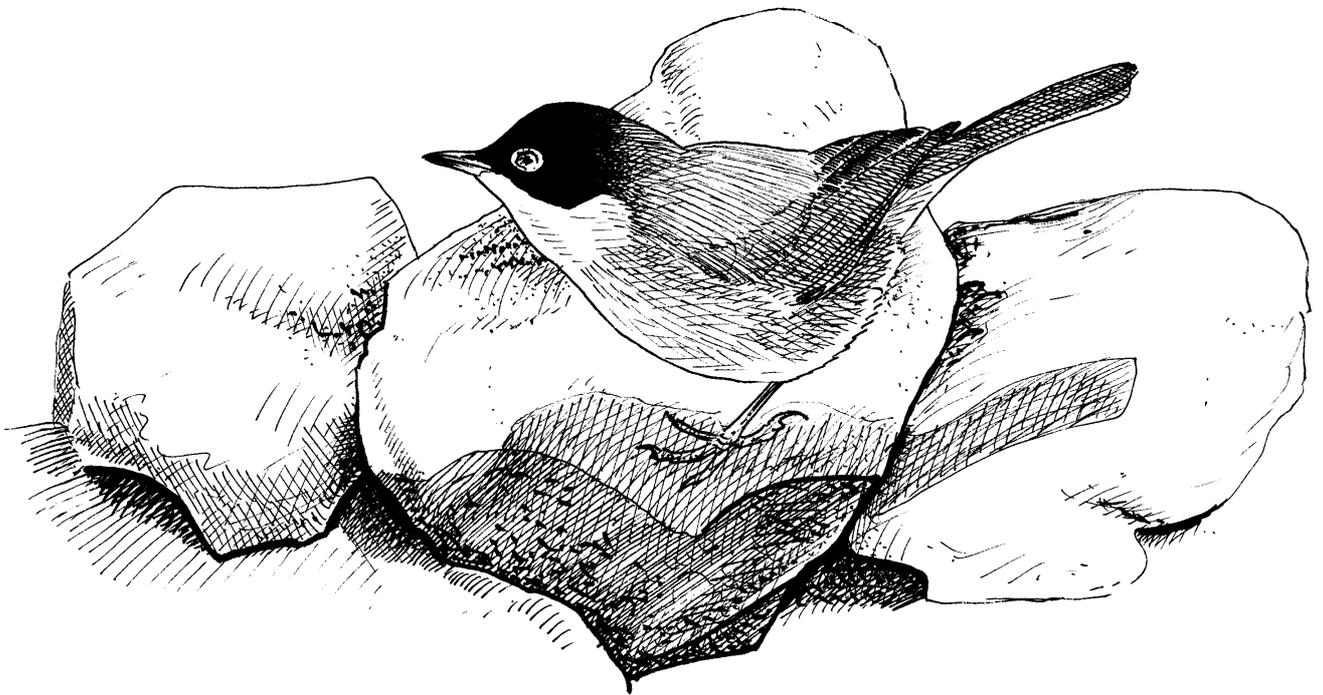


Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Crete
18 - 25 April 2006

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Front cover: Sardinian warbler

As with all Honeyguide holidays, £25 of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case for the lammergeier project of the Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS), which is based in Athens but whose work covers the whole of Greece and its islands. The conservation contribution this year of £25 per person was supplemented by gift aid through the new Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, rounded up to a total of €520 (£371). This brings Honeyguide's total contributions to HOS since the first Honeyguide holiday in Crete in 1995 to £5,690. Information on the lammergeier project is at <http://www.ornithologiki.gr/en/lib/engypbar.htm>

The total conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 was at £42,235 (roughly €59,100) at the end of summer 2006.

Crete 18 – 25 April 2006

Tuesday 18 April: Arriving in Crete.

We began our Cretan holiday in two separate parties, one flying from Manchester and the other from Gatwick and the flight times meant that we didn't finally meet until we had all arrived at Plakias. The Manchester group landed in Heraklion on a fine, hot afternoon. Their first impressions – of golden hillsides covered in Jerusalem sage, road verges decorated with the statuesque giant fennel, distant black specks of large raptors, snow-capped mountain peaks – remained in waiting for the Gatwick party. They arrived late in the afternoon, just as the sun was setting. A couple of swifts and a group of yellow-legged gulls were a taste of the pleasures to come but the evening quickly darkened and by the time the minibus hire formalities had been completed, darkness was falling and the drive to Plakias left the landscape to the imagination. Dinner at a delightful taverna on the seafront was the setting for the final meeting of the two groups, introductions all round and the first brief outline of the plans for the week.

Wednesday 19 April: Plakias and the walk to Mirthios.

We decided that a leisurely start to the day would be appropriate after our late night. We were welcomed at breakfast by Anne-Marie who, with her Greek husband George, is our host at the Hotel Sofia. The plan was for a day of local exploration and no driving. The village of Plakias is clustered around the mouth of a tiny river, entering the sea in a classically beautiful south-facing bay. We set off through the village and had a glimpse of the sea. Swallows and Italian sparrows twittered from the telegraph wires and flew in and out of nest sites under the eaves. Two distant, leisurely buzzards passed in front of the hillside and we turned left, away from the sea and up the valley behind the village. We stopped at a patch of waste ground to have a quick look at some of the commonest flowers and insects. Southern speckled woods and clouded yellows fluttered over the crown daisies, corn marigolds, pitch trefoil and cock's-comb sainfoin. We passed big stands of the giant reed *Arundo donax* with a Cetti's warbler shouting explosively at us from deep in the thicket of willow behind. Olive groves were home to calling great tits, chaffinches and greenfinches and, when the path opened out, the banks were brilliant with Jerusalem sage, Bermuda buttercup, poppies and viper's bugloss. A curious rather stick insect-like grasshopper attracted our attention in some long grass: *Acrida ungarica* – the nosed grasshopper. Tawny mining bees were active on the dry sandy banks where we also found patches of the charming lobelia-like tiny endemic *Solenopsis minuta* ssp. *annua*. Climbing steeply uphill, we enjoyed the views unfolding behind us and two good shouts of 'golden oriole', first from Val and Ron and then from David J ensured that everyone saw one or other of these colourful birds. There were other insects active in the sunshine: holly blues and large whites, violet carpenter bees, fire bugs, flower chafers and red-winged grasshoppers. An Egyptian locust lurked on a fence and allowed us to gaze into its striped eyes. At the edge of the next village, Mirthios, the powerful and evocative scent of orange and lemon trees was all round us and we were glad to arrive at our lunch destination: the aptly named taverna – *Panorama*.

The village of Mirthios is dramatically perched on the hillside with astounding views in all directions. Our large party was soon welcomed and a table was found for us all out on the covered terrace. Drinks and a delicious menu occupied us for a while and then we could take stock of our surroundings. The sea of Plakias bay glistened in the distance; Italian sparrows were mating on the wires; swallows and martins flew in and out of their nests in the cottage roofs; buzzards drifted across the distant hillside. Mirthios had another secret gem for us too – a fabulous jewellery shop, which set a bit of a surprise pattern for the whole week!

We made a leisurely return to Plakias, with the opportunity for special interests to be followed. We admired the wonderful massive and ancient pollard olive trees, their aged trunks assuming gaunt and dramatic shapes. The ground beneath the olive trees was covered in nets to assist the harvesting process. In a corner of an olive grove we stopped to admire a magnificent clump of the beautiful, misty blue spires of the Cretan endemic – another member of the bellflower family – Cretan wall lettuce *Petromarula pinnata*. Goldfinches twittered from the olive trees; we watched four hooded crows and a party of alpine swifts and then two bee-eaters flew up the valley off the sea. A tired looking purple heron flew across ahead of us and we identified a distant griffon vulture taking command of some erratic air currents. Down by the bridge, a common sandpiper was bobbing about among the logs and stones and we added collared dove to the day's tally of birds.

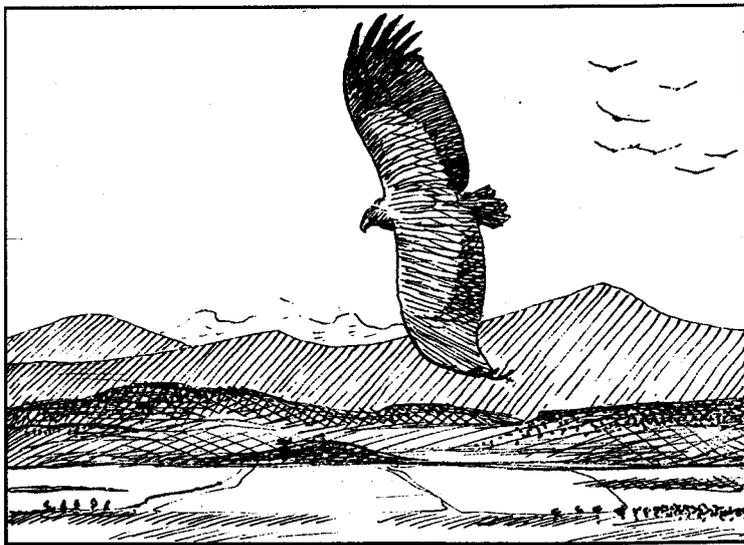
When we arrived back in Plakias there was still a little time before we needed to get ready for the evening meal so we strolled along the coast road to the west to meet at close quarters one of the most abundant and striking of the Cretan endemics, shrubby sainfoin or Cretan ebony, *Ebanus cretica*. Far from being related to ebony, this is a shrubby member of the pea family with silky heads of deep pink flowers. Though it is only found in Crete, it is very abundant there and grows in spectacular crimson drifts across the hillsides. We got back to the hotel in time for a drink and a shower and then met in the dining room at the hotel to review and record the day's activities and sightings before setting off into the village to enjoy a marvellous taverna dinner. The village was still wide awake when we left the taverna and we were amazed to find another astonishingly high quality jewellery shop still open – though, for the moment, everyone managed to keep their credit cards under control.

