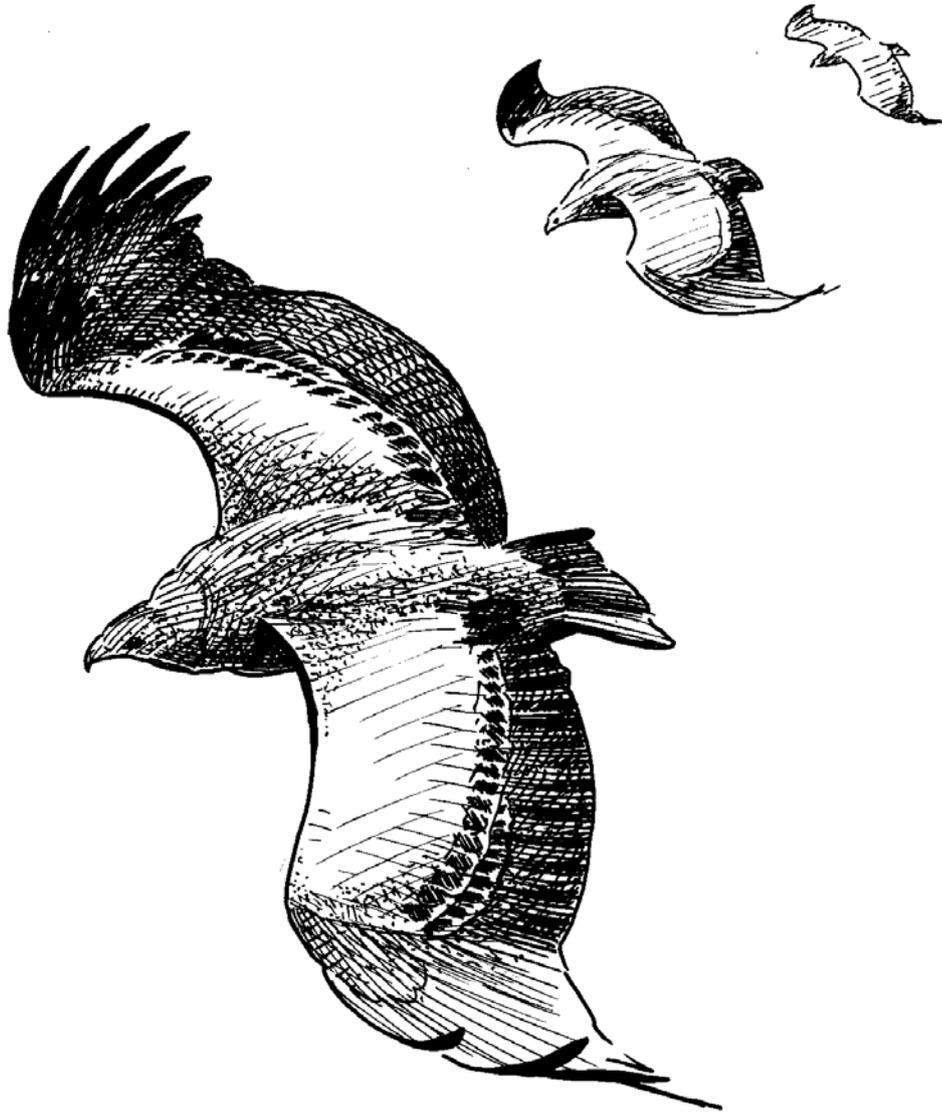


Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Crete
17 - 24 April 2007

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Holiday participants

Helen Revell

David Lord

Lesley Lord

Graham Harris

Peter Higgleton

Chris Ebden

Dave Wilkins

Betty Mason

Margaret Dixey

Lucy Spink

Collin Hodgson

Marilyn Hodgson

Elke Löpke

Leaders

Chris and Maureen Gibson

Report by Maureen and Chris Gibson

Illustrations: collared flycatcher by Szabolcs Kokay from Gerard Gorman's *Woodpeckers of Europe* (Bruce Coleman Books) and reprinted here with their kind permission. Black-winged stilts by Gary Wright.

Other illustrations by Rob Hume, including front cover, griffon vultures.

As with all Honeyguide holidays, £25 of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case for the 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 Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, rounded up to a total of €585 (£403). This brings Honeyguide's total contributions to HOS since the first Honeyguide holiday in Crete in 1995 to £6,093 (roughly €8835). Information on the lammergeier project is at is at <http://www.ornithologiki.gr/en/lib/engypbar.htm> There is a thank-you letter from HOS at the end of this report (but not on this web version of the report).

The total conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 was at £47,863 (roughly €69,400) at the end of June 2007.

Crete
17 - 24 April 2007

Tuesday 17 April: the way there

A lunchtime flight allowed for leisurely arrivals at Gatwick, although early birds Collin and Marilyn kept the leaders guessing until the last minute. Clear skies gave those on the right of the plane great views of the Alps, Venice and the Dalmatian coast, while the final approach to Heraklion airport over the sea was a surprise to some!

The sun was setting as we left the north coast, but not before we saw crown daisies and Spanish broom lining the roadsides, a taster of things to come before, we plunged into the gathering gloom and the gorges. The small coach threaded its way through the narrow streets of Plakias, enabling us to disembark at the steps to the Hotel Sofia. Our host, George, greeted us warmly in his own inimitable style, but as the hour was late and a taverna meal was waiting we didn't linger long over the tea he offered us.

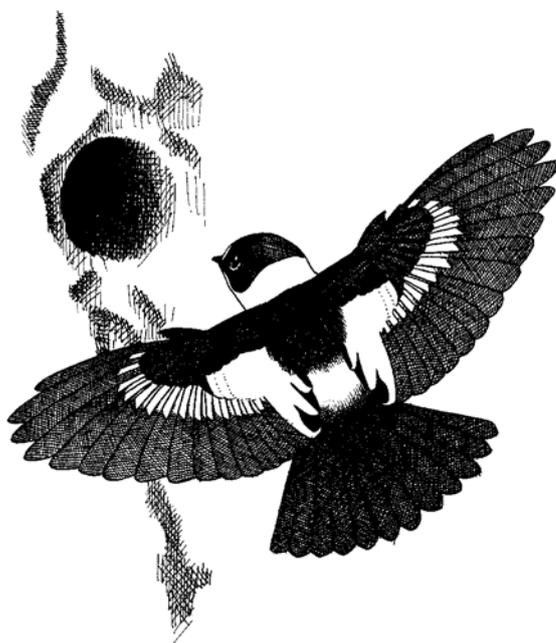
The night was full of promise: Chris picked up an exhausted reed warbler from the taverna floor, and at 11.30pm a pied flycatcher flew in off the sea! Just then, the lights dimmed and a large cake was brought in, decorated with sparklers and candles to mark Marilyn's special birthday the day before. George joined us, along with the waiters, for cake and raki, before we all headed off to bed, fed, watered, relaxed and raring to go!

