

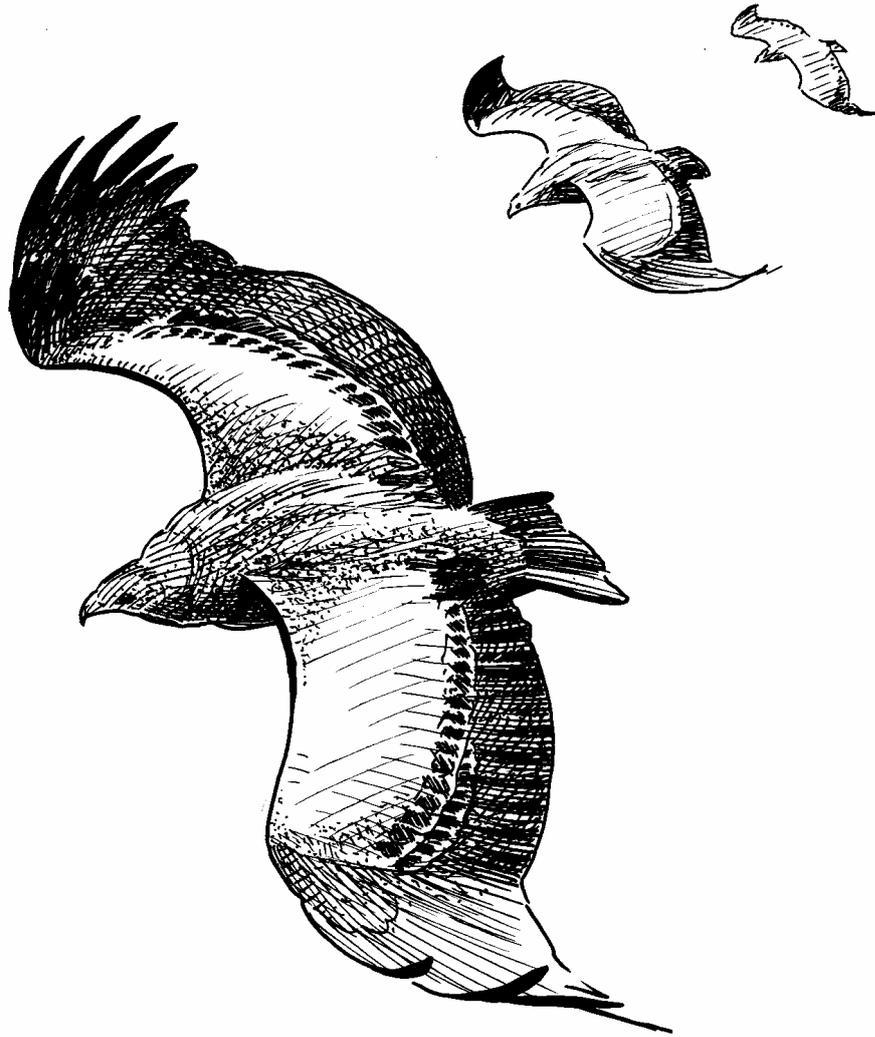
Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Crete

6 – 13 April 1999

**Crete
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Holiday participants

Mary Cunningham

Stephen Sutton
Pamela Sutton

Gordon Webster
Maureen Webster

Della Mascarenhas

Margot Holmes-Smith
Neale Holmes-Smith

Richard Beswetherick
Sandra Beswetherick

Ian Milne
Jenn Milne

Kathleen Claxton
Michael Claxton

Leaders

Mick Rebane
Diana Mortimer

Report written by Mick Rebane and Diana Mortimer

Illustrations by Rob Hume. Cover: griffon vultures

As with all Honeyguide holidays, £25 of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case for the Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS), which is based in Athens but whose work covers the whole of Greece and its islands. £350 was sent this year - £25 per person. This brings Honeyguide's total contributions since the first Honeyguide holiday in Crete in 1995 to £1,695, and to conservation projects in Europe to £17,425. A thank-you letter from HOS and information about the lammergeier project work appear at the end of this report (but not this web version).

CRETE
6 - 13 APRIL 1999

Tuesday 6 April – Gatwick to Plakias

As usual with most charter flights these days, there was a slight delay in the flight. Arriving at the new upgraded Heraklion airport, Mick Rebane - co-leader for this holiday who had already been on Crete for a week - patiently waits for Diana and the rest of the Honeyguide group to reclaim their baggage. Slowly, slowly - siga, siga - is a phrase that everyone became accustomed to on the island during the week, where the pace of life is much slower. Most things do eventually happen in Cretan time, and that perhaps is one of the reasons people come here - to unwind and forget about deadlines and the daily manic rushing around. A good introduction was the baggage reclaim where things were proceeding at an even slower pace than normal - even for Crete!

Mary is the first to come through and embark onto the coach, while Mike and June renew acquaintances with Mick who they met on a holiday in the Spanish Pyrenees a few years ago, but it is some time before everyone is accounted for. All bags and belongings retrieved, except for Richard's pruning knife - we never did find out whether Richard intended to get a gardening job on Crete or whether he had read the guide books before about the macho Cretan race and wanted to impress the locals with his own knife!

A Crete bathed in warm sunshine welcomes the group. A good omen, as the previous week had been both cold and wet. The two hour coach transfer first follows the north coast westwards towards Rethymnon through the rugged and impressive coastal scenery, and we then turn south and inland on the second leg down towards the sleepy resort of Plakias on the south coast.

The journey is so spectacular that most of the group quickly drops off to sleep. Those that do manage to stay awake are rewarded with much more than spectacular scenery. The stunning yellow of Jerusalem sage, Spanish broom and thorny broom carpeting the hillsides; the orange sellers along the roadside; the deep blue inviting Cretan sea and the fleeting glimpses of large birds of prey such as buzzard and griffon vulture; all providing a taster of what was to come during the week. It is always a little frustrating during that first coach journey to see so many interesting plants, birds and new sights pass as a blur and not be able to stop and explore.

