



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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The Peloponnese
18 – 25 April 2013

Holiday participants

Susie Turner
Phil Brew
Christine Lee
Jan Tyne

Cherry Robertson
Janet Turner
Russell and Sara Gomm

and from the Salisbury & District Natural History Society

Rosemary and Gerald Nicholls
Grace Hickman

Elisabeth Richmond
Donald and Rita Scarfe

Leaders

Robin and Rachel Hamilton

Host and local guide

Sue Davy

Our holiday was based at Elena's apartments in Livadi.

Report by Rachel and Robin, with additions by Sue. Lists compiled by Rachel and Robin.
Plant list to follow.

Many thanks to Susie Turner for help with moth identification.

Photos by Phil Brew.

Cover: Parnonas mountain view.

Below: Elena, Stratos and Panayiotis.



As with all Honeyguide holidays, part of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case for the Management Body of Mount Parnon and Moustos Wetland Ecological Park, to help them to record biodiversity in the protected area. Honeyguide funded a trail camera which is triggered by a motion detector and an infra-red sensor, together with a secure tamper-proof case. This will join the cameras given to the project on the 2012 Honeyguide visit to provide monitoring opportunities for mammals such as golden jackals and otters. Photographs and videos taken by these cameras can be viewed via the following link on the Honeyguide website: <http://www.honeyguide.co.uk/wildlife-holidays/peloponnese-cons.html>. The total for conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays was £88,604 to June 2013.

Daily Diary

Thursday 18 April – Athens, Corinth Canal and Livadi

What a contrast! We left a very chilly Heathrow dawn (albeit with a tiny hint of spring in the form of a lone swallow flying past the window as we waited at the departure gate), enjoyed a decent BA breakfast and excellent cloudless views of the snow-clad Alps, and then landed on time in a brilliant, balmy Athens. We even felt hot by the time we set off in the minibuses for Livadi.

We came off the motorway just north of the bridge over the Corinth Canal, where we had arranged a rendezvous with Sue, our local host and guide, interpreter, problem-solver and generally indispensable person. We took the opportunity to see at close hand the remarkable example of 19th century engineering which technically turned the Peloponnese into an island. The immense scale of the project was thrown into focus by the seemingly tiny jackdaws ('Are those starlings, down there?' someone asked) flying below us across the canal, we marvelled at the Eucalyptus trees *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* perilously rooted in the cliff crevices, and we enjoyed our first tastes of Greek snacks and coffee at the little tavernas near the bridge.

On the road again it felt more relaxed and we soon left behind the busy motorway and followed Sue on the route south. The mountains of the Peloponnese were looming ahead – first, the imposing rocky hilltop citadel of ancient Corinth and later the distant mountains of the Parnonas range, where we were heading. Wildlife began to be more exciting: a raven flew overhead, the startling pink of Judas Trees *Cercis siliquastrum* dotted the hillsides and the bright white of Storax *Styrax officinalis* flowers shone from the roadside bushes. Around Argos, the intense smell of orange and lemon blossom filled the buses. As we got closer to our destination, the warm mauve of the shrubby sage *Salvia pomifera*, the sharp green of the Mediterranean Spurge *Euphorbia characias* and the yellow of the several species of broom, coloured the rocky roadsides. A blue rock thrush flew across in front of the buses and swifts and swallows swirled above us in the seaside villages.

We had a wonderful welcome from Elena, Panayiotis and their son Stratos when we arrived and a comfortable time to find our apartments and settle in, to take in the amazing views across the Mirto Sea and to inhale the orange and lemon blossom perfumes that enveloped us. Then, there was a short walk up the lane, between the orange, lemon and olive groves, to Taverna Manoleas, Sophia's local taverna which was to be a fairly regular venue for meals for the rest of the week – a happy encounter with a glow-worm on the way – a spread of salads and grills, and a plentiful supply of their own wine greeted us.

It had been a long day and bed was very welcome.

Friday 19 April – Livadi and Upper Tyros

We woke to a dawn chorus of blackbirds and Sardinian warblers, and from our rooms we could see the sun rise over the low hills on the far side of the Gulf of Argolicos. The sky was a clear blue, with a faint and welcome haze and light breeze; we needed time to adapt to this unaccustomed sunshine! Breakfast – cereal with local yoghurt and honey, local bread and home-made jams, freshly squeezed orange juice and a basket piled high with fruit, all from the trees in the family's orange grove, and excellent fresh coffee – was laid out for us in the garden under the shade of a woven canopy and an ancient olive tree. The only people who had been out and about before breakfast were Russell and Sara who arrived with news of a golden oriole calling.

After breakfast, the plan was for a very brief drive up to the top of the village followed by a gentle stroll down the hill – to break us in gently on the first day. Near the minibuses, parked under a great Carob tree, we looked up to see our first red-rumped swallows flying overhead: the village locals; we would get to know them well.

We parked at the top of the hill and the award for the first plant-finding of the week went to Grace for picking out the pretty fruits of Starry Clover as she stepped out onto the parched grasses on the verge. We had a wonderful view of the bay, and we could just make out the roofs of our apartments through the vista of olive groves and Italian cypresses. Butterflies were in evidence as we walked down the track: common blue, small white, southern swallowtail. A praying mantis had laid its eggs, a papy cocoon stuck fast on a rock.

Everyone's attention was drawn to a very striking flower – the purple Salsify *Tragopogon sinuatus* at the edge of the track. In the long grass too were the tall, slender knapweed *Crupina crupinastrum*, the delicate white onion *Allium subhirsutum*, Hare's-tail Grass *Lagurus ovatus* and Disc Trefoil *Medicago orbicularis*. Rosemary and Gerald called out as a clouded yellow flew by, and a pair of distant short-toed eagles appeared over the hill and lingered briefly.

Wendy, a friend of Sue's and another local 'Brit' who generously gave her time to help us on several occasions and whose local knowledge is immense, invited us to wander around her garden. There, she showed us how the Branched Broomrape *Orobanche ramosa* appeared to be parasitising the Bermuda Buttercup *Oxalis pes-caprae* under her olive trees with an encouragingly damaging effect on the invasive Bermuda Buttercup, and she showed us a lovely clump of wild gladioli. The insects were very active: a scarce swallowtail, a violet carpenter bee, a wall brown, a black-veined white, a brimstone and several Glanville fritillaries were all in flight and two Egyptian locusts clattered into view and landed briefly. We watched a cirl bunting singing on a telegraph wire, Janet found a cluster of flower chafer beetles *Oxythyrea funesta* feeding in some flowers and Russell and Sara called us over to look at some beech marten droppings. The view from Wendy's balcony was superb – an excellent photo opportunity. It was time to carry on down the hill. We stopped to admire a magnificent plant of the shrubby sage, *Salvia pomifera* – a local speciality – that we had seen for the first time on the drive from Athens. A Cetti's warbler was singing from some bushes in the valley but, as usual, refusing to show itself, a meadow brown passed us and Sara found and photographed a Peloponnese wall lizard.

