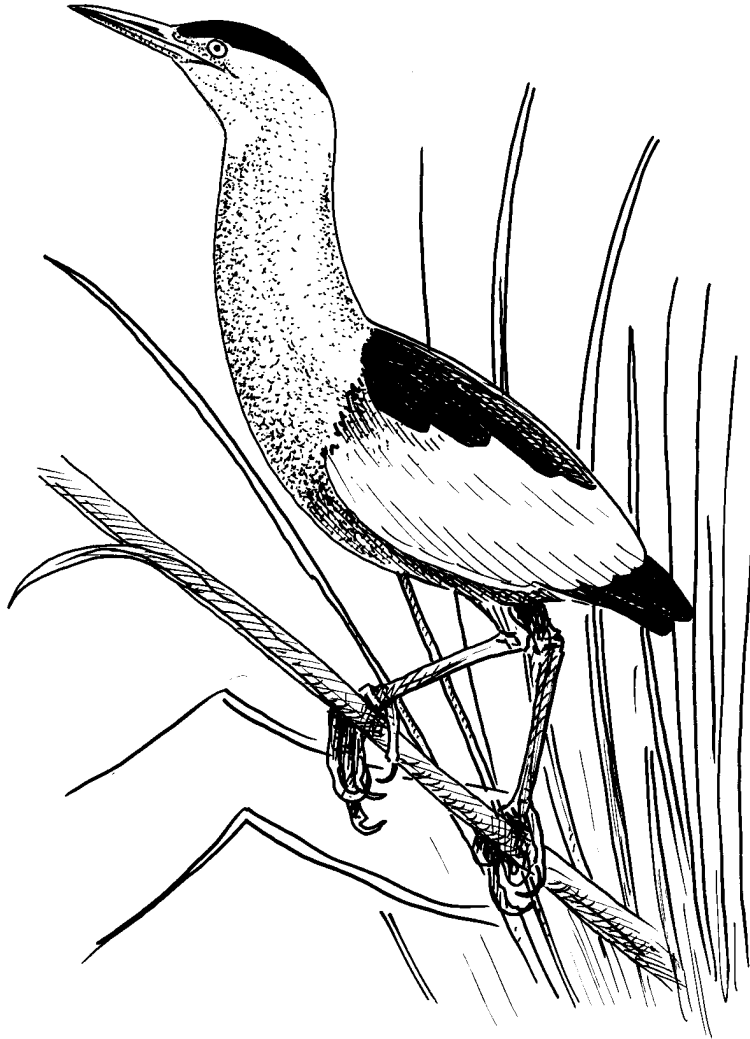


Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX
Telephone: 01603 300552 evenings & weekends
www.honeyguide.co.uk E-mail: honeyguide@tesco.net



Crete
15 – 22 April 2008

Crete
15 – 22 April 2008

Holiday participants

Tom Wiseman
Gillian Shrimpton and John Mallison
Patricia Duffield
Barry Hennessey
Julia Maynard

Leader

Chris Durdin

Report by Chris Durdin

Illustrations by Rob Hume, including front cover, little bittern.

As with all Honeyguide holidays, £30 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 £30 per person was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, a total of €300 (£230).

This brings Honeyguide's total contributions to HOS since the first Honeyguide holiday in Crete in 1995 to £6,333. The total for conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 was at £52,681 in early June 2008.

Information on the lammergeier project is at <http://www.ornithologiki.gr/en/lib/engypbar.htm>

Crete 15 – 22 April 2008

Crete's weather can be very changeable in April, but this year was unusually hot and dry. It's easier to see migrant birds on all Mediterranean islands when they are held up by poor weather, and especially so on Crete when clouds covering the mountains prevent birds from crossing them and moving north so one can find concentrations of birds near the coast. But they still trickle through even in good weather and there are resident birds to find too, so the birds this year were merely good, rather than excellent! It wasn't so dry that the flowers had dried up, so they were superb as always, and there were more butterflies on the wing than usual, both residents like fast-flying Cretan festoons and migrants like clouded yellows.

This holiday report follows the usual pattern of a daily diary followed by various lists.

Tuesday 15 April – Gatwick to Heraklion and Plakias

After many years of using charter flights for Honeyguide's groups on Crete, it was a smooth scheduled flight that brought this year's group safely and more or less on time. With a small group we didn't have the usual coach to transfer us and our luggage to our south coast base in Plakias, so seven of us squeezed successfully into a minibus, briefly pausing to take in hooded crow, crown daisies, the Mediterranean field thistle *Galactites* and a squirting cucumber plant at the airport parking lot. We journeyed west into the setting sun along the road that runs along the north coast, stopping to buy fuel west of Heraklion, noting many buzzards along the way and how built up much of the north coast is. We turned inland at Rethymnon as dusk fell, over the central spine of Crete, through Kourtaliotiko gorge in the dark and arrived in Plakias two hours after we set off.

George, the newly-refurbished Hotel Sofia's owner – that's the hotel that's refurbished, not George – greeted us with tea. His colleague Costas took us to our rooms, so recently re-done that the new doors had their numbers temporarily just on post-it notes. Our first excellent taverna meal of many, this time fish, was at the Gio-Ma taverna.

Wednesday 16 April – walk to Mirthios

The vivacious Annemarie prepared breakfast, as always, following which we gathered for our morning walk to Mirthios, the village up the hill from Plakias. We started by wandering down to the beach to overlook the river that runs through the Kotsiphou gorge and meets the sea in Plakias: there was a common sandpiper here today, and on many days to follow. Sparrows were all clearly Italian, with chestnut heads, and we noted scarlet pimpernel in both blue and red. A group of aerial feeders dashed through, including a red-rumped swallow and a pallid swift, but blink and you'd missed them. The first of countless buzzards soared over the hillside inland.

Walking out of Plakias we paused by a patch of rough ground to take in the colourful common wayside flowers, too numerous to list here, but including purple salsify, yellow honeywort and the intense red of asparagus pea. A huge hornet moved harmlessly around us. It was fairly quiet for birds as we walked through the olive grove, but the flower list grew rapidly. Highlights were two from the bellflower family, the tiny lobelia *Solenopsis minuta* growing on bare cuttings and the famous and showy endemic *Petromarula* or Cretan wall lettuce, found by Barry. We puzzled over tongue orchids.

We retraced our steps to the bridge and headed slowly and steadily up the steep hill. Cretan and sage-leaved cistuses were beginning to flower and other interesting plants included yellow-wort (is it only natural history that throws up double-Ws in words?), chaste tree and Mediterranean selaginella, the last a fern-like plant taxonomically but gripping an exposed face of conglomerate like a lichen.