George Giorgos, our host for the week meets us in the square at Plakias and greets us with both bad and good news! First - the bad news - we do not have a hotel! The good news - we have been allocated to another hotel in the village (three in fact), and with superb views to boot. Our original hotel, the Sophia, was suffering from 'water problems' and the spare parts had not arrived and Greek Easter was fast approaching. This is not a normal problem and an interesting start for Diana leading her first holiday. It even throws Mick initially as it is the first time this situation had occurred in over 20 tours to the island. As one might expect, the unloading and transfers from the coach take a little longer to organise than usual and as a consequence our dinner rendezvous is later than normal. As a result the Sophia (no relation) taverna was now full inside, and so we experience our first Cretan evening meal together outdoors. We soon discover why everyone is inside and everyone soon have their coats on and the gas heaters are turned to full 'blast'. Winding down begins and soon we are all warm - but whether that is due to the extra clothes, the heaters, the food or wine is a little unclear!

Wednesday 7 April - Mirthios

Having arranged to meet after breakfast on the harbour next to the Sophia taverna in the morning, we congregate in the warm morning sunshine before heading off into the hills behind the village of Plakias. This however is the first tour to Crete that a member of the group is lost before the trip had started. Della arrives at the meeting place quite promptly and quickly disappears because she then thinks that Ian and Jenn are meeting her in front of the hotel. A few minutes pass and Ian and Jenn arrive without Della! Ian then goes off in search of Della! This could have continued all day and would have been very entertaining but fortunately we are all reunited with each other and make our way inland towards the hillside village of Mirthios.

Gordon had already had sightings of bee-eaters along the cliffs by the hotel earlier this morning - a very, very early record for Crete - so we were all looking forward to equally good sightings during our

first day. As with all first days, progress can be especially slow when there is so much to see. Italian sparrows noisily greet us as we leave the village, where we come to an abrupt stop in a car park which is covered in all sorts of colourful wildflowers - crown daisy (with both colour forms), honeywort, large blue alkanet and wild salsify to name a few. We could have easily spent all morning in the car park, but by consensus we decide to move on up the valley as postcards sent back home may have read a little strangely - "First day spent in car park looking at weeds!"

Winding our way up the valley through the olive groves, people soon become familiar with the loud song of Cetti's warbler in the cover of giant reed in the riverbed, and the buzzards drifting high overhead. Our first orchids are soon found - tongue, Italian man and marengo orchid. While Neale discovers a specimen of the weird friar's cowl, the only one seen during the whole week.

A superb old bridge and an ancient chimney mill (originally built to power a wheel for grinding corn) come into view but we first briefly disappear around the corner to pay a visit to a hidden chapel built into the cliffs. This was gradually disappearing under ferns and Cretan endemics such as hanging mullein and Cretan wall lettuce. The climb up the hillside now began in earnest through the surrounding dramatic scenery with crag martins, blue rock thrush and raven all putting in appearances. Most of the group were wondering what they had let themselves in for as they emerged at the top of the slope just below the village - however confidence in the leaders was soon restored when everyone is told that this is the most strenuous walk of the week and a cold beer lies in wait just round the corner, or is it the next corner, no it must be the one after that!

The old village laundry is carefully examined and noted for later in the week, before we settle in at the Plateia taverna in Mirthios - one of the most stunningly-situated tavernas in the whole of Crete, looking down onto the inviting bay of Plakias, and we all (well most of us!) agree that it was well worth the climb up. After a very relaxing and superb lunch we regroup and stagger homeward down an easy path back to Plakias.

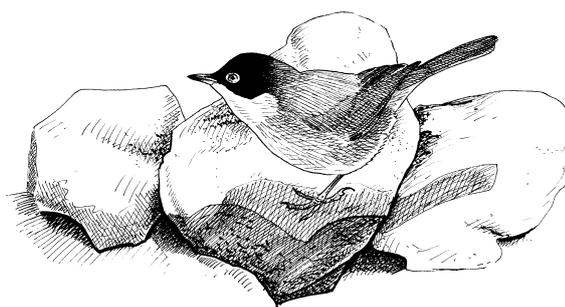
A new taverna tonight - Christos's - where we actually chose to eat outside. More Cretan specialities as we share our mezethes and listen to the waves of the Libyan Sea hit the Cretan shore. No-one knew that it was Diana's birthday (obviously apart from Mick and Diana that is!) until a large chocolate birthday cake appears at the end of the evening, impressing everyone in the taverna. Christos coaxes Diana to the fore - a little embarrassed - to cut the cake, to the strains of "Happy birthday to you....".

Thursday 8 April - Kourtalotiko Gorge, Kedros mountains behind Spili

Yesterday was down as a relaxing introduction to the island (although not everyone seemed to agree with that!) walking from the village without having recourse to transport. Today saw our first outing in the minibuses. Neale, Margot, Diana and Mick meet for breakfast and while we did not have the same views that the rest of the group enjoyed (green with envy), at least for this morning and this morning only - we did have the pleasure of the company of a very very noisy great reed warbler singing at the top of a plane tree directly above the swimming pool.

Before setting off inland towards the Kourtalotiko gorge and beyond we drive eastwards along the coast a little to see if we could catch up with the bee-eaters that Gordon had spotted the previous morning. Unfortunately they were nowhere to be seen and had obviously been passing through heading north. However we were not disappointed as there was much to see - including a woodchat shrike perched on the hillside scrub, a hidden nightingale, good views of Sardinian warbler (*below*), and a kingfisher ("Over there Mary - quick!" - a shout often heard during the trip). Mary never did see a kingfisher but not for want of trying.