Wednesday 18 April: Plakias Old Mill & Kotsiphou Gorge

Due to our late night, only a few ventured out early, but they were rewarded with more evidence of migration; whinchats, nightingale, mixed hirundine flocks of up to sixty at a time passing over, and a marsh harrier arriving off the sea. And then to breakfast, a splendid spread laid on by Anne-Marie.

The group gathered at 9.30, when we all met Elke, our Honeyguider from Germany, and set off leisurely through the village. Stopping at the bridge to see little egret, common sandpiper, little stint, little ringed plover and a ruff, surprisingly, once again a pied wagtail was seen here; why this spot regularly produces piers when most on Crete are whites is a mystery. Even the sparrows merited close examination – Italian not house, although a few individuals were seen with some, or even a full set of house sparrow characters.

Setting off up the track towards an old Venetian mill, we paused to look at the many plants which would become familiar during our week here: *Galactites tomentosa*, an attractive variegated thistle; blue *Anchusa italica*; a larger and more beautiful form of wild carrot than ours at home; and pitch trefoil, with purple clover heads and pungent aroma. Our attention was taken by birds flitting round a garden – eventually we all had good views of a pair of collared flycatchers, smart in their black and white plumage. Winding on up the hillside we didn't know where to look; upwards to see swifts, common buzzard or woodchat shrike, or down to look at carpets of viper's-bugloss and the beautiful *Convolvulus althaeoides*, with its large, clear pink flowers. Approaching the mill, we found our first Cretan endemic *Petromarula pinnata*, or Cretan wall lettuce, actually in the campanula family, and



many more individuals than Chris had seen here in previous years. Griffon vultures floated over, and one or two of us saw a dark, slim falcon, a possible Eleonora's, before it sped away.

On reaching the mill the party split up, some to sketch and photograph, some to explore, all meandering back in our own time to meet at the minibuses for the short ride to the hillside village of Mirthios, and lunch at the aptly named Panorama taverna. A blue rock thrush was seen in the distance, and spectacular views over Plakias bay accompanied our delicious and generous lunch.

We then explored further in the buses, stopping several times as we drove up into the Kotsiphou Gorge, picking up several species of arum: Cretan arum, with delicate yellow flowers; a large dragon arum not yet in flower; and *Arum concinatum*, similar to lords-and-ladies back at home. Next stop – orchids – naked man, lax-flowered, man orchid and small-flowered tongue orchid covered the slopes above the gorge. The second bus had spotted a blue rock thrush close to the road; on our return it had disappeared, but an Ortolan bunting, understated but beautiful, had replaced it. Eventually we set off back to Plakias, some seeing a cuckoo fly across the road.

We had booked tonight's meal at the Gio-Ma, a taverna with lovely views over the bay in the sunset. The table was set up on the terrace, however, and the wind did not abate!

Thursday 19 April: Kourtaliotiko Gorge & Spili

Today's early birders set out in the minibuses, driving slowly along the dunes at Plakias. Migration was much in evidence: whinchats were everywhere, plus pied flycatchers, not the collareds from yesterday, and northern wheatear. A blue rock thrush was on the promontory at the end of the beach, and a hoopoe flew across, but disappeared into the scrub.

After breakfast we set off up the Kourtaliotiko gorge, pausing at the bottom to watch Griffon Vultures basking in the warming sunshine, waiting for the thermals to carry them away for a days foraging. Another blue rock thrush was singing from a rocky perch, and a splendid male stonechat sang an unusually long and varied song, both from a rock and in flight.

As the griffons started to drift away along the gorge, a different silhouette was seen – lammergeier! Long, paddle-shaped tail, narrower wings; unmistakable! It circled round, giving us all good views, with the sliver of a brand new moon seemingly just behind it. Suddenly the sky was full; a honey buzzard, together with alpine swifts, a long-legged buzzard, a common buzzard and a steppe buzzard, all picked out by Chris and separated by small but distinct characteristics. Apart from the resident common, all these buzzards were moving through to their more northern breeding grounds.

Further up the gorge we took the steps down to a small chapel at the bottom of the gorge by the river, pausing first to admire a handsome black-eared wheatear displaying, then finding several endemic plants on the way down; *Ricotia*, a tiny honesty relative, Cretan cyclamen, with its pure white flowers, and Mount Ida knapweed. We also saw how more palatable plants use spiny plants to give them protection from grazing animals – the tiny blue *Polygala venulosa* growing through spiny burnet. At the river a *Styrax*, or snowbell tree, was in full



bloom, gently scenting the air, and a Cretan festoon butterfly sped by.

The back road to Spili goes up into the hills in quite spectacular fashion; after a couple of stops, including a view over the Valley of the Giant Fennels, we dropped back down for lunch in Spili town. Several of us gathered at the long wall of fountains with our 'gyros', the local fast food, and were rewarded with greasy hands and a wood warbler in the holm oaks. A Cretan festoon flew by at a more leisurely speed, giving us a chance to see it properly.

Then it was off to the 'Bumps'. A deserted tavern on one side of the road and a small lay-by being vacated by two minibuses allowed us to park alongside a field studded with deep red *Tulipa doerfleri*. A careful crossing of a sturdy tree trunk across the stream, and a few paces further on was a hillock, quite rocky and covered in orchids! We gathered round as Chris began to identify them, more than 20 species in total, with particularly impressive displays of purple *Orchis boryi* and yellow few-flowered orchid. Presently we met another group, the leaders, John Akeroyd and Bob Gibbons being two of Chris's botanical heroes – he was mightily pleased to discover that he was also known by repute to them!

Carrying on round the mound we found several orchids trampled on and some snapped off undamaged – possibly picked. It seemed too good an opportunity not to look at them closely but being seen holding a severed orchid does make one feel like the guilty party! Eventually we made our way back to the vans, where a passer-by asked who our leader was. Naturally we directed him to Chris, where a discussion ensued regarding ways of putting in place adequate protection for this as yet unprotected, but magical place. Watch this space!

Back in Plakias a cool beer was enjoyed by some, while watching a kingfisher fishing off the rocks by the Gio-Ma taverna – the same bird was seen here regularly during the rest of the week.

Friday 20 April: Phaestos & Agia Triada

The road to Phaestos takes us through a variety of Cretan landscapes – alongside Mount Psiloritis, (the highest point on Crete by 20 metres!), through a large valley clothed in glass and polythene, and through the working town of Timbaki, eventually to Phaestos itself – the second most important Minoan site of Crete. The car park was full of coaches – Collin suggested that Honeyguide leaders should emulate the tour leaders' uniform – a tight green mini-dress and thigh boots!

