

# Iran

## *The Zagros Mountains*

A Greentours Tour Report

15<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> April 2007

Led by Ian Green and Mehran Etemadi

Day 1      April 15<sup>th</sup>    Departure

We all met up at Heathrow at the appropriate hour and took off on schedule on our BA operated flight to Tehran at nine-thirty in the evening.

Day 2      April 16<sup>th</sup>    to Shiraz & Dasht-e Arjan

Rather bleary-eyed we emerged from the completely hassle-free immigration and customs to be greeted by Mehran, our Iranian guide. Mehran has accompanied most of our Iranian groups for the past five years or so. He whisked us over to the domestic terminal where we set about a typical Iranian breakfast of lavaş bread, butter and honey and of course the ubiquitous and excellent tea. Fried eggs soon appeared too. It was a bright and sunny morning though the cloud hanging over the snowy peaks of the Alborz just north of the city were a reminder that April is a very changeable month in Iran and there had in fact been heavy rain the day before in the capital. Nonetheless the line of 4000m peaks carpeted with extra fresh snow looked very impressive. We checked in just before nine and were airborne again by ten. The flight to Shiraz took us about eighty minutes and after crossing an area of barren interior those on the right side of the aircraft had great views of range after range of the Zagros Mountains stretching south and west for hundreds of miles. Those that weren't asleep that was - I fell asleep before take-off and only woke up after we'd gained cruising altitude!

In Shiraz it was lovely and warm and sunny, just 16°C at eleven-thirty. A Plain Tiger butterfly flew across the front of the terminal building. We regained our luggage and met up with our drivers Hossayain and Hassan and then took a cuppa as we sorted out who was doing what. Some elected to go into Shiraz, settle into their hotel and then have a couple of late afternoon hours at the Vakil Bazaar whilst the rest of us took the bus through the crowded roads of Shiraz and out towards the west. Some sixty kilometres out of the city we came across a large lake lying in a depression between high cliffs - Arjan Lake. First it was lunch though and in this unprepossessing little settlement a roadside cafe was found which produced an excellent Khoresh-t-e Ghormeh Sabzi, a kind of spinach and bean stew served with saffron rice and a side dish of yoghurt. Very nice. The

lassi-like dukh, a yoghurt drink with mint and cumin, was fresh and lovely too. A quick look at the enticing looking cliffs behind the village revealed little of interest other than a Long-legged Buzzard holding steady in the wind. There was also a pair of Desert Finches.

So we headed on past the lake, taking a little track up into a protected area. As well as scenic views back over the lake, the habitat itself was very pleasant. Open Zagros Oak (*Quercus brantii*) woodland occupied little valleys and rocky ridges. Under it grew our first Crown Imperials, *Fritillaria imperialis*, a glorious sight. Blue Muscari neglectum and just a few *Tulipa biflora*, these just about over, were other bulbs along with *Ornithogalum cuspidatum* and *Gagea villosa*. The fine buttercup *Ranunculus farsicus* with very dissect leaves, was common, as was one of the *Geranium tuberosum* types. There were abundant colchicums in leaf and fruit and Wild Boar had been having a field day digging them up. One though had succumbed. A fine old boar had been killed, it seemed not by hunters (poachers here of course - it is a protected area) but by another animal. The half eaten back end suggested that the culprit may have been Leopard - it certainly looked good habitat for them. Birds were rather good. As we arrived a pair of Middle-spotted Woodpeckers fled. Jays, Hoopoe and Red-billed Chough were all seen and heard. Both Black and Common Redstarts flitted in the trees and migrant warblers were quite varied with Barred, Orphean, a lovely 'pinkish' Menetries Warbler as well as several Blackcaps. Some of these were feeding by landing on the Crown Imperials' stems and 'gleaning' inside the orange bells for insects! The tiny Plain Leaf Warbler sang in its usual exuberant little fashion from a tree top. White-eared Bulbuls and both Black-eared and Finsch's Wheatears were also seen.

Then it was back across the plain where we stopped for a quick distant 'scope view of lakeshore birds. Even in two minutes we found a flock of Dalmatian Pelicans, as well as Spoonbills, Little and Great White Egrets, lots of Teal and Coot and a few Mallard too. Most of us slept I think on the journey back to Shiraz. There we settled into the rather comfortable Parseh Hotel and took a very palatable dinner in the restaurant there.