As we had not yet explored the other end of Plakias beach we make our way through the village to this beach. We are rewarded when 17 little egrets fly overhead shortly after we arrive, as do 4 grey herons. The damp fields and beach however are pretty quiet apart from a little ringed plover, numerous crested larks, stonechats and a solitary tawny pipit, although the flowers make up for the



quietness with bright splashes of colour in the fields as well as on the beach. Masses and masses of pinks vied with the sea spurge, sea medick, sea rocket and leaves of the autumn flowering sea daffodil.

Time was passing quickly and we reluctantly get back into the buses and head out of the village inland towards the spectacular Kourtalio Gorge with its precipitous gorge walls. As the weather is still and warm we decide to do the gorge in the morning rather than on the way back. Parking the buses at the top of the gorge we descend the steep steps down into the gorge bottom with its church of Ayios Nikolaos and noisy waterfalls. It's always difficult to know whether to keep your eyes on the ground looking for plants or skywards in the hope of seeing a Lammergeier. On this terrain there is no option - concentrate in the steps - and stop if you want to look for plants or birds!

The soils are obviously different here to the soils immediately around Mirthios, and the morning's walk reveals some exciting finds including yellow asphodel, Cretan cyclamen, Cretan tulip and tree spurge. The birds no less so, and while no lammergeier appears we do have good views of griffon vultures, two grey wagtails around the waterfalls and the fast flowing river, crag martins darting in and out of the rock faces, rock doves, wren (a mountain species in Crete!) and a very obliging alpine chough. Most make use of the well-positioned bench on the way back up - not for a breather of course but for a final look skywards before returning to the buses.

Everyone is feeling a little peckish now so the culinary delights of Spili are in most people's minds - flowers and birds having taken a back seat. Taking a short cut up through the sleepy village of Frati we are soon distracted once more and stop for a quick exploration. We are not disappointed with Ian and Richard lucky to catch a glimpse of a beech marten disappearing into a Cretan garden, while others were suitably impressed with the size of the giant orchid. Unfortunately a singing cirl bunting would not reveal itself and eventually disappears around the corner and further up the valley. Even over lunch at Spili with its famous lion fountains, there was much to distract us - swallows, more griffons and a peregrine overhead on our way back to the buses after lunch.



The foothills of the Kedros mountains behind Spili are one of the botanical highlights of the whole of the island, if not the whole of the Mediterranean. However at this time of year the weather has not yet settled and a visit up into the foothills can be a bit of a hit and miss affair. This year and today however we hit it spot on - warm and sunny with the plants (and even the birds) at their very best. Orchids too numerous to mention but mention we will - carpets of few-flowered orchid and Boryi's orchid, alongside and rubbing shoulders with rainbow, bumblebee and Cretan bee orchid, fields full of poppies, tulips and anemones, and the stream sides and wetter flushes clothed in widow iris. The birds do not like this competition and a hoopoe greets us on arrival at our parking spot, and soon have all and sundry admiring the bird, and stalking a tree to get better views.

Once we cross the stream, the next couple of hours pass very quickly with plenty to keep everyone's interest. Gordon was first onto a male Montagu's harrier, and other birds quickly follow - a black-eared wheatear, a female marsh harrier, a couple of woodlarks and 25 very busy short-toed larks.

We eventually pull ourselves away from this amazing place and make our way back to Plakias where the sparkling bay greets us on our return. Another new taverna tonight, the Glaros where the genial and charming Nikos plies us with lurid cocktails and raki into the late evening.

Friday 9 April – Phaestos and Ayia Triada

Today sees us venture farther afield, the end destination being one of the four Minoan palaces known from Crete - Phaestos. The first part of the journey is a repeat the journey of yesterday, through the Kourtalotiko Gorge, Frati and Spili but then onto a new piece of road through the mountains heading eastwards towards the sea again. Unsurprisingly many stops are made with good numbers of alpine swift and distant griffons, and much in the way of flowers to keep people occupied - particularly masses and masses of giant fennel in the fields and the roadsides filled with blue hairy lupins.

As we journey further into the mountains a photo stop is requested of the heavily snow-capped mountains in the distance. Various combinations of individuals stand next to each other as the cameras clicked, and it is as much as Mick and Diana can do than to stop some of the group being run over by local traffic as they marvel at the scenery forgetting they are also standing on a main road. Margot (with her Dutch ancestry) becomes increasingly excited with the mountain scenery and we have to force her back onto the bus!

Back into the buses for a unforgettable drive through the extremely busy town of Timbaki on market day! Stalls are spread out across the main road with what seems no room for any pedestrians let alone traffic. Anyway, we gradually make slow progress through the very crowded streets rubbing shoulders - literally - with well dressed Cretans, getting close views of shoe stalls, fireworks (in readiness for Greek Easter in a day or two) and cups of Greek coffee.

When we eventually arrive at Phaestos, this too was very busy and the car park is almost full with hire cars and tour buses. After a welcoming cup of coffee and early lunch at the cafe and gift shop Diana and Mick explain the plan for the afternoon - it becomes obvious that everyone is now fully in holiday mode and no-one listen to our precise programme for the afternoon. Gasps of disbelief are heard as Mick and Diana disappear off to Ayia Triada in the buses, returning together in only one. As the afternoon progresses it becomes clear to some if not all what is happening as we all walk away from Phaestos towards the summer palace of Ayia Triada. If Spili and the Kedros mountains were spectacular for the number of orchids, then Phaestos must be one of the most colourful of the countryside around with banks and banks of purple vipers bugloss, golden cassidony, field gladioli and mallow-leaved bindweed, together with patches of the endemic shrub shrubby sainfoin (Cretan ebony), and sprinkled through with more orchids - Cretan bee orchid, pyramid orchid and tongue orchids.