After a cool drink we split up, some to look at the ruins while the rest of us made our way along a small road towards the Minoan summer palace of Agia Triada. A large metallic beetle lay on Chris's hand to be scrutinised, and the warmth of the day brought out butterflies – Bath white, Mediterranean skipper feeding on pitch trefoil, Lulworth skipper, common blue, painted lady and common meadow brown.

The slopes were clothed in beautiful pink *Convolvulus althaeoides*, red *Echium angustifolium* and *Ricinus*, the exotic looking castor oil plant, often used in British gardens as part of an annual tropical-style border. An adult ant-lion flapped weakly past, becoming perfectly camouflaged at rest vertically on plant stems. A lone chukar was heard proclaiming his territory, but just further on we encountered an 'orgy of chukars' as three chased each other round madly – one even leaping up a tree trunk in an attempt to evade an over-amorous suitor! The butterflies kept coming; swallowtail and scarce swallowtail, and a tiny white was eventually identified as a male mountain small white.

The drivers returned to pick up vans and culture vultures, and, pausing to show them the chukar, we saw a hoopoe, heard crested lark song and located a singing short-toed lark –

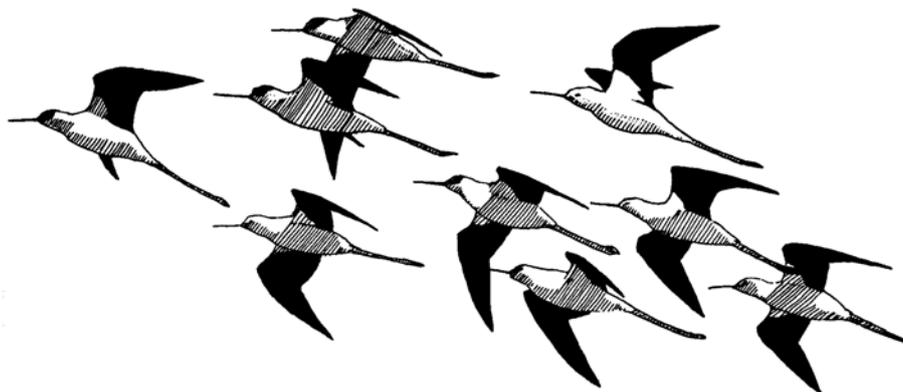
flying 'bat-like' in its display. We passed the others, who elected to carry on walking to the lunch stop, where we admired Cretan ebony growing all over the hillsides.

After lunch, a walk downhill towards the Geropotamus river was at first uneventful apart from eastern tongue-orchid and yellow horned-poppy on the road verges, then the afternoon came alive! Hoopoe, Cetti's warbler, spotted flycatcher, stonechats (including a couple of magnificent white-rumped males, perhaps the eastern race *variegata*, sometimes considered part of a second species, the Siberian stonechat) a shrubby thyme covered in 20 or more huge hornets, two bee-eaters flew over, and that was all before we found the wagtails – four subspecies of yellow wagtail all seen together in a field – blue-headed, ashy-headed, grey-headed and black-headed, each one ultimately heading for a different breeding destination. A green sandpiper in the same dry field initially confused us, but set us hoping for more waders, until we reached the river, and found it completely dried up, all abstracted further upstream for irrigation.

Our meeting tonight began with the popping of champagne corks – served flamboyantly by George – to celebrate both Helen's birthday today and in anticipation of Betty's tomorrow. The fizz lubricated Chris quite nicely resulting in a stimulating and remarkably coherent lecture on species evolution, triggered by memories of the wagtails and stonechats from earlier! And all this before another lovely taverna meal.

Saturday 21 April: Souda, Moni Preveli & free half day

Two minibuses set off early to the headland at Damnoni. It was a barren rocky landscape, silent in the calm windless morning, where a silky goat risked life and limb while nonchalantly browsing on the sheer cliff edge. A black-eared wheatear was seen well, but the morning was quiet, so we drove down to the seafront. Later in the season this is the local naturist beach (watch the spelling there!) but today it was just us – and 11 black-winged stilts! They were spotted by Peter, flying in off the sea, round the bay a couple of times looking for somewhere safe to land, but eventually flew off into a more secluded bay further on.



Several of the group elected to turn today's 'half-day' into a full day of rest and relaxation in Plakias, while the rest of us drove west to Souda, to see a real speciality, the near-endemic Cretan palm. A dense, often branched palm, it provided perfect cover for Cetti's warblers, who duly shouted at us from within. A woodchat shrike posed strikingly against the hillside, and Elke found 'a serious beetle' a large longhorn *Agapanthia villosoviridescens*. In addition to spent spikes of tongue orchid we added a new orchid to the list - *Orchis coriophora* ssp. *fragrans*, the bug orchid.

Driving back through Plakias and on towards Preveli, we paused alongside a well-vegetated river, where up to 10 golden orioles were seen well, with at least one singing its full and melodic song. The wind had increased noticeably since earlier, and a marsh harrier was

struggling northwards, keeping low over the hillside to make headway. Lammergeier was here too, possibly nesting in the blind gorge close by.

We set off again, straight on up the road towards the headland, pausing at the war memorial with its touching inscription, a tribute to the part played by the monks in the Resistance and a celebration of Peace. In the now strong wind, birds were keeping low, but we located the jangling keys of a corn bunting, and a chukar proclaimed his territory.

Returning to the attractive Venetian bridge, there was time for a walk before lunch at the taverna there. The wind was now creating swirling dust storms, but we added several new plants here: common myrtle, rose garlic, and smilax, a thorny climber which had all but engulfed a tall conifer. We pressed on to a bridge downstream, to be rewarded with Balkan terrapins and freshwater crabs, both seen well in the clear water, together with several examples of the local form of banded demoiselle, looking very similar to our beautiful demoiselle.

While we wandered happily back for lunch, David and Lesley hurried back hoping to find one of David's new high-tech, but light and delicate, hearing aids. Maureen had noticed the safety wire protruding slightly out of David's ear at the monastery, possibly dislodged by the wind, so after a delicious lunch, eaten to the strains of tree frog and Cretan water frogs, Chris's bus returned to the monastery car park to continue the search (sadly to no avail), while the rest returned to Plakias for an afternoon of leisure.

Only a couple of hardy souls braved the windy conditions for the 4pm dune walk. Two black-winged stilts were on the water's edge, a yellow crab-spider was sitting on the endemic *Muscari spreitzenhoferi*, and a fully adult nosed grasshopper contrasted with the two smaller ones seen before. Add to that the carpets of yellow sea medick and pink *Silene colorata*, and you have a feast of biodiversity on our very doorstep.