Thursday 20 April: Kourtaliotiko Gorge and Kedhros Foothills, Spili.

It was bright and clear for our early walk. While we assembled on the hotel steps, we watched the activities of the Italian sparrows that were nesting in the roof opposite. We walked along the beach towards the mouth of the little river and watched three common sandpipers flying ahead of us along the beach, and a distant white wagtail. Up on the side of the road three crested larks were feeding in the dried mud and gave us an opportunity for an excellent view. Then a blue-headed wagtail appeared nearby and was joined by two more, flying together up onto a half-finished building.

After breakfast we drove inland along the route we had taken on the way there – some of us on that occasion in the dark. The hills soon rise on either side and the road enters the Kourtaliotiko Gorge, one of several that cut through the central massif on its southern flank. We parked in a lay-by; immediately we could hear the song of a male blue rock thrush and tracked him down to a conspicuous song-post on a rock above our heads. Crag martins were flying about, visiting their nests plastered into crevices in the rock faces. A very smart black-eared wheatear showed itself well and the tantalizing movement of a small bird obscured in the bushes eventually resolved itself into nothing more exciting than a wren! There were griffon vultures overhead; several rock doves flew purposefully across the valley, low down among the trees; presumably they were nesting nearby. A male stonechat delighted us with a fine view as he perched on top of a bush of spiny spurge and then treated us to a very pretty song flight. We watched in admiration as a family of feral goats nimbly negotiated the cliff ledges.

A short drive further on, a second lay-by serves a flight of steps which lead down to a little chapel near the bottom



of the gorge. We parked, and found ourselves very close to several griffon vultures, some of which were on the nest and had well grown young. It was entertaining to watch them and to watch the unwelcome attentions of some of the other larger birds: 2 ravens, 9 jackdaws and 2 kestrels. We were able to get the telescopes on another excellent blue rock thrush in good light. As we walked along the road we were intrigued to find a number of plants of one of the island's several dodder species (in this case, given what they were parasitising, probably *Cuscuta epithymum*) practically overwhelming plants of Mediterranean thyme and making it look as though someone had emptied a pan of vermicelli over them. The stone steps lead down the

steep hillside into the gorge. Here, among the rocks and the bushes of spiny spurge and thorny burnet is a perfect natural rock garden: little clusters of white or palest pink Cretan cyclamen, trailing strands of mallow-leaved bindweed, splashes of pure white turban buttercup, cushions of pink *Ricotia*, like tiny honesty. Beside the chapel there is a good-sized tree of *Styrax*, with its astonishingly fragrant white flowers and, over the river, a large straggly clump of the very un-comfrey-looking Cretan gorge comfrey, hanging perilously under an overhang. Climbing back up the steps, some of the group found a good specimen of a Cretan festoon, a brightly coloured and spectacular butterfly – always good to see.

We headed on up the gorge, keeping a watch out all the time for lammergeiers, always a possibility here but never a certainty. We turned off the main road to take a short cut to Spili and stopped at the top of the hill with a wonderful view back down the gorge. Then we carried on through very pretty rolling countryside and tiny hamlets to the little town of Spili, and our lunch-stop. Spili is rather geared to tourists and known for embroidered linens and lace, so it was a useful hunting ground for souvenirs and presents (including earrings). We separated to find lunch, some experimenting with the local fast food, the *gyros*, meat rotating like a doner kebab – very tasty. After lunch we gathered in the fountain square for coffee and then returned to the minibuses for the last destination of the day.

The reputation of the site known to British botanists as 'Spili Bumps', in the foothills of Mount Kedhros, had reached us and there was a considerable amount of anticipation in the party. The landscape is all very pretty, with a group of little rocky hills set in an area of mixed agricultural land. We quickly identified the songs of woodlark, blackcap and corn bunting, and they accompanied us all afternoon. Geoff and Angela caught the call of a quail and, with some attentive listening, the rest of the group heard it too. We all had a lovely view of a woodchat shrike silhouetted on the top of a thorn bush.

We decided to take a short cut to the first of the rocky hillocks which involved a little tight-rope-walking along a fallen log, but immediately we had arrived, the explanation for Spili's reputation became clear: you could not take a step without treading on flowers, and particularly orchids. The botanists were in heaven. Some species were there in extraordinary profusion: *Orchis horvi*, *O. italica* and *O. nauciflora*. Others were fewer and caused excitement

when they were identified: *Ophrys episcopalis*, *O. iricolor* and *O. mammosa*. In all, we identified 20 species of orchid there and, without a doubt, missed many others. The other floral spectacles were of the wild tulips – the Cretan endemic *Tulipa doerfleri*, wild lupins and irises, all in extraordinary numbers. Spili Bumps had indeed lived up to expectation.

We made our way down a dusty track back to the vehicles. We had a good look at a dappled white butterfly and a shout from Shevaun made sure that everyone could watch two ortolan buntings preceding us along the path, which was flanked by more of the lovely iris, *Gynandiris (Moraea) sisyrinchium* (eaten in parts of the Mediterranean as Barbary nut). There was a clump of the very attractive shining figwort and a field with some fine specimens of lax-flowered orchid to add to our list. The route back to Plakias took us through the Kourtaliotiko Gorge again and we had a brief stop to scan, unsuccessfully, for lammergeiers. Then, after a break for showering and general recuperation, it was time to head into the village for another taverna meal.

Good Friday 21 April: Festos and the Valley of the Geropotamos.

A short minibus drive before breakfast, passing a group of common sandpipers on the beach, took us west to the village of Souda. Here a little stream gouges a path for itself down the hillside, creating an extremely uncommon habitat, home to the rare and special Cretan palm. There is a little colony of them here, with their distinctive squat growth and branched trunks. A Cetti's warbler greeted us, corn buntings were singing from the telegraph wires and we had a really good view of a male Sardinian warbler – the best so far, so we could all admire the red eye-ring. Waves of house martins and swallows flew over from time to time and then a small flock of sand martins appeared. A distant falcon pleasingly turned out to be a peregrine. Returning to the minibuses, we allowed ourselves to be distracted by a new orchid – pretty and fragrant, under a sage bush: a group of bug orchids.

After breakfast there was time for everyone to forage among the varied village shops for picnic lunches before we set of southwards for Festos. As we crossed the bridge, there was a pied wagtail, the northern race of the species, in exactly the same place as one had been recorded by Honeyguide in each of the last two years! We had hardly left the village before one of the minibuses started to flash a mysterious warning light. Luckily, a garage was handy, and open even though it was Good Friday. The elderly, black-clad Cretan lady indicated with gestures that she would fetch her son who came, efficiently and competently examined the problem and reassured us. In the meantime, his mother had bustled off and returned to present each of the women in the group with a cluster of lemon flowers that she had picked for us from their lemon orchard; we were all incredibly touched by this. Do they do it for all their customers, we wondered; was it because we were British, or because it was Good Friday? We drove on, noting sadly but with interest a dead hedgehog on the road – it was a specimen of *Erinaceus concolor*, the only hedgehog species that occurs on Crete. (It is similar in size and general appearance to our species but can be distinguished by the presence of a distinctive white breast that contrasts with the dark-coloured belly.) Then, a little further on and another excitement: we all came to an abrupt halt as a large crab trundled across the road in front of us. It stopped and looked back at us, waving its pincers malevolently at us but we were able to have a really close look at this curious creature in a very improbable environment. It turned out to be a fine specimen of *Potamon potamios* one of the semi-terrestrial freshwater crab species found on several of the islands in the region.