The walk produces few new birds although chukar was heard, with many buzzards and towards the end point of the walk, a number of kestrels seemingly feeding on the bees over the colourful hives nearby. Further searching by Richard reveals what looks like an active badgers' sett. As the remainder of us approach Ayia Triada we find the speedy walkers - Margot, Sandra, Mary and Jenn - all disappointed with the lack of a tea shop at Triada and busy replanning the itinerary for next years group!

We all rush back from Ayia Triada to Phaestos to give everyone the opportunity to visit this world renowned palace and archaeological site before it closes for the day, only to find that almost everyone has opted for tea and ice creams - I don't know why we bother sometimes! A huddle soon forms as Mary describes the finer points of a warbler, seen during her walk to Ayia Triada, to Ian and Gordon who scour the books in search of this mysterious bird.

As compensation for a generally quiet day for the birders, a quail is heard below the ramparts at Phaestos, with good views of stonechat sitting on the overhead wires - along with new birds for the trip - fan-tailed warbler, collared dove and woodpigeon - all fairly uncommon on the island.

Friday sees us return to Christos's taverna where another varied and stupendous meal was had. Jenn, Pamela and Diana become so hysterical at one point - goodness knows what the reason was - that they suddenly agree between themselves that a silence pact was in order, and what seems like the whole taverna and village suddenly become quiet. Fifteen minutes later riotous laughter and conversation resume. Tonight is almost an exact re-enactment of two nights ago - this time it is Della's birthday and she is also surprised to receive a birthday card and cake, doing the honours with the taverna's own Cretan birthday knife. It is also on this night that we discover there are two aliens in our midst - Stephen and Pamela. Acting suspiciously for a number of days they finally unwittingly exhibit their alien personas by wearing a short-sleeved shirt (Stephen) and a summer dress (Pamela) to dinner. They have no conception of the cool ambient evening temperatures at this time of year but had read somewhere in 'The Alien's guide to Earthling Crete' that it is very warm - indeed hot - in the

Mediterranean! Despite being aliens they have a good general grasp of life on earth, and were, for aliens, very good company.

Saturday 10 April - Kotsiphou gorge, Kournas Lake and Ayia Reservoir

Today was a bit of an unknown quantity as no-one knew where we going! Mick and Diana less so than others it appeared. For the first time since Honeyguide started going to Crete five years ago the leaders had finally thrown in the towel. Most groups can be pretty demanding but this lot - well!

But - seriously as they say - given the strong interest in birds (and yesterday had been quite a quiet day, and no we hadn't seen lammergeier yet, etc, etc) a drive to probably the best bird site on Crete was called for. But first of all we stop on the way out of Plakias in the Kotsiphou gorge - the only other route in and out of Plakias. As we are about to enter the gorge the song of ortolan bunting is heard from the bus and we scan the shrub-covered hillside for views of the bird. Further into the gorge good views of blue rock thrush are had above us on the cliff, for those who missed the bird on the first day, while a group of noisy jackdaws (uncommon in Crete) call and float above. Neale disappears after Cretan arum and yellow flax which are hanging off the walls of the gorge, but promptly returns when the sound of turning engines is heard - it always works!

Again the journey is littered with roadside stops for this and that we make a short stop on the north coast to stretch our legs. The coast turns out to be a little quiet apart from the odd common sandpiper, little egret and yellow-legged gull. There follows a detour to Kournas Lake where much yoghurt with honey/fruit is consumed overlooking the only natural lake in Crete. The lake is apparently bottomless and its eerie turquoise blue colour gives it a very unnatural feel. A regular wintering site for black-necked grebe is its other claim to fame, and some of us are rewarded with a brief view of one bird which despite after much searching cannot be refound - a sprinkling of pedaloos, little grebe, moorhen and coot are also to be had, and a little egret gives a good flypast.

Time is marching on and so back onto the buses for the main destination of the day - Ayia Reservoir - about 12 kilometres to the south west of the ancient city of Chania on the road up towards the Omalos Plateau. Passing through the main orange growing area on Crete with its sweet smelling flowers we arrive at Ayia around lunchtime and while expectations are great they are quickly exceeded. Despite being an artificial water body it looks more natural than Kournas Lake, and is certainly much richer in birdlife. It is difficult to know where to start looking first. Firstly the whiskered terns call for your attention, then the marsh harriers, then the squacco heron, followed by the single glossy ibis - but what are those birds feeding at the reed edge - yes they are little crakes - and that one, another little crake, no it's a Baillons' crake! At one point the crake is at our feet and much too close to use binoculars! Wood sandpiper, black-winged stilt, little gull, kingfisher, and clouds of house martins all vie for our attention. Tearing ourselves away for a late but laid back lunch (was it 4 or 5 pm?) in the quiet coastal village of Almerida, the peace of Richard Hobbs (a friend of Mick and another wildlife leader) was destroyed when we arrive, but he kindly agrees to take photos and more photos of the table. A swift walk follows to admire the 5th century Byzantine mosaic - there really is too much to see and do on Crete - before we board the skylark buses back to Plakias.

Tonight is the eve of Greek Easter and all are keen to go up to the village of Mirthios for the church service around midnight. George's wife, Anne Marie, is a little worried about the prospect of us going to the village - "too much boom boom" she cries - we find out she is going to a quieter service at Preveli. Each of us will have our own memories of the Greek Easter service and the celebrations, the friendliness of the villagers, the exuberance (!) of the youngsters, and the "boom booms" - but it will certainly never be forgotten. What we didn't expect that evening was to overtake a train!