The leaders, enjoying an early evening drink at the Gio-Ma were surprised by a glossy ibis, which circled the bay trying to gain height in the strong wind, and was off again. Although the starters at tonight's taverna, the Kri-kri, were most delicious, our main courses were served sporadically, Marilyn's not at all, and the atmosphere was spoiled. We hoped to have more success with real living Kri-kri tomorrow.

Sunday 22 April: Agia Reservoir & Omalos Plateau

The day began clear, sunny and warm, and the early birders heard two great reed warblers singing before breakfast. We set off promptly for the long drive to Agia Reservoir. The clouds were building and it was *very* windy on our arrival. Bird-life was consequently sparse - yellow-legged gull, coot, moorhen, and a couple of marsh harriers playing on the wind. A wood sandpiper was seen well on the near edge of the reservoir, and a squacco heron battled into the wind. A little crane dashed from the concrete edge into a clump of vegetation, not to be seen again, and a dice snake was seen swimming along the water's edge.

Due to the unpleasant conditions, we decided to carry on up to the Omalos Plateau for lunch and hopefully some shelter from the wind, but not before rescuing a tiny terrapin which was playing 'chicken' on the road. So began the long winding drive up: the road was good, the hairpins tight, but the views (for those who dared to look!) were amazing! We finally dropped down onto the Omalos plateau, a flat, stony plain surrounded on all sides by mountains, used for grazing sheep, but studded with bright pink tulip flowers and crown anemones.

We continued to the taverna which clings to the rocks at the very top of the Samaria gorge, and enjoyed lunch, all the while scanning the rocky slopes for the elusive kri-kri. We were shown where one had been seen earlier that morning, but couldn't relocate it. The gorge itself

begins here with a long flight of steps cut into the rock, and Elke (a fit young thing!) said on a previous visit it had taken her 7_ hours to walk down! Despite the lammergeier overhead, we turned our attention to the plants underfoot, including aubrieta (just as in many of our gardens back home), the endemic mouse-eared chickweed *Cerastium scaposum*, and the very spiny *Berberis cretica*, just springing into leaf after the recent retreat of winter.

Driving leisurely back across the plateau, coach-loads of locals were harvesting something from the ground into carrier bags: at first we thought tulip bulbs or snails, but some of us had enjoyed 'wild green' pies for lunch, and what they were picking looked like thistle rosettes, but the mystery was not solved. The birds were interesting here – a tree pipit singing so beautifully from a tree that Chris mistook it for more than a moment for a woodlark, whinchat, garden warbler, Sardinian warbler, common redstart and whitethroat, along with several subspecies of yellow wagtail.

As the wind had eased a little, we returned to the reservoir. A little bittern flew past the group and into reeds, and many of us eventually had good views of both this and little crane. Ferruginous duck was added to the list here, and a tree-frog in the giant reeds was admired at close range by all, but soon it was time to head homeward, with plenty of time for forty winks in the back!

Monday 23 April: Frangocastello

The fierce north wind, the *meltemi*, more usually a feature of the late summer, disturbed many of us overnight, rattling shutters and banging doors, and even Anne- Marie pronounced the days forecast as 'stormy'. Nevertheless we set off westwards once more, along a spectacular road snaking along the cliff edge, over a very narrow bridge in the village of Rodakino, and pausing to admire a field of the deepest, most stunning blue lupins. Just before Frangocastello, we turned left off the road, down a track towards the sea. As in previous years the tap was dripping, but not for the benefit of wildlife – the farmer opened the gate and his sheep all had a good drink in the resulting large puddle.

The wind was howling, but we all sniffed a dragon arum in full flower – it was, unlike the specimens some of us had grown in the garden at home, disgusting! Red-rumped swallows and other hirundines flew in low off the sea, struggling northwards, and we abandoned a walk at Frangocastello itself, eating our lunch in any shelter we could find. By way of recompense, Honeyguide treated us all to a coffee in the taverna there; although the roof sounded none too safe at least we were out of the wind, and we were surprised to find two tiny terrapins in the water feature.

On health and safety grounds, we decided to abort the mission to Imbros; sheer drops, hairpin bends and storm-force winds do not sit comfortably together. Retracing our steps, we called at a beach near Rodakino, and watched the wind whip up the sea into clouds and sprites. The geology here told the tale of Crete's turbulent past; the rocks twisted and folded back on themselves, intrusions of other rocks had forced their way in between, then weathering had created caves and gullies.

Sellia, a small village, had attracted our attention this morning on the way through, so we stopped there on our return. The 'Art in Nature' gallery was compelling – pottery, driftwood sculptures and other artefacts beautifully displayed in the cool, white space. Almost everyone



indulged in a little retail therapy, and a long line of bright red carrier bags trooped back to the buses.

Chris knew the back road to Plakias, so after allowing various tractors and delivery vans to pass, we set off down. A large land crab thanked Chris for rescuing it from the wheels of a truck by pinching him most soundly! We all had a good look at this large and furious beast, before setting him safely on the verge (hopefully on the side he wanted to be!). And so to our last meal of the holiday, by popular demand, enjoyed out of the wind at Mousses, where everyone (apart from Elke, who sadly had already returned home) recounted their favourite bits of the holiday:

Collin – lammergeier

Marilyn – collared flycatcher and black-eared wheatear

Graham – Spili Bumps

Helen – her birthday made special, and the confiding kingfisher

Peter – Spili Bumps, for the number and variety of orchids

Lucy – the sheer number and coverage of wild flowers, and the tree frog at the reservoir

Betty – ‘Les Fleurs’ and the companionship of the group

Dave – the early morning falls of migrants, and Spili Bumps

Lesley – Spili Bumps and lammergeier

Chris – lammergeier, and, he said, for a non-flower person, Spili Bumps

David – seeing the four sub-species of yellow wagtail

Margaret – Spili Bumps, alpine swifts and ‘our driver, Maureen, for her perceptive comments and amazing eye’

Chris – his encounter with the land crab, and the crab spider on the dunes

Maureen – the Art in Nature gallery, alpine swifts, lammergeier, golden oriole and Cretan ebony.

Tuesday 24 April: Kourtaliatiko Gorge and the way home

Another night disturbed by the wind, and only the two leaders and Peter ventured out early, to be treated to yet more bird migration, including an isabelline wheatear on Plakias beach.