At first the track is flanked by small trees and bushes – Carob *Ceratonia siliqua* and Mastic trees *Pistachia lentiscus*, Wild Pear *Pyrus spinosa*, Storax *Styrax officinalis* and one or two young Vallonia Oaks *Quercus ithaburensis* ssp *macrolepis*. Then it turns into a dry watercourse where a great tit was singing and Rita and Gerald were both on the lookout for butterflies – Rita found an orange tip and Gerald a speckled wood. The last bit of the path is a steep scramble, through Autumn Tree Heath *Erica manipuliflora*, Cistus *Cistus* spp and Kermes Oak *Quercus coccifera*, with dry- and lime-loving plants like rock-roses *Helianthemum* and *Fumana* spp, *Phagnalon* spp and *Helichrysum* spp. Chris found Greater Quaking Grass *Briza maxima* and then was captivated by the weird spiny grass *Aegilops geniculata* at the edge of the track. Elena's other son Dimitri had kindly cut some steps in the steepest part of the track to make the last descent easier for us. Back at the apartments, Gerald added some more butterflies to the list: large white, southern white admiral and mallow skipper, and then it was time for a break to prepare for lunch and the afternoon's excursion.



Lunch at the taverna.

Sue had arranged for us to have lunch at a taverna in Tyros, a few kilometres back along the coast, and strategically placed for our afternoon's walk. In a perfect position beside the beach, our table was set out on the terrace, and soon an amazing selection of breads, salads and cheeses appeared, soon followed by dishes of fish. We tucked in, delighted by the local stripy aubergine (melitzana) salad and by the amazing array of flavours; Greek coffee got us going again and we tore ourselves away to Ano (Upper) Tyros, and our afternoon walk.

We headed up the hill for a steep but pretty drive through the old village of Ano Tyros – Sue explained that the coastal settlement had only been created when the fear of pirates had abated in the nineteenth century – and our afternoon walk.

A bush of Sage-leaved Cistus *Cistus salvifolius* covered in charming, crumpled white flowers, greeted us and we quickly had the chance to get to know some significant local plants, with a bit of a theme, all ‘barbed-wire’ plants or, more accurately, ‘wire-netting’: Greek Spiny Spurge, Greek Spiny Burnet, Greek Spiny Broom (*Euphorbia acanthothamnus*, *Sarcopoterium spinosum*, *Calicotome villosa*). Sue introduced us to an important and frequently seen Peloponnese endemic alkanet, *Alkanna sfikasiana*. This has only recently been described and is striking for its distinctly blue petals and contrasting orange, cream or brown corolla tube. It is found only in the Parnonas Mountains of the Peloponnese, but we got to know it well.

Rosemary found us a small emerald moth and then Russell and Sara delighted us all by finding a trapdoor spider’s tunnel, complete with its beautifully hinged trapdoor. It was superbly camouflaged in the rock of the cliff face, but once we knew what to look for, we found others along the bank beside the track.



Violet carpenter bee on clover and trapdoor spider's tunnel.

The cliff crevices also brought other pleasing things – clusters of small blue calcite crystals, a blue-flowered shrub *Globularia alypum*, bright patches of Tassel Hyacinth *Muscari comosum*, and clumps of a lemon-yellow Golden Drop with orange tips to its flowers, *Onosma frutescens*, which is endemic to the Aegean region of southern Greece.

We strolled along the track; there was a wonderful view down to the sea, across the low scrubby ‘phrygana’ to a hillside grey with olive trees and dramatically punctuated with Italian cypresses. Round the corner, we left the path to climb up to some abandoned cultivation terraces, red with field poppies *Papaver rhoeas*, where we could see two orchids growing: Naked Man Orchid *Orchis italica* and Four-spot Orchid *Orchis quadripunctata*, with some bright red Peacock Anemones *Anemone pavonina*. Phil called us over to a lovely patch of gladioli *Gladiolus italicus* below the track and, with some searching, we re-found a rather ambiguous Tongue Orchid *Serapias* sp that several people had noticed on the way up. Jan re-found a charming little yellow-flowered plant in great danger in the middle of the track: Yellow Gromwell *Neotostema apulum*. A blue tit was calling from the bushes above the bank and we heard our first subalpine warbler singing sweetly.

Returning to Livadi, we gave ourselves time to relax and change, enjoy the view from our balconies and meet under the shelter to review what we had seen. Then we drove back to Tyros for dinner at another taverna by the sea, this one specialising in the great variety of local fish with, of course, its own wine and fresh fruit juice. Hardly any of the fish selection offered went untried! Well ‘wined and dined’ we wound our way out of the village by a different route and looked back at the pretty lights of the bay. On the way home, a fox sauntered across the road in front of the lead minibus.

Saturday 20 April – Tsitalia Track and the Roadside Cliff above Leonidio

We woke to another perfect morning and were ready to start the routine of a before-breakfast stroll around the village. We admired the spectacular dark red *Amaranthus* plant, just coming up at the roadside opposite the gate – too young to identify! By now, we were familiar with the persistent, scratchy song of the Sardinian warbler but were delighted to have a perfect view of one, singing from the top of a bush, and kind enough to stay close for everyone to see him, and his striking red eye-ring. There was a fine spread of Climbing Birthwort *Aristolochia sempervirens* scrambling through the fence underneath. Two turtle doves flew in from the sea and we watched a cirl bunting and then a serin each singing from a telegraph wire. The beach is made up of colourful pebbles, including a lot of green ones derived from undersea volcanoes. (The area is still pretty active and small earthquakes are not infrequent.....!) The strandline there is a very fruitful place for beachcombing; Sara found a peacock's tail seaweed *Padina pavonica*, and Russell picked up an eroded limestone cobble which contained a piddock *Barnea candida* in its burrow. There is a curious mangrove-like plant community backing the beach with Giant Reed *Arundo donax*, Olive *Olea europaea*, Eucalyptus *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, Mastic trees *Pistachia lentiscus* and Chaste Tree *Vitex agnus-castus* all surprisingly salt tolerant, and a lovely plant of Yellow Horned Poppy *Glaucium flavum* at the bottom of the track that leads back to the apartments – and breakfast.



Aristolochia sempervirens

We headed further south after breakfast, guided by Sue through the main local town, Leonidio, up the hill to Tsitalia and on to a wonderful track leading over the plateau. This sort of 'off-roading' is not the thing for hired minibuses so Sue and Wendy's four-wheel-drive vehicles provided a shuttle service for us up the rough track, so that we could enjoy an easy walk back. The waiting groups at both ends of the shuttle explored happily. Two ravens flew over, a subalpine warbler sang nearby, Rosemary found the first red tulips *Tulipa goulimyi* and lots of new plant species were added to the growing list.

By the time we had all reached the top, the early arrivals had spread out, hunting goodies – new plants: the charming pink Spring Rock-cress *Arabis verna*, a new Golden Drop, this time a Peloponnese endemic *Onosma erecta*, Shepherd's Needle *Scandix pecten-veneris*, the tiny southern-Greek endemic *Anchusella variegata*, dramatic patches of Pink Hawksbeard *Crepis rubra*, Yellow Gromwell *Neotostema apulum* again, and Russell showed us a huge buprestid beetle *Capnodis tenebrionis*. As we began the walk back we were alerted by the call to a pair of buzzards above us, the male doing aerobatics, swooping, soaring and stalling. Then there was another call of 'raptor' – a hobby flew close by once, turned and crossed in front of us again.



Horned Woodcock Orchid

Hiding in the shade of the low shrubs, we found the leaves of Blue Wood Anemone *Anemone apennina* ssp *blanda* and of both Greek Cyclamen *Cyclamen graecum* and Sowbread *C hederifolium* and then the brilliant cerise flowers of some Peloponnese Cyclamen *C peloponnesiacum* – another Peloponnese endemic. A subalpine warbler was singing and some of the group caught a brief glimpse of a large pale falcon. Was it just a pale peregrine, or the lanner falcon that was seen nearby recently? We shall never know. The striking prostrate prickly knapweed *Centaurea raphanina* attracted attention. Jan found a fine specimen of the Horned Woodcock Orchid *Ophrys scolopax* ssp *cornuta* (with bright pink sepals, very different from the *Ophrys* that had puzzled us there in 2012). Further down, Rita found the yellow Sicilian Orchid *Ophrys sicula*.