Sunday 11 April - Moni Preveli

A wet start to the day, making life a little difficult for the villagers who are getting their barbecues ready for the lamb roast for Easter lunch. A later start for us today following last night's celebrations - also it is only a short journey for our half day so we have plenty of time. Stopping off at the far end of the beach at Plakias again, 17 (all herons come in 17s it seems) purple herons fly over our heads. A drive down the beautiful Geropotamus valley stopping on the way at the old Moni Preveli, where while admiring the old monastery a large mixed flock of hirundines fly past overhead - mainly house martins and swallows, but sprinkled with a few red-rumped swallows and sand martins which give all an

opportunity to compare and contrast and get to grips with the finer points of identification. Maureen is so keen to get her identification correct, or is it to get that extra special photograph of the monastery, that she falls into the boundary fence! Fortunately she is only shaken and not stirred, but her lens filter is nowhere to be seen. A short drive towards the sea and the next stop at the 'new' Moni Preveli - famous for the part it played assisting the British and Allied troops during the German occupation of the island in the 2nd World War. We stop here for a very pleasant couple of hours for a walk down through the coastal scrub in search of migrants and Ruppell's warbler - the morning brings few birds however apart from the odd black-eared wheatear, a couple of chukar partridges and the occasional croaking of a nearby raven. This gives time for searching out new plants and strangely Mick cannot find any volunteers to test out the stinging potential of the Roman nettle.

The afternoon is free and some share another lunch at the square up in Mirthios village, while others have a relaxing time down and around the sea at Plakias. Neale and Margot go for direct route 1 back down the hillside to Plakias retracing our steps of the first morning - fortunately for us all and Margot in particular a spiny bush prevents her rolling down the precarious hillside as she stumbles on the way down!

As this is Greek Easter, when families celebrate with an open air Sunday afternoon lunch of roast lamb, we also sample this traditional Cretan celebration in Christos's in the evening. At least some of his staff have partially recovered from the festivities and return to the taverna in the evening to assist with the cooking and waiting. Beautifully tender dishes of lamb with all the trimmings appear followed by a special Cretan desert of figs. Conversation soon turns to birds of prey, and some of the group is now beginning to suspect that lammergeier is a figment of the imagination. However, if we are to see this elusive creature they decide that some direct action is called for, and so all lamb bones soon disappear into various bags to be laid in the Kotsiphou gorge tomorrow. While seemingly a good idea at the time, Mick and Diana - charged with looking after this collection of bones (thanks!) - decide that walking around Plakias with a bag of bones and being followed by all the village's cats is not good for their street cred, so they lay the bones to rest so to speak in a municipal dustbin.

Monday 12 April - Frangokastello

A new direction for the trip today in search of, among other things, those two elusive birds - lammergeier and Ruppell's warbler. Before we head west today we cannot avoid the anticipation of what birds might be hiding along the beach at the far end of Plakias. We don't want to spend too much time here as there is much new land to explore but we feel that ten minutes or so may repay a little effort. The previous day's rain seems to have brought a few birds down to rest on their migration northwards. In the fields there are four tawny pipits, and three whinchat feeding in the wet patches along the road from the beach out of the village.

We climb up the mountainside through Mirthios into the Kotsiphou gorge and out onto the road westwards towards Frangokastello. The morning is glorious and the hillsides look very promising so we stop to scan the hillsides. Almost as soon as we get outside of the buses a Ruppell's warbler bursts into song and both male and female birds are clearly seen by everyone for a good half hour, the pair being very active with another male bird also seen. Further excitement was provided a singing ortolan bunting in the distance - heard but not seen. A Cretan gentleman passes us on the roadside walking home after the Easter festivities and boasting of his night's conquest!

The scenery really is stunning along the drive and it is very tempting to stop around each corner, which Diana's bus does. Given the lack of bones, Diana and Ian attempt to turn a griffon vulture into a juvenile lammergeier - a nice try but the rest of us remain unconvinced. A short deviation down to the beach at Rodakina reveals an immature shag sunning itself on the rocks close to the shore, and a poppy-filled meadow contains fringed rue.

A pre-lunch walk along the coast at Frangokastello is quiet - a lone purple heron and not much else - although the plants growing amongst the ruins of the castle, mandrake, foetid trefoil and pheasant's eye attract the botanists. The nearby taverna beckons and once the owner recovers from the shock of 16 customers arriving off season and mid-week, we are treated to another tasty fresh Cretan meal.

After lunch, the drive above the Imbros gorge is not an easy one. Hairpin bends follow each other in quick succession, and when you think you are at the top another rise appears. This is the second longest gorge in Crete after Samaria and is particularly inviting to walkers early in the season when the Samaria gorge is still closed.

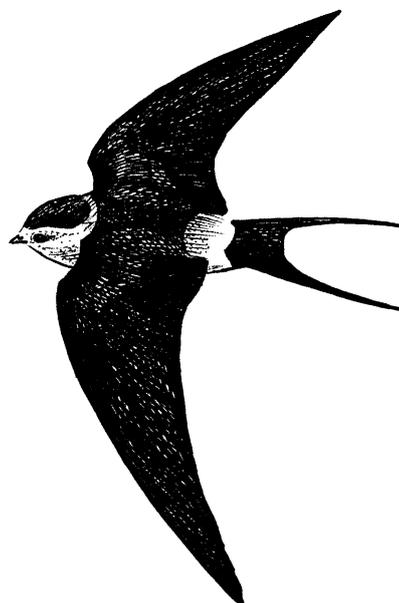
Returning home past a woodchat shrike and some tawny pipits on the flat plain of Frangokastello, Diana's bus - now heavily tuned to 'flattened fauna' - all shout out when passing a sadly squashed badger, but Mick's bus misses it for the second time that day. After some last minute shopping at Mirthios a vote decides we end the week at the Glaros taverna - where Diana and Mick are suitably embarrassed when presented with a generous gift from the group including a hand drawn (by Gordon) card of the two 'in action' ie with binoculars in hand looking bemused and uncertain! Mick however is not convinced that Gordon has quite perfected his artistic talents as he is convinced that: 1. He is much taller, 2. His legs are not that hairy and 3. His stomach is not that large. Mick is a little happier when Gordon tells him that he is looking at the sketch of Diana! Lurid coloured concoctions, raki and that old favourite pop song of the 1960s - "Diana" - round off the evening and sadly the week.

