

A new bird species was discovered in? Athens!

Title

A group of birdwatchers ? members of the Hellenic Ornithological Society ? woke up at dawn the 1st May in order to see the new bird species for Greece: the Pallas's Warbler (*Phylloscopus proregulus*). However, this time they did not go to some distant destination- not even to a protected area close to Athens- but to Mt. Ymittos, where the bird had arrived from distant Siberia! The species had been discovered by Michael Kotsakis, an HOS member and volunteer, just the night before: ?I didn?t dare to think that it was a Pallas's Warbler! At first, I overlooked it thinking that it was a common species. However, after a while, I discerned certain special characteristics. I thought it was a Yellow Browed Warbler (*Phylloscopus inornatus*), a rare species which had already been monitored in Greece. But when I sent its photos to the HOS?s birdwatching forum, the more experienced birdwatchers identified the species as the Pallas?s Warbler. It is a lifelong dream for every birdwatcher to spot a new species, let alone if it is just few kilometres away from the centre of Athens!? the volunteer said. The Secretary of the Hellenic Rarities Committee, Nikos Probonas, commented: ?After the ? official ? approval of the Committee, the Pallas?s Warbler is the 444th species monitored in Greece. This is a pleasant surprise for all of us, especially if we consider that this small bird (10 cm long and weighing just a few grams) has travelled such a long distance. At the same time, this is further evidence for the value of Mt. Ymittos and the surrounding areas of Athens?. Birdwatching is an increasingly popular activity that satisfies the need to be in touch with and also learn more about nature in both an entertaining and educational manner. Contrary to the widely held impression that birdwatching is an activity that can only be done in protected areas, it can also take place in urban environments, where green spaces are becoming more and more rare. Moreover, it is an activity that contributes to the protection of wildlife, which is also of social and financial value.
