

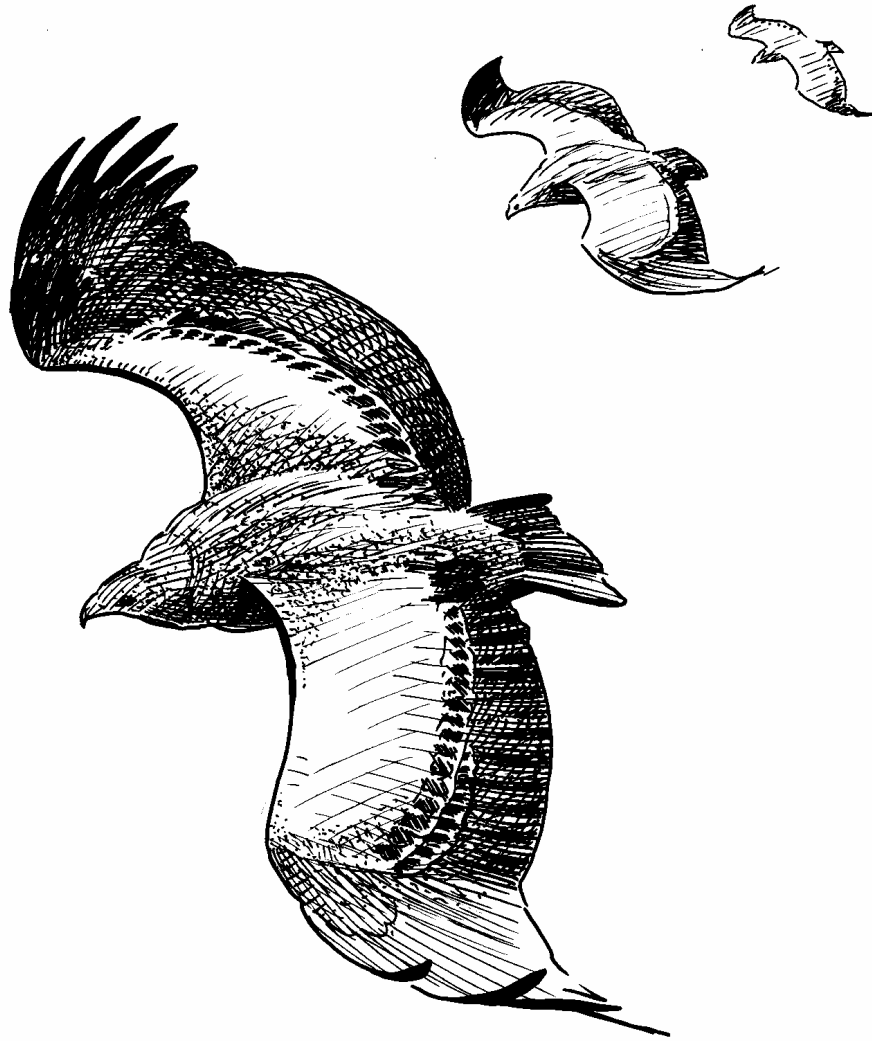
# *Honeyguide*

**WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS**

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**Crete**

**6 – 13 April 1999**

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**Holiday participants**

Mary Cunningham

Stephen Sutton  
Pamela Sutton

Gordon Webster  
Maureen Webster

Della Mascarenhas

Margot Holmes-Smith  
Neale Holmes-Smith

Richard Beswetherick  
Sandra Beswetherick

Ian Milne  
Jenn Milne

Kathleen Claxton  
Michael Claxton

Leaders

Mick Rebane  
Diana Mortimer

Report written by Mick Rebane and Diana Mortimer

Illustrations by Rob Hume. Cover: griffon vultures

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

**CRETE**  
**6 - 13 APRIL 1999**

Tuesday 6 April – Gatwick to Plakias

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

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

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

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

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

Wednesday 7 April - Mirthios

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

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

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

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

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

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

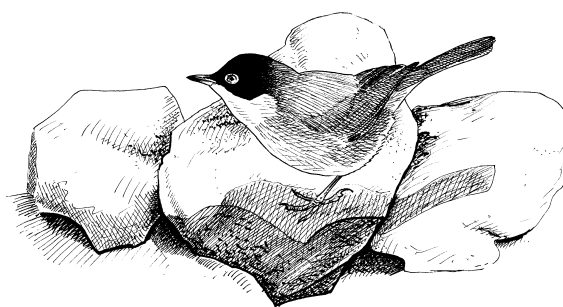
A new taverna tonight - Christos's - where we actually chose to eat outside. More Cretan specialities as we share our mezethes and listen to the waves of the Libyan Sea hit the Cretan shore. No-one knew that it was Diana's birthday (obviously apart from Mick and Diana that is!) until a large chocolate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

#### Thursday 8 April - Kourtalotiko Gorge, Kedros mountains behind Spili

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

### Friday 9 April – Phaestos and Ayia Triada

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Sunday 11 April - Moni Preveli

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

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

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

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

#### Monday 12 April - Frangokastello

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

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

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