Tuesday 13 April

A sad farewell to another sunny and warm Plakias morning, but at least a coach departure of 11am gives us time for some last minute birdwatching, plant searching, sunbathing and shopping.

The coach makes good time and we locate an empty part of the departure lounge for our picnic, serenaded by a young girl on her violin, and rapturous sighs from Ian who has just read that Wales have just defeated England in the rugby.

All runs smoothly on the return flight until we arrive at Gatwick when the aliens discover they have left their keys to their 'spaceship' back in Plakias. An hilarious week of excellent company, sunshine and warm temperatures, stupendous scenery, plants and birds, very friendly local people, and the many shared meals. Oh yes, and there was a little raki and the odd 'boom boom'!



**HONEYGUIDE WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS
CRETE
6 - 13 APRIL 1999**

PLANT LIST

The following list comprises the more obvious plants seen and identified during the week.

Key and nomenclature: Latin names of plants follows those used in *Flora of the Cretan Area* (Turland et al 1993), any alternative names as used in *Mediterranean Wild Flowers* (Blamey & Grey-Wilson 1993) follow in brackets.

* Endemic to Crete

Introduced and not native to Crete and cultivated or planted species

1 PTERIDOPHYTES

Adiantaceae

Adiantum capillus-veneris Maidenhair Fern

Aspleniaceae

Ceterach officinarum subsp. *officinarum* Rusty Back Fern

Hypolepidaceae

Pteridium aquilinum Bracken

Selaginellaceae

Selaginella denticulata Mediterranean Selaginella

2 SPERMATOPHYTES

i) Gymnosperms

***Cupressaceae* - Cypress Family**

Cupressus sempervirens forma. *horizontalis* Cypress

C. sempervirens forma. *sempervirens* Funeral Cypress

ii) Angiosperms

a) Dicotyledons

***Aizoaceae* - Aizoon Family**

Carpobrotus edulis var. *rubescens* Hottentot Fig

***Anacardiaceae* - Pistacio Family**

Pistacia lentiscus Mastic Tree

***Apocynaceae* - Oleander Family**

Nerium oleander subsp. *oleander* Oleander

***Boraginaceae* - Borage Family**

Anchusa italica (*A. azurea*) Large Blue Alkanet

Anchusa variegata Variegated Anchusa

Borago officinalis Borage

Cynoglossum creticum Blue Hound's Tongue

Echium angustifolium subsp. *angustifolium* Narrow-Leaved Bugloss

Echium italicum subsp. *biebersteinii* Pale Bugloss

Echium plantagineum Purple Viper's Bugloss

Onosma erecta Golden Drops

Symphytum creticum (*Procopia cretica*) Procopia

Cactaceae - Cactus Family

Opuntia ficus-barbarica (*O. ficus-indica*) Prickly Pear

Campanulaceae - Bellflower Family

* *Petromarula pinnata* Cretan Wall Lettuce

Caprifoliaceae - Honeysuckle Family

Sambucus nigra Elderflower

Caryophyllaceae - Pink Family

Cerastium scaposum

Petrorhagia velutina (*Kohlrauschia velutina*)

Silene bellidifolia

Silene colorata subsp. *colorata*

Silene conica Sand Catchfly

Silene vulgaris Bladder Campion

Cistaceae - Rockrose Family

Cistus creticus Cretan Cistus

Cistus salvifolius Sage-Leaved Cistus

Fumana arabica Arabian Fumana

Fumana thymifolia Thyme-Leaved Fumana

Compositae - Daisy Family

Anthemis rigida subsp. *rigida* Rayless Chamomile

Asteriscus spinosa (*Pallensis spinosa*)