Outside the Panorama taverna in Mirthios was a sign saying 'Open from 17:00' and it was only one o'clock, but they were expecting us and we were soon tucking into Greek salads while admiring the view down to Plakias Bay. Add fresh bread and olive oil and it you have a simple but excellent midday meal. There were kestrels and alpine swifts and an Italian sparrow disappearing into an untidy nest on the next building.

With two in the group walking at least sometimes with sticks, we took the slow and steady downward descent along the road, rather than back down the steep track, an easy walk with abundant wayside

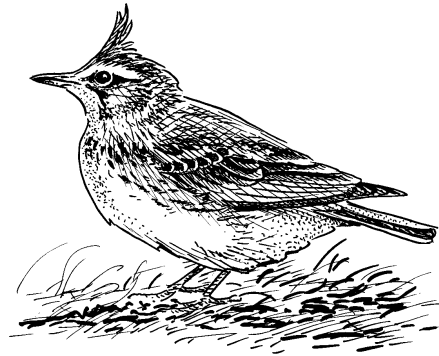
wildflowers, though more traffic than is ideal. Cretan hillsides in April seem to be dominated by yellow, with giant fennel and Jerusalem sage especially striking. We watched a Sardinian warbler for a while, but generally there were few birds and it was surprisingly windy, despite the sunshine.

Reaching Plakias beach, there was a new range of flowers, with pink patches of Mediterranean catchfly, the semi-parasitic yellow bartsia and bellardia, sea medick and the leaves of the autumn-flowering sea daffodil.

We opted for tea rather than something stronger as we ran through checklists in the breakfast room. Unusually, we ate away from the seafront as Annemarie suggested that the food in the Tavernaki taverna was good, which it was, though it was too smoky and would have been better without the music.

Thursday 17 April – Kourtaliotiko Gorge and ‘Spili bumps’

Our first pre-breakfast birdwatching was at the open area at the eastern end of Plakias. There were good views of a crested lark (*right*) on a pile of soil and a buzzard on a pole; two little egrets flew through.



As we headed out of Plakias after breakfast, a flock of nine grey herons flew slowly through. There was not far to go, to the gorge of Kourtaliotiko that makes it such an impressive route into this part of the south coast. At the first layby we stopped to stare, and immediately there was a fine male black-eared wheatear in song. There were blue rock thrushes below in the gorge and on the rock above to the left, and several crag martins. One of several ravens moved onto its nest on a crag, and the expected griffon vultures came into view. Plants are interesting here too: in the cracks by our feet we noted the tiny bellflower *Campanula erinus* and the obscure valantia, a tiny bedstraw. At the other end of the scale were showy spikes of yellow asphodel and big bushes of tree spurge.

Dropping down into the gorge – which is easy as there are steps – there were more botanical highlights. Quite quickly we found three notable endemic plants. First was the pretty crucifer *Ricotia*, like a small honesty. In among some turban buttercups were the white flowers of Cretan cyclamen, and out of crevices in the walls Cretan gorge comfrey or *Procopiana* was growing. Down the bottom there are storax trees, with vanilla-scented flowers like a snowdrop. Up at the top, Barry pointed out the endemic hanging mullein *Verbascum arcturus*.

We took the pretty back road to Spili, pausing briefly to admire the view and various plants, and dropped down into the car park that now mercifully reduces the congestion in the town that doglegs around a main road. There is a Honeyguide tradition of a lunch here of gyros; pronounced ‘heros’ and what at home we might call donner kebabs, but very nice they are. A Cretan festoon flew up and down the main street, and we watched violet carpenter bees as we munched. Drinks, yoghurt & honey and other goodies followed in the by now hot square beside the row of lion-mouth fountains.

Tempting though it may have been to linger, the draw of ‘Spili bumps’ – more properly the Kedros foothills alongside to road to Gerakari – meant we moved on. This is my favourite place for looking at flowers in Europe, and it didn’t disappoint. Rather than the usual crossing point over the ditch along the trunk of a fallen willow, we parked by the road and potted to the left side of that road to start with. There were immediate three orchid species: Italian man orchid, *Orchis boryi* and lax-flowered orchid, and the pretty while *Gagea graeca* was abundant. Crossing the road and walking along the track there were pink tulips in the fields and thick yellow patches of corn marigolds. Pink Mediterranean kidney vetch, the curious-looking yellow vetchling, patches of perfoliate alexanders, big asphodels and the tiny pink bartsia *Parentucellia*: all in all a remarkable supporting cast to the stars of the show. Those stars are the orchids on the main ‘bump’: most of those listed in the back of this report were found here. The showiest this year were probably the yellow few-flowered orchids and the big patches of pink Italian man orchids. The small four-spotted orchids are a delight and among the many Boryi’s orchids were two white specimens. It’s a tough place to leave!

We paused briefly at the bottom of Kourtaliotiko gorge on our way back and had a gossip with the affable group from Naturetrek, on its way for just one night in Plakias. I think we all had a quiet smug moment that we don't have to live out of suitcase like that. After checklists we tried Atlantis taverna, round the corner on the western face of Plakias. We were the only customers and the chef and proprietor was charming; the food (mostly fish) was excellent, though expensive compared with other tavernas. Some tried sea urchin eggs in our selection of starters; slightly sloppy and salty. The best bit though was a gift from the chef for our pudding: ice cream very briefly deep-fried in filo pastry. Yum.

Friday 18 April – Festos and Ayia Triada

With birds rather thin in Plakias so far, the early morning birders tried Souda, about three kilometres west. We noted some plants to show the rest later, but bird-wise it was quiet until we found a fine woodchat shrike, which had probably arrived the previous night.

We journeyed east today to the famous Minoan sites of Festos and Ayia Triada, with the mountains to our left. The journey took us through the low lying area round Ayia Galini where vegetables are growing under ugly seas of plastic and then the distinctly un-touristy town of Timbaki on market day. Whatever you think of archaeology, the setting of Festos on the hill above the flat plains of the Geropotamos valley is quite magnificent. By chance, we were there on International Day of Monuments, so after a drink in the café that ensured a small saving for the culture vultures and even the Philistines, like me, then took a quick tour round the Festos site. There was a coach party of schoolchildren, bubbling and chatting outside the site on their day trip, a little glum inside (or was that just me?), but it wasn't crowded, despite the special day.

Leaving Gillian and John to soak up more culture, the rest of us moved off along the road that leads to Ayia Triada, three kilometres away. Tom and Julia found a superb chukar partridge in the field below to our left. This stretch of road is also notable for the extensive areas of Crete's most famous endemic plant, Cretan ebony, a shrubby sainfoin that makes the hillside a soft pink colour.