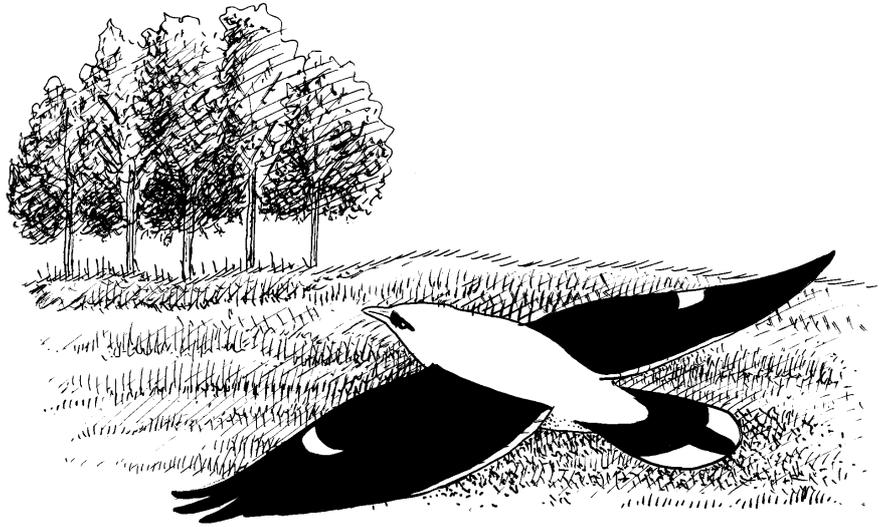
At last we could continue on our way to Festos without interruption. The route took us through some interesting and varied landscape, ranging from the snow-clad peaks of the Psiloritis Mountains, through fertile flood plains to derelict and run-down industrial areas and acres of neglected greenhouses. Festos is the second most important Minoan site on Crete in a magnificent position on a ridge at the eastern end of the Messará plain, commanding views across a wide valley to the mountains beyond. Coffee on the terrace seemed a good idea and we took in our environment: an alpine swift wheeling overhead and an unforgettable view of a golden oriole set against the distant snowy mountains. Elaine decided to forgo the coffee break in favour of a visit to the ruins and emerged having found a scarce swallowtail butterfly for us all. From the ruins, a road summer palace of Ayia Triadha in River. We left the minibuses in the hill. The hillside was a rich tapestry bushes of drought- and grazing-brightly coloured flowers. We were bushes for butterflies (there were species) and birds, when the strident struck up above us. And there he hilltop, proudly proclaiming his a chukar as you could hope for and several minutes. There was a fine roadside specimen of dragon arum, under the shade of a tree, the enormous spathes much in evidence, but, for some reason, without the strong smell it is reputed to have. The drivers then nobly returned for the minibuses and we settled down to our picnic on a sunny bank overlooking the flowery hillsides.



which she was able to find again leads down the hill to the Minoan the valley of the Geropotamos car park and took the road down of dwarf shrub – garrigue – spiny resistant plants, many with enjoying these and scanning the swallowtails about, of both and insistent call of a chukar was, beautifully silhouetted on the position. It was as good a view of we were able to savour it for

After lunch we carried on down hill. Buzzards were much in evidence – one with very pale tail feathers suggesting a hint of the eastern race, often known as the steppe buzzard. We found a scarce swallowtail at rest, a perfect view enabling some very satisfactory photographs to be taken. We came upon some ruined foundations of a building and amongst the stones and the community of minute flowers and grasses there was a new orchid for us, the strikingly marked Cretan ophrys, *Ophrys cretica*.

We strolled on down to the Geropotamos where it is bridged by a concrete roadway. The advance guard had struck incredibly lucky: Ron, Val and David J came upon the magical sight of a beech marten in the process of moving her family to a new place along the river bank, carrying the babies – kits – one by one in her mouth, all the time being mobbed by stonechats and goldfinches. David N caught a glimpse of a yellow bird in a pine tree. We crept up and no fewer than three golden orioles flew out. Then one oriole was spotted flying into a poplar tree at the bottom of the hill and it obligingly remained there for the 'scopes to focus on it and to watch as it was joined, and irritated, by a hooded crow and then by two more orioles. Meanwhile, some tree pipits had been located and, in an orchard as we passed, a small flock of turtle doves.



We were back in good time for another brief but fruitless lammer-stop in the Kourtaliotiko Gorge and then for a break before the evening review in the dining room. We did not feel we had done justice to the extremely friendly taverna where we had assembled late on the first night, so that was where we headed for our evening meal: an astonishingly wide selection of fish! It was, after all, Good Friday.

It was bright and clear as we walked back to the hotel after dinner so we got out some telescopes and had a brief look at the sky. Jupiter was up and about and its moons were clear – a new experience for some, but there was too much light from the village for very productive stargazing.

Easter Saturday 22 April: Moní Préveli, a free half-day and the Kotsiphou Gorge; Easter Celebrations.

A storm blew up overnight and many of us were disturbed by banging doors and branches lashing against the windows. It was still windy and overcast when we met for our early walk so we took to the minibuses and drove along the beach and then inland to the next cove, Damnóni, where we hoped it would be a little more sheltered. We encountered a very windswept raven and a stonechat struggling to keep its perch. The Sardinian and Cetti's warblers were still singing though, undaunted by the blustery wind. A squacco heron flew up from some reeds, apparently struggling to keep airborne; it was followed by another and we had an excellent sorry view of a very tired squacco heron on the ground across a little field. Down on the beach there was a little egret paddling and feeding at the edge of the sea and there were two shags out in the bay. When one of them swam into calm water we were able to get it in the telescope and then it flew by, showing its pale underside nicely – indicative of the Mediterranean race. While we were shag watching, movement on a distant rock caught our eye and we picked out a white wagtail running up and down and every so often flying up to catch flies. Another exhausted squacco heron flew along the beach, but breakfast called so we headed back to the buses and the few miles back to Plakias.

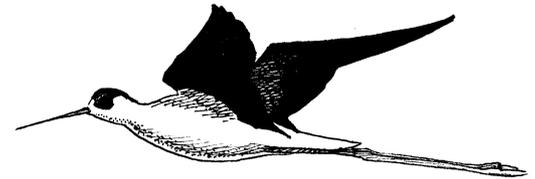
We drove eastwards again after breakfast, a few miles round to the next headland and the monastery of Moní Préveli. The wind had dropped and the clouds were breaking up. There was a shout of 'hoopoe' from the back of the minibus - a brief view caught only by a couple of the group as it flapped through an olive grove, and it proved to be the only hoopoe of the week. Our first stop was by the river where a very pretty stone bridge (a nineteenth century copy of a Venetian original) stands beside the road. There was a very close wood sandpiper, scaly back clearly visible, in a pool under the bridge and we heard blackcap and saw a tree pipit in a walnut tree beside the little river. We were looking across the valley at a good view of a woodchat shrike when we spotted three griffon vultures flying out from between some nearby hills. A second wood sandpiper appeared upstream and as we crossed the bridge and peered into the water we saw several of our friends the crabs again. They did seem rather more at home in the water here than scuttling across a road!

Along the single-track road out onto the headland we passed the original sixteenth century monastery, now abandoned and rapidly falling into ruin, below us beside the road. The road rounds a bend close to the edge of the cliff and you are met with a very arresting sight: a spectacular and yet simple and moving memorial to the

celebrated collaboration between the monks at the monastery and the stranded Allied soldiers whom they sheltered after the Battle of Crete during the Second World War. We stopped at the memorial, the bright colours of the garrigue clothing the hill behind us. A distant chukar was calling but we couldn't track it down. One of the fence posts around the memorial proved to be a good vantage point for a lovely black-eared wheatear to keep a look out and a red admiral posed for us on some thistles. A little further on, we came to the present monastery, an enormous complex of buildings centred round a large chapel and courtyard and with a café and an extensive car park. We took stock from the vantage point of the car park and took the opportunity to discuss the complex of scrubby habitats which clothe the hills around and offer such a rich variety of plants. We could hear another chukar calling on the hillside but the track leading down the hill below the monastery grounds was very enticing. There were chaffinches singing in some conifers and we watched a wood warbler and several pied flycatchers, both male and female, all newly arrived from Africa, in some trees by the path. A group of turtle doves flew in from the sea and sheltered corners were good for butterflies – small white, dappled white and a diminutive blue which we failed to identify as it was whisked about in the still somewhat blustery wind. The path ends in a substantial goat milking shed and we could hear their bells clanking from inside. Then the doors opened and out they all scrambled into the bright sunshine, to scatter out onto the headland. We strolled back, enjoying the sunshine and flowers beside the path. Two cistuses - Cretan and sage-leaved - were in flower, Jerusalem sage (*Phlomis fruticosa*) and shrubby sage (*Salvia fruticosa*) and Angela and Geoff came upon the very striking long-beaked storksbill *Erodium gruinum*.

It was lunchtime! We had liked the look of the *Taverna Gefyra*, beside the Venetian Bridge, so we decided to go back there for lunch. It proved to be a very good decision, with simple but excellent local food quickly served.

We had scheduled a 'free' afternoon, but offered an optional trip to see the other, smaller gorge that runs down towards Plakias, the Kotsiphou Gorge. The party divided, with some independent souls wanting to catch up with postcards and shopping etc. Three very good jewellery shops had by then been located in the village. Before the Gorge party had left though, a mobile phone call from Shevaun alerted us to a pair of black-winged stilts among the rocks on the beach. We passed a heap of agricultural rubbish on the way out of the village where a group of at least seven whinchats were alternately feeding and lining up on a fence, some of them looking very smart in their breeding plumage. All this was being overseen by an excellent woodchat shrike perched on a nearby bush.