### Day 3      April 17<sup>th</sup>      Persepolis, Naghst-e Rostam & Bamu National Park

The sun gets up early in Shiraz and so it was already warm by nine when we left after a hearty buffet breakfast. We drove north through the little cleft in the mountains that for long ages has been the only route to pass northwards, and one guarded by the city. We passed high barren mountainsides and great flat plains in between, these obviously very fertile now and presumably in the past. It took just about an hour to reach Persepolis where we and the few other cars and a couple of coaches occupied approximately one per cent of the huge carpark!

During the morning we split, with John and Kerstin back in Shiraz sorting out a longer visa, me doing a spot of wildlife watching behind the ruins, and the rest of the group taken round the site by Mehran. He'd already given us an insight into the complicated history of Iran during the bus journey and now it was the background and minutiae of fabulous Persepolis that he poured forth on. (The next bit might not be exactly as it happened as I wandered off to locate some wildlife but

should be something along the lines of what you did!). Once at the site we entered up the wonderfully broad Monumental Staircase to the Gate of All Nations built by Xerxes I. These pillars formed an impressive backdrop to our guide as he gave us some background to them and to the building of 2500 year old Persepolis itself. Passing some fine Homa statues on the left we moved to the eastern staircase of the Apadana, Darius's audience hall. This staircase is almost beyond belief so well preserved are the reliefs. The carving is sharp and accurate and it looks as if somebody had finished it only a year or so before – this of course may have been because it had been under a pile of dust for a very long time! The reliefs depict a variety of scenes with the cypress tree which was the Achaemenian symbol of life prominent. The majority of scenes depict the nations of the then known world bringing tribute to this summer palace. Each group of peoples has its leader being lead by the hand by an Achaemenian and each some followers bearing gifts for the king. The distinctive dress styles and even facial characteristics of some twenty-three nations were depicted here and each bore a variety of gifts. Pointy hatted Scythians bore golden torcs and a finely attired horse, the half-naked barefoot delegation from India carried bottles of incense and led an Ass to the throne, Assyrians and Phoenicians had strange curved beehives on their heads and lead a horse-drawn chariot. There were Medes, Armenians, Elamites bearing a lioness and her cubs, Babylonians with a Zebu bull, Aryans with a Bactrian Camel and of course Bactrians with the same! Sogdians from Samarkand in Central Asia offered horses, Cilicians from the Anatolian Diagonal some fine rams and Gandharians a Zebu bull and a collection of spears. Parthians, their heads swathed in what looks a little like a turban, lead yet more Bactrian Camels, whilst Arabs proffered the only Dromedary Camels. Most unusual of all perhaps were some Ethiopians or Nubians that led what was either a long-necked Eland or a short-necked Giraffe to the great throne of the Apadana Palace.

On to the Apadana where there were Lion-headed capitals (pillar-tops) and a vast array of stones that were as yet 'un-assigned' and then we were into Darius's Palace. Here was a fine bas-relief of Darius with his golden crown and what was known as the hall of mirrors because of the highly polished stones. Door jams were decorated with Darius fighting a Lion and a Bull and a Chimera. Ahuramazda the Zoroastrian god was depicted on a bas-relief between here and Xerxes Palace which featured bas-reliefs of Xerxes with a guy behind him carrying a parasol and a fly-swat – Xerxes was known for his love of play and luxury rather than Darius's more war-like tendencies!

Meanwhile I'd been out back doing a spot of photography on the common flowers of the area. They were on good form this year and the recent rains had indeed made the place very green. The thistle *Gundelia tournefortii* was everywhere as were *Roemeria hybrida*, patches of *Ixiolirion tataricum*, several Boraginaceae including *Paracaryum undulatum*, *Mathiola longipetala*, Geraniums, *Astragaluses*, *Erodiums cicutarium*, *gruinum* and *malacoides*, the deep red inflated seeded *Astragalus fasciculifolius* or *glaucacanthus* and a whole host of little Asteraceae. Growing on the rocks were two pretty *Campanulas*, tiny blue *polyclada* and larger pink and blue striped *leuoclada*. In the same habitats were *Umbilicus tropaeolifolius*, *Rosularias* and two pretty little ferns, *Cheilanthes fragrans* and *Cheilanthes catanensis*. The large long tailed agamid lizards *Laudakia nupta* perched atop rocks as did several wheatears. These included Mourning, Finsch's, and a stunning male Eastern Pied Wheatear of the *capistrata* race. Other avian highlights were the many Bee-eaters that most saw,

and on my little journey, Eastern Rock Nuthatches, Long-legged Buzzard, Scrub and Upcher's Warblers, and Rock Sparrows. Down by the carpark we saw Upcher's and Olivaceous Warblers and our first Nightingale of the trip sang loudly from one of the freshly green compact looking elms.