Today’s itinerary simply mentioned travel, but the coach was not arriving until mid-afternoon, so we set off again up the Kourtaliatiko Gorge, this time driving right through, stopping at the top to walk back down into the gorge to admire the lovely hanging mullein. By the vans we found more tongue orchids and a single spike of Cretan bee orchid. One griffon was airborne in spite of the strong and gusty wind, and a night heron flapped off up river. Collin called out ‘oriole!’ – it promptly disappeared into a tree, and in spite of us all looking from all sides, it was not seen again until it eventually flew off. One last stop halfway down the gorge – we really couldn’t tear ourselves away – gave us our last new bird of the trip – two Bonelli’s eagles came over the ridge, and landed in trees. We were able to get one in the ‘scope for most people to see, until it flew into a hidden cleft, possibly its nest site.



Time was ticking away fast – time to get back for the last bits of packing and to eat one final Greek salad. All too soon the coach was waiting, but before we left Crete we had one more task to do: Michaelis from HOS found us in the long check-in queue, and Chris presented him with Honeyguide’s donation of £403 towards their vital conservation work, making a total of more than £6,000 since our first holiday there in 1995. Green tourism in action!

BIRDS

Little grebe	20+ Agia Reservoir
Shag	1 at Plakias, Mediterranean race
Little bittern	1 seen well at Agia Reservoir
Night heron	1 over Plakias; 1 at rest at Agia Reservoir; 1 in upper Kourtaliatiko Gorge
Squacco heron	singles at Plakias, Agia Reservoir
Little egret	one or two birds at Plakias river most of the week
Great white egret	1 flying over Plakias Bay
Grey heron	singles flying past Plakias
Purple heron	1 in flight over Plakias; another by Venetian bridge at Moni Preveli
Glossy ibis	1 in off the sea at Plakias
Garganey	small flocks of up to 15 in Plakias Bay
Tufted duck	1 at Agia Reservoir
Pochard	1 at Agia Reservoir
Ferruginous duck	3 at Agia Reservoir
Honey buzzard	migrating individuals at Plakias and Kourtaliatiko Gorge
Lammergeier	2 sub-adults Kourtaliatiko Gorge; 1 adult on the way to Moni Preveli; 1 adult Samaria Gorge
Griffon vulture	seen regularly over hills; birds at nest holes Kourtaliotiko Gorge
Marsh harrier	singles at Plakias, Damnoni, Moni Preveli and Agia Reservoir
Bonelli's eagle	a pair in the Kourtaliotiko Gorge
Golden eagle	1 seen behind Plakias
Buzzard	common and widespread; 1 showing characteristics of steppe buzzard flying in up the Kourtaliotiko Gorge
Long-legged buzzard	1 flying in up the Kourtaliotiko Gorge, within a few minutes of both steppe and honey buzzards
Kestrel	common and widespread
Red-footed falcon	1 at Agia Triada
Hobby	1 behind Plakias
Eleonora's falcon	1, almost certainly this species, over the Old Mill, Plakias
Peregrine	1 on the south coast, near Rodakino
Chukar	Agia Triada (including 4 displaying); Moni Preveli; Omalos
Little crane	several at Agia Reservoir
Moorhen	several at Agia Reservoir; 1 in Plakias river
Coot	many at Agia Reservoir
Black-winged stilt	11 at Damnoni; 2 on Plakias beach
Little ringed plover	Plakias; Damnoni; Frangocastello
Wood sandpiper	singles at Plakias, Agia Triada; Agia Reservoir; Frangocastello
Green sandpiper	1 on a dry field at Agia Triada
Common sandpiper	singles and groups of up to 8 along the coast at Plakias and elsewhere
Ruff	1 at Plakias river
Little stint	up to 2 at Plakias river
Temminck's stint	1 at Agia Reservoir
Yellow-legged gull	common and widespread
Lesser black-backed gull	1 at Frangocastello
Rock dove	several apparently wild birds in the gorges; feral pigeons everywhere
Wood pigeon	widespread in small numbers
Collared dove	small numbers in many towns and villages
Turtle dove	singles and small flocks flying through
Cuckoo	1 at Plakias
Swift	seen in small numbers most days
Alpine swift	seen most days, in groups of up to 8;
Kingfisher	1 at Plakias, seen very regularly around the harbour
Bee-eater	1 over Plakias; 2 at Agia Triada
Hoopoe	singles at Plakias and Agia Triada

Short-toed lark	singles at Phaistos and Damnoni
Crested lark	common and widespread
Woodlark	Spili, Agia Triada and Omalos
Sand martin	seen regularly in periods of hirundine movement
Crag martin	Plakias, and in all the gorges
Swallow	many flocks passing through
Red-rumped swallow	1 at Agia Reservoir; several groups passing through at Frangocastello and Damnoni
House martin	many flocks passing through
Tree pipit	migrating individuals seen everywhere
Tawny pipit	1 at Frangocastello
Yellow wagtail	blue-headed, black-headed, grey-headed and ashy-headed males together in one group at Agia Triada; several other blue- and black-headed (and unspecified) elsewhere; female black-headed at Agia Reservoir
White & pied wagtail	white widespread; pied at river mouth at Plakias, which seems to be a regular spot for this subspecies
Grey wagtail	1 by the Venetian bridge at Moni Prevelli
Wren	small numbers in the gorges
Nightingale	small numbers of migrants in several places
Redstart	1 at Omalos
Whinchat	abundant throughout the island, especially early and late in the week, often in groups of up to 10 birds
Stonechat	small numbers in most places, including several newly-fledged broods; 2-3 individuals showing features of race <i>variegata</i> at Agia Triada
Wheatear	small numbers moving through
Isabelline wheatear	1 on Plakias beach
Black-eared wheatear	pairs in the gorges, Plakias, and several other coastal locations
Blue rock thrush	pairs in the gorges, Moni Prevelli, Omalos, Agia Triada
Blackbird	common and widespread
Cetti's warbler	heard regularly in most sites
Sedge warbler	Plakias, Souda and Agia Reservoir
Reed warbler	Plakias, including one attracted to taverna lights
Great reed warbler	2-3 at Plakias, 1 at Damnoni
Sardinian warbler	common and widespread
Blackcap	small numbers seen and heard in several places
Whitethroat	Plakias, Moni Prevelli, Omalos and Agia Triada
Garden warbler	1 at Omalos
Wood warbler	singles at Kourtaliatiko Gorge, Spili and Plakias
Willow warbler	1 at Plakias
Spotted flycatcher	scattered in most sites
Pied flycatcher	small numbers at several sites, males and females in almost equal numbers; several attracted to taverna lights
Collared flycatcher	the most common flycatcher, especially early in the week around Plakias; mostly males
Blue tit	common and widespread
Great tit	common and widespread
Golden oriole	excellent views at Moni Prevelli; also at the top of Kourtaliotiko Gorge
Woodchat shrike	common and widespread early in the week; many fewer later on distant views at Samaria Gorge
Chough	common in the gorges
Jackdaw	common and widespread
Hooded crow	seen in every gorge and often during journeys
Raven	common and widespread
Italian sparrow	Plakias – a few birds showing the true characters of this species
House sparrow	common and widespread
Chaffinch	common and widespread
Greenfinch	common and widespread
Goldfinch	common and widespread