Both tassel hyacinth *Muscari comosum* and the more 'normal looking' *Muscari commutatum* (dark, dark blue and totally lacking pale tips to its tepals) were there. A green hairstreak adorned a bank of *Thymelaea Thymelaea tartronaria*. Then a kestrel and two more hobbies flew over. Susie hung back to do some sketching, determined to get to know the subalpine warbler, and she waited patiently. She was rewarded with a lovely view of it, in full view on a song post. It made a few short song-flights and then returned. So faithful was it that she was able to give everyone at last a really good view. We were then distracted by another 'raptor' call; a pair of short-toed eagles came over and performed a spectacular courtship flight, circling and dancing, as Jan described it. While we watched we could hear a distant woodlark singing. Rosemary found a very pretty *Crepis rubra* with peach-yellow flowers, an unusual but well known form, and Gerald, always on the hunt for butterflies, found a pale clouded yellow and then a scarce swallowtail in the process of laying eggs on a wild pear.

Our picnic lunch had followed us in Sue's car and we laid it out among the rocks and enjoyed a selection of bread, cold meats and salads that Sue had prepared for us, to be followed by a box of exciting cakes and biscuits fresh from the local bakery – all delicious. Sara and Russell wandered off to explore and located some beautifully constructed tarantula burrows, luring the female out to be photographed. A dead hebe tiger moth was found under a bush. Some of us caught a flash of yellow as a male golden oriole flew across the path behind us. We strolled on down the track, adding new flowers to the list: more tulips *Tulipa goulimyi*, a Peloponnese endemic Fritillary *Fritillaria messanensis* ssp *messanensis*, a strange huge *Muscari* relative *Bellevalia ciliata*, the Horned Orchid from last year *Ophrys leptomera*, as well as the abundant but very striking spurge *Euphorbia rigida*, the spurge-like Perfoliate Alexanders *Smyrniium perfoliatum* and many others. But we had other places to see, so we returned to the minibuses and set off back down the hill.

Our next stop was in the shadow of a great roadside cliff on the edge of a gorge leading down into Leonidio. Here, where the cliff is predominantly north-facing, we would hope to find a range of specialist plants dependent on the cooler and damper microclimate, seldom if ever subjected to direct sunlight for prolonged periods. This group of plants, chasmophytes, contains yet another collection of endemics as well as more widely tolerant species. It is a wonderful vertical rockery. Both our Golden Drops were there, and *Allium subhirsutum*. We had close encounters with Jerusalem Sage *Phlomis fruticosa* and Cistuses not yet in flower, the familiar Salsify and its relative the clear yellow *Scorzonera crocifolia*. Two beautiful Parnonas endemics, both with silver leaves, would grace any rock garden: the lemon yellow *Stachys chrysantha* and the grey-blue *Campanula andrewsii* ssp *hirsutula*.



Euphorbia rigida, *Campanula andrewsii* ssp *hirsutula* and *Thalictrum orientale*

In the meantime, a rock partridge called briefly from the other side of the gorge and we heard a short snatch of woodlark song. A raven soared overhead and the rock partridge called again but still would not show itself. In the sunshine on the other side of the road, brimstones were feeding and then we caught the distinctive raptor 'mew' and looked up to see a pair of short-toed eagles displaying overhead, wheeling, swooping, soaring and clasping each other's talons. We were so engrossed in watching this spectacle that most of the group missed the party of about fifty migrating serins flying past us down the gorge in a tight flock.

There was just time for something more. On a shady corner, where a little spring issues out of the cliff, there is an extraordinary display of yet another south Peloponnese speciality, a very beautiful white-flowered Meadow Rue *Thalictrum orientale*. And while we were there, the sharp eyes of the Gomms found a bagworm case – the cocoon of a moth – dangling from a rocky overhang. (As a reward, there was a Turkish gecko waiting for them in their room when they got back to Livadi!)

We gathered our recollections of the day around the table under the canopy and then walked up to Sophia's again. Jugs of their home-made wine, tsatsiki, and tiny cheese pasties greeted us, and then a truly Greek moussaka – firm, meaty and delicious, with apple and cinnamon to finish, and a stroll home under the stars.

Sunday 21 April – Prastos and Kastanitsa

Again, we woke to a fine, sunny morning, with a chorus of blackbirds, cirl buntings and Sardinian warblers in the orange groves. Seven of us set off up the hill to have a look at the red-rumped swallows' nest on a building by the road. We caught a glimpse of the swallows as we turned the corner but the puddle that they had been using was now dry, the sun had not come round to that stretch of the lane and there was, sadly, no sign of them when we got there – though we had plenty of time to admire their design and construction. We saw a jay flying across the valley and watched a greenfinch, a cirl bunting and a house sparrow together on a wire. We turned back in good time for breakfast, ready for an earlier than usual getaway because of the long drive today.

We set off northwards along the coast, rendezvous-ing in Tyros with Sue who led the way. We continued north, Cherry and Sara simultaneously spotting a wheatear close to Krioneri. It was a beautiful drive. We left the coast road a little south of Astros and turned towards the hills. There was a beautiful view of the highest peak in the Parnonas range, Mount Parnon or Megali Tourla, 1934 metres high, with snow still lying in the hollows; our destination, the villages of Prastos and Kastanitsa, lie on its eastern slopes. Our road followed the valley of a river, dry now, but clearly accustomed to carrying a considerable torrent. As we passed, we picked out species we had not seen before: a hawthorn *Crataegus* sp and a wild rose *Rosa* sp. We turned sharply towards Prastos, and began to climb steeply. Soon after the turning the river valley narrows, and there is a stand of oriental planes *Platanus orientalis*, forming a strip of beautiful riverine woodland. (Consulting the map afterwards, we found we were close to the village of Platanos.) High in the hills we came upon a group of fields brilliant with poppies and tassel hyacinths, and promised a photo-stop on the way down. We climbed on, and could see the buildings of Prastos as we approached. Prastos was once a major settlement in the region, Tsakonia, but it was sacked during the Greek War of Independence in the early years of the 19th Century, and its people could never be persuaded to return. Most of the houses stand deserted and are falling into ruin, but a few are now being gradually restored. Gerald noticed eastern orange tips as we drove slowly up through the village.

We left the tarmac road and drove on up the hill above the village, and after several twists and turns, reached a good parking place with amazing views and abundant flowers, birds, reptiles and butterflies. There was a gentle climb along the continuing track with all the usual flowers of the dwarf scrubby plant communities – the phrygana – in profusion: Jerusalem Sage *Phlomis fruticosa* and the more orange *P cretica*, endemic to western Crete and the eastern Peloponnese (at last the two *Phlomis* species flowering together and a chance to pick out the differences), the bright pink bindweed *Convolvulus elegantissima*, Tassel Hyacinth *Muscari comosum*, the now familiar little white *Allium Allium subhirsutum*, the ubiquitous Narrow-leaved Glaucous Spurge *Euphorbia rigida*, Four-spot Orchid *Orchis quadripunctata* and many many more.