On the way up we passed an interesting road casualty: an almost perfect beech marten – of particular interest to those who had seen them so well near Ayia Triadha. We stopped at the southern end of the gorge to look at views in both directions. There were some lovely mulleins there, the yellow spires looking fine against the blue sky. We drove through the gorge and parked at the top amongst some pretty clumps of *Petrorhagia velutina* (tunic flower, a long-stalked and tiny-flowered relative of pinks and champions). Griffon vultures crossed the gorge way above our heads and a cirr bunting sang persistently from a bush on the lip of the cliff. Up above us there was a lovely display of the bright yellow tree flax – in fact a shrub rather than a tree but *Linum arborea* none the less. While we were admiring that, another curious shrub attracted our attention growing out of the cliff: *Ptilostemon chamaepeuce*, a member of the dandelion family with long, dark green leaves reminiscent of pine.

An energetic group climbed up the hill to look out over the plateau above the gorge, passing some very pretty vetches and some disc trefoil with its huge flat fruits. They were up in the garrigue at the top, on a level with the cirr bunting, and had a very good view of it. The less energetic botanised and were charmed by a colony of tiny irises which turned out to be very dwarfed specimens of the Barbary nut *Gynandiris (Moraea) sisyrinchium*, growing in an extremely dry and trampled situation.

Perhaps it was tempting fate but we selected the *Taverna Kri-kri* for dinner tonight. The kri-kri is the local name for the very rare Cretan wild goat which has one of its few strongholds in the hills around the Samariá Gorge, where we planned to go tomorrow. It was an extremely welcoming and friendly restaurant, and the food was very good, so on that score at least we were not disappointed.

Easter is the most important religious festival in Crete as in the rest of Greece and the main celebration is late on Easter Saturday evening. Two local communities were the focus of celebration here. One was Mirthios, where fireworks and general communal revelry, including firecrackers in the streets, were promised. The other was the monastery at Moní Préveli. There they hold the long Easter Mass centred on a flame flown in from Jerusalem and carried by car – with a police escort – from Heraklion airport. Both celebrations culminate in a feast of traditional soup, *mayiritsa*, made of lamb offal, served after midnight to break the Lenten fast. The rest of the lamb is then roasted and eaten during the following day. The group was undecided as to which celebration to attend and in the end, one minibus went to each and thoroughly valued and enjoyed a special experience, far removed from the style of celebration at home. The Moní Préveli group even arrived just in time to see the flame arrive. No one was tempted by the soup though!

Easter Sunday 23 April: Aghia Reservoir and the Omalos Plateau.

We walked along the beach before breakfast. The usual birds were about: the Italian sparrows, chaffinches, goldfinches and the same crested larks foraging at the edge of the road. A marsh harrier came in across the bay and two squacco herons flew along the beach. We took the opportunity to turn our attention to the beach itself and enjoyed the colour and diversity of the tiny plants: sea spurge, sea rocket, Mediterranean catchfly, sea medick and tassel hyacinths in the low dunes at the back.



Leaving the village on our northward journey we encountered another marsh harrier flying in off the sea and at the top of the Kourtalotiko Gorge we had good views from both minibuses as a Montagu's harrier, buffeted by the wind, flew past in front of us.

Our first stop was at the Aghia Reservoir, southwest of Rethimnon, one of the best and best-known sites for birds on the island. It did not disappoint! It has matured well and in the main, attractive, varied natural vegetation has developed on its margins; on three sides it is surrounded by trees and bushes. The top of the dam has been made into a walkway and makes a first class viewing area. We didn't have to wait very long for our first excitement and then they came in quick succession. There was a little stint running along at the foot of the dam and a reeve was spotted on the far shore. The bird for which the site is most renowned by Honeyguide, the little crane, suddenly appeared below us and gave us an excellent view. There was movement among the reeds close to us and a little bittern made an appearance. We watched it for a long time, completely charmed as it tiptoed about and assumed its strange, still poses in strategic positions on reed stalks or logs, poised to snatch fish from the water below. There were enormous Balkan terrapins basking on logs at the base of the reeds and we rescued one that had become stranded on the wrong side of the new wall on top of the dam; it was exciting to have so close an encounter. Dabchicks, coots, moorhens, mallards and greylags, all in some numbers, were dotted on the water. Swifts, swallows and house martins fed over the water in large numbers and were occasionally joined by sand martins and alpine swifts. There were a

few grey herons standing about on the far bank and first a single and then two squacco herons flew by. We walked along the dam towards the spillway and came upon a little stint walking on a raft of floating blanket weed and had a good view of a pair garganey swimming and feeding in a bay. When we got to the spillway, there were two black-winged stilts, four ruffs, a common and a wood sandpiper, all incredibly close!

We had lunch in the café beside the reservoir – very good fresh local food, the crowning glory being the orange juice freshly pressed from the adjacent orange grove. There were some natural history highlights still to come though – first one, soon to be followed by a second, enormous Balkan green lizards appeared on the lawn outside the taverna and went about their business quite oblivious of our intent gaze. Then, on the way back to the minibuses, Chris gave us a perfect demonstration of a squirting cucumber growing in the car park, the ripe fruit living up to its name.

Our afternoon excursion took us up onto the Omalos Plateau. We wound our way up steep and tortuous hairpins, with amazing views appearing (for those who were not driving!) on either side. We seemed to be high in mountain conifer forests but then, unexpectedly, we dropped down onto a high plain, entirely encircled by mountain peaks. We were higher than anywhere in Britain yet the enclosed landscape, with fruit trees in flower, May blossom out and tranquil fields of sheep was all very reminiscent of an idealised English country scene. We drove on south across the plateau to the point where it drops down into the celebrated and treacherous Samariá Gorge. A taverna is perfectly positioned at the viewpoint with balconies looking out across and down the gorge and the owner, Aristotelis, is very familiar with the true Cretan wild goat, or kri-kri. We scoured the hillside opposite with our telescopes to no avail but in just a few minutes, Aristotelis found us a male animal, browsing low on the opposite hill. It was a great and unexpected thrill. Birds from the viewpoint were exciting too; there were some very good views of choughs, crag martins and a raven. Climbing down the steps from the taverna we had time to relish some of the botanical treasures; there was a pretty little mouse-eared chickweed in flower around the steps themselves – the Cretan endemic *Cerastium scaposum* and the somewhat familiar *Aubretia deltoidea*. Further off among the rocks there were clumps of *Daphne sericea* and *Prunus prostrata* and the dainty maple, deciduous normally, despite its name: *Acer sempervirens*.

Back in the buses we went on a little tour clockwise around the edge of the plain to take in the strange environment. Wheatears were obviously abundant here and we had a prolonged look at some tawny pipits busy in the long grass and reeds. Linnets were much in evidence, a jay flew up into the trees as we drove past and we heard and then saw woodlarks in several places in flight and perched on trees. We came upon a large shallow pool, surrounded by rushes and sedges. An informative multi-lingual notice told us that it was being studied and indeed protected, as part of a study of the ephemeral pools of the area. A small group of wood sandpipers were feeding at its edge. For us, by far the most striking feature of the plain was the meadows of wild tulips – sometimes in small groups and sometimes in astonishing colourful profusion. We identified two different pink species, *Tulipa bakeri* and *T. saxatilis* as distinct from the red *T. doerfleri* that we had found at Spili. Unfortunately, though, the best tulips were

inaccessible behind very effective sheep- (and people-) proof fences. Probably the most memorable were carpeting the ground under the trees in a pear orchard, where a woodlark sang.

We tore ourselves reluctantly away from the Omalos Plateau and made our way back down the winding road. Views kept opening up in front of us and colours of the sky and the sea developed beautifully as the sun went down. There were some good plants to be seen as we passed: clumps of golden drop, willowherbs and St John's wort, but no time to stop until our next destination, the town of Rethimnon. The sun was setting behind the headland to the west when we arrived and as we drove round, the old town, with its fort and ancient military harbour, was bathed in sunset colours. There were parties of screaming swifts dashing through the evening air but the hoped for pallid swifts did not make an appearance. We strolled round the old fort and in the twilight our eyes caught movement – a small animal was running about on the vertical face of the old stone battlements and in and out of the crevices between the stones. We at last got a good view and were able to identify it as a black rat – smaller, more dainty and much more nimble than our more familiar brown rats. Another appeared, unconcerned by our presence and then, to our amazement, it ran out along the electricity cable that stretched across high above the road. This was the sort of behaviour that we would normally associate with a squirrel, not a brown rat, and it made us realize why these black rats, or 'ship rats' were so successful in boarding ships: cables and hawsers would have been no deterrent. It was a charming spectacle and entertained us for quite a time – until the call of dinner proved irresistible.

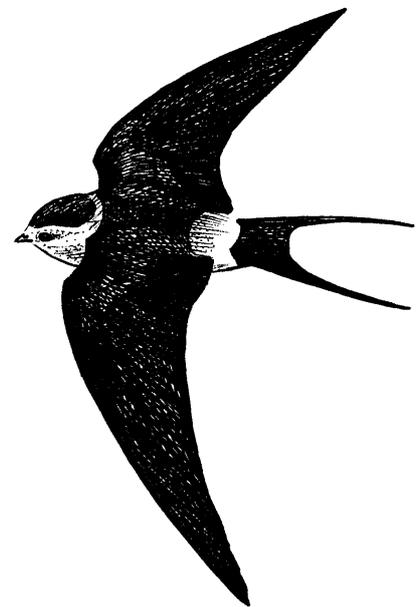
We had negotiated our dinner before our walk and a table was set up for us almost filling the little taverna. As ever, a wonderful selection of local and traditional dishes was on offer, though they were very pressing with the roast lamb, the traditional counterpart to last night's soup. A brief distraction was caused by a comma that fluttered about and then settled on the light fitting high on the ceiling and refused to be rescued.