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



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

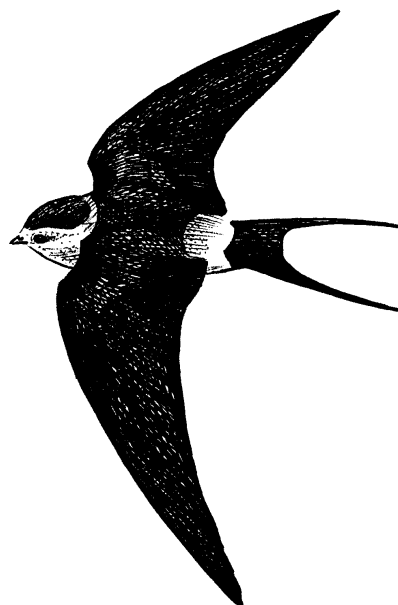
Returning home past a woodchat shrike and some tawny pipits on the flat plain of Frangokastello, Diana's bus - now heavily tuned to 'flattened fauna' - all shout out when passing a sadly squashed badger, but Mick's bus misses it for the second time that day. After some last minute shopping at Mirthios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

### Tuesday 13 April

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

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

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



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

**PLANT LIST**

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

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

\* Endemic to Crete

# Introduced and not native to Crete and cultivated or planted species

**1 PTERIDOPHYTES**

***Adiantaceae***

*Adiantum capillus-veneris* Maidenhair Fern

***Aspleniaceae***

*Ceterach officinarum* subsp. *officinarum* Rusty Back Fern

***Hypolepidaceae***

*Pteridium aquilinum* Bracken

***Selaginellaceae***

*Selaginella denticulata* Mediterranean Selaginella

**2 SPERMATOPHYTES**

**i) Gymnosperms**

***Cupressaceae* - Cypress Family**

*Cupressus sempervirens* forma. *horizontalis* Cypress

*C. sempervirens* forma. *sempervirens* Funeral Cypress

**ii) Angiosperms**

**a) Dicotyledons**

***Aizoaceae* - Aizoon Family**

# *Carpobrotus edulis* var. *rubescens* Hottentot Fig

***Anacardiaceae* - Pistacio Family**

*Pistacia lentiscus* Mastic Tree

***Apocynaceae* - Oleander Family**

*Nerium oleander* subsp. *oleander* Oleander

***Boraginaceae* - Borage Family**

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

*Anchusa variegata* Variegated Anchusa

*Borago officinalis* Borage

*Cynoglossum creticum* Blue Hound's Tongue

*Echium angustifolium* subsp. *angustifolium* Narrow-Leaved Bugloss

*Echium italicum* subsp. *biebersteinii* Pale Bugloss

*Echium plantagineum* Purple Viper's Bugloss

*Onosma erecta* Golden Drops

*Symphytum creticum* (*Procopia cretica*) Procopia

**Cactaceae - Cactus Family**

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

**Campanulaceae - Bellflower Family**

\* *Petromarula pinnata* Cretan Wall Lettuce

**Caprifoliaceae - Honeysuckle Family**

# *Sambucus nigra* Elderflower

**Caryophyllaceae - Pink Family**

*Cerastium scaposum*

*Petrorhagia velutina* (*Kohlruschia velutina*)

