



BIRDING IN MESSOLONGHI

A birdwatching guide to the Messolonghi & Aitoliko
protected area in Western Greece


Ορνιθολογική
HELLENIC ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Introduction



Imagine a place with all kinds of wetlands, from shallow lagoons and salt flats to freshwater marshes and riparian forests bordered by steep gorges, dense deciduous forests and slopes covered with dense maquis scrub.

Now, stop imagining because this place exists and it is the Messolonghi National Park, one of the most important wetlands of Greece that hosts very large numbers of waterfowl, waders, raptors etc. year-round. For this reason, it was acknowledged as a Ramsar wetland of international importance back in 1975, when nature protection was not yet a priority of the state.

Its ornithological value was discovered by foreign travelers as early as the 19th century and now, in its ever-changing ecosystems, a total of almost 300 species of birds have been recorded, while the variety of other wildlife -mammals, amphibians, reptiles and, of course, fish- is particularly great. So, when you are looking for birds in the lagoons it is very easy to see terrapins, frogs, harmless Grass Snakes and Dice Snakes and, if you are lucky, otters and jackals.

Ease of access and the unique combination of nature, history and folklore make Messolonghi an ideal destination for birdwatchers. Beginners can enjoy a wide variety of species in all seasons and learn to distinguish the different species.

The more experienced can look for less common species that occur more regularly here than in other places. But there are also the more dedicated observers who are capable of travelling hundreds of kilometres, even on the same day, to see an extremely rare feathered visitor, as has happened many times in recent years. **Whatever the level of the birdwatcher, one thing is certain: you will never leave this place unsatisfied!** Especially if at the end of the trip you'll taste some of the local delicacies in one of the local taverns.



Photo: Morten Ekker

This guide aims to present in as comprehensive a manner as possible the ornithological wealth of the region and the places where the most important species of birdlife have been recorded. Through discrete routes, which include the largest and most easily accessible part of the National Park, information is given on what can be seen and when.



Photo: Morten Ekker