Bellis sylvestris Southern Daisy

Calendula arvensis Field Marigold

Chrysanthemum coronarium var. *coronarium* Crown Daisy

C. coronarium var. *discolor* Crown Daisy

Crupina crupinostrum Crupina

Dittrichia viscosa subsp. *viscosa* Stink Aster

Galactites tomentosa Mediterranean Thistle

Helichrysum barrelieri (*H. conglobatum*) Golden Cassidony

Phagnalon graecum (*P. rupestre*) Shrubby Cudweed

Ptilostemon chamaepeuce Shrubby Knapweed

Silybum marinum Milk Thistle

Tragopogon sinuatus (*T. porrifolius*) Wild Salsify

Convolvulaceae - Bindweed Family

Convolvulus althaeoides Mallow-leaved Bindweed

Cuscuta epithymum Dodder

Crassulaceae - Stonecrop Family

Umbilicus parviflorus Small-Flowered Navelwort

Cruciferaeae - Cress Family

Biscutella didyma Buckler Mustard

Cakile maritima Sea Rocket

Eruca sativa Eruca

Matthiola tricuspidata Three-Horned Stock

**Ricotia cretica* Ricotia

Dioscoraceae - Yam Family

Tamus communis Black Bryony

Dipsacaceae - Teasel Family

Knautia integrifolia subsp. *mimica* A Scabious

Ericaceae - Heath Family

Erica arborea - Tree Heather

Euphorbiaceae - Spurge Family

Euphorbia acanthothamnus Greek Spiny Spurge

Euphorbia characias Mediterranean Spurge

Euphorbia dendroides Tree Spurge

Euphorbia helioscopia Sun Spurge

Euphorbia paralias Sea Spurge

Mercurialis annua Annual Mercury

Ricinus communis Castor Oil Plant

Fagaceae - Oak Family

Quercus pubescens Downy Oak

Geraniaceae - Geranium Family

Erodium gruinum Long-beaked Stork's Bill

Geranium robertianum Herb Robert

Guttiferae - Hypericum Family

Hypericum empetrifolium subsp. empetrifolium Shrubby St. John's Wort

Labiatae - Mint Family

Ballota pseudodictamnus subsp. pseudodictamnus False Dittany

Coriodithymus capitatus (Thymus capitatus) Shrubby Thyme

Mentha spicata Spear Mint

Origanum vulgare subsp. hirtum Marjoram

Phlomis fruticosa Jerusalem Sage

Phlomis lanata

Prasium majus Spanish Hedge-nettle

Salvia fruticosa Three-Leaved Sage

Salvia scalarea Clary

Salvia viridis Red-Topped Sage

Satureja nervosa

Satureja thymbra Savory

* *Scutellaria sieberi* A Skullcap

Leguminosae - Pea Family

Acacia spp Mimosa

Anagyris foetida Bean Trefoil

Bituminaria bituminosa (Psoralea bituminosa) Pitch Trefoil

Calicotome villosa Hairy Thorny Broom

Ceratonia siliqua Carob Tree

* *Ebenus creticus* Shrubby Sainfoin

Lathyrus aphaca Yellow Vetchling

Lotus creticus Southern Bird's-Foot Trefoil

Lupinus micranthus Hairy Lupin

Medicago arabica Spotted Medick

Medicago marina Sea Medick

Medicago orbicularis Large Disk Medick

Spartium junceum Spanish Broom

Tetragonolobus purpureus Asparagus Pea

Trifolium stellatum Star Clover

Trifolium uniflorum One-Flowered Clover

Trigonella balansae A Fenugreek

Tripodion tetraphyllum (Anthyllis tetraphyllum) Bladder Vetch

Vicia sativa Fodder Vetch

Linacea - Flax Family

Linum arboreum Tree Flax

Linum bienne Pale Flax

Lythraceae - Loosestrife Family

Lythrum junceum Creeping Loosestrife

Malvaceae - Mallow Family

Lavatera cretica Lesser Tree Mallow

Malva sylvestris Common Mallow

Moraceae - Fig Family

Ficus carica Fig

Morus alba White Mulberry

Myrtaceae - Myrtle Family

Myrtus communis subsp. *communis* Common Myrtle

Oleaceae - Olive Family

Olea europaea subsp. *europaea* Olive

Orobanchaceae - Broomrape Family

Orobanche ramosa Branched Broomrape

Oxalidaceae - Sorrel Family

Oxalis pes-caprae Bermuda Buttercup

Papaveraceae - Poppy Family

Glaucium flavum Yellow-Horned Poppy

Papaver rhoeas Common Poppy

Plantaginaceae - Plantain Family

Plantago afra

Plantago lagopus

Plantago lanceolata Ribwort Plantain

Platanaceae - Plane Tree Family

Platanus orientalis Oriental Plane

Polygalaceae - Milkwort Family

Polygala venulosa Eastern Milkwort

Primulaceae - Primrose Family

Anagallis arvensis Scarlet Pimpernel (Scarlet and blue forms)

**Cyclamen creticum* Cretan Cyclamen

Ranunculaceae - Buttercup Family

Adonis microcarpa subsp. *cretica* Yellow Pheasant's-Eye

Anemone coronaria Crown Anemone

Anemone hortensis ssp. *heldreichii*

Ranunculus asiaticus Turban Buttercup

Ranunculus scleratus Celery-leaved Crowfoot

Resedaceae - Mignonette Family

Reseda lutea Wild Mignonette

Rosaceae - Rose Family

Prunus dulcis - Almond

Pyrus amygdaliformis Almond-leaved Pear

Rubus sanctus Bramble

Sanguisorba minor subsp. verrucosa Mediterranean Salad Burnet
Sarcopterium spinosum Thorny Burnet

Rubiaceae - Bedstraw Family

Rubia peregrina Wild Madder

Rutaceae - Rue Family

Citrus limon Lemon

Citrus sinensis Orange

Ruta chalepensis subsp. chalepensis Fringed Rue

Santalaceae - Sandalwood Family

Osyris alba Osyris

Scrophulariaceae - Figwort Family

Bellardia trixago Bellardia

Linaria pelisseriana Jersey Toadflax

Misopates orontium Lesser Snapdragon

Parentucellia latifolia

Parentucellia viscosa Yellow Bartsia

Scrophularia lucida Shining Figwort

* *Verbascum arcturus* Hanging Mullein

Verbascum sinuatum

Solanaceae - Potato Family

Hyoscyamus albus White Henbane

Mandragora autumnalis Mandrake

Styracaceae - Storax Family

Styrax officinalis Storax

Tamaricaceae - Tamarix Family

Tamarix smyrnensis Tamarisk

Thymelaeaceae - Daphne Family

Daphne sericea

Thymelaea hirsuta Thymelea

Umbelliferae - Carrot Family

Apium nodiflorum Fools Water-cress

Bupleurum gracile A Thorow Wax

Daucus carota Wild Carrot

Eryngium maritimum Sea Holly

Ferula communis subsp. communis Giant Fennel

Foeniculum vulgare Fennel

Oenanthe pimpinelloides Corky-Fruited Water Dropwort

Tordylium apulum Mediterranean Hartwort

Urticaceae - Nettle Family

Parietaria judaica Pellitory of the Wall

Urtica membranacea Membranous Nettle

Urtica pilulifera Roman Nettle

Valerianaceae - Valerian Family

**Valeriana asarifolia* Cretan Valerian

Valerianella discoidea A Corn Salad

Verbenaceae - Verbena Family

Vitex agnus-castus Chaste Tree

Vitaceae - Vine Family

Vitis vinifera subsp. *vinifera* Grape Vine

b) Monocotyledons**Agavaceae - Agave Family**

Agave americana Century Plant

Amaryllidaceae - Daffodil Family

Narcissus tazetta Rose of Sharon (in fruit only)