Serin	surprisingly scarce, just a few seen and heard, often while travelling
Linnet	a few birds on several days, especially at high altitude
Cirl bunting	above Kotsiphou and Kourtaliatiko Gorges; Omalos
Ortolan bunting	a fine male above the Kotsiphou Gorge
Corn bunting	few in the lowlands, but common on the higher plateau areas

PLANTS

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 or near-endemic to Crete

Introduced and not native to Crete and cultivated or planted species

FERNS AND ALLIES

<i>Ceterach officinarum</i>	Rustyback Fern
<i>Equisetum ramosissimum</i>	
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken
<i>Selaginella denticulata</i>	Mediterranean Club-moss

CONIFERS

Cupressaceae - Cypress Family

<i>Cupressus sempervirens horizontalis</i>	Cypress
<i>C. sempervirens sempervirens</i>	Funeral Cypress
<i>Juniperus oxycedrus ssp. macrocarpa</i>	

Ephedraceae – Joint Pine Family

Ephedra distachya

Pinaceae - Pine Family

# <i>Araucaria araucana</i>	Norfolk Island Pine
<i>Pinus brutia</i>	

FLOWERING PLANTS

Dicotyledons

Aceraceae - Maple Family

Acer sempervirens

Aizoaceae - Mezembryanthemum Family

# <i>Carpobrotus edulis</i>	Hottentot Fig
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Anacardiaceae - Pistachio Family

<i>Pistacia lentiscus</i>	Mastic Tree
<i>P. terebinthus</i>	Turpentine Tree

Apiaceae - Carrot Family

<i>Crithmum maritimum</i>	Rock Samphire
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Wild Carrot
<i>Eryngium campestre</i>	Field Eryngo
<i>Ferula communis</i>	Giant Fennel
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Fennel

<i>Lagoecia cuminoides</i>	
<i>Oenanthe globulosa (pimpinelloides)</i>	Mediterranean Water-dropwort
<i>Pseudorlaya pumila</i>	
<i>Scaligera napiformis</i>	
<i>Scandix australis</i>	
<i>S. pecten-veneris</i>	Shepherd's Needle
<i>Smyrniium perfoliatum</i>	Perfoliate Alexanders
<i>Tordylium apulum</i>	Mediterranean Hartwort
Apocynaceae - Oleander Family	
<i>Nerium oleander</i>	Oleander
Araliaceae - Ivy Family	
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy
Asteraceae - Daisy Family	
<i>Anthemis chia</i>	
<i>Anthemis rigida ssp. rigida</i>	Rayless Chamomile
<i>Asteriscus (Pallenis) spinosus</i>	
<i>Bellis annua</i>	Annual Daisy
<i>Bubonium (Astericus) aquaticum</i>	Yellow Sea Aster
<i>Calendula arvensis</i>	Field Marigold
* <i>Centaurea idaea</i>	
* <i>C. raphanina</i>	
<i>Chrysanthemum coronarium</i>	Crown Daisy
<i>Chrysanthemum segetum</i>	Corn Marigold
* <i>Crepis cretica</i>	
<i>Crupina crupinastrum</i>	
<i>Dittrichia viscosa</i>	
<i>Echinops spinosissimus</i>	
<i>Filago pyramidata</i>	Broad-leaved Cudweed
<i>Galactites tomentosa</i>	Mediterranean Thistle
<i>Geropogon (Tragopogon) hybridus</i>	
<i>Helichrysum (stoechas ssp.) barrelieri</i>	Curry-plant
<i>Leontodon tuberosus</i>	
<i>Notobasis syriaca</i>	
* <i>Onopordum bracteatum ssp. creticum</i>	
<i>Phagnalon graecum</i>	Shrubby Cudweed
<i>Picnomon acarna</i>	
<i>Ptilostemon chamaepeuce</i>	
<i>Reichardia picroides</i>	
<i>Rhagadiolus stellatus</i>	
<i>Scorzonera cretica</i>	Cretan Viper's-grass
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Groundsel
<i>Silybum marianum</i>	Milk Thistle
<i>Tolpis barbata</i>	
<i>Tragopogon sinuatus (porrifolius)</i>	Salsify
<i>Tyrimnus leucographus</i>	
Berberidaceae - Barberry Family	
<i>Berberis cretica</i>	
Boraginaceae - Borage Family	
<i>Anchusa italica (azurea)</i>	Large Blue Alkanet
<i>Borago officinalis</i>	Borage
<i>Cerintho major</i>	Honeywort
<i>Cynoglossum creticum</i>	Blue Hound's-tongue
<i>Echium angustifolium</i>	Narrow-leaved Bugloss
<i>E. italicum</i>	Pale Bugloss
<i>E. plantagineum</i>	Purple Viper's-bugloss

<i>Onosma graecum</i>	Golden-drops
Brassicaceae - Cabbage Family	
<i>Aethionema saxatile creticum</i>	Burnt Candytuft
<i>Arabis verna</i>	Spring Rock-cress
<i>Aubrieta deltoidea</i>	Aubrieta
<i>Biscutella didyma</i>	Buckler Mustard
<i>Brassica nigra</i>	Black Mustard
<i>Cakile maritima</i>	Sea-rocket
<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	Shepherd's-purse
<i>Erophila verna</i>	Whitlow-grass
<i>Eruca sativa</i>	
* <i>Erysimum raulinii</i>	
<i>Hirschfeldia incana</i>	Hoary Mustard
* <i>Ricotia cretica</i>	Ricotia
<i>Sinapis arvensis</i>	Charlock
Cactaceae - Cactus Family	
# <i>Opuntia ficus-barbarica</i> (<i>O. ficus-indica</i>)	Prickly Pear
Campanulaceae - Bellflower Family	
* <i>Petromarula pinnata</i>	Cretan Wall Lettuce
* <i>Solenopsis minuta</i> ssp. <i>annua</i> (<i>Laurentia gasparrinii</i>)	
Caryophyllaceae - Pink Family	
<i>Cerastium comatum</i>	
* <i>C. scaposum</i>	
<i>Petrorhagia velutina</i> (<i>Kohlrauschia velutina</i>)	
<i>Silene bellidifolia</i>	
<i>S. colorata</i>	
<i>S. gallica</i>	Small-flowered Catchfly
Cistaceae - Rockrose Family	
<i>Cistus (incanus</i> ssp.) <i>creticus</i>	Cretan Cistus
<i>C. monspeliensis</i>	
<i>C. salvifolius</i>	Sage-Leaved Cistus
Clusiaceae – St John's-wort Family	
<i>Hypericum empetrifolium</i> ssp. <i>empetrifolium</i>	Shrubby St. John's-wort
Convolvulaceae - Bindweed Family	
<i>Convolvulus althaeoides</i>	Mallow-leaved Bindweed
Crassulaceae - Stonecrop Family	
* <i>Sedum praesidis</i>	
<i>Umbilicus horizontalis</i>	
<i>U. parviflorus</i>	Small-Flowered Navelwort
Dipsacaceae - Scabious Family	
<i>Knautia dipsacifolia</i>	
<i>Scabiosa maritima</i>	
Ericaceae - Heather Family	
<i>Erica arborea</i>	Tree-heath
Euphorbiaceae - Spurge Family	
<i>Euphorbia acanthothamnus</i>	Greek Spiny Spurge
<i>E. characias</i>	Mediterranean Spurge
<i>E. dendroides</i>	Tree Spurge
<i>E. helioscopia</i>	Sun Spurge