Monday 24 April: Frangocastello and the Imbros Gorge.

The early risers set off up the hill through the olive groves behind the village. It was fine and clear, and a few sand and house martins were coming in off the sea. A turtle dove flew up into the olive grove where a white wagtail was feeding on the ground. Great tits and blue tits were calling around the houses in the olive grove and we had a very good view – the best yet – of a Cetti's warbler singing on the branch of an olive tree.

Not everyone had been introduced to the Cretan palm grove at Souda, so we took a short detour on our way out after breakfast and, en route, passed the body of a black rat on the road – interesting confirmation that they were in the Plakias area too.

During breakfast we had noticed that the wind was getting up and though it was still sunny, the television forecast was not promising. We took a beautiful route westwards along the south coast, through tiny villages, round tranquil coves and over spectacular headlands. We reaped the benefit of the strong southerly wind when we came over a pass to find ourselves in the middle of a big flock of mixed hirundines, swirling and feeding in the air currents. They were all there: house and sand martins, swallows and – at last – a red rumped swallow, and they were accompanied by both common and alpine swifts. We lingered there to make sure that everyone had had a good view of the less common birds and then dropped down onto the coastal plain of Frangocastello, our destination for the morning.



The plain is dominated by an extraordinary fourteenth century fortress, now only a shell. It is a classic foursquare stone structure with a tower in each corner, like some giant sand castle. It is surrounded by a huge area of sparse low scrub, sandy tracks and scattered buildings, some of which incongruously turn out to be tavernas. It all appears very desolate until you reach the top of the low cliff which reveals an enormous expanse of beautiful white sandy beach, one of the finest in Crete. In April, out of the main holiday season, it was almost deserted.

We strolled along one of the sandy tracks, in the general direction of an enticing looking taverna (after all, it was about coffee-time). Tawny pipits and crested larks were much in evidence, we watched a tree pipit on a wire and then, at last, a small flock of pallid swifts flew in from the sea.

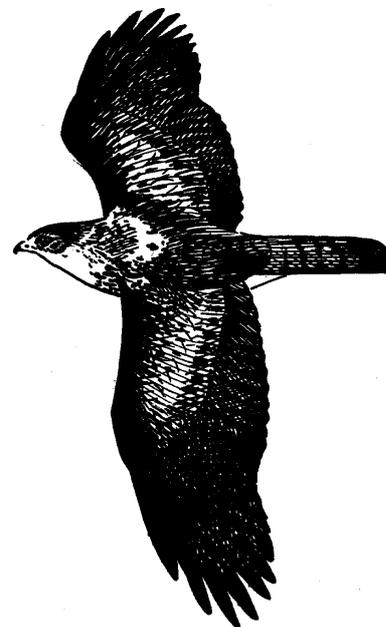
There were plenty of new plants to amuse the botanically minded too: a very pretty little yellow flax *Linum strictum*, the tiny dwarf mallow *Malva cretica*, creeping restharrow *Ononis reclinata*, wild rue *Ruta chalepensis*. Sue found us a strange spotty-leaved bryony growing among bushes on the cliff edge. It turned out to be the Cretan subspecies of our white bryony *Bryonia cretica* ssp *cretica*. The nightshade family has some weird plants in it but probably none more so than the mandrake, with its inconsequential rosettes, which is abundant here. All sorts of mythology

surrounds the plant and the consequences of pulling it up, which we were not tempted to do, but it was somehow appropriate to find it growing abundantly and in flower in the chilly gloom of the inside of the castle courtyard.

Picnic lunch was a more cheerful matter – when we could find some stones to sit on that were not sabotaged by viciously spiny plants. A group of red-rumped swallows obliged us again and after lunch we had another walk to look (unsuccessfully) for the elusive spectacled warbler which is recorded as breeding in the area.

A few kilometres' drive further on we began the climb up to the top of the Imbros gorge, the last new destination for the week. As we started the climb, a group of at least 16 ravens caught our attention flying around in a delightful aerobatic display. We stopped half way up the hillside in a lay-by to admire the wonderful view over the sea and the show of flowers in the *phrygana* – the name given to the form of garrigue that develops in more extreme environments. There was a touching shrine there in memory of a victim of the sinking of the Italian cruise ship *Andrea Doria* in the 1956, still lovingly tended 50 years later.

A modern road hairpins to the top of the gorge and then on inland as it is now an important tourist route. The taverna at the top shows little sign of being able to cope with the passing coach-loads though, teetering as it does on rough wooden struts, out over the precipice. The panoramas were phenomenal and we had lovely views of crag martins and of a female pied flycatcher and we watched a blue tit visiting its nest in the wall below the balcony. Just before we left we had a glimpse of the large raptor for which the Imbros gorge is known – Bonelli's eagle. But it was tantalisingly brief, and disappeared down towards the sea. Shortly after that we retraced our tracks and halfway down were delighted to catch sight of the Bonelli's eagle again. This time we had a wonderful view. It was an adult bird, moving elegantly over the spur of the hill opposite, sometimes landing on a rock or disappearing for a while and then reappearing, rising in a rush of updraughts. A woodlark was singing as we watched the eagle and a hoodie flew over, then dived spectacularly in front of us with nearly closed wings.



While we were up at the taverna our attention had been taken by a particularly charming cloud! It was isolated, very perfectly shaped and full of character, and we watched its evolution and eventual disappearance with interest and much clicking of cameras. The weather threw up some more interest for us as we drove eastwards along the coast back to Plakias. The wind, still strong but now coming from the west, seemed to be meeting the strong downdraughts from off the hills and producing remarkable clouds of spindrift on the sea just off the headlands as we passed. There were some lovely rainbow effects and another excuse for some camera action.

We felt that we had been particularly charmed to see the kri-kri so well on Sunday so, for our last evening meal we decided to return to the taverna which bears its name. As before, we were welcomed warmly and the meal was excellent. As usual on the last evening of a Honeyguide holiday we are glad to share reminiscences and identify the particular highlights of the week for everyone. It always brings up some surprises!

Angela: Set against the brilliant colours everywhere the highlights were black and white: the ravens tumbling in display; the white cyclamen in the gorge; the black-eared wheatear.

Carol: The whole landscape and topography of Crete; the amazing gorges with their vultures; the lake with so much: the little bittern, the black-winged stilt, the little stint, the blue-headed wagtail and the terrapin.

Chris: The kri-kri and the black rat (equal first); even on the fifth visit – still Spili Bumps; the little crakes; the company.

David (Jones): The little bittern clamped to a reed stalk; the first dragon arum; the live beech marten carrying a kit.

David (Nind): the reassuring garage man who could understand the fault symbols and his black-clothed mother with presents of lemon flowers; Spili Bumps; friar's cowl; the little bittern; the ortolan bunting; the griffon vulture on the nest.

Elaine: Tulips; the tiny plants on the hillsides; swallowtails and scarce swallowtails; the black-winged stilts; the pear blossom on Omalos.

Geoff: The food; Omalos Plateau and the view over the Samariá Gorge were 'out of this world'; the view of the ortolan bunting at Spili Bumps; the wild gladiolus and the tiny iris at Kotsiphou gorge.

Jill: One bird - the little bittern; one place – Spili Bumps; one flower – the wild tulips, *Tulipa doerfleri* at Spili Bumps

Lyn: Spili Bumps – a revelation to see so many orchids; the ship rat running up the vertical wall; the birds everywhere, especially the sensation of being so close to ravens.

Rachel: The orange and lemon blossom smells everywhere; the land crab crossing the road; the two special mammals – the black rat and the kri-kri; Omalos and Spili Bumps; the plate of mixed starters at the taverna on the beach; the group; the collective encouragement on ear-ring hunts.

Robin: New things – the kri-kri and the chukar; the warmth and hospitality of the Cretans we met, especially Aristotelis, the kri-kri man and the old lady at the garage.

Ron: The little bittern; the LIVE beech marten; the pie shop in Plakias.

Shevaun: The Cretan people that we met, especially the lady with the lemon flowers and the man in the Plakias jewellery shop; the golden oriole against the snow; the black rat on the wire beside Rethimnon fortress.

Sue: Spili Bumps – with their flowers and birds; the griffon vulture on the nest with young; the Balkan green lizard on the bank outside the restaurant at Aghia; the catchfly *Silene gallica*; seeing Jupiter and its moons in the telescope.

Val: The little bittern; the orchids on Spili Bumps (which she had long hoped to see); the tightrope walking black rat.

Tuesday 25 April: Plakias, Heraklion and Home...

It was very windy when we set out before breakfast, with the wind coming down from the north. We went along the beach and still there was spindrift in the bay. By the bridge, the pied wagtail was there again in its usual place and below the bridge a Temminck's stint was feeding at the edge of the stream. We were able to look down on it from just a few feet above – very special. There was a common sandpiper just above the bridge and three more common sandpipers further along. The spray blown off the crests of the waves was again producing a beautiful rainbow effect out in the bay. We were chilly from the north wind and turned to go back for breakfast when we noticed a windblown marsh harrier trying to fly in from the south and making virtually no progress against the wind. Had it been struggling like that all the way from Africa?