*Silene bellidifolia*

*Silene colorata* subsp. *colorata*

*Silene conica* Sand Catchfly

*Silene vulgaris* Bladder Campion

**Cistaceae - Rockrose Family**

*Cistus creticus* Cretan Cistus

*Cistus salvifolius* Sage-Leaved Cistus

*Fumana arabica* Arabian Fumana

*Fumana thymifolia* Thyme-Leaved Fumana

**Compositae - Daisy Family**

*Anthemis rigida* subsp. *rigida* Rayless Chamomile

*Asteriscus spinosa* (*Pallensis spinosa*)

*Bellis sylvestris* Southern Daisy

*Calendula arvensis* Field Marigold

*Chrysanthemum coronarium* var. *coronarium* Crown Daisy

*C. coronarium* var. *discolor* Crown Daisy

*Crupina crupinostrum* Crupina

*Dittrichia viscosa* subsp. *viscosa* Stink Aster

*Galactites tomentosa* Mediterranean Thistle

*Helichrysum barrelieri* (*H. conglobatum*) Golden Cassidony

*Phagnalon graecum* (*P. rupestre*) Shrubby Cudweed

*Ptilostemon chamaepeuce* Shrubby Knapweed

*Silybum marinum* Milk Thistle

*Tragopogon sinuatus* (*T. porrifolius*) Wild Salsify

**Convolvulaceae - Bindweed Family**

*Convolvulus althaeoides* Mallow-leaved Bindweed

*Cuscuta epithymum* Dodder

**Crassulaceae - Stonecrop Family**

*Umbilicus parviflorus* Small-Flowered Navelwort

**Cruciferaeae - Cress Family**

*Biscutella didyma* Buckler Mustard

*Cakile maritima* Sea Rocket

*Eruca sativa* Eruca

*Matthiola tricuspidata* Three-Horned Stock

\**Ricotia cretica* Ricotia

**Dioscoraceae - Yam Family**

*Tamus communis* Black Bryony

**Dipsacaceae - Teasel Family**

*Knautia integrifolia* subsp. *mimica* A Scabious

**Ericaceae - Heath Family**

*Erica arborea* - Tree Heather

**Euphorbiaceae - Spurge Family**

*Euphorbia acanthothamnus* Greek Spiny Spurge

*Euphorbia characias* Mediterranean Spurge

*Euphorbia dendroides* Tree Spurge

*Euphorbia helioscopia* Sun Spurge

*Euphorbia paralias* Sea Spurge

*Mercurialis annua* Annual Mercury

# *Ricinus communis* Castor Oil Plant

**Fagaceae - Oak Family**

*Quercus pubescens* Downy Oak

**Geraniaceae - Geranium Family**

*Erodium gruinum* Long-beaked Stork's Bill

*Geranium robertianum* Herb Robert

**Guttiferae - Hypericum Family**

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

**Labiatae - Mint Family**

*Ballota pseudodictamnus subsp. pseudodictamnus* False Dittany