E. paralias
Ricinus communis
Mercurialis annua

Sea Spurge
Castor Oil Plant
Annual Mercury

Fabaceae - Pea Family

Acacia spp.
Anagyris foetida
Anthyllus hermanniae
Anthyllus vulneraria ssp. *rubriflora*
Astragalus angustifolius
Bituminaria (Psoralea) bituminosa
Calicotome villosa
Cercis siliquastrum
Ceratonia siliqua
* *Ebenus cretica*
Genista acanthoclada
Hymenocarpus circinnatus
Lathyrus setifolius
Lotus halophilus
Lupinus micranthus
Medicago arabica
 M. marina
 M. orbicularis
Melilotus sulcatus
Onobrychis aequidentata
 O. caput-galli
Ononis reclinata
Robina pseudoacacia
Securigera (Coronilla) cretica
 S. securidaca
Spartium junceum
Tetragonolobus purpureus
Trifolium campestre
 T. nigrescens
 T. resupinatum
 T. stellatum
 T. spumosum
 T. uniflorum
Trigonella balansae
Tripodion (Anthyllis) tetraphyllum
Vicia bithynica
 V. hybrida
 V. villosa

Mimosa

Red Kidney Vetch

Pitch Trefoil
Hairy Thorny Broom
Judas Tree
Carob Tree
Shrubby Sainfoin (Cretan Ebony)

Disk Trefoil

Hairy Lupin
Spotted Medick
Sea Medick
Large Disk Medick

Cock's-comb Sainfoin
Small Rest-harrow
False acacia
Cretan Crown Vetch

Spanish Broom
Asparagus Pea
Hop Trefoil

Reversed Clover
Starry Clover

One-Flowered Clover

Bladder Vetch
Bithynian Vetch
Hairy Yellow Vetchling
Fodder Vetch

Fagaceae - Oak Family

Quercus coccifera

Kermes Oak

Gentianaceae - Gentian Family

Blackstonia perfoliata
Centaurium pulchellum

Yellow-wort
Lesser Centaury

Geraniaceae - Geranium Family

Erodium cicutarium
Geranium dissectum
 G. molle
 G. purpureum
 G. rotundifolium

Common Stork's-bill
Cut-leaved Crane's-bill
Dove's-foot Crane's-bill
Little Robin
Round-leaved Crane's-bill

Lamiaceae - Mint Family

Coridothymus (Thymus) capitatus

Shrubby Thyme

<i>Lamium amplexicaule</i>	Henbit Dead-nettle
<i>Lavandula stoechas</i>	French Lavender
<i>Marrubium vulgare</i>	White Horehound
<i>Phlomis fruticosa</i>	Jerusalem Sage
<i>Prasium majus</i>	
<i>Salvia fruticosa</i>	Shrubby Sage
<i>S. verbenaca</i>	Wild Clary
<i>S. viridis</i>	
<i>Satureja(Micromeria) nervosa</i>	
<i>S. thymbra</i>	Savory
<i>Sideritis curvidens</i>	
<i>Stachys cretica</i>	
* <i>Scutellaria sieberi</i>	
Linaceae - Flax Family	
<i>Linum arboreum</i>	Tree Flax
<i>L. bienne</i>	Pale Flax
<i>L. strictum</i>	
Lythraceae - Loosestrife Family	
<i>Lythrum junceum</i>	
Malvaceae - Mallow Family	
<i>Lavatera cretica</i>	Lesser Tree Mallow
<i>Malva cretica</i>	
<i>M. parviflora</i>	Small-flowered Mallow
<i>M. sylvestris</i>	Common Mallow
Moraceae - Fig Family	
<i>Ficus carica</i>	Fig
Myrtaceae - Myrtle Family	
<i>Myrtus communis</i>	Common Myrtle
Oleaceae - Olive Family	
# <i>Jasminum fruticans</i>	Wild Jasmine
<i>Olea europaea</i>	Olive
Orobanchaceae - Broomrape Family	
<i>Orobanche lavandulacea</i>	
<i>O. pubescens</i>	
<i>O. ramosa</i>	Branched Broomrape
Oxalidaceae - Sorrel Family	
# <i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i>	Bermuda Buttercup
Papaveraceae - Poppy Family	
<i>Glaucium flavum</i>	Yellow Horned-poppy
<i>Papaver purpureomarginatum</i>	
<i>P. rhoeas</i>	Common Poppy
Plantaginaceae - Plantain Family	
<i>Plantago afra</i>	
<i>P. bellardii</i>	
<i>P. lagopus</i>	
<i>P. lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain
Platanaceae - PlaneFamily	
<i>Platanus orientalis</i>	Oriental Plane