Pottering up to the top of the hill we came to a greener, lusher sward, carpeted with *Crepis rubra*, and we spread out to see what we could find, the best flower find being a lovely little clump of Few-flowered Orchid *Orchis pauciflora*. There were dozens of Glanville fritillaries, a small blue, a small copper, quite a few common blues – Grace found a pair of them mating – and Rosemary had a good view of a Cleopatra. Several people saw Peloponnese wall lizards, Gerald and Rosemary found a Balkan wall lizard and Russell found a snake-eyed skink. Then he went off, carefully looking under the large stones, and found several huge centipedes *Scolopendra cingulata* and a yellow scorpion *Buthus occitanicus*. On some of the bushes, particularly the Kermes Oak, two or three people found the beautifully constructed nests of mason wasps. In the woods above us we watched raven and hooded crows and a distant cuckoo was calling.

A pear tree on the hillside provided a subalpine warbler with a useful song-post and we watched its song flight as two red-rumped swallows flew over.

Lunch was calling, and Kastanitsa was our destination, so we returned to the minibuses and retraced our tracks. We made the promised stop to photograph the brilliantly colourful meadows and then pressed on, but were brought to a sudden halt again near to the Plane woods, by the unmistakable song of a nightingale echoing through the valley. We enjoyed it for a few minutes and then drove on, climbing still, with Megali Tourla towering above us on our right. As we came into the village there was a blackcap singing, and we parked the minibuses in the shade in the village car park.

There is a steep climb up to the square in the centre of Kastanitsa where two rival tavernas compete for custom. A table was laid ready for us and we settled down to an exceptional Greek lunch. For our starters, plates of 'horta' (wild greens, which we failed to identify!), aubergine and tomato salad, artichokes in a delicious crisp batter, garlic-mashed potato, a local speciality, green salads, cheese flat breads, chick peas with chestnuts (we were in Kastanitsa after all). Then we were offered a choice – goat casserole, pork with chestnuts (Kastanitsa again) or grilled lamb. To finish, we had slices of apple and a delicately flavoured home-made halva (this version made from semolina, Sue and Wendy explained), followed by Greek coffee or mountain tea, an infusion of one of the *Sideritis* species, picked high in the mountains. Our meal was accompanied by a lovely serenade from the local serins and house martins, and we walked back to the minibuses to a duet between a blackcap and a blackbird.

After lunch, Wendy led us further up above the village, to the Sweet Chestnut *Castanea sativa* woods that give the village its name, and the reason for the abundance of chestnuts on the menu. We stopped under some Chestnut trees, still bare of leaves, and immediately noticed that they were festooned with Continental Mistletoe *Loranthus europaeus*, whose orange berries were hanging in tassels from the branches and scattered on the ground.

The presence of Sweet Chestnut woods here is accounted for by the ancient soils overlying very localised schistic rocks in the small area around Kastanitsa, so that the influence of the widespread underlying limestone is more remote. Other plants respond to this effect and we found tracts of Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, Algerian Iris *Iris unguicularis*, a very large and vigorous form of Common Dog Violet *Viola riviniana*, Leopardsbane *Doronicum orientale* and Daisy *Bellis perennis*, none of which would we associate with a free draining limestone soil. At the top of the hill the Sweet Chestnut gives way to the famous Black Pine *Pinus nigra* and to the Greek endemic Greek Fir *Abies cephalonica*; we found several of these almost smothered in common Mistletoe *Viscum album*, which in Greece, unlike in Britain, is more usually found on conifers. We explored a little at the top of the hill listening to distant goat bells, and found a new orchid, a charming Ophrys, with two white spots on its otherwise almost black lip and which, as Sara pointed out from the photograph she took, bears an uncanny resemblance to Shaun the Sheep! Its identity has yet to be confirmed.



The 'Shaun the Sheep' orchid.

It was time to head for home. We were held up by a very picturesque herd of goats crossing the road and posing obligingly. Wendy was now our guide and she led us down past the only possible point where we might take a wrong turn. Then, with Sara and Russell to accompany her, she took a cross-country route along unmade tracks through the mountains back to Livadi, a journey which Sara and Russell will never forget! They encountered a marginated tortoise on the way.

Dinner tonight was at Sophia's again, though we were hardly hungry after our Kastanitsa lunch. We had a light salad to start and then some very delicious and beautifully cooked local cod. We were very ready for bed.

Monday 22 April – Moustos Lake and Seashore

Another fine sunny sunrise! Could we really be so fortunate? Before breakfast, we decided to take a clockwise circuit around the apartment grounds and straight away had the best views so far of the pair of red-rumped swallows from up the hill, looking closely at the way their tails look, from the underside, as if they have been dipped in ink. We had a good look, too, at some of the local flowers – the white-flowered Oregano *Oreganum onites* (not yet out) which is widely dried and used locally as a culinary herb, Mallow-leaved Storksbill *Erodium malacoides*, a welshed thistle with white markings on the leaves *Carduus pycnocephalus*, and also the similar Mediterranean Thistle *Galactites tomentosa*, a young Vallonia Oak *Quercus ithaburensis* ssp *macrolepis* with its needle-pointed teeth on the leaves, Stink Aster *Dittrichia viscosa* and the blue spreading Bellflower *Campanula andrewsii* ssp *andrewsii*, amongst many others.

Several people photographed a lovely speckled wood with yellow spots, intermediate between the cream of the British race and the orange race found in SW Europe. There was an excellent southern swallowtail which was also photographed and a southern white admiral perched decoratively on Storax flowers. Susie spotted a cirl bunting singing from the top of a tree and we all watched it well through our bins. At breakfast, Susie also told us that she had deliberately left on her balcony light to try and attract moths, but there was nothing much except a Galium Carpet – she would try again.

We took the coast road northwards again after breakfast, Sue joining us at the Tyros crossroads, and leading the way. There is a sharp bend on the road, with rocky scrub on both sides of the road, and a regular site for glimpses of blue rock thrush. There it was again, and a better view this time – slate-blue in the sunshine in front of the lead minibus. Our destination today was the extensive lake and wetland we had passed on the way from Athens, a key site in the Mount Parnon and Moustos Wetland Protected Area, and some very different habitats from any others we had looked at so far. We were welcomed by Katerina and Giorgos, members of the Management Body of Mount Parnon and Moustos Wetland, and they told us something of their work, and also, when we asked, about the awful difficulties that they are facing at the moment as a result of the pressure on Greece's economy. We were able to present to them the Conservation Contribution from the Honeyguide Holiday: another trail camera, together with a bear-proof (!) case, to add to the monitoring equipment that we had given them on our visit last year. (The exciting results of this can be seen on the Honeyguide Website).

While Katerina and Giorgos were talking, we were hearing Cetti's and reed warblers singing and watching squacco herons and little egrets at the water's edge, through the 'scopes. A common sandpiper flew past a couple of times and a pair of mallard and both grey and purple herons appeared, and then lost themselves in the reeds. There was an amazing display of leaping by some of the large grey mullet that inhabit the lake – no fishing is permitted, Katerina explained. A raven croaked to alert us to his presence and we had a very nice view of a female marsh harrier in flight over the reedbed.

There is a good track that leads to the sea, via a couple of hides that overlook the lake; we set off at a very gentle pace in the warm sunshine. The track is flanked on either side by Tamarisk bushes *Tamarix* spp, small stands of Giant Reed *Arundo donax* and extensive areas of Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, with areas of salt and brackish marsh, ditches and pools. Reed warblers were a constant accompaniment and suddenly the contrasting louder, harsher song of a great reed warbler struck up, and we had an excellent view of one near to the path. A little further on, a female stonechat popped up onto the top of a tamarisk bush and was soon joined by her mate. On a sunny patch of marsh, a dappled white fluttered about and we were able to get the binoculars on it, and see the way the dark patches of colour show through the wings. We looked at some of the saltmarsh plants: Sea Purslane *Atriplex portulacoides*, Annual Glasswort or Samphire *Salicornia europaea*, Perennial Glasswort *Sarcocornia fruticosa*, Sea Lavender (not in flower) *Limonium* spp and, at the edge of the path, a fascinating sward of minute grass-like plants: a tiny form of Buckshorn Plantain *Plantago coronopus*, the little sedge relative *Scirpus cernua*, the very slender grass *Parapholis filiformis*.