We had time for a short walk after breakfast before our coach arrived to take us back to Heraklion. We turned up the hill behind the village, past an old olive oil mill and stopped to admire some ancient pollard olive trees - some 1.5 metres in diameter. Geoff and Angela were puzzled by an eel-like animal wriggling across the road where it fords a little stream; its exact identity remains a mystery. We found some nice specimens of the rather special grape hyacinth *Muscari spreitzenhoferi* growing on a sandy bank and admired two climbing plants – a very good looking specimen of smilax and an intensely blue morning glory just coming out for the day. It was still very windy as we turned back to collect our luggage and make our farewells at the hotel. A miserable looking purple heron was struggling vainly to fly over the hilltop against the wind.

The coach was waiting for us near the bridge and the Temminck's stint was still there. A little egret flew past as well, as if to bid us farewell!

It was a pleasant journey to Heraklion in clear sunshine, with long views from the slightly elevated seats in the coach. It was another opportunity too to contrast the north and south coasts of Crete, and reinforce the view that the advantages of tranquillity, as well as landscape, lie in the south. Plakias makes a perfect base for our lovely week.

The party bound for Manchester were scheduled to fly out in the early afternoon but the Gatwick-bound flight had been rescheduled to the evening. We delivered the Manchester party to the airport and there we met a representative of the Hellenic Ornithological Society and handed over the Honeyguide cheque. In the slightly curious environment of Heraklion Airport we heard about HOS's work and the lammergeier project which would benefit from the donation and came away with some very attractive and informative publicity booklets and a DVD.

The Gatwick group then had some time to spare and used it to fascinating effect, on a visit to the Heraklion Museum of Antiquities. This was a wonderful introduction to the astonishing history of Cretan civilization and made a perfect conclusion to the week. And there was a jewellery shop, and the resistance of the last male in the party was broken, and a pair of earrings bought!

Probably the less said about the return flight, the better. It was delayed, and then delayed again. We whiled away some of the time by looking at the lammergeier DVD on a laptop while we waited. Eventually we returned to Gatwick in the small hours of the morning with Carol having to wait for the milk train to get to her destination. One soon forgets these difficulties though, and the abiding memory is of a wonderful week, in delightful company and an altogether unforgettable Cretan experience.

BIRD LIST CRETE 18 - 25 April 2006

Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Many at Aghia reservoir
Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii</i>	Two at Damnóni
Little bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	At least two at Aghia Reservoir, one seen very well
Squacco heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Four at Damnóni, two at Plakias and two at Aghia Reservoir
Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Single birds at Damnóni and Plakias
Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	A few at Aghia
Purple heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Two migrating individuals at Plakias
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	A few at Aghia
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	A pair at Aghia
Griffon vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Seen regularly over hills and gorges; a pair at nest in Kourtaliotiko Gorge
Marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Odd individuals at Plakias; one at Aghia
Montagu's harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	1 over the road north of Kourtaliotiko Gorge
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Common and widespread
Bonelli's eagle	<i>Hieraetus fasciatus</i>	One adult seen well at Imbros Gorge
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Common and widespread
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	One at Souda
Chukar	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>	One seen well at Festos; two heard at Moní Préveli
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	One heard at Spili
Little crane	<i>Porzana parva</i>	Several at Aghia Reservoir
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Several at Aghia Reservoir
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Many at Aghia Reservoir
Black-winged stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	A pair at Plakias and a pair at Aghia Reservoir
Little stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	A few at Aghia Reservoir
Temminck's stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	One seen very close at Plakias
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Several at Aghia Reservoir
Wood sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Two at the Venetian bridge; two at Aghia; six at Omalos
Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Small numbers most days at Plakias beach; one at Aghia Reservoir
Yellow-legged gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	Common and widespread
Rock dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	Several apparently wild birds at Kotsiphou Gorge
Wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Odd individuals at Plakias, Omalos and Kourtaliotiko Gorges
Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Common and seen every day in ones and twos
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Small migrating groups at Geropotamos River and Moní Préveli; one at Plakias
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Seen in small numbers on most days
Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	A small flock at Frangocastello
Alpine swift	<i>Apus melba</i>	Seen every day including very good views at Aghia Reservoir
Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	Two at Plakias
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	One near the Venetian Bridge
Short-toed lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	Four at Frangocastello
Crested lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	Widespread; seen on most days
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	Seen at Spili and Omalos; heard at Imbros Gorge
Sand martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Small migrating flocks at Spili, Aghia Reservoir and Frangocastello
Crag martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	Seen in Kourtaliotiko Gorge, Samaria and Imbros gorges
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	A few migrating groups every day
Red-rumped swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	Several at Frangocastello and one on the drive back to Heraklion
House martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	Small migrating flocks on most days
Tawny pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	Several at Omalos and Frangocastello
Tree pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Ones and twos at Aghia Reservoir, Moní Préveli, Omalos, Geropotamos River and Frangocastello
Blue-headed wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	A few at Plakias
White & pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	White at Kourtaliotiko Gorge and Damnóni; male nixed at the river mouth at Plakias. This seems to

Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	be a regular spot for this race
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	One at Kourtaliotiko Gorge
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	Six at Plakias
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Seen well on most days
Black-eared wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	Several at Omalos
		Individuals in Kourtaliotiko Gorge and Moní Préveli
Blue rock thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Ones and twos in Kourtaliotiko Gorge and other rocky places
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Widespread; seen on most days
Cetti's warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	Heard on most days in damp and scrubby places; one seen well near Plakias
Sardinian warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	Common and widespread
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Migrating individuals seen or heard at Spili, Moní Préveli, Aghia Reservoir and Plakias
Wood warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Two at Moní Préveli
Pied flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	Several at Moní Préveli and one at Imbros Gorge
Blue tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	Common and widespread
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Common and widespread
Golden oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	Two at Plakias; excellent views of several males at Festos
Woodchat shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	Individuals at Spili, Venetian Bridge and Plakias
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	One at Omalos
Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	Good views at Samariá gorge
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Common in Kourtaliotiko and other gorges
Hooded crow	<i>Corvus corone cornix</i>	Common and widespread
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Seen in gorges and mountainous areas; a flock of sixteen at Imbros Gorge
Italian sparrow	<i>Passer italiae</i>	Common and widespread
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Common and widespread
Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	One in Spili town
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Common and widespread
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Common and widespread
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	A few at Spili, Aghia and Imbros Gorge
Cirl bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	A singing male at Kotsiphou Gorge and one at Omalos
Ortolan bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	Two at Spili
Corn bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	A singing male at Spili; often seen on journeys

MAMMALS, AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

Eastern hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus concolor</i>	One road casualty on the way to Festos
Serotine bat	<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	One at Moní Préveli
Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus sp</i>	A few at Rethimnon
Ship (black) rat	<i>Rattus rattus</i>	Several athletic individuals at Rethimnon and a road casualty near Plakias
Beech marten	<i>Martes fiona</i>	One carrying its young by the Geropotamos River; several road casualties
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	One road casualty
Wild Goat (Kri-kri)	<i>Capra aegagrus</i>	A male at Samariá Gorge
Common Tree frog	<i>Hyla arborea</i>	Heard at Aghia Reservoir
Balkan terrapin	<i>Mauremys caspica</i>	Several at Aghia Reservoir
Balkan green lizard	<i>Lacerta trilineata</i>	Two at Aghia Reservoir
Erhard's wall lizard	<i>Podarcis erhardii</i>	Seen at Spili, Aghia Reservoir and Frangocastello

BUTTERFLIES AND OTHER INSECTS AND INVERTEBRATES

Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>	Festos and Aghia Reservoir
Scarce swallowtail	<i>Iphiclidespodalirius</i>	Plakias and Festos
Cretan festoon	<i>Zerynthia cerisyi fcretica</i>	Kourtaliotiko Gorge
Large white	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	Plakias
Dappled white	<i>Euchloë ausonia</i>	Spili and Moní Préveli
Clouded yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>	Plakias

Cleopatra	<i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i>	Festos
Southern comma	<i>Polygonia egea</i>	Festos
Painted lady	<i>Cynthia cardui</i>	Frangocastello
Red admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	Moní Préveli
Speckled wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	Plakias, Spili and Moní Préveli
Wall brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	Plakias and Spili
Small copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	Festos and Frangocastello
Holly blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	Plakias and Kourtalioitiko Gorge
Brown argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>	Plakias

OTHER INSECTS

Flower chafer	<i>Oxythyrea funesta</i>	Plakias
Violet Carpenter-bee	<i>Xylocopa violacea</i>	Plakias, Spili, Venetian Bridge, etc
Tawny mining bee	<i>Andrena fulva</i>	Plakias and Moní Préveli
Egyptian Locust	<i>Anacridium aegyptiacum</i>	Plakias and Frangocastello
Nosed grasshopper	<i>Acrida ungarica</i>	Plakias, Spili and Frangocastello
Firebug	<i>Pyrhocoris apterus</i>	Plakias
Red-winged Grasshopper	<i>Oedipoda germanica</i>	Plakias
Seven-spot ladybird	<i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i>	Plakias and Spili
Shield bug (Millwall bug)	<i>Graphosoma italicum</i>	Kourtalioitiko Gorge
Devil's coach horse	<i>Staphylinus olens</i>	Spili
Honey bee	<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Festos

OTHER INVERTEBRATES

Freshwater Crab	<i>Potamon potamios</i>	One crossing the road near Plakias and a few in the river at the Venetian Bridge
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PLANT LISTS

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

Key and nomenclature: Latin names of plants generally follow those used in Flora of the Cretan Area (Turland et al. 1993); any alternative names in common usage are given in brackets. English names are given only where one is in general use. Localities are not given: special plants in special places are mentioned in the text.