I returned to collect the minibus, Gill and John and picked up everyone else along the road, Barry excepted, who walked and was soon with us for our picnic at Ayia Triada. We watched two hooded crows mobbing a buzzard – life must sometimes be irritating when you're a bird of prey. Leaving Gill to more history, most of us took the track around the back of the historical site and down towards the river valley. What looked at first like a small carob on closer inspection turned out to be a bean trefoil bush, with rather similar big pods, but when the foliage was crushed with a characteristic scent, that we struggled to put a name to – was it like Worcester sauce?

This can be a good area for orchids but with the warm, advanced spring not so today, though there were the stumps of gone over giant orchids. The exception, though, was by a small area of building foundations right of the downward slope where there were Cretan bee orchids and our first mambose orchid. We then moved into area with scattered citrus trees in the Geropotamos river valley. A woodchat shrike was followed by two turtle doves on a wire, which suddenly became 11 turtle doves – plainly a migrant flock. A purple heron got up from the riverbed, but that raised false hopes: the river bed this dry season was almost dry, save one pool with a single wood sandpiper. I went back for the bus to save the uphill walk on another hot day.

Back in Plakias, we checked the fields at the eastern end of town, where there were no less than five whinchats and three woodchat shrikes. This evening's taverna was the family-run Korali, from where we could watch a little stint close by on the beach. Hospitality in tavernas is typically a glass of raki presented with the bill: here we were also provided with extra beers and carafes of white and red wine on the house.

Saturday 19 April – Ayia reservoir and the Omalos plateau

The stint was there again before breakfast, as were three common sandpipers, two of which were displaying in what seemed to be a joust over a territory held temporarily on migration. At the whinchat/woodchat shrike end of the beach was a flock of 47 sand martins on a wire, plus a few swallows. Of half a dozen yellow wagtails feeding in the grass, one male was the black-headed

subspecies *feldegg* from the Balkans/Greece and another a grey-headed wagtail *thunbergi* from Scandinavia/Russia.

The back door on the minibus was refusing to open so we went via the Europrint office in Hania, which we found easily with a combination of Julia's map reading and Barry's local knowledge. The man in the office tried and failed the door; a mechanic from the workshop came with his WD40 and also tried and failed. In the meantime, we browsed the excellent bookshop next door and admired the Judas trees in the street. Next stop was the workshop, where we quickly transferred to another minibus. The workshop was at the bottom of the Omalos road, so it was easy to set off to our next stop, the compact and well-vegetated little reservoir at Ayia. Some new signs to 'lake café' would have taken us, I think, to the new café on the wrong side of the reservoir, looking into the sun; the sign with the mute swan took us to the car park and taverna on the southern side where we needed to be this hot and sunny day.

As ever, there were so many birds that working out where to look first is always a challenge. Two squacco herons were flying around, doing their usual trick of looking like egrets in flight and all but disappearing when landed in their yoghurt-and-honey colours. A sprinkling of ducks were garganey, at least five, and two pairs of shovelers. Two other birdwatchers, Peter and Lesley, arrived at this point and were invited to listen in – not least to the flock of 23 bee-eaters that arrived and settled on reeds to our left. A serin buzzed past but didn't stop, but two rather dark marsh harriers were easy to see. Frogs and stripe-necked Balkan terrapins could be detected in the water. Moving along the reservoir bank, while watching wood sandpipers and greenshanks, we located first one then two little crakes in the edge of the reed. Then a little bittern came into view, and all three birds could be seen together in one easy and excellent telescope view.

Pausing to admire a tree frog, we moved back to where we'd come up onto the reservoir bank for our picnics, then into the shady taverna for fresh orange juice and coffee. The former could hardly have fewer food miles – orange plantations surround the reservoir. Curiously, Tom's cappuccino came with a free crème caramel in a glass, which mostly stayed under control.

It's not that far but quite a long – around 90 minutes – though fascinating drive to the plateau as the road winds higher and higher. We paused to look at the view from the top over what is, strictly, a mountain plain, though whatever you call them the plains or plateaux are some of Crete's most distinctive physical features. Dropping onto the Omalos plateau, the first stop was to admire sheets of pink tulips. There are some unattractive wire fences too, but they plainly make a big difference in preventing the tulips from being grazed. Outside the fence line, Barry pointed out the grazing-resistant plants like asphodels.

At the far end of the plateau is the start of the famous Samaria gorge, not open this early in the year, a viewpoint and a taverna. There is also a sprinkling of interesting plants, such as aubretia and Cretan barberry. The taverna is up some steep steps but offers both the best watchpoint and, happily, the best watcher. Aristotelis, the guy I'd met here two years ago, quickly located a kri-kri, the Cretan wild goat, a tiny speck sitting on a rock on the far side that would have taken us a month of Sundays to find. After admiring this for a while and patronising the café, naturally, we took the easy route back to the minibus down the road.

We took a left turn to make a circuit of the plateau, pausing by a small lake, complete with EU sponsored sign 'Action for Mediterranean temporary ponds on Crete', or words to that effect. The pond had a couple of migrant wood sandpipers feeding by it and a sheet of water crowfoot, but it's the setting rather than species that makes this area so special. Two local ladies – presumably summer visitors, like the wheatears? – were collecting *horta*, wild greens, looking like partially grazed dandelions, and Patricia, whose knowledge of Greek put us all to shame, made conversation. Woodlarks perched on a wire.

It was tough to tear everyone away from this magical setting and it was 6 pm by the time we were on the long and winding road off the plateau, heading for our evening destination of Rethymnon. Our usual car park had a sign saying full but the man found us a slot. Having booked our taverna table, we took a quick turn past the Venetian castle and round the picturesque port. It was already on the dark side of dusk, but a few pallid swifts could be made out entering a building overlooking the coast road. There are many touristy restaurants by the harbour but, after collecting Tom and Patricia, who'd stayed

close to the castle, we repaired to the family-run 'To Tripio Katostari' taverna, complete with Andy Capp style cartoons, near the car park. After a typical taverna meal, they showed us their new toy – their back wall down which a continuous sheet of water slid once they'd turned on the switch. Then it was time for an uneventful drive home to Plakias.