Polygalaceae - Milkwort Family

Polygala venulosa

Eastern Milkwort

Polygonaceae - Dock Family

Rumex bucephalophorus

Primulaceae - Primrose Family

Anagallis arvensis

Scarlet Pimpernel

**Cyclamen creticum*

Cretan Cyclamen

Ranunculaceae - Buttercup Family

Anemone coronaria

Crown Anemone

A. hortensis ssp. *heldreichii*

Clematis cirrhosa

Maiden's Bower

Nigella damascena

Love-in-a-mist

Ranunculus asiaticus

Turban Buttercup

R. peltatus ssp. *fucooides*

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

Pyrus spinosa

Almond-leaved Pear

Rubus sanctus

Bramble

Sarcopterium spinosum

Thorny Burnet

Rubiaceae - Bedstraw Family

Galium aparine

Cleavers

Valantia hispida

Rutaceae - Rue Family

Citrus limon

Lemon

Citrus sinensis

Orange

Salicaceae - Willow Family

#*Populus nigra*

Black Poplar

Santalaceae- Sandalwood family

Osyris alba

Osyris

Saxifragaceae – Saxifrage Family

Saxifraga chrysosplenifolia

Scrophulariaceae - Figwort Family

Bellardia trixago

Bellardia

Linaria pelisseriana

Jersey Toadflax

Parentucellia latifolia

P. viscosa

Yellow Bartsia

Scrophularia lucida

Shining Figwort

* *Verbascum arcturus*

Hanging Mullein

V. macrurum

V. sinuatum

V. spinosum

Solanaceae - Nightshade Family <i>Hyoscyamus albus</i> # <i>Nicotiana glauca</i>	White Henbane
Styracaceae - Storax Family <i>Styrax officinalis</i>	Storax
Tamaricaceae - Tamarisk Family <i>Tamarix smyrnensis</i>	Tamarisk
Thymelaeaceae - Daphne Family <i>Daphne sericea</i> <i>Thymelaea hirsuta</i>	
Ulmaceae - Elm Family <i>Ulmus minor</i>	Small-leaved Elm
Valerianaceae - Valerian Family * <i>Valeriana asarifolia</i> <i>Valerianella coronata</i> <i>V. discoidea</i>	Cretan Valerian
Verbenaceae - Vervain Family <i>Verbena officinalis</i> <i>Vitex agnus-castus</i>	Vervain Chaste-tree
Vitaceae - Vine Family <i>Vitis vinifera</i>	Grape Vine
Monocotyledons	
Agavaceae - Agave Family # <i>Agave americana</i>	Century Plant
Amaryllidaceae - Daffodil Family <i>Narcissus tazetta</i> <i>Pancratium maritimum</i>	Sea Daffodil
Araceae - Arum Family <i>Arisarum vulgare</i> <i>Arum concinatum</i> <i>A. creticum</i> <i>Dracunculus vulgaris</i>	Friar's Cowl Cretan Arum Dragon Arum
Areaceae – Palm Family # <i>Phoenix canariensis</i> <i>P. theophrasti</i>	Date Palm Cretan Palm
Cyperaceae - Sedge Family <i>Cladium mariscus</i> <i>Schoenus nigricans</i>	Saw-sedge Black Bog-rush
Iridaceae - Iris Family <i>Gladiolus italicus</i> <i>Gynandriris sisyrrinchium</i> * <i>Iris cretensis</i> <i>Iris pseudocorus</i>	Field Gladiolus Barbary Nut Yellow Flag

Liliaceae - Lily Family

<i>Allium nigrum</i>	
<i>A. roseum</i>	Rose Garlic
<i>Asphodeline lutea</i>	Yellow Asphodel
<i>Asphodelus ramosus (aestivus)</i>	Common Asphodel
<i>Charybdis (Drimia, Urginea) maritima</i>	Sea Squill
<i>Gagea graeca</i>	
<i>Muscari comosum</i>	Tassel Hyacinth
* <i>M. spreitzenhoferi</i>	
<i>Ornithogalum exscapum</i>	
<i>O. narbonense</i>	
<i>Smilax aspera</i>	Common Smilax
* <i>Tulipa bakeri</i>	
* <i>T. doerfleri</i>	
<i>T. saxatilis</i>	

Orchidaceae - Orchid Family

<i>Aceras (or Orchis) anthropophorum</i>	Man Orchid
<i>Neotinea maculata</i>	Dense-flowered Orchid
<i>Ophrys apifera</i>	Bee Orchid
<i>O. bombyliflora</i>	Bumblebee Orchid
* <i>O. cretica ariadne</i>	Cretan Bee Orchid
<i>O. episcopalis</i>	Bishop's Orchid
<i>O. fleischmannii</i>	Fleischmann's Orchid
<i>O. (scolopax) heldreichii</i>	Marengo Orchid
* <i>O. fusca creberrima</i>	
<i>O. iricolor</i>	Rainbow Orchid
<i>O. phryganae</i>	Phrygana Orchid
<i>O. (sphegodes) mammosa</i>	Mammose Orchid
<i>O. sphegodes cretensis</i>	Early spider orchid
<i>O. tentredinifera</i>	Sawfly Orchid
<i>Orchis boryi</i>	
<i>O. collina</i>	Hill Orchid
<i>O. (coriophora) fragrans</i>	Bug Orchid
<i>O. italica</i>	Naked Man Orchid
<i>O. lactea</i>	Milky Orchid
<i>O. laxiflora</i>	Loose-flowered Orchid
<i>O. (provincialis) pauciflora</i>	Few-flowered Orchid
<i>O. quadripunctata</i>	Four-spotted Orchid
<i>Serapias bergonii</i>	
<i>S. (vomeraea) orientalis</i>	Eastern Tongue-orchid
<i>S. parviflora</i>	Small Tongue-orchid

Poaceae - Grass Family

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

Poseidoniaceae – Sea-grass family

Poseidonia oceanica

Zosteraceae – Eel-grass Family

Zostera marina

BUTTERFLIES

Swallowtail
Scarce Swallowtail
Cretan Festoon
Large White
Small White
Mountain Small White
Bath White
Wood White
Clouded Yellow
Painted Lady
Red Admiral



Southern Speckled Wood
Meadow Brown
Cretan Small Heath
Balkan Marbled White
Wall Brown
Small Copper
African Grass Blue
Holly Blue
Common Blue
Lulworth Skipper
Mediterranean Skipper

OTHER INVERTEBRATES

Potamon potamios
Misumenia vatia
Acrida ungarica
Anacridium aegyptiacum
Crocothemis erythraea
Anax parthenope
Calopteryx splendens cretensis
Aquarius najas
Pyrhocoris apterus

Macroglossum stellatarum
Oxythyrea funesta
Buprestid sp.
Agapanthia villosoviridescens
Xylocopa violacea
Andrena fulva
Polistes sp.
Scolia flavifrons

Freshwater Crab
a yellow crab spider
Nosed Grasshopper
Egyptian Locust
Scarlet Darter
Lesser Emperor
Banded Demoiselle
a large pond-skater
Firebug
Antlion sp.
Hummingbird Hawk-moth
a black and white chafer
a large metallic-haired beetle
a longhorn beetle
Violet Carpenter-bee
Tawny Mining-bee
a paper-wasp
a hornet

AMPHIBIANS

Cretan Marsh Frog – seen at Moni Preveli

Common Tree Frog – heard in the gorges, and at Spili; seen at Agia Reservoir

REPTILES

Balkan (Stripe-necked) Terrapin – Plakias River; Moni Preveli; Agia Reservoir

Balkan Green Lizard

Erhard's Wall Lizard

Dice Snake – Agia Reservoir

MAMMALS

Bat sp.

Eastern Hedgehog

Badger

Stone Marten

Apart from an unspecified bat round one of the tavernas, all mammals were road casualties