* Endemic to Crete

Introduced and not native to Crete and cultivated or planted species

// New to Honeyguide records in 2006

FERNS AND ALLIES

Adiantum capillus-veneris Maidenhair Fern
Ceterach officinarum Rustyback Fern
Cheilanthes acrosticta (maderensis)
Equisetum ramosissimum
Pteridium aquilinum Bracken
Selaginella denticulata Mediterranean Club-moss

CONIFERS

Cupressaceae - Cypress Family

Cupressus sempervirens horizontalis Cypress
C. sempervirens sempervirens Funeral Cypress
Juniperus oxycedrus ssp. *macrocarpa*

Pinaceae - Pine Family

#*Araucaria araucana* Norfolk Island Pine
Pinus brutia

FLOWERING PLANTS

Dicotyledons

Aceraceae - Maple Family

Acer sempervirens

Aizoaceae - Mezembryanthemum Family

Carpobrotus edulis Hottentot Fig

Anacardiaceae - Pistachio Family

Pistacia lentiscus Mastic Tree

P. terebinthus Turpentine Tree

Apiaceae - Carrot Family

Crithmum maritimum Rock Samphire

Daucus carota Wild Carrot

Eryngium campestre Field Eryngo

Ferula communis Giant Fennel

Foeniculum vulgare Fennel

Lagoecia cuminoides

Oenanthe pimpinelloides Corky-fruited Water-dropwort

Pseudorhiza pumila

Scandix pecten-veneris Shepherd's Needle

Smyrniolum perfoliatum Perfoliate Alexanders

Tordylium apulum Mediterranean Hartwort

Apocynaceae - Oleander Family

Nerium oleander Oleander

Araliaceae - Ivy Family

Hedera helix Ivy

Asteraceae - Daisy Family

Anthemis chia

Anthemis rigida ssp. *rigida* Rayless Chamomile

Asteriscus (Pallenis) spinosus

Bellis annua Annual Daisy

//*Bellis perennis* Daisy

Bubonium (Asteriscus) aquaticum Yellow Sea Aster

Calendula arvensis Field Marigold

Carlina corymbosa

**Centaurea idaea*

Chrysanthemum coronarium Crown Daisy

Chrysanthemum segetum Corn Marigold

**Crepis cretica*

Crupina crupinastrum

Dittrichia viscosa

Filago (Evax) pygmaea

F. pyramidata Broad-leaved Cudweed

Galactites tomentosa Mediterranean Thistle

Geropogon (Tragopogon) hybridus

Helichrysum (stoechas ssp.) *barrelieri* Curry-plant

Leontodon tuberosus

Notobasis syriaca

**Onopordum bracteatum* ssp. *creticum*

Phagnalon graecum Shrubby Cudweed

Picnemon acarna

Ptilostemon chamaepeuce

Reichardia picroides

Scorzonera cretica Cretan Viper's-grass

Senecio vulgaris Groundsel

Silybum marianum Milk Thistle

Tolpis barbata

Tragopogon sinuatus (porrifolius) Salsify

Berberidaceae - Barberry Family

Berberis cretica

Boraginaceae - Borage Family

Anchusa hybrida (undulata)

A. italica (azurea) Large Blue Alkanet

Borago officinalis Borage

Cerithe major Honeywort

Cynoglossum columnae

C. creticum Blue Hound's-tongue

Echium angustifolium Narrow-leaved Bugloss

E. arenarium

E. italicum Pale Bugloss

E. plantagineum Purple Viper's-bugloss

Myosotis incrassata

Onosma graecum Golden-drops

Symphytum creticum (Procopiana cretica) Cretan gorge comfrey

Brassicaceae - Cabbage Family

Aethionema saxatile Burnt Candystuff

Arabis verna Spring Rock-cress
Aubrieta deltoidea Aubrieta
Biscutella didyma Buckler Mustard
Brassica nigra Black Mustard
Cakile maritima Sea-rocket
Capsella bursa-pastoris Shepherd's-purse
Erophila verna Whitlow-grass
Eruca sativa
Erucaria hispanica
Hirschfeldia incana Hoary Mustard
Matthiola tricuspidata Three-horned Stock
*Ricotia cretica Ricotia
Sinapis arvensis Charlock

Cactaceae - Cactus Family

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

Campanulaceae - Bellflower Family

Campanula erinus

* Petromarula pinnata Cretan Wall Lettuce

*Solenopsis minuta ssp. annua (Laurentia gasparrinii)

Capparaceae - Caper Family

Capparis spinosa

Caryophyllaceae - Pink Family

Arenaria muralis

Cerastium comatum

*C. scaposum

Herniaria hirsuta

Petrorhagia velutina (Kohlrauschia velutina)

Silene colorata

S. gallica Small-flowered Catchfly

S. noctiflora Night-flowering Catchfly

S. vulgaris Bladder Campion

Chenopodiaceae - Spinach Family

Atriplex halimus Shrubby Orache

Cistaceae - Rockrose Family

Cistus (incanus ssp.) creticus Cretan Cistus

C. salvifolius Sage-Leaved Cistus

Fumana thymifolia Thyme-leaved Fumana

Tuberaria guttata Spotted Rock-rose

Clusiaceae – St John's-wort Family

Hypericum empetrifolium ssp. empetrifolium Shrubby St. John's-wort

Convolvulaceae - Bindweed Family

Convolvulus althaeoides Mallow-leaved Bindweed

Crassulaceae - Stonecrop Family

Crassula alata

Sedum litoreum

*S. praesidis

S. rubens

Umbilicus parviflorus Small-Flowered Navelwort

Cucurbitaceae – Cucumber Family

//Ecballium elaterium Squinting cucumber

//Bryonia cretica ssp cretica Cretan white bryony

Dipsacaceae - Scabious Family

Knautia dipsacifolia

Ericaceae - Heather Family

Arbutus unedo Strawberry-tree

Erica arborea Tree-heath

Euphorbiaceae - Spurge Family

Euphorbia acanthothamnos Greek Spiny Spurge

E. characias Mediterranean Spurge

E. dendroides Tree Spurge

E. helioscopia Sun Spurge

E. paralias Sea Spurge

Ricinus communis Castor Oil Plant

Mercurialis annua Annual Mercury

Fabaceae - Pea Family

Acacia spp. Mimosa

Anagyris foetida

Anthyllus hermanniae
 Anthyllus vulneraria ssp. rubriflora Red Kidney Vetch
 Astragalus angustifolius
 Bituminaria (Psoralea) bituminosa Pitch Trefoil
 Calicotome villosa Hairy Thorny Broom
 #Cercis siliquastrum Judas Tree
 Ceratonia siliqua Carob Tree
 Coronilla scorpioides Scorpion-vetch
 * Ebenus cretica Shrubby Sainfoin (Cretan Ebony)
 Genista acanthoclada
 Hymenocarpus circinnatus Disk Trefoil
 Lathyrus setifolius
 Lotus halophilus
 L. peregrinus
 Lupinus micranthus Hairy Lupin
 Medicago arabica Spotted Medick
 M. disciformis
 M. littoralis
 M. lupulina Black Medick
 M. marina Sea Medick
 M. orbicularis Large Disk Medick
 M. polymorpha Toothed Medick
 Melilotus sulcatus
 Onobrychis aequidentata
 O. caput-galli Cock's-comb Sainfoin
 Ononis reclinata Small Rest-harrow
 O. viscosa
 Robina pseudoacacia False acacia
 Securigera (Coronilla) cretica Cretan Crown Vetch
 S. securidaca
 Spartium junceum Spanish Broom
 Tetragonolobus purpureus Asparagus Pea
 Trifolium angustifolium
 T. campestre Hop Trefoil
 //T. fragiferum
 T. nigrescens
 T. resupinatum Reversed Clover
 T. stellatum Starry Clover
 T. tomentosum Woolly Trefoil
 T. uniflorum One-Flowered Clover
 Trigonella balansae
 Tripodion (Anthyllis) tetraphyllum Bladder Vetch
 Vicia bithynica Bithynian Vetch
 V. hybrida Hairy Yellow Vetchling
 V. lathyroides Spring Vetch
 V. lutea Yellow Vetch
 V. sativa Common Vetch
 V. villosa Fodder Vetch
Fagaceae - Oak Family
 //Quercus ilex
 Quercus coccifera Kermes Oak
Fumariaceae - Fumitory Family
 Fumaria macrocarpa
Gentianaceae - Gentian Family
 Blackstonia perfoliata Yellow-wort
 Centaurium maritimum Yellow Century
 C. pulchellum Lesser Century
Geraniaceae - Geranium Family
 Erodium cicutarium Common Stork's-bill
 E. gruinum Long-beaked Stork's-bill
 E. malacoides
 Geranium dissectum Cut-leaved Crane's-bill
 G. lucidum Shining Crane's-bill
 G. molle Dove's-foot Crane's-bill
 G. purpureum Little Robin
 G. rotundifolium Round-leaved Crane's-bill