Sunday 20 April – Moni Préveli and Kotsiphou Gorge

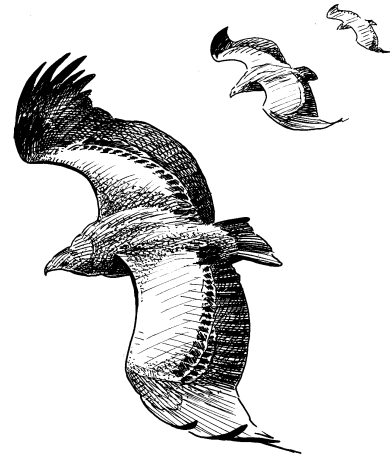
After a last night's late night we rested the pre-breakfast birdwatching so batteries were fully re-charged as we took the short journey, about 20 minutes, towards Moni Préveli. We paused first in the valley at the Turkish bridge over the Megalopotamos river. The bridge was punctuated with the small, greyish rosettes of evax plants and the white blooms of a storax tree leant over it. The search was then on for a special resident of the river here, and after a while there was one, half under a stone: a freshwater crab.

We parked in the generous car park near to the coastal monastery at Moni Préveli. The landscape here is all *phrygana*, even more open and Spartan than low-growing garrigue often found near the Mediterranean coast. We considered its origins: Oliver Rackham's book on the making of the Cretan landscape argues powerfully that this is not a 'ruined landscape' as typically explained in many texts, but can be explained by a level of browsing over three or four millennia.

It was a hot and still day, with the prospects for this being a hotspot for migrant birds looking poor. There were many clouded yellows and several painted ladies, so the fair weather was good for these migrants. There was a raven and alpine swifts over the car park and a corn bunting singing, but a walk down to overlook the sea was very birdless; not even a blue rock thrush. But some careful searching of the cypress trees below the monastery was, finally, rewarding with at last three pied flycatchers, a spotted flycatcher and a wood warbler. In the meantime, Patricia was exploring the monastery and we met up in the café for fresh orange juice or coffee.

The monastery famously sheltered escaping Allied troops in World War Two and we stopped at the fine memorial to this on the way back, a monk and a Tommy set in the coastal *phrygana* landscape. The taverna by the bridge was not yet open for business so we opted to return to the Panorama taverna in Mirthios; yet more fried courgettes and Greek salads.

After lunch, Gillian walked back to Plakias and the rest of spent our nominally 'free' afternoon in some relaxed pottering in nearby Kotsiphou gorge. In among the spiny vegetation above the gorge were some Bishop's ophryses and our first monkey orchids. Our first Cleopatra butterfly came past us several times and several Cretan festoons were on the wing. The gorge has excellent plants, the most remarkable of which to my mind is the yellow-flowered tree flax, albeit more of a bush. We found evergreen maple, the same as was on the Omalos plateau, three species of arums, and more of the endemic Cretan gorge comfrey and hanging mullien. An eye on the sky was needed too: there was a steady trickle of griffons (*right*), a chough and finally a peregrine powered through.



We dropped down through the gorge and to the coast, meeting and picking up Gillian and turning west to Souda. The botanical highlights seen the other day by the early birders could now be shared: Cretan palms, a near endemic species, and bug orchids.

This evening we ate at the Kri Kri taverna to mark our sighting of the Cretan wild goat yesterday, and very good it was too.

Monday 21 April – Frangocastello and Imbros gorge

Before breakfast we took a short drive to Damnoni beach, which lies just on the other side of the headland at the eastern end of Plakias Bay. By now, good weather meaning fewer migrants was an expected pattern, but some still arrive, nonetheless: Julia noticed a squacco heron flying in across the bay, and soon after there was a group totalling eight which landed on the rocks. Three of us were

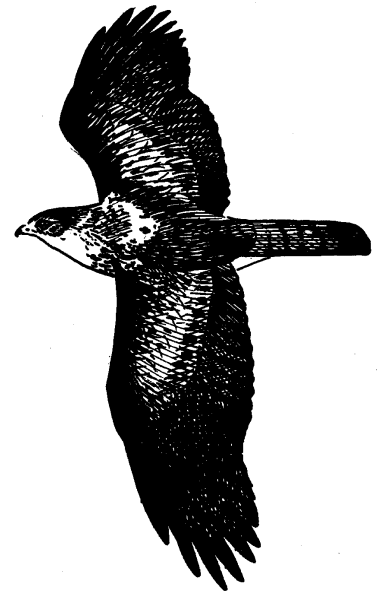
feeling a bit under the weather, but talking to Annemarie we concluded it was probably due to lots of sun.

We headed west. One of my favourite Mediterranean bird songs caught my ear as we drove, so we stopped to admire a fine male ortolan bunting with its typical 'Beethoven's Fifth' song with an interval of a minor third. It's a delightfully unimproved minor road that winds through un-touristy villages. In one of these we witnessed the extraordinary sight of two or three live sheep being carried strapped to the back of a donkey.

Arriving at the coastal plain of Frangocastello we stopped to buy some petrol, and the minibus wouldn't restart. It was proving hit and miss already, with overheating the cause. The man at the garage was brilliant, ringing up Eurorent for us and eventually getting it going. Happily it started OK for the rest of the day out. In the meantime a marsh harrier appeared near the sea.

We parked in the shade of the castle: just a shell, but some shell, and we looked inside. Walking along the top of the low cliff there were several new plants, notably white henbane, mandrakes – famed for their roots that are supposed to squeal when pulled up – and some quite magnificent and suitably smelly dragonarums. Birdwise it was predictably slow, just one flyby red-rumped swallow of any note. As well as many migrant butterflies, there was a hummingbird hawkmoth. We had our picnic in the shade of the castle, followed by a brief and unsuccessful look for spectacled warbler in the low coastal scrub, where we found the sandalwood-scented osyris.

Barry has walked Imbros Gorge in the past, which is more than I have, and his description of its ruggedness reinforced the plan not to try to walk any of it in today's heat. The road winds up and up the side of the gorge through rich *phrygana*. Towards the top there were roadworks, widening the road, especially at the very top, after it becomes wooded, where a cutting is going through and the road is closed due to the works. Sadly the café at the top of the gorge has gone: just charred wooden beams remained, though whether it has burnt down or this was related to the roadworks we don't know. Nonetheless, near where the café used to be proved a good spot, with shade, to see if any of the gorge's birds would appear. It looked rather unpromising in the heat of the afternoon but, after we threatened to leave, a golden eagle joined the distant griffons. I threatened to leave again and a peregrine flew through then, at last, a pair of Bonelli's eagles (*right*), offering good views of one of Europe's most elusive raptors.



Back at Plakias, the Eurorent mechanic arrived with our previous minibus, the back door now fixed. Unfortunately for him, the other one wouldn't start – which at least proved our point. We'd chosen to return to the Gio-Ma taverna for our final meal so everyone else went on down there, armed with my modest order of yet another Greek salad. The third garage the mechanic and I tried had some jump leads we then borrowed, but the minibus started anyway at that point.