*Coriodothymus capitatus (Thymus capitatus)* Shrubby Thyme

*Mentha spicata* Spear Mint

*Origanum vulgare subsp. hirtum* Marjoram

*Phlomis fruticosa* Jerusalem Sage

*Phlomis lanata*

*Prasium majus* Spanish Hedge-nettle

*Salvia fruticosa* Three-Leaved Sage

*Salvia scalarea* Clary

*Salvia viridis* Red-Topped Sage

*Satureja nervosa*

*Satureja thymbra* Savory

\* *Scutellaria sieberi* A Skullcap

**Leguminosae - Pea Family**

# *Acacia spp* Mimosa

*Anagyris foetida* Bean Trefoil

*Bituminaria bituminosa (Psoralea bituminosa)* Pitch Trefoil

*Calicotome villosa* Hairy Thorny Broom

*Ceratonia siliqua* Carob Tree

\* *Ebenus creticus* Shrubby Sainfoin

*Lathyrus aphaca* Yellow Vetchling

*Lotus creticus* Southern Bird's-Foot Trefoil

*Lupinus micranthus* Hairy Lupin

*Medicago arabica* Spotted Medick

*Medicago marina* Sea Medick

*Medicago orbicularis* Large Disk Medick

*Spartium junceum* Spanish Broom

*Tetragonolobus purpureus* Asparagus Pea

*Trifolium stellatum* Star Clover

*Trifolium uniflorum* One-Flowered Clover

*Trigonella balansae* A Fenugreek

*Tripodion tetraphyllum (Anthyllis tetraphyllum)* Bladder Vetch

*Vicia sativa* Fodder Vetch

**Linacea - Flax Family**

*Linum arboreum* Tree Flax

*Linum bienne* Pale Flax

**Lythraceae - Loosestrife Family**

*Lythrum junceum* Creeping Loosestrife

**Malvaceae - Mallow Family**

*Lavatera cretica* Lesser Tree Mallow

*Malva sylvestris* Common Mallow

**Moraceae - Fig Family**

*Ficus carica* Fig

# *Morus alba* White Mulberry

**Myrtaceae - Myrtle Family**

*Myrtus communis subsp. communis* Common Myrtle

**Oleaceae - Olive Family**

*Olea europaea subsp. europaea* Olive

**Orobanchaceae - Broomrape Family**

*Orobanche ramosa* Branched Broomrape

**Oxalidaceae - Sorrel Family**

# *Oxalis pes-caprae* Bermuda Buttercup

**Papaveraceae - Poppy Family**

*Glaucium flavum* Yellow-Horned Poppy

*Papaver rhoeas* Common Poppy

**Plantaginaceae - Plantain Family**

*Plantago afra*

*Plantago lagopus*

*Plantago lanceolata* Ribwort Plantain

**Platanaceae - Plane Tree Family**

*Platanus orientalis* Oriental Plane

**Polygalaceae - Milkwort Family**

*Polygala venulosa* Eastern Milkwort

**Primulaceae - Primrose Family**

*Anagallis arvensis* Scarlet Pimpernel (Scarlet and blue forms)

