

- **Imperial Eagle**
winter visitor
- **Red Knot**
winter visitor
- **Gull-billed Tern**
summer visitor
- **Short-toed Lark**
summer visitor
- **Stone Curlew**
summer visitor



Dalmatian Pelican is a species of international concern and Greece has a huge responsibility for its protection, since the country hosts around 20% of its global population.

After many years of absence as a nesting species, the Dalmatian Pelican returned to Messolonghi and now the local lagoons host up to 150 pairs, highlighting the exceptional importance of the area for this emblematic species!



Useful contact info

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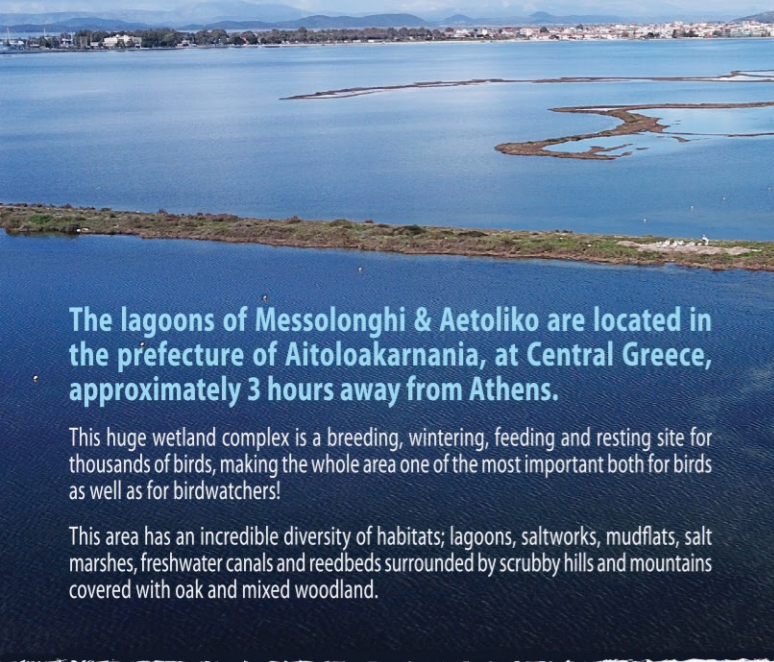


BIRDING in MESSOLONGHI



A birdwatching guide for the Messolonghi & Aetoliko protected areas in Western Greece

Messolonghi & Aetoliko lagoons



The lagoons of Messolonghi & Aetoliko are located in the prefecture of Aitolokarnania, at Central Greece, approximately 3 hours away from Athens.

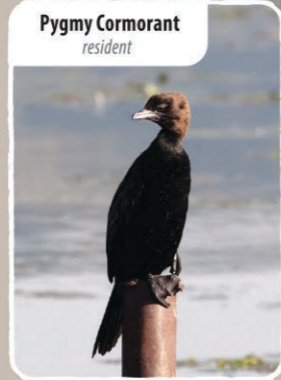
This huge wetland complex is a breeding, wintering, feeding and resting site for thousands of birds, making the whole area one of the most important both for birds as well as for birdwatchers!

This area has an incredible diversity of habitats; lagoons, saltworks, mudflats, salt marshes, freshwater canals and reedbeds surrounded by scrubby hills and mountains covered with oak and mixed woodland.

Highlight bird species

The Messolonghi National Park is one of the most important areas in Greece for waders and waterfowl.

In total, almost 300 species of birds have been recorded, including extremely rare species such as the Black Heron and the Sociable Lapwing.



PROTECTION STATUS

This is a NATURA 2000 site, an Important Bird Area (GR092), a National Park and a Ramsar Convention site. Part of the area is a Wildlife Refuge. The small riparian forest of Fraxos is a Biogenetic Reserve.

HOW TO GET THERE

The town of Messolonghi is in Western Greece, 240 km west of Athens. From Athens, you can access the area either driving along the Athens-Patra National Road, via the impressive bridge of Rio-Antirio, or alternatively you can go via Itea and Nafpaktos, which is a very scenic route.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

Messolonghi is beautiful all year round, spring and autumn being the best seasons due to migration but winter and summer also being very promising for birdwatching.



Birding Hotspots

Lagoons

Every winter, thousands of coots and ducks come to the lagoons of Kleisova and Tholi to overwinter, while large numbers of Spotted Eagles are observed along with individual Imperial Eagles. At the same time of the year, hundreds of herons and Pygmy Cormorants are also observed along with thousands of Cormorants. Large numbers of terns such as the Little Tern and the Gull-billed Tern nest on the islets and dykes, while the Dalmatian Pelican has made a dynamic come-back in recent years and breeds successfully on isolated islets in Kleisova lagoon.



Birdwatching Tower



Salt marshes

In the mud-flats and salt-flats, Calandra Larks, Greater Short-toed Larks and Crested Larks, as well as Stone Curlews and Collared Pratincoles are breeding. In the coastal areas with low tamarisk trees, we find Zitting Cisticolas, Corn Buntings and Rufous Bush Robins, a special species with a limited distribution in Greece.



Arakynthos Mt. & Kleisoura Gorge

The imposing mass of Arakynthos is an important habitat for raptors such as the Short-toed Eagle, the Peregrine Falcon and the Eurasian Eagle-Owl. In the open oak woodland we find Turtle Doves, shrikes and Sombre Tits among others. In the extensive shrublands we can see Sardinian Warblers, Rüppell's Warblers and Cretzschmar's Buntings. Griffon Vultures still nest in the gorge of Kleisoura, while in the same site we can enjoy Western Rock Nuthatches, Blue Rock Thrushes and Eurasian Crag Martins.



Fraxos riparian forest

In the riparian forest of Fraxos we can see Nightingales, Penduline Tits, other passerines such as various tits and woodpeckers such as the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and the Middle Spotted Woodpecker. Another important inhabitant is the Levant Sparrowhawk, which also breeds along the Acheloos River.



Tourlida

In the coastal zone from Tourlida to the estuary of river Evinos, very large numbers of waders -sandpipers, curlews, plovers and many others- among them very interesting species such as the Greater Sand Plover, the Bar-tailed Godwit and the Red Knot, can be observed all year round, but mainly during the migratory periods.



Salt pans

The Flamingo is inextricably linked to Messolonghi and its salt marshes as it finds its favourite food in their highly saline waters, which is why we see it all year round, along with Avocets, Spoonbills and Shelducks.



Towns & villages

The towns and villages are home to several swallows and swifts, while we also find several nests of White Storks. The Lesser Kestrel has recovered and can be seen nesting on the roofs of houses, especially in the village of Lessini. However, there are also nocturnal birds such as the Scops Owl, the Little Owl and the Tawny Owl, which can be seen in the villages and towns.