We crept up and stood watching for a while in the hope of catching a glimpse of a terrapin, without luck. Susie picked up a pair of buzzards and then three hobbies appeared, hawking after insects high above the reeds. We rested for a little while at the hide and first heard, and then saw in the distance, a flock of about 30 bee-eaters flying over.

Some of us strolled back – still no terrapins, and Sue ran a shuttle service for the less energetic. Donald and Rita had a good view of a female Montagu's harrier, Sara heard a sedge warbler and Gerald heard and saw a reed bunting. Greek marsh frogs were calling and a water rail squealed just beside the path but sadly out of sight. Back at the car park we had another look around. There were some nice plants of Squirting Cucumber *Ecballium elaterium*, sadly not quite ready to squirt, and we had an excellent telescope view of a squacco heron. Then it was time to head off for our picnic.

Our picnic spot was a hilltop overlooking the wetland we had been visiting. It is the site of a ruin of a small stone tower house built during the Turkish occupation and surrounded by the remains of fortifications, with a little church, dating from 1611 in the grounds. There are cool shady walls and stone benches, an ideal place to spread out a picnic and to sit in the cool shade. Once again, Sue had provided a fine feast of cold meats and salads, fruit juices (the sour cherry was a surprising favourite) and wicked temptations from the bakery in the village. The vegetation was the most parched we had seen, with Hare's-tail grass and a variety of vetches being the main survivors. There were large numbers of the huge ant *Crematogaster lateralis* but luckily, it seemed to be more interested in our lunch than it was in us. The butterflies were good: the first brown argus of the week, and all three swallowtails – Phil taking some excellent photographs.



From the left: swallowtail, scarce swallowtail and southern swallowtail.

Russell was off searching under stones and came across a little gecko. At first we took it for a Turkish Gecko but Russell photographed it, and by looking closely at its feet you could see there were no adhesive pads and that it had long, bony toes: Kotschy's gecko (corroboration provided by Russell and Sara's 10 year old grandson!)

After lunch, we drove the minibuses right down to the shore so that we could enjoy a real seaside experience. People paddled, rested on the wooden bridge or on the sand, or sketched, or explored. There were several seaside acquaintances from Britain at the top of the beach: Marram Grass *Ammophila arenaria*, Sea Holly *Eryngium maritimum*, Sea Rocket *Cakile maritima*, Golden Samphire *Inula crithmoides*, with some very pretty Mediterranean species as well: Sea Medick *Medicago marina*, Mediterranean Catchfly *Silene colorata*, Narrow-leaved Bugloss *Echium angustifolium*, Sea Knotgrass *Polygonum maritimum*. We came upon a beautiful lawn of white Woolly Chamomile *Anthemis tomentosa*, dotted with brilliant pink *Petrorhagia prolifera*. Several people had found a colourful clump of the unlikely looking purple and white Sea Lavender *Limonium sinuatum* – a good wild Mediterranean species. There were a few clumps of the leaves of Sand Daffodil *Pancretium maritimum*; one had to imagine how beautiful they would be in flower. Amongst the ranker vegetation, there was a group of Bug Orchids *Anacamptis fragrans* and Phil found a tiny dead marginated tortoise. Gerald came upon a big live one, but by the time he had found someone to show it to, it had bumbled off and couldn't be found! There were small heaths, but otherwise the butterflies were quiet and the beachcombing was not particularly fruitful – lots of Mediterranean cone shells. We watched a tawny pipit feeding and also collecting food, and Sara and Russell saw a group of four little egrets. Rosemary came back to the minibus with a report of a new orchid, and Sue led the buses to the place she described, where we found a lovely lot of Lax-flowered Orchids *Anacamptis laxiflora*. Again following Sue, through the maze of tracks behind the beach, we arrived at a very promising area of scrub and brackish lagoons, close to Cheronisi. Sadly though, the hot sun of the last few days had dried the lagoons to parched mud and there was not a bird to be seen except, just as we arrived, the sharpest eyes caught sight of a lovely Montagu's harrier which flew up, circled round and then disappeared behind the hill.

We bumped on again through olive groves, with sheep grazing peacefully, and stopped where a beautiful ancient stone bridge, a fine example of local craftsmanship and architecture, stands all by itself in the middle of a substantial dry river bed. We left the minibuses to see what we could find. There was nice crested lark – the first of the week – but otherwise the birds were quiet. The plants were interesting though, with plenty of ruderals, and up on the bridge itself was a very attractive display, a silvery carpet of the papery *Paronychia capitata* mixed with the very pretty Feather Grass *Stipa parviflora*. On the homeward drive, the blue rock thrush was at its regular corner.

It was dinner with a difference tonight: Elena, Panayiotis and Stratos had invited us to a barbecue at our apartments. Panayiotis is the barbecue chef, Elena queen of the salads and Stratos, who speaks good English, plied us with wine (from their cousin's vineyard) made sure that everything ran smoothly and that we had all that we wanted. The meat, Panayiotis informed us, had been marinating for two days, though he would not say what his secret ingredients were. It was absolutely delicious: tender, tasty and succulent pieces of their own pork, chicken and goat, and of course exciting Greek salads, all grown in the garden. There was more than we could possibly eat, even at the relaxed pace of the evening. Then there was fruit, and again slices of halva, but this time made with sesame. And finally, the highlight began when Stratos picked up his bouzouki to play for us. (Some years ago he was the runner up in all of Greece in the under-18 Bouzouki competition.) It was magical. He is also teaching his 10 year old niece Marilena and charmingly introduced her and encouraged her to play – her first public appearance! Panayiotis sang too, and then Sue's friend Chris, also a very talented musician, played his guitar wonderfully. It was a great treat, and a lovely end to the evening. We made a collective decision that an early walk the next day would not be a good idea!

Tuesday 23 April – Nea Kios and Mycenae

Susie's overnight mothing had produced a few more species this time, which she had photographed for later identification. Sue met us after breakfast to hand over an exciting parcel of pastries warm from the bakery, but she was not coming with us today. We had scheduled a second day with a coastal theme and we drove north, following the shore around the top of the Gulf of Argolicos, almost as far as Nafplio.

Just north of Nea Kios there are wide sandy beaches with pools and a few rocky outcrops, and the area has a reputation as a staging-post particularly for migrating waders. We were immediately treated to good (telescope) views of several Kentish plovers, running about at the edge of the pools and there were a couple of little egrets. There was a very obliging wood sandpiper and a couple of curlews. A party of a dozen little stints swirled around, trying to find somewhere to land. They obviously wanted to stop near two little egrets, but the egrets had other ideas, and eventually the stints settled on a muddy bank where we were able to get the telescopes on them for everyone to see. Herons – grey and purple – a cormorant and very large numbers of yellow-legged gulls completed the tally of water birds. We could hear a crested lark singing and then had some excellent views of it feeding; swallows were gathering mud beside a little stream that crosses the beach. In the meantime, there had been some foraging along the strandline. Last year, we had seen the body of a loggerhead turtle stranded on a sandbar off shore; it was still with us in the form of several ribs that Sara and Phil found and a claw and a large piece of skull. There were pieces of the honeycomb worm *Sabellaria alveolata* and many of the pretty pink tellin shells *Angulus tenuis*.