Pancratium maritimum Sea Daffodil (leaves only)

Araceae - Arum Family

Arisarum vulgare Friars Cowl

Arum creticum Cretan Arum

Dranunculus vulgaris Common Dragon Arum

Graminaceae - Grass Family

Arundo donax Giant Reed

Briza maxima Giant Quaking Grass

Dasyrium villosum

Lagurus ovatus Hare's-tail

Phragmites australis Reed

Iridaceae - Iris Family

Gladiolus italicus Field Gladiolus

Gynandriris sisyrrinchium Barbary Nut

Hemodactylus tuberosus Widow Iris

Iris albicans White Flag Iris

Iris pseudocorus Yellow Flag

* *Iris unguicularis* ssp. *cretensis* Cretan Iris

Liliaceae - Lily Family

Allium commutatum Wild Leek

Asphodeline lutea Yellow Asphodel

Asphodelus aestivus Common Asphodel

Drimia maritima (*Urginea maritima*) Sea Squill

Gagea graeca

Muscari comosum Tassle Hyacinth

Ornithogalum exscapum A Star of Bethlehem

Ornithogalum narbonense A Star of Bethlehem

* *Tulipa cretica* Cretan Tulip

* *Tulipa doerfleri* (*T. orphanidea*) Orange Wild Tulip

Tulipa sylvestris Wild Tulip

Orchidaceae - Orchid Family

Aceras anthropophorum Man Orchid

Anacamptis pyramidalis Pyramidal Orchid

Barlia robertiana Giant Orchid

Ophrys bilunulata Double Moon Orchid

Ophrys bombyliflora Bumble Bee Orchid

Ophrys doerfleri (*O. cretica*) Cretan Bee Orchid

Ophrys fusca Sombre Bee Orchid

Ophrys heldreichii (*O. scolopax* ssp. *heldreichii*) Marengo Orchid

Ophrys iricolor Rainbow Orchid

Ophrys sicula Sicilian Orchid (a Yellow Bee Orchid)

Ophrys mammosa (*O. sphegodes* ssp. *mammosa*) Mammose Orchid

Ophrys tentredinifera Sawfly Orchid

Orchis boryi

Orchis collina (*O. saccata*) Fan-Lipped Orchid
Orchis italica Italian Man Orchid
Orchis lactea Milky Orchid
Orchis laxiflora subsp. *laxiflora* Lax-Flowered Orchid
Orchis papilionacea Pink Butterfly Orchid
Orchis pauciflora (*O. provincialis* subsp. *pauciflora*) Few-flowered Orchid
Orchis quadripunctata Four-Spotted Orchid
Orchis tridentata Toothed Orchid
Serapia bergonii (*S. vomeracea* ssp. *laxiflora*) Bergon's Tongue Orchid
Serapia orientalis ssp. *orientalis* Eastern Tongue Orchid
Serapia parviflora Small-flowered Tongue Orchid

Palmae - Palm Family

Phoenix theophrasti Cretan Palm

Typhaceae - Reedmace Family

Typha domingensis A reedmace

BUTTERFLY LIST

Bath white
Black-veined white
Cleopatra
Clouded yellow
Eastern festoon
Holly blue
Large white
Mazarine blue
Painted lady
Peacock
Red admiral
Small copper
Small tortoiseshell
Southern comma
Speckled wood
Scarce swallowtail
Swallowtail
Wall Brown

plus Egyptian Locust

REPTILE AND MAMMAL LIST

Reptiles

Balkan Green Lizard
Common Tree Frog
Erhard's Wall Lizard
Marsh Frog
Moorish Gecko
Stripe-necked Terrapin

Mammals

Badger
Beech Marten
Eastern Hedgehog
Weasel

BIRD LIST

Little grebe
Shag
Squacco heron
Little egret
Grey heron
Purple heron
Glossy ibis
Mallard
Griffon vulture
Marsh harrier
Montagu's harrier
Buzzard
Kestrel
Peregrine
Chukar
Quail
Little crane
Baillons crane
Moorhen
Coot
Black-winged stilt
Little ringed plover
Wood sandpiper
Common sandpiper
Little gull
Yellow-legged gull
Whiskered tern
Rock dove
Woodpigeon
Collared dove
Swift
Alpine swift
Kingfisher
Bee-eater
Hoopoe
Short-toed lark
Crested lark
Woodlark
Sand martin
Crag martin
Swallow
Red-rumped swallow
House martin
Tawny pipit
Yellow wagtail (*Montilla f. feldegg*)
Yellow wagtail (*Montilla f. thurnbergi*)
Grey wagtail
White wagtail
Wren
Robin
Nightingale
Whinchat
Stonechat
Wheatear
Black-eared wheatear
Blue rock thrush
Blackbird
Cetti's warbler
Fan-tailed warbler
Sedge warbler
Great reed warbler
Sardinian warbler
Ruppell's warbler
Blackcap
Blue tit
Great tit
Lesser grey shrike
Woodchat shrike
Alpine chough
Jackdaw
Hooded crow
Raven
Italian sparrow
Chaffinch
Serin
Greenfinch
Goldfinch
Linnet
Cirl bunting
Ortolan bunting
Corn bunting

