyon”, Hamza spotted a juvenile Brown Fish Owl on a low rocky...
ledge, and two adult birds were subsequently located. Hamza also thought that a 4th bird was possibly present although I did not see it. We got great views of the birds although the light was a little dark for photography – a wonderful experience nonetheless. Özcan later told me that strong north-east winds in the previous few days had made the birds more elusive, so we were perhaps a little fortunate to see the birds so well. A fourth species of owl was seen back at Villa Aden, where a family of Little Owls were regular companions for the holiday around the complex.

**Akseki (Krüper’s Nuthatch etc.):**

**Krüper’s Nuthatch** were found easily in the pinewoods north of Akseki (about 1h 45 from Serik), near the White-backed Woodpecker site described in Rich Bonser’s report: [http://www.birdtours.co.uk/tripreports/turkey/turkey23/turk-july-04.htm](http://www.birdtours.co.uk/tripreports/turkey/turkey23/turk-july-04.htm).

Although I didn’t see White-backed Woodpecker, I found several Eastern Bonelli’s Warblers and a Lanner Falcon here, as well as Eurasian Nuthatch, Spotted Flycatcher and the only Chaffinches of the trip. The Akseki graveyard produced 2 Syrian Woodpeckers and 2 Masked Shrikes, and the Walled Garden area yielded another Syrian Woodpecker, Long-legged Buzzard, Western Rock Nuthatch, Blue Rock Thrush, Sombre Tit, Short-toed Eagle and Eastern Black-eared Wheatear. Olive-tree Warbler has been seen here in recent weeks but I failed to locate any. Note that the Walled Garden itself is barely visible from the road due to the large earth embankment which has been constructed as part of a new road carriageway, but by climbing over the embankment I was able to walk around the Walled Garden.

We also passed through some very likely-looking habitat for Krüper’s Nuthatch north of Tasigil on the way to Beskonak for a white-water rafting trip along Koprulu Canyon – exploration of this area might be fruitful although the winding road was rather hairy.

**White-throated Kingfisher:**

Probably the biggest surprise of the trip, as I wasn’t expecting to see this species in this part of Turkey, although the Collins guide does have an isolated spot on the distribution map for this species here. I was checking out some drainage channels and canals southeast of Serik when one of these fabulous birds was found fishing along a channel. The site is near the
village of Denizyakat about 25-30 mins west of Side and 10 mins east of Serik. From the D400 take the road south to Denizyaka (the turning is between the Tasigil and Belkis/Aspendos turnings on the D400. Take the road for Denizyakat for about 6.5km, following signs for Lykia World, ignoring the first bridge over a drainage channel. Just after Denizyakat village the road takes a sharp s-bend then a gentle right hand bend. Park on the right after a couple of hundred metres just at the bridge over the canal, by the signpost Kanala Yaklasmayiniz. The bird was fishing in the channel about 50m west of the bridge; by standing on the bridge you get a good view along the channel on both sides of the road. However a second short visit produced only a Common Kingfisher and a juvenile Purple Heron. Graceful Prinias and Yellow-vented Bulbuls were seen well on both occasions.

![Map of Denizyakat and surrounding area with marked points of interest](image-url)
Other birds:

Birding at this time of the year in Turkey is quite tough, with temperatures exceeding 40 °C and many species having finished breeding – very little birdsong was heard during the trip. For instance, on my first visit to the Tasigil Olive-tree Warbler site, I failed to see or hear a single bird for over 30 minutes! For this reason I didn’t make any effort to go for any of the higher-altitude specialities e.g. around the Korkuteli hills, deciding to leave it for another visit at a more suitable time of year. However the area around Villa Aden at the Caretta Villas near Karadayi (just south of Serik) was quite productive on early morning reccies; bushes around a small rocky outcrop just southwest of the villa yielded an Eastern Orphean Warbler, 2 Eastern Olivaceous Warblers, a family of Yellow-vented Bulbuls, and Rufous Bushchat. A superb male Levant Sparrowhawk was seen circling low around the villas on one date, and 3 other sightings of a distant Accipiter during the fortnight may also have been this species. A family of Little Owls were on almost constant view, sheltering under the solar panels of the roofs of the villas; Barn and Red-rumped Swallows skimmed the pool, often while we were in it, and Crested Lark, Hoopoe and Eastern Black-eared Wheatear were all seen from the villa. Small parties of Bee-eaters were seen and heard from the villa on a couple of dates, and a Short-toed Eagle drifted over.
All in all despite the unfavourable time of year we saw some great birds, and I look forward to returning to Turkey in the near future.

Please feel free to contact me at i.d.broadbent@rgu.ac.uk about any aspect of this report.