Mycenae is about half an hour's drive to the north, through the rolling hills covered in vineyards and olive and citrus groves, with signs to other archaeological sites pointing in all directions. We had our picnic lunch in the car park, with astounding views and tempting stalls selling freshly squeezed orange juice. The *spanakopita*, the classic feta cheese and spinach pie from the Tyros baker was quite wonderful, and only a very few crumbs went to the charming dog that waited patiently in the shade of the minibus to clear up after us. We were visited by a great green bush cricket during lunch, and serenaded by a flock of goldfinches that lived in the pines near the entrance.

Everyone went at their own pace and with their own agenda around Mycenae. Elisabeth was the first to head off, determined to see every bit of it, and indeed she was the only one who walked down the road to see the celebrated beehive tomb known as the Treasury of Atreus. Some people spent time in the excellent museum, some strolled round the lower slopes of the site and others strode over the top and down the far side. It is all well and clearly 'interpreted', with good access and comfortable walking.

There is also some excellent wildlife. The plants of the natural rocks and the rock walls are lovely, but by now mostly familiar: campanulas, convolvulus, vetches, mallow, squirting cucumber, pitch trefoil. Swallowtails fluttered about, and Phil added large wall to the butterfly list. The icing on the cake though, around the Sally Gate at the far end of the site, was a pair of rock nuthatches. There were wonderful views to be had: the adults were flying about among the rocks, perching to sing little snatches of song and catching small grasshoppers which they were carrying to their nest. Through the Sally Gate we could see the nest, a contorted mud structure with a tunnel entrance into which the parents kept popping with their juicy catches, and emerging again with the occasional faecal sac.



Mycenae: The Lion Gate and rock nuthatch.

There was time for a refreshing drink of fresh orange juice, or a coffee, or an ice cream, then the drive home, and preparation for dinner at a different taverna.

Sapounakeika is perched on the hillside above Tyros, facing Ano Tyros across the valley, with one of the best tavernas in the area. We drove up the narrow streets, twisting between the houses, and arrived to a beautiful view out across the bay in the evening light. Our table was laid out on a sheltered terrace, and at every place there was a charmingly tied bouquet of herbs. In spite of the canopy, we were grateful to Sue for reminding us to bring jerseys or fleeces, because the evening turned chilly. The food here is superb, and it soon appeared, thanks to Wendy who had come up earlier to finalise the arrangements. There were variations on all the salad themes, and baked cheeses, as starters. Then we had choices to make – not easy! They raise their own rabbits; there was local lamb and pork, some of it casseroled and some grilled. All was quickly resolved and we tucked in. After that, there was a desert of kumquats and a delicious home-made Greek panna cotta with a sauce of their own honey. They press their own olive oil too, and pretty bottles of it were on display for sale to bring home as souvenirs.

Wednesday 24 April – Paliohora

We were so lucky with the weather! It was the last morning and still there was hardly a cloud to be seen. Strimmers had been out in the village – it is important to ensure that dried grasses and herbs are cut and cleared away to avoid risk of fire later in the year, and there is a moratorium on bonfires after a fixed date. So we felt free to harvest a little of the wild oregano before the strimmers got to it, and to bring it home for a taste of Greece for the rest of the year. We saw our first woodchat shrike perched high on a tree, its breast shining in the morning sun. Had they only just arrived? We took a different path, heading northwards behind the apartments, and it was a rich source of botanical delights for Jan: a sticky Restharrow *Ononis pubescens*, the white-flowered Narrow-leaved Cistus *Cistus monspeliensis* in flower for the first time, Moth Mullein *Verbascum blattaria*, the shrubby Thyme *Coridothymus capitatus* just coming into flower.

Stratos was there at breakfast and, with his parents, gave everyone a bottle full of their own home-grown Kalamata olives. Panayiotis's family comes from Kalamata, on the Peloponnese coast southwest of the area where we were, and Kalamata olives are famed for their dark meaty flesh and intense flavour – a special and generous present!

Today was our last day; had Sue saved the best till last? We drove south to Leonidio and then, keeping a close eye on the twists and turns Sue took through the town, we turned steeply uphill and hairpinned our way up the side of the valley. There were breathtaking views, and a few ravens and a kestrel flew above us. The vegetation gradually transformed from olive groves, through taller tree-dominated plant communities – the maquis – and then up into the low floriferous scrub – the phrygana – as we came onto the Paliohora Plateau.

We soon left the tarmac road and took to a dusty track. Our first stop was beside some abandoned cultivation terraces cut into the phrygana – they were unbelievably flowery. We all went exploring and Elisabeth quickly found a big marginated tortoise, which everybody could admire and photograph. The botanical people had fun picking out familiar flowers and puzzling over the new ones, but the plant list for the site is immense. The butterflies were good too: blues and Glanville fritillaries fluttered about and there was a very nice clouded yellow posing for photographs. A very striking gall on the Kermes Oak leaves made it look as though it had bright red berries. Several other tortoises turned up, all ages, and all marginated.

A good sized flock of ravens appeared over the hill and we watched them doing aerobatics for a while: how enjoyable it looked! And a short-toed eagle flew over, dangling its feet. Some of the more energetic strolled up the track to where there was an old ruined stone farmstead with threshing floor and vaulted bread oven. There were blue tits nesting in the gable wall. Further along the track Sue stopped again to show us a 'sterna', a sophisticated water catchment system with an ancient vaulted cistern and a drinking trough, built for the roaming flocks of goats which have been an important feature of this landscape for many centuries, and played a major part in creating the ecosystems that we now see. A Peloponnese wall lizard was basking in the sun and seen well and photographed, especially by Susie. The shady wall at the north end of the oldest part of the sterna was a very fruitful place for the botanists, with many species of rocky crevices, including some new ones: a tiny relative of the bedstraws *Valantia muralis*, a little dark blue speedwell *Veronica cymbalaria*, a little hairy plantain *Plantago bellardii* as well as masses of the little Rustyback Fern *Ceterach officinarum*. Nearby there was a tiny arable field with some oats and barley struggling amongst a wonderful display of arable weeds; Gerald caught a fine specimen of the ascalaphid *Libelloides coccajus*.



Swathes of *Crepis rubra*.

Our next stop was for lunch. We parked the minibuses beside a breathtaking swathe of pink – the Pink Hawksbeard *Crepis rubra* was so dense there seemed to be space for little else. Sue drove ahead and unpacked another wonderful spread – today crowned with local loquats and strawberries – on some stone tables in the grounds of a tiny church, while the rest of us walked up from the minibuses, enjoying yet another form of the extraordinarily diverse and colourful maquis.

We pottered round in the area surrounding the church. In the lush shade near the tables we were trampling on fodder vetch *Vicia villosa*. In a sunny corner, under some trees, there was a lovely display of Peloponnese cyclamen *Cyclamen peloponnesiacum*; the small periwinkle *Vinca herbacea* and the cornflower *Centaurea pichleri* made a bright display. We made our way back to the minibuses, spreading out in the hunt for new delights. There were more patches of cyclamen, and large numbers of the little Four-spot Orchid *Orchis quadripunctata*. We compared the two species of Arbutus, Strawberry Tree *Arbutus unedo*, winter flowering, with dull, flaky bark and toothed leaves and Eastern Strawberry Tree *A. andrachne*: spring flowering with reddish bark that peels in large strips and has leaves with toothed edges. Rosemary saw a small snake, probably an aesculapian snake, and several large tortoiseshells, a dappled white, a painted lady and a small heath were all about.