Lamiaceae - Mint Family

Ballota pseudodictamnus
Coridothymus (Thymus) capitatus Shrubby Thyme
Lamium amplexicaule Henbit Dead-nettle
Lavandula stoechas French Lavender
Marrubium vulgare White Horehound
Mentha longifolia
Phlomis fruticosa Jerusalem Sage
*P. lanata
Prasium majus
Salvia fruticosa Shrubby Sage
S. verbenaca Wild Clary
S. viridis
Satureja (Micromeria) nervosa
S. thymbra Savory
Sideritis curvidens
*S. syriaca ssp. syriaca
Stachys cretica
S. spinulosa
*Scutellaria sieberi
Teucrium microphyllum
Linaceae - Flax Family
Linum arboreum Tree Flax
L. bienne Pale Flax
L. strictum
L. trigynum

Lythraceae - Loosestrife Family

//Lythrum hyssopifolia
L. junceum

Malvaceae - Mallow Family

Lavatera bryoniifolia
L. cretica Lesser Tree Mallow
Malva cretica
M. parviflora Small-flowered Mallow
M. sylvestris Common Mallow

Meliaceae - Persian Lilac family

Melia azedarach Indian Bead-tree (Persian Lilac)

Moraceae - Fig Family

Ficus carica Fig

Myrtaceae - Myrtle Family

Myrtus communis Common Myrtle

Oleaceae - Olive Family

#Jasminum fruticans Wild Jasmine
Olea europaea Olive
Phillyrea latifolia

Orobanchaceae - Broomrape Family

Orobanche lavandulacea
O. pubescens
O. ramosa Branched Broomrape

Oxalidaceae - Sorrel Family

Oxalis pes-caprae Bermuda Buttercup

Papaveraceae - Poppy Family

Glaucium flavum Yellow Horned-poppy
Papaver purpureomarginatum
P. rhoeas Common Poppy

Plantaginaceae - Plantain Family

Plantago afra
P. bellardii
P. lagopus
P. lanceolata Ribwort Plantain
P. weldenii

Platanaceae - Plane Family

Platanus orientalis Oriental Plane

Polygalaceae - Milkwort Family

Polygala venulosa Eastern Milkwort

Polygonaceae - Dock Family

Rumex crispus

Rumex bucephalophorus

Primulaceae - Primrose Family

Anagallis arvensis Scarlet Pimpernel

*Cyclamen creticum Cretan Cyclamen

//Lysimachia serpyllifolia

Punicaceae – Pomegranate Family

#Punica granatum Pomegranate

Ranunculaceae - Buttercup Family

Adonis microcarpa

Anemone coronaria Crown Anemone

A. hortensis ssp. heldreichii

Clematis cirrhosa Maiden's Bower

Ranunculus asiaticus Turban Buttercup

*R. cupreus

R. ficaria ssp. chrysocephalus Lesser Celandine

R. gracilis

R. peltatus ssp. fucoides Pond Water-crowfoot

Resedaceae - Mignonette Family

Reseda alba White Mignonette

Reseda lutea Wild Mignonette

Rhamnaceae - Buckthorn Family

Rhamnus lycioides

Rosaceae - Rose Family

Crataegus monogyna ssp. azarella Hawthorn

#Eriobotrya japonica Loquat

Prunus prostrata

P. webbii

Pyrus spinosa Almond-leaved Pear

Rubus sanctus Bramble

Sarcopoterium spinosum Thorny Burnet

Rubiaceae - Bedstraw Family

Galium aparine Cleavers

Rubia peregrina Wild Madder

Sherardia arvensis Field Madder

Valantia hispida

Rutaceae - Rue Family

Citrus limon Lemon

Citrus sinensis Orange

Ruta chalepensis

Salicaceae - Willow Family

#Populus nigra Black Poplar

//Salix alba White willow

Santalaceae- Sandalwood family

Osyris alba Osyris

Scrophulariaceae - Figwort Family

Bellardia trixago Bellardia

Linaria pelisseriana Jersey Toadflax

Misopates orontium Lesser Snapdragon (Weasel's Snout)

Parentucellia latifolia

Parentucellia viscosa Yellow Bartsia

Scrophularia lucida Shining Figwort

Scrophularia peregrina Nettle-leaved Figwort

* Verbascum arcturus Hanging Mullein

V. macrurum

V. sinuatum

V. spinosum

Veronica cymbalaria

Solanaceae - Nightshade Family

Hyoscyamus albus White Henbane

//Mandragora autumnalis Mandrake

#Nicotiana glauca

Styracaceae - Storax Family

Styrax officinalis Storax

Tamaricaceae - Tamarisk Family

Tamarix smyrnensis Tamarisk

Thymelaeaceae - Daphne Family

Daphne sericea

Thymelaea hirsuta

Ulmaceae - Elm Family

Ulmus minor Small-leaved Elm

Urticaceae - Nettle Family

Parietaria judaica Pellitory of the Wall

Urtica urens Annual Nettle

U. pilulifera Roman Nettle

Valerianaceae - Valerian Family

Centranthus calcitrapae

Fedia cornucopiae

*Valeriana asarifolia Cretan Valerian

Valerianella coronata

V. discoidea

Verbenaceae - Vervain Family

Vitex agnus-castus Chaste-tree

Violaceae - Violet Family

*Viola cretica

Vitaceae - Vine Family

Vitis vinifera Grape Vine

Monocotyledons

Agavaceae - Agave Family

Agave americana Century Plant

Amaryllidaceae - Daffodil Family

Narcissus tazetta

Pancratium maritimum Sea Daffodil

Araceae - Arum Family

Arisarum vulgare Friar's Cowl

Arum concinatum

A. creticum Cretan Arum

Dracunculus vulgaris Dragon Arum

Arecaceae - Palm Family

#Phoenix canariensis Date Palm

P. theophrasti Cretan Palm

Cyperaceae - Sedge Family

Carex divulsa Grey Sedge

C. otrubae False Fox-sedge

Cladium mariscus Saw-sedge

Cyperus longus Galingale

Scirpoides holoschoenus Round-headed Club-rush

Iridaceae - Iris Family

Gladiolus italicus Field Gladiolus

Gynandris (Moraea) sisyrinchium Barbary Nut

Hermodactylus tuberosus Widow Iris

*Iris cretica

Iris pseudocorus Yellow Flag

Juncaceae - Rush Family

Juncus heldreichianus

Liliaceae - Lily Family

Allium nigrum

A. roseum Rose Garlic

A. subhirsutum

Asparagus aphyllus

Asphodeline lutea Yellow Asphodel

Asphodelus ramosus (aestivus) Common Asphodel

Charybdis (Drimia, Urginea) maritima Sea Squill

Gagea chrysantha

G. graeca

Muscari comosum Tassel Hyacinth

*M. spreitzenhoferi

Ornithogalum exscapum

O. narbonense

Smilax aspera Common Smilax

*Tulipa bakeri

*T. doerfleri

T. rupestris

//T saxatilis

Orchidaceae - Orchid Family

Aceras anthropophorum Man Orchid
Anacamptis pyramidalis Pyramidal Orchid
Barlia robertiana Giant Orchid
Neotinea maculata Dense-flowered Orchid
//*Ophrys ariadne*
O. bombyliflora Bumble Bee Orchid
O. doerfleri (cretica) Cretan Bee Orchid
O. (scolopax) heldreichii Marengo Orchid
O. iricolor Rainbow Orchid
O. phryganae
O. (sphegodes) mammosa Mammose Orchid
O. sphegodes Early spider orchid
O. tentredinifera Sawfly Orchid
Orchis anatolica Anatolian Orchid
O. boryi
O. collina Fan-lipped Orchid
O. italica Naked Man Orchid
O. lactea Milky Orchid
O. laxiflora Loose-flowered Orchid
O. (provincialis) pauciflora Few-flowered Orchid
//*O. papilionacea* Butterfly Orchid
O. quadripunctata Four-spotted Orchid
O. simia Monkey Orchid
O. tridentata Toothed Orchid
Serapias (vomeraea) orientalis Eastern Tongue-orchid
S. parviflora Small Tongue-orchid

Poaceae - Grass Family

Ammophila arenaria Marram
Arundo donax Giant Reed
Briza maxima Greater Quaking-grass
B. minor Small Quaking-grass
Hordeum leporinum
Hyparrhenia hirta
Lagurus ovatus Hare's-tail
Lamarckia aurea
Lolium temulentum Darnel
Phragmites australis Common Reed
Poa bulbosa Bulbous Meadow-grass
Triticum markgrafii (*Aegilops dichasians*)
Vulpia ciliata