Later, arriving at the taverna, there was a tight flock of birds flying around and landing on the sea in the half-light. They could only have been garganeys; I estimated 120 of them. Plakias Bay is known is a stopping off point for them, but they were gone next morning. Returning to the taverna a few minutes after we'd left – I'd forgotten to pay – I realised that this was good way of avoiding the raki that traditionally arrived with the bill!

Tuesday 22 April – Plakias and home

No garganeys before breakfast, but instead there were 35 little egrets on the rocks opposite the Gio-Ma taverna.

With a free morning before our early evening flight, we walked to the old mill – in fact two old Venetian mills, water-powered olive mills. John explained how they worked and, on the second, better-preserved structure, there was much Cretan wall lettuce in flower. New butterflies today were small skipper and brown argus.

We lunched at Korali taverna. Plakias was noticeably gearing up for the tourist season during our week. Now, on the beach, diggers were moving the winter's accumulation of Mediterranean seagrass or *Posidinia*. Behind us, retzina had freed a group of locals from any inhibitions they may have had, and to one side, a courier escorted a coach party of German tourists to fill the next taverna and overspill into ours. It was time to leave, and at three o'clock we were away. We stopped in Kourtaliotiko gorge for a last, unsuccessful attempt to find a lammergeier – the threatening to leave trick didn't work this time – then back to Heraklion where our mechanic friend was there to pick up the minibus. It was an uneventful flight back to Gatwick.

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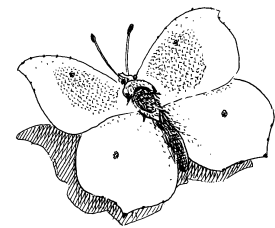
Highlights of the week, as nominated by group members

John: bird: ortolan bunting- first good long look at one; flowers: all the orchids (and everything else) on Spili Bumps; general: amazing general yellowness and profusion of the flowers.
Gillian: marsh frogs and bee-eaters at Ayia reservoir; colours of everything – flowers, sky, mountains.
Barry: bird – Bonellis' eagle; flower – tulips at Omalos; place – Omalos plateau.
Patricia: plethora of flowers especially mandrake and dragonarums; the donket carrying live sheep.
Julia: two little crakes and little bittern together at Ayia reservoir; fried ice cream.
Tom: dragonarum, masses of flowers at Spili bumps.
Chris: Spili bumps, as always; migration surprises like squacco herons flying in off the sea at Damnoni.

Butterflies

Swallowtail
 Scarce Swallowtail
 Cretan Festoon
 Small White
 Bath White
 Clouded Yellow
 Cleopatra
 Comma sp
 Painted Lady

Red Admiral
 Meadow Brown
 Southern Speckled Wood
 Wall Brown
 Holly Blue
 Brown argus
 Common Blue
 Small Skipper



Other notable invertebrates

Potamon potamios
Acrida ungarica
Anacridium aegyptiacum
Macroglossum stellatarum
Oxythyrea funesta
Graphasoma italicum
Xylocopa violacea
Andrena fulva
Polistes sp.
Scolia flavifrons

Freshwater Crab
 Nosed Grasshopper
 Egyptian Locust
 Hummingbird Hawk-moth
 a black and white chafer
 a black and red shield bug
 Violet carpenter-bee
 Tawny mining-bee
 a paper-wasp
 a hornet

Amphibians & reptiles

Cretan Marsh Frog – Ayia reservoir
 Common Tree Frog – Ayia reservoir
 Ocellated skink – found dead at Plakias
 Balkan (Stripe-necked) terrapin – Ayia reservoir
 Balkan Green Lizard - Ayia reservoir & elsewhere

Mammals

Bat sp. - Rethymnon
 Brown hare - Phaistos
 Beech marten (road casualty, near Imbros gorge)
 Wild goat (Kri-kri) – Omalos

PLANT LIST

Key and nomenclature: Latin names of plants follows those used in *Flora of the Cretan Area* (Turland et al 1993), with additions from Mediterranean Wild Flowers (Blamey & Grey-Wilson 1993). Also used as references: *The Orchids of Crete and Karpathos* by Albertis Antonis (a photoguide); *Wild Flowers of Crete* by George Sfikas; *Flowers of Crete* by J Fielding & N Turland; and *Wild Flowers of Crete* by Vangelis Papiomitoglou.

* Endemic to Crete

Introduced and not native to Crete and cultivated or planted species

FERNS AND ALLIES

<i>Adiantum capillus-veneris</i>	Maidenhair Fern
<i>Ceterach officinarum</i>	Rustyback Fern
<i>Equisetum ramosissimum</i>	a horsetail
<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</i> ssp. <i>Macrocarpa</i>	Juniper

Pinaceae - Pine Family

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

FLOWERING PLANTS

Dicotyledons

Aceraceae - Maple Family

Acer sempervirens

Aizoaceae - Aizoon Family

Carpobrotus edulis Hottentot Fig

Anacardiaceae - Pistacio Family

Pistacia lentiscus Mastic tree or lentisc

Apiaceae (=Umbelliferae) - Carrot Family

<i>Apium nidiflorum</i>	Fool's watercress
<i>Crithmum maritimum</i>	Rock Samphire
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Wild Carrot
<i>Eryngium campestre</i>	Field Eryngo
<i>Ferula communis</i> subsp. <i>communis</i>	Giant Fennel
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Fennel
<i>Oenanthe globulosa</i>	Mediterranean water dropwort
<i>Orlaya grandiflora</i>	
<i>Scandix pecten-veneris</i>	Shepherd's needle
<i>Smyrniium olusatrum</i>	Alexanders
<i>Smyrniium perfoliatum</i> subsp. <i>rotundifolium</i>	Perfoliate Alexanders
<i>Tordylium apulum</i>	Mediterranean Hartwort (equally 2-lobed petals)
<i>Tordylium officianale</i>	a hartwort (with unequally lobed petals)

Asteraceae (=Compositae) - Daisy Family

<i>Anthemis chia</i>	
<i>Anthemis rigida</i> ssp. <i>rigida</i>	Rayless Chamomile
<i>Asteriscus (Pallenis) spinosus</i>	Spiny golden star
<i>Calendula arvensis</i>	Field Marigold
<i>Chrysanthemum coronarium</i> var. <i>coronarium</i> (now <i>Glebionis coronaria</i>)	Crown Daisy
<i>C. coronarium</i> var. <i>discolor</i>	Crown Daisy
<i>Chrysanthemum segetum</i>	Corn Marigold