Wendy was waiting for us, sitting under a wild pear tree at our next stop. She is a great walker and explorer in the hills and had walked over from the mountain retreat that she shares with Sue and a local friend. Our target was a spectacular swallow-hole, a dramatic feature in the limestone landscape and part of a huge network of underground caves and watercourses, typical of this type of Karst landscape. Wendy led us by a moderately easy route down – but not too close – to the swallow-hole. We had seen no sign of a rock nuthatch but there was a rock nuthatch's characteristic nest cemented to the rock above the hole. There were tiny plants of a wild Aubretia *Aubretia* sp and Shining Cranesbill *Geranium lucidum* in crevices in the rock. We explored the surrounding fields, full of arable weeds: Pheasant's Eye *Adonis flammea*, Tuberous Cranesbill *Geranium tuberosum*, a short pale blue flax *Linum* sp, Star of Bethlehem *Ornithogalum montanum*, a small Venus's Looking Glass *Legousia hybrida* and a strange-looking member of the Barbary family, *Leontice leontopetalum*, with fat, temptingly poppable fruits.

Sue had one more treat up her sleeve for us. We drove a little way back along the track to an open area, with scattered pear trees. (The flowers were over, and the trees well in leaf but you could imagine how beautiful it would have looked when they were in full flower.) The silence and stillness there was complete, and we waited for the sound of a sombre tit. The hoped-for movement among the trees didn't happen, but instead we all had some wonderful views of a pair of woodchat shrikes in the afternoon sunshine. We moved on to another potential sombre tit spot and after only a few moments, one appeared, out of the scrub and into a pear tree. It was followed by a second. There was some confusion when a couple of blue tits also appeared but we soon had a wonderful view of one of the sombre tits as it flew down, hesitated and went into, and then out of, a nest hole in the trunk of the pear tree.

It was definitely a high point at which to head for home and, by a slightly different route we came to the top of the long descent to Leonidio, watching the views of the mountains unfolding in the evening sunshine. We passed an enormous array of photo-voltaic cells – which helped to explain the high quality of the road up the mountainside.

We assembled under the canopy for the final review of our week's records and then made our way up to Sophia's taverna for the last time. As ever, lovely fresh salads, followed by a lamb, cooked in the Greek way, in the oven, so that it was very succulent and tender. Of course there was a plentiful supply of their rather gentle wine.

After dinner, as is usual on our last evening, we went round the dinner table and asked people to recall their highlights of the week. They are listed on the next page.

And it wasn't over yet.... while we were packing, or getting ready for bed at about 11.45 we were shaken by a small earthquake.

Thursday 25 April – Athens and home

We had an early breakfast, aiming to leave at 8.30 for our 13.35 flight. Sue came to wave us off and we had affectionate hugs with the whole family as we parted. The sun still shone all the way for our last drive through the orange groves, then up to the hills dotted with Judas trees and back to the hurly-burly of motorways and tolls and the outskirts of Athens. We hadn't much time to spare at the airport, but we all got safely aboard, including our bottles of olives, and had a very comfortable flight, arriving at Heathrow – in sunshine, at last.

Highlights

- Sara Finding the trapdoor spiders and being able to show them to people; the wonderful limestone topography and scenery; the roads up the canyon and the 'Shaun the Sheep' orchid.
- Elisabeth Butterflies – three different kinds of swallowtail in the flowery meadow; watching the sun rise over the Gulf of Argolicos; everything about the visit to Mycenae, after never expecting to be able to see it; and the wonderful Greek food – a 'gastronomic sensation'!
- Grace The Corinth Canal: what a surprise – so deep and so narrow, and the boats so tiny; the poppy fields and the flowers and butterflies by the church at Paliohora.
- Donald The Gomm's showing us the trapdoor spider was the undoubted highlight; and the way that Rachel got us down from Paliohora in one piece.
- Rita Very impressed with the amazing Corinth Canal; the sheer abundance and variety of plant life, especially the Judas trees and wild flower meadows; the spectacular scenery; and finding tortoises.
- Sue Seeing how much everyone enjoyed and appreciated the place.
- Phil The *al fresco* breakfasts, especially the Greek yoghurt and honey and the freshly squeezed orange juice from their own trees; the courtship flight of the short-toed eagles; subalpine warblers – first ever good views of them; the Pink Hawksbeard; and Stratos's playing.
- Russell The contrast in colours of the landscape and the flowers – lovely light blues and honey colours in contrast with the purples and browns of home; the breakfasts – yoghurt, honey and oranges; the smell of orange blossom; the first tortoise on the drive with Wendy; and the music.
- Susie The wonderful welcoming group – so important when you come on your own; the lizard this morning – I watched it for ages and got a photograph when it stuck its head out; the subalpine and Sardinian warblers; the short-toed eagles displaying; the classical references of the Adonis and Venus's Looking-glass (should be Athene's Looking Glass); the trip to Mycenae; the music; and hearing Sue tell us what her highlight was!
- Jan Fabulous bombardment of all the senses: the scent of the orange blossom in the morning; the alpine meadows, especially the poppies, Tassel Hyacinths and Pink Hawksbeard; the geology – the colour and form of the cliffs; the food was absolutely lovely; the music – Stratos's playing; the shared knowledge and care and thoughtfulness of all our hosts.
- Chris The Judas trees in the landscape; the food, especially the lunch at Kastanitsa – pork and sweet chestnuts; the Shepherd's Needle and *Aegilops*; the warmth and support from the group and from the family and everyone around; Stratos's music.
- Janet The wonderful way the landscape merged with the sea; so many wonderful plants and birds; the short-toed eagles displaying; such lovely welcoming people to meet.
- Cherry 'Lots' of everything: lots of poppies and Tassel Hyacinths; lots of blues and purples; lots of ravens – so worth fighting with the crutches for; magical mix of this place – the wonderful orange trees, the crazy mixture of terracotta pots, the rickety fence and the motorbikes – and the family – all melded together to make something gorgeous
- Gerald Seeing three swallowtails together; the species of wild cyclamen; the breakfasts; Chris's guitar playing; seeing the real Greece and not the rubbish they show you on the telly.
- Rosemary The sunshine; the quietness of the countryside; the flowers: red poppies mixed with blue Tassel Hyacinths, *Crepis rubra*, *Euphorbia* and *Cyclamen*; the numbers of butterflies. Altogether a lovely week with a very friendly group.
- Rachel The flowers, especially the carpets of *Crepis rubra*, and the Peloponnese Cyclamen – the way they peep from under the bushes as if they were illuminated; the rock nuthatches behaved so beautifully for us; the family here, their warmth and welcome; Stratos's music, and his moments of quiet philosophy; Sue and Wendy and their tireless help and thoughtfulness.
- Robin The rock nuthatches – it's such a relief when things appear to order; the trapdoor spider; the sheets of *Crepis rubra*; the musical evening; and the help from Sue and Wendy.

