

Raptor Migration in Lesbos, September 2005

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Date	Conditions	Wind direction	Wind strength	No. of birds
17/9	2/8; clear	S-SW	1-3	41
18/9	0/8; very poor	SE	1-2	65
19/9	0-3/8; very poor	SE	1-3	51
20/9	5/8 clearing poor	SE veering SW	0-1 rising 2-3	22
			Total	179

Species	17 th Sept	18 th Sept	19 th Sept	20 th Sept	Totals
Honey Buzzard	18	22	41	19	100
Booted eagle	17	30	-	-	47
Marsh harrier	6	8	1	2	17
Pallid harrier	-	-	1	-	1
Goshawk	-	4	-	-	4
Osprey	-	-	1	-	1
Eleanora's falcon	-	1	4	-	5
Hobby	-	-	3	1	4
Total	41	65	51	22	179

Commentary

A watch was kept over the period 17th-28th September. but movement was observed on only 4 days, 17th -20th September. Despite overwhelming evidence that most raptor migration occurs with following winds¹, autumn migration is only observed in Lesbos when winds are adverse, i.e southerly. Presumably under these conditions birds are either displaced or 'drifted' from their normal route or they are forced down to levels where they are visible. On clear days with northerly winds sky watches were attempted to find high flying raptors. None were found but light conditions mean that high level scanning cannot be maintained for more than five minutes at a stretch and is clearly extremely inefficient. 179 birds of 8 species were counted, only half as many as in 2004. Honey buzzard was again the commonest migrant. Marsh harrier numbers were very low but the numbers of booted eagles was exceptional and on 18th the

¹ See, for instance Ian Newton, *Population Ecology of Raptors*, Poyser, Berkhamstead, 1979.

species was the commonest raptor. Except on 17th it was extremely hazy and the nearby Lesbos coastline, was frequently obscured. Chios was never visible. Visibility probably contributed to the dearth of observations of migrating falcons. On 19th a watch was made in the evening from Monasteraki on the north side of Profitias Lias (Polychnitos) overlooking the Gulf of Kalloni. This produced fine views of 9 honey buzzards, a marsh harrier, a pallid harrier and an osprey crossing the Gulf. and proceeding south.