<i>Crupina crupinastrum</i>	Crupina
<i>Ditrichia viscosa</i>	
<i>Filago (Evax) pygmaea</i>	Evax
<i>Galactites tomentosa</i>	Mediterranean Thistle
<i>Helichrysum (stoechas ssp.) barrelieri</i>	Curry-plant
<i>H. conglobatum</i>	a curry-plant without scent
<i>Phagnalon graecum</i>	Shrubby Cudweed
<i>Ptilostemon chamaepeuce</i>	
<i>Scorzonera cretica</i>	Cretan Viper's-grass
<i>Silybum marianum</i>	Milk Thistle
<i>Tragopogon sinuatus (porrifolius)</i>	Salsify
Apocynaceae - Oleander Family	
<i>Nerium oleander subsp. oleander</i>	Oleander
Berberidaceae - Barberry Family	
<i>Berberis cretica</i>	
Boraginaceae - Borage Family	
<i>Anchusa italica (azurea)</i>	Large Blue Alkanet
<i>Borago officinalis</i>	Borage
<i>Cerinthe 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>	
<i>Symphytium creticum (Procopiana cretica)</i>	Procopiana or Cretan gorge comfrey
Cactaceae - Cactus Family	
# <i>Opuntia ficus-barbarica (O. ficus-indica)</i>	Prickly Pear
Campanulaceae - Bellflower Family	
<i>Campanula erinus</i>	
* <i>Campanula tubulosa</i>	
* <i>Petromarula pinnata</i>	Cretan Wall Lettuce
* <i>Solenopsis minuta ssp. annua (Laurentia gasparrinii)</i>	
Caprifoliaceae - Honeysuckle Family	
# <i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder
Caryophyllaceae - Pink Family	
<i>Cerastium comatum</i>	
<i>PetrorrhAya velutina (Kohlrauschia velutina)</i>	
<i>Silene cretica</i>	
<i>S. colorata</i>	Mediterranean catchfly
<i>S. gallica</i>	Small-flowered Catchfly
<i>S. vulgaris</i>	Bladder Campion
Cistaceae - Rockrose Family	
<i>Cistus (incanus ssp.) creticus</i>	Cretan Cistus
<i>C. salvifolius</i>	Sage-Leaved Cistus
<i>Fumana sp.</i>	
Clusiaceae – St John's-wort Family	
<i>Hypericum empetrifolium ssp. empetrifolium</i>	Shrubby St. John's-wort
Convolvulaceae - Bindweed Family	
<i>Convolvulus althaeoides</i>	Mallow-leaved Bindweed
<i>C. (althaeoides) elegantissimus</i>	cut leaves, pale in centre of flower
<i>Cuscuta epithimum</i>	Dodder

Crassulaceae - Stonecrop Family

<i>Sedum praesidis</i>	
<i>Umbilicus horizontalis</i>	Navelwort

Cruciferae (=Brassicaceae) - Cabbage Family

<i>Aubrieta deltoidea</i>	Aubrieta
<i>Biscutella didyma</i>	Buckler Mustard
<i>Cakile maritima</i>	Sea-rocket
<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	Shepherd's-purse
<i>Cardaria draba</i>	Hoary cress
<i>Nasturtium officinale</i>	Watercress
<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i>	Wild radish
* <i>Ricotia cretica</i>	Ricotia
<i>Sinapis arvensis</i>	Charlock

Cucurbitaceae - Cucumber Family

<i>Ecballium elaterium</i>	Squirting cucumber
<i>Bryonia cretica</i> ssp <i>cretica</i>	Cretan white bryony

Dipsacaceae - Scabious Family

<i>Knautia dipsacifolia</i>	
<i>Tremastelma palaestinum</i> (just seen by Chris on the headland east of Plakias bay)	

Euphorbiaceae - Spurge Family

<i>Euphorbia acanthothamos</i>	Greek Spiny Spurge
<i>E. characias</i>	Mediterranean Spurge
<i>E. dendroides</i>	Tree Spurge
<i>E. helioscopia</i>	Sun Spurge
<i>E. paralias</i>	Sea Spurge
# <i>Ricinus communis</i>	Castor Oil Plant
<i>Mercurialis annua</i>	Annual Mercury

Fabaceae (=Leguminosa) - Pea Family

# <i>Acacia</i> spp.	Mimosa
<i>Anagyris foetida</i>	Bean trefoil
<i>Anthyllus vulneraria</i> ssp. <i>praepropera</i> (= <i>rubriflora</i>)	Red (Mediterranean) Kidney Vetch
<i>Bituminaria (Psoralea) bituminosa</i>	Pitch Trefoil
<i>Calicotome villosa</i>	Hairy Thorny Broom
# <i>Cercis siliquastrum</i>	Judas Tree
<i>Ceratonia siliqua</i>	Carob Tree
<i>Coronilla scorpioides</i>	Scorpion-vetch
* <i>Ebenus cretica</i>	Shrubby Sainfoin (Cretan Ebony)
<i>Hymenocarpus circinnatus</i>	Disk Trefoil
<i>Lathyrus annuus</i>	yellow flowers, often red-veined
<i>L. aphaca</i>	Yellow vetchling
<i>Lupinus micranthus</i>	Hairy Lupin
<i>Medicago arborea</i>	Tree Medick
<i>M. marina</i>	Sea Medick
<i>Melilotus</i> sp <i>indicus</i>	Small melilot?
<i>Onobrychis</i> sp	Cock's-comb sainfoin
<i>Ononis reclinata</i>	Small rest-harrow
<i>O. viscosa</i>	
<i>Robina pseudoacacia</i>	False acacia
<i>Securigera (Coronilla) cretica</i>	Cretan Crown Vetch
<i>Spartium junceum</i>	Spanish Broom
<i>Tetragonolobus purpureus</i>	Asparagus Pea
<i>Trifolium angustifolium</i>	
<i>T. campestre</i>	Hop Trefoil
<i>T. nigrescens</i>	a common annual white clover
<i>T. resupinatum</i>	Reversed Clover
<i>T. stellatum</i>	Starry Clover
<i>T. tomentosum</i>	Woolly Trefoil
<i>T. uniflorum</i>	One-Flowered Clover

Tripodion (Anthyllis) tetraphyllum
Vicia bithynica
 V. hybrida
 V. lathyroides
 V. sativa
 V. villosa

Bladder Vetch
Bithynian Vetch
Hairy Yellow Vetchling
Spring Vetch
Common Vetch
Fodder Vetch