SPECIES LISTS

BIRDS

Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	One at Nea Kios
Squacco heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Seen twice at Moustos lake
Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Several near Moustos lake & at Nea Kios
Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	One at Nea Kios; one at Moustos lake
Purple heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	One at Nea Kios
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	A pair at Moustos lake
Short-toed eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	Pairs & individuals seen on most days
Marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Two at Moustos lake
Montagu's harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	Single 'ringtails' at Moustos lake & Cheronisi
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	A few seen every day
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Seen almost every day
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Three at Tsitalia & three at Moustos
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	One at Moustos lake
Rock partridge	<i>Alectoris graeca</i>	Heard near Paliohora
Water rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	One heard at Moustos lake
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Several at Moustos lake
Kentish plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Several at Nea Kios
Little stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	About a dozen at Nea Kios
Wood sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	One at Nea Kios
Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	One at Moustos lake; one at Tyros beach
Curllew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Two at Nea Kios
Yellow-legged gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	Ubiquitous along the coast
Rock dove/Feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Occasional in towns & villages
Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Several seen every day
Turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	One or two migrants on two days
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Heard at Livadi, Tsitalia & Prastos
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Ones & twos on a few days
Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	A flock of about 40 at Moustos lake
Green woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	One heard near Kastanitsa
Crested lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	One at the Roman bridge; a pair at Nea Kios
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	Singing birds at Tsitalia & above Leonidio
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Common & widespread
Red-rumped swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	Small numbers, especially around Livadi
House martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	Occasional in towns & villages
Tawny pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	One on Moustos beach carrying food
Black-headed wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	One near Moustos lake
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	One at Kastanitsa
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	Heard near Prastos
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	A pair at Moustos lake
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	A migrating bird by the coast road
Blue rock thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Occasional individuals by the coast road
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Very common & widespread
Cetti's warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	Singing birds at Livadi, Moustos lake & Nea Kios
Fan-tailed warbler	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	One calling at Argos
Sedge warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	One singing at Moustos lake
Reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	One or two singing at Moustos lake
Great reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	One singing at Moustos lake
Subalpine warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	Frequently seen & heard in upland areas
Sardinian warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	Common & widespread near the coast
Eastern Bonelli's warbler	<i>Phylloscopus orientalis</i>	One singing near Prastos

Sombre tit	<i>Poecile lugubris</i>	A pair at the nest near Paliohora
Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	Common & widespread in suitable habitats
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Common & widespread in suitable habitats
Rock nuthatch	<i>Sitta neumayer</i>	A pair at the nest at Mycenae
Golden oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	Migrating individuals at Livadi & near Tsitalia
Woodchat shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	Several near Paliohora & one at Livadi
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Occasional birds in lowland areas
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Common & widespread in suitable habitats
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Occasional in rocky places
Hooded crow	<i>Corvus corone cornix</i>	Common & widespread
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Seen on most days in hilly areas
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Frequently seen in villages
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Occasional in woodland & scrub
Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	Seen every day in Livadi & other villages
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Seen & heard every day at Livadi
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	A few at Mycenae, Livadi & other villages
Cirl bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	Common & widespread
Reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	One at Moustos lake

MAMMALS, FISH, AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

Eastern hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus concolor</i>	Occasional road casualties
Beech marten	<i>Martes foina</i>	Droppings at Livadi
Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	One by the coast road near Livadi.
Grey mullet	<i>Chelon labrosus</i>	Common in Moustos lake
Greek marsh frog	<i>Rana kurtmuelleri</i>	Several singing at Moustos lake
Marginated tortoise	<i>Testudo marginata</i>	Several at Paliohora; occasional elsewhere
Loggerhead turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>	A few bones on the beach at Nea Kios
Turkish gecko	<i>Hemidactylus turcicus</i>	On buildings at Livadi
Kotschy's gecko	<i>Mediodactylus kotschy</i>	One or two near Moustos
Greek rock lizard	<i>Lacerta graeca</i>	Several on walls and rocks
Peloponnese wall lizard	<i>Podarcis peloponnesiacus</i>	Seen on most days on walls and rocks
Snake-eyed skink	<i>Ablepharus kitaibellii</i>	One above Prastos
Four-lined snake	<i>Elaphe quatuorlineata</i>	One at Paliohora
Aesculapian snake	<i>Zamenis longissimus</i>	One at Paliohora



Peloponnese wall lizard and marginated tortoise.

BUTTERFLIES in order left to right

Mallow skipper <i>Carcharodus alceae</i>	Mediterranean skipper <i>Gegenes nostrodamus</i>
Swallowtail <i>Papilio machaon</i>	Southern swallowtail <i>Papilio alexanor</i>
Scarce swallowtail <i>Iphiclides podalirius</i>	Large white <i>Pieris brassicae</i>
Small white <i>Artogeia rapae</i>	Green-veined white <i>Artogeia napi</i>
Black-veined white <i>Aporia crataegi</i>	Dappled white <i>Euchloë ausonia</i>
Orange tip <i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>	Eastern orange tip <i>Anthocharis damone</i>
Clouded yellow <i>Colias crocea</i>	Pale clouded yellow <i>Colias hyale</i>
Cleopatra <i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i>	Brimstone <i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>
Southern white admiral <i>Aglais urticae</i>	Large tortoiseshell <i>Nymphalis polychloros</i>
Painted lady <i>Cynthia cardui</i>	Red admiral <i>Vanessa atalanta</i>
Glanville fritillary <i>Melitaea cinxia</i>	Meadow brown <i>Maniola jurtina</i>
Small heath <i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Speckled wood <i>Pararge aegeria</i>
Large wall brown <i>Lasiommata maera</i>	Wall brown <i>Lasiommata megera</i>
Green hairstreak <i>Callophrys rubi</i>	Small blue <i>Cupido minimus</i>
Common blue <i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	Brown argus <i>Aricia anteros</i>
Small copper <i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	

MOTHS AND OTHER INSECTS

Cream-spot tiger	<i>Arctia villica</i>
Hebe tiger	<i>Arctia festiva</i>
Mullein wave	<i>Scopula emutaria</i>
Galium carpet	<i>Epirrhoe galiata</i>
Mottled rustic	<i>Caradina morpheus</i>
Riband wave	<i>Idaea aversata</i>
Great oak beauty	<i>Hypomecis roboraria</i>
Vine's rustic	<i>Hoplodrina ambigua</i>
Emerald moth	? <i>Hemistola chrysoprasaria</i>
Sword-grass (caterpillar)	<i>Xylena exsoleta</i> (right)
Bagworm	<i>Psychidae</i>
Flower chafer	<i>Oxythyrea funesta</i>
Rose chafer	<i>Cetonia aurata</i>
Violet carpenter-bee	<i>Xylocopa violacea</i>
Egyptian locust	<i>Anacridium aegyptiacum</i>
Shield bug (Millwall bug)	<i>Graphosoma italicum</i>
Ascalaphid	<i>Libelloides coccajus</i>
Bee-fly	<i>Bombylius</i> sp
Velvet ant	<i>Mutilla europaea</i>
Hornet	<i>Vespa crabro</i>
Praying mantis	<i>Mantis religiosa</i>
Buprestid beetle	<i>Capnidis tenebrionis</i>
Dung beetle	<i>Scarabaeus</i> sp
Comb-clawed beetle	<i>Omophlus lepturoides</i>



OTHER INVERTEBRATES

Scorpion	<i>Buthus occitanicus</i>
Trapdoor spider	<i>Cteniza sauvagesi</i>
Red jumping spider (right)	<i>Philaeus chrysops</i>
Green hairy crab spider	<i>Heriaeus hirtus</i>
Tarantula	<i>Lycosa narbonensis</i>
Millipede	<i>Diplopoda</i>
Centipede	<i>Scolopendra cingulatus</i>
Honeycomb worm	<i>Sabellaria alveolata</i>
Mediterranean cone shell	<i>Conus mediterraneus</i>
Tellin	<i>Angulus tenuis</i>