\**Cyclamen creticum* Cretan Cyclamen

**Ranunculaceae - Buttercup Family**

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

*Anemone coronaria* Crown Anemone

*Anemone hortensis ssp. heldreichii*

*Ranunculus asiaticus* Turban Buttercup

*Ranunculus scleratus* Celery-leaved Crowfoot

**Resedaceae - Mignonette Family**

*Reseda lutea* Wild Mignonette

**Rosaceae - Rose Family**

*Prunus dulcis* - Almond

*Pyrus amygdaliformis* Almond-leaved Pear

*Rubus sanctus* Bramble

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

**Rubiaceae - Bedstraw Family**

*Rubia peregrina* Wild Madder

**Rutaceae - Rue Family**

# *Citrus limon* Lemon

# *Citrus sinensis* Orange

*Ruta chalepensis subsp. chalepensis* Fringed Rue

**Santalaceae - Sandalwood Family**

*Osyris alba* Osyris

**Scrophulariaceae - Figwort Family**

*Bellardia trixago* Bellardia

*Linaria pelisseriana* Jersey Toadflax

*Misopates orontium* Lesser Snapdragon

*Parentucellia latifolia*

*Parentucellia viscosa* Yellow Bartsia

*Scrophularia lucida* Shining Figwort

\* *Verbascum arcturus* Hanging Mullein

*Verbascum sinuatum*

**Solanaceae - Potato Family**

*Hyoscyamus albus* White Henbane

*Mandragora autumnalis* Mandrake

**Styracaceae - Storax Family**

*Styrax officinalis* Storax

**Tamaricaceae - Tamarix Family**

*Tamarix smyrnensis* Tamarisk

**Thymelaeaceae - Daphne Family**

*Daphne sericea*

*Thymelaea hirsuta* Thymelea

**Umbelliferae - Carrot Family**

*Apium nodiflorum* Fools Water-cress

*Bupleurum gracile* A Thorow Wax

*Daucus carota* Wild Carrot

*Eryngium maritimum* Sea Holly

*Ferula communis subsp. communis* Giant Fennel

*Foeniculum vulgare* Fennel

*Oenanthe pimpinelloides* Corky-Fruited Water Dropwort

*Tordylium apulum* Mediterranean Hartwort

**Urticaceae - Nettle Family**

*Parietaria judaica* Pellitory of the Wall

*Urtica membranacea* Membranous Nettle

*Urtica pilulifera* Roman Nettle

**Valerianaceae - Valerian Family**

\**Valeriana asarifolia* Cretan Valerian

*Valerianella discoidea* A Corn Salad

**Verbenaceae - Verbena Family**

*Vitex agnus-castus* Chaste Tree

**Vitaceae - Vine Family**

*Vitis vinifera* subsp. *vinifera* Grape Vine

**b) Monocotyledons****Agavaceae - Agave Family**

# *Agave americana* Century Plant

**Amaryllidaceae - Daffodil Family**

*Narcissus tazetta* Rose of Sharon (in fruit only)

*Pancratium maritimum* Sea Daffodil (leaves only)

**Araceae - Arum Family**

*Arisarum vulgare* Friars Cowl

*Arum creticum* Cretan Arum

*Dranunculus vulgaris* Common Dragon Arum

**Graminaceae - Grass Family**

*Arundo donax* Giant Reed

*Briza maxima* Giant Quaking Grass

*Dasyrium villosum*

*Lagurus ovatus* Hare's-tail

*Phragmites australis* Reed

**Iridaceae - Iris Family**

*Gladiolus italicus* Field Gladiolus

*Gynandriris sisyrrinchium* Barbary Nut

*Hermodactylus tuberosus* Widow Iris

# *Iris albicans* White Flag Iris

*Iris pseudocorus* Yellow Flag

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

**Liliaceae - Lily Family**

*Allium commutatum* Wild Leek

*Asphodeline lutea* Yellow Asphodel

*Asphodelus aestivus* Common Asphodel

*Drimia maritima* (*Urginea maritima*) Sea Squill

*Gagea graeca*

*Muscari comosum* Tassle Hyacinth

*Ornithogalum exscapum* A Star of Bethlehem

*Ornithogalum narbonense* A Star of Bethlehem

\* *Tulipa cretica* Cretan Tulip

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

*Tulipa sylvestris* Wild Tulip

**Orchidaceae - Orchid Family**

*Aceras anthropophorum* Man Orchid

*Anacamptis pyramidalis* Pyramidal Orchid

*Barlia robertiana* Giant Orchid

*Ophrys bilunulata* Double Moon Orchid

*Ophrys bombyliflora* Bumble Bee Orchid

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

*Ophrys fusca* Sombre Bee Orchid

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

*Ophrys iricolor* Rainbow Orchid

*Ophrys sicula* Sicilian Orchid (a Yellow Bee Orchid)

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

*Ophrys tentredinifera* Sawfly Orchid

*Orchis boryi*

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

**Palmae - Palm Family**

*Phoenix theophrasti* Cretan Palm

**Typhaceae - Reedmace Family**

*Typha domingensis* A reedmace

**BUTTERFLY LIST**

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

plus Egyptian Locust

**REPTILE AND MAMMAL LIST**

**Reptiles**

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

**Mammals**

Badger  
Beech Marten  
Eastern Hedgehog  
Weasel



## BIRD LIST

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