Fagaceae - Oak Family

Quercus coccifera
Quercus ilex

Kermes Oak
Holm or evergreen oak

Fumariaceae - Fumitory Family

Fumaria macrocarpa

Gentianaceae - Gentian Family

Blackstonia perfoliata
Centaurium pulchellum

Yellow-wort
Lesser Century

Geraniaceae - Geranium Family

Erodium cicutarium
 E. malacoides
Geranium dissectum
 G. lucidum
 G. purpureum
 G. rotundifolium

Common Storksbill
Mallow-leaved Storksbill
Cut-leaved Cranesbill
Shining Cranesbill
Little Robin
Round-leaved Cranesbill

Lamiaceae (=Labiatae) - Mint Family

Coridothymus (Thymus) capitatus
Marrubium vulgare
Phlomis fruticosa
Prasium majus
Salvia fruticosa (formerly *S. triloba*)
 S. verbenaca
Satureja (Micromeria) nervosa
 S. thymbra
Stachys cretica
**Scutellaria sieberi*

Shrubby Thyme
White Horehound
Jerusalem Sage
Spanish hedge-nettle
Shrubby or 3-leaved Sage
Wild Clary

Savory

A big white skullcap

Linaceae - Flax Family

Linum arboreum
 L. bienne

Tree Flax
Pale Flax

Lythraceae - Loosestrife Family

Lythrum junceum

Malvaceae - Mallow Family

Lavatera cretica
Malva. parviflora
 M. sylvestris

Lesser Tree Mallow
Small-flowered Mallow
Common Mallow

Meliaceae - Persian Lilac family

Melia azedarach

Indian bead tree or Persian lilac

Moraceae - Fig Family

Ficus carica
Morus alba

Fig
White Mulberry

Myoporaceae – Myoporium family

Myoporium laetum

Ngaio (from New Zealand)

Oleaceae - Olive Family

Olea europaea

Olive

Phillyrea latifolia

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

Pittosporaceae – Pittosporum family

Pittosporum tobira

Pittosporum

Plantaginaceae - Plantain Family

Plantago afra

P. coronopus

Buckshorn plantain

P. lanceolata

Ribwort Plantain

Platanaceae - Plane Tree Family

Platanus orientalis

Oriental Plane

Polygalaceae - Milkwort Family

Polygala venulosa

Eastern Milkwort

Polygala x dalmaisiana

Sweet pea shrub

Primulaceae - Primrose Family

Anagallis arvensis

Scarlet Pimpernel (Scarlet and blue forms)

**Cyclamen creticum*

Cretan Cyclamen

Punicaceae – Pomegranate family

Punica granatum

Pomegranate

Ranunculaceae - Buttercup Family

Adonis microcarpa

Yellow pheasants-eye

Anemone coronaria

Crown Anemone

A. hortensis ssp. *heldreichii*

Nigella damascena

Love-in-a-mist

Ranunculus asiaticus

Turban Buttercup

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

Rosaceae - Rose Family

Crataegus monogyna ssp. *azarella*

Hawthorn

#*Eriobotrya japonica*

Loquat

Pyrus spinosa

Almond-leaved or Wild Pear

Rubus sanctus

Bramble

Sarcopterium spinosum

Thorny Burnet

Rubiaceae - Bedstraw Family

Galium aparine

Cleavers

Sherardia arvensis

Field Madder

Valantia hispida

Rutaceae - Rue Family

Citrus limon

Lemon

Citrus sinensis

Orange

<i>Ruta chalepensis</i>	Rue
Santalaceae - Sandalwood family	
<i>Osyris alba</i>	Osyris
Scrophulariaceae - Figwort Family	
<i>Bellardia trixago</i>	Bellardia
<i>Linaria pelisseriana</i>	Jersey Toadflax
<i>Misopates orontium</i>	Lesser Snapdragon (Weasel's Snout)
<i>Parentucellia latifolia</i>	
<i>Parentucellia viscosa</i>	Yellow Bartsia
<i>Scrophularia lucida</i>	Shining Figwort
* <i>Verbascum arcturus</i>	Hanging Mullein
<i>V. macrurum</i>	
<i>V. sinuatum</i>	
<i>Veronica cymbalaria</i>	
Solanaceae - Potato Family	
<i>Hyoscyamus albus</i>	White Henbane
<i>Mandragora autumnalis</i>	Mandrake
# <i>Nicotiana glauca</i>	Tree tobacco
Styracaceae - Storax Family	
<i>Styrax officinalis</i>	Storax
Tamaricaceae - Tamarix Family	
<i>Tamarix smyrnensis</i>	Tamarisk
Thymelaeaceae - Daphne Family	
<i>Thymelaea hirsuta</i>	Thymelea
Urticaceae - Nettle Family	
<i>Parietaria judaica</i> Pellitory of the Wall	
<i>Urtica pilulifera</i> Roman Nettle	
Valerianaceae - Valerian Family	
<i>Centranthus calcitrapae</i>	
* <i>Valeriana asarifolia</i>	Cretan Valerian
<i>Valerianella sp</i>	Cornsalad
Vitaceae - Vine Family	
<i>Vitis vinifera</i>	Grape Vine
<u>Monocotyledons</u>	
Agavaceae - Agave Family	
# <i>Agave americana</i>	Century Plant
Amaryllidaceae - Daffodil Family	
<i>Pancratium maritimum</i>	Sea Daffodil (leaves only)
Araceae - Arum Family	
<i>Arum concinatum</i>	
<i>A. creticum</i>	Cretan Arum
<i>Dracunculus vulgaris</i>	Dragon Arum
Arecaceae - Palm Family	
<i>Phoenix theophrasti</i>	Cretan Palm
# <i>Washingtonia filifera</i>	Washingtonia
Iridaceae - Iris Family	
<i>Gladiolus italicus</i>	Field Gladiolus

Gynandrisis sisyrrinchium
Iris pseudocorus

Liliaceae - Lily Family

Allium nigrum
Asphodeline lutea
Asphodelus ramosus (aestivus)
Charybdis (Drimia, Urginea) maritima
Gagea graeca
Muscari comosum
 **M. spreitzenhoferi*
Ornithogalum narbonense
Ruscus aculeatus
Smilax aspera
**Tulipa doerfleri*
 T. saxatilis

Orchidaceae - Orchid Family

Aceras anthropophorum
Anacamptis pyramidalis
Barlia robertiana

Ophrys cretica

O. (scolopax) heldreichii
 O. episcopalis/holoserica
 O. iricolor
 O. phrygana
 O. sicula

O. (sphegodes) mammosa

Orchis boryi

O. coriophora ssp. fragrans
 O. italica
 O. laxiflora
 O. (provincialis) pauciflora
 O. quadripunctata
 O. simia

Serapias orientalis?

S. lingua

Poaceae - Grass Family (very incomplete)

Arundo donax
Briza maxima
Lagurus ovatus
Phragmites australis
Typha domingensis

Barbary Nut
Yellow Flag

Yellow Asphodel
Common Asphodel
Sea Squill

Tassel Hyacinth (*right*)

A spiked Star-of-Bethlehem
Butcher's broom
Common Smilax or Sarsparilla
(red, Spili)
Rock tulip (pink, Omalos)

Man orchid
Pyramidal orchid
Giant orchid (not in flower)

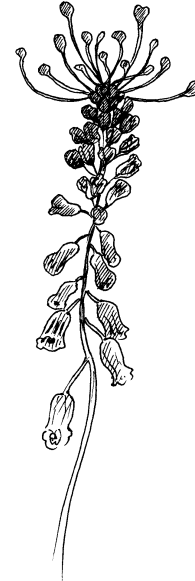
Cretan bee orchid
Marengo orchid
Bishop's ophrys
Rainbow orchid

Phrygana orchid a yellow bee orchid; hairy speculum
Sicilian orchid, another yellow bee orchid – flowers held
horizontally or vertically; hairless speculum
Mammose orchid

Bug orchid
Italian man orchid
Loose-flowered orchid
Few-flowered orchid
Four-spotted orchid
Monkey orchid

Tongue orchid

Giant Reed
Greater Quaking-grass
Hare's-tail
Common Reed
a reedmace



BIRDS

Little grebe	lots at Ayia Reservoir 19/4
Shag	1 at Plakias, Mediterranean race, 18 & 19/4
Little bittern	1 seen well at Ayia Reservoir 19/4
Squacco heron	3 Ayia Reservoir 19/4; 8 in off the sea at Damnoni beach 21/4
Little egret	2 at Plakias 17/4; 35 Plakias 22/4
Grey heron	9 flying inland of Plakias 17/4
Purple heron	1 at Ayia Triada 18/4
Mute swan	1 at Ayia reservoir 19/4
Garganey	5 at Ayia Reservoir 19/4; c 120 in Plakias Bay, evening of 21/4
Shoveler	2 pairs at Ayia Reservoir 19/4
Griffon vulture	seen over hills from Plakias; birds at nest holes Kourtaliotiko Gorge, several Kotsiphou gorge; several at Imbros
Marsh harrier	2 at Ayia Reservoir 19/4, 1 at Frangocastello 21/4
Bonelli's eagle	a pair in Imbros gorge 21/4
Golden eagle	1 at Imbros gorge 21/4
Buzzard	common and widespread
Kestrel	seen at Mirthios, Spili town and Spili bumps
Peregrine	1 at Kotsiphou gorge 20/4; 1 at Imbros gorge 21/4
Chukar	seen at Festos; heard at Moni Préveli
Quail	heard at Spili bumps
Little crane	2 at Ayia Reservoir 19/4
Moorhen	several at Ayia Reservoir
Coot	many at Ayia Reservoir
Little stint	1 at Plakias, 18/4, 19/4 and 21/4 river
Greenshank	2 at Ayia Reservoir 19/4
Wood sandpiper	1 at Ayia Triada 18/4; 3 at Ayia Reservoir 19/4; 3 on Omalos plateau 19/4
Common sandpiper	singles and to 3 at Plakias
Yellow-legged gull	common and widespread
Feral pigeon / rock dove	some with the characteristics of wild birds in Kourtaliotiko gorge, but mixing freely there with feral pigeons
Woodpigeon	widespread in small numbers
Collared dove	small numbers in many towns and villages
Turtle dove	11 Ayia Triada 18/4
Cuckoo	1 heard on the edge of the Omalos plateau 19/4
Swift	seen in small numbers at Ayia reservoir 19/4 and elsewhere in the following days
Pallid swift	1 Plakias 16/4; seen going into a building at dusk at Rethymnon 19/4
Alpine swift	seen most days, including 6 at Mirthios, 10 at Spili bumps and many at Ayia Triada and Ayia reservoir
Bee-eater	23 at Ayia Reservoir 19/4
Hoopoe	singles near Damnoni 17/4 and at Ayia Triada 18/4
Crested lark	common and widespread
Woodlark	Omalos
Sand martin	seen regularly in periods of hirundine movement, notably a flock of 47 at Plakias 19/4
Crag martin	in Kourtaliotiko gorge
Swallow	many trickling through, but no big flocks
Red-rumped swallow	1 at Plakias 16/4 Ayia Triada 18/4 and Frangocastello 19/4
House martin	trickling through
Yellow wagtail	Of half a dozen yellow wagtails feeding at Plakias 19/4, one male <i>feldegg</i> and one male) <i>thunbergii</i>
White wagtail	white widespread, no pied this year
Wren	heard at Omalos and in Kourtalitikio gorge
Whinchat	best count was 5 at Plakias 18/4
Stonechat	small numbers in most places
Wheatear	small numbers on the Omalos plateau only

Black-eared wheatear	pairs in the gorges and on the way up to Omalos
Blue rock thrush	Kourtaliotiko gorge; also on the headland east of Plakias Bay
Blackbird	widespread
Cetti's warbler	heard at Plakias, seen at Ayia Triada
Sedge warbler	one at Plakias, 18/4
Sardinian warbler	common and widespread
Blackcap	heard at Plakias 16/4 and Spili town 17/4
Whitethroat	heard at Omalos
Wood warbler	single at Moni Préveli 20/4
Spotted flycatcher	single at Moni Préveli 20/4
Pied flycatcher	3 at Moni Préveli 20/4
Blue tit	widespread
Great tit	common and widespread
Golden oriole	3 near Moni Préveli 20/4
Woodchat shrike	first was at Souda 18/4 then 5 at Plakias that evening; 1 Ayia Triada 18/4, 1 Omalos 19/4
Chough	over the café at the top of Samaria Gorge 19/4; 1 at Kotsiphou gorge 20/4
Jackdaw	in the gorges
Hooded crow	common and widespread
Raven	seen in every gorge and often during journeys
Italian sparrow	common and widespread
Chaffinch	common and widespread
Greenfinch	common and widespread
Goldfinch	common and widespread
Serín	just briefly seen and heard at Ayia reservoir
Linnet	at high altitude, namely Spili bumps and Omalos
Cirl bunting	very scarce, just heard while driving at Omalos
Ortolan bunting	a fine male west of Plakias 21/4
Corn bunting	most seen on the higher areas – Spili bumps and Omalos.