We made the short journey to the Peacock's Nest, a rather pleasant restaurant just a couple of miles away. Bee-eaters and Rollers were common on the wires on the way. The restaurant rapidly served up an excellent meal of various stews not to mention the herb and cheese starter even though they were inundated with guests. One of these was none other than Professor Mozaffarian, curator of the Herbarium in Tehran, teacher of eco-guides, and finder of many new plants including several *Dionysias*, one of which bears his name - more on that later!

After lunch it was to Naghsht-e Rostam. These large Achaemenian tombs are believed to be those of Darius I, Artaxerxes, Xerxes I and Darius II. Below were several reliefs from later in the Sassanian dynasty depicting various scenes of imperial conquests and royal investitures. After the cultural bit was finished we moved a little up the road to view the cliffs. Mid-way up we could see many cushions of yellow - our first *Dionysia* - this one *Dionysia diapensifolia*. They were at the height of flowering. It was all I could do to stop people racing up the slope ..... But there were virtually none within easy reach, only a couple of plants with two or three flowers each, and so I suggested we waited until later in the afternoon (and hoped I was right!). When we arrived at the Bamu National Park ranger house's we found all bar one (a familiar face from the previous year's visit at least) was out on a poaching incident and so we would have to wait. However the understanding ranger allowed us on when we pointed out that the spot we wanted was within sight of his abode! So we tracked up hill (many walking it mostly or all anyway) about four hundred metres and then parked the 4wds and walked up a slope to our left. The vista all around was quite something with a large petrochemical works in the distance but all across the valley and into the mountains beyond an uninhabited and more importantly ungrazed (except by wild animals) montane steppe. It was very green with grass growing well and not a few nice herbs to add interest. In fact on the way up to the rocks where we'd already espied the prized *dionysias* we stopped for our first encounter with the lovely rose and white *Ajuga chamaecytisus*, a few *Muscari caucasicum* and some shrubs that we could not identify. Little and Common Swifts wheeled overhead and Long-legged Buzzard and Red-billed Chough cruised along the skyline. Blue Rock Thrush, Chukar and White-throated Robins inhabited the slopes. But it was the *Dionysias* that held sway. These were all forms of *Dionysia diapensifolia*. There were some fabulous cushions of this elegant species and we spent some time enjoying the spectacle. There were also a number of other unusual plants here including a pretty *Silene*.

It was just closing in on dusk now so most of the group departed for Shiraz and just a few of us stayed out in the 4wd to try our luck after dark. It took some time at the ranger's house to get permission but it was eventually forthcoming and so, in the pitch black we set off with a couple of rangers joining Terry and Jill in the 4wd and with me on the roof. We crossed the dry riverbed and within moments had picked up our first eyeshine. We were excited to find a group of beautiful Goitred Gazelles right by the roadside, and though they gradually walked off they seemed not at

all upset to be so illuminated! Pleased we drove on soon finding another gazelle, then a small group, then a few more – we saw many gazelle in the end. Cape Hare and a Red Fox were next, then as we drove along the side of some steep hills we picked out some dark shapes moving towards us. These stopped but we could see what they were – two large Wild Boar. They seemed uncertain what to do and fidgetted this way and that before sloping off into a gully. Crested Larks roosting along the track flew up in front of us at regular intervals and we found yet more gazelle as we started back towards the ranger's house, taking a track along the other side of the wide valley. Almost at the Dionysia site we picked up strong green eyeshine but it wasn't the Leopard the ranger's were looking for, but in fact a Striped Hyena. This stood silhouetted against a hillside and it wasn't long before we realized that there were in fact three Striped Hyenas. And they had some food, we could see one carrying it in its jaws. All in all an exceptional evening's viewing!

We returned to Shiraz, going straight to join the others at a rather good restaurant where a large wedding party had the tables near us!

#### Day 4      April 18<sup>th</sup>      Barmshur Spring & the Sarvestan-Kherameh Pass

A five-thirty start for the keen bird people among the group. We drove out to Maharlu Lake and parked the vehicles up just a few hundred metres short of the spring at Barmshur. Calandra and Crested Larks marked our progress to the waters as Quail called. In the cereal crops were some nice 'weeds' such as Cow Basil, *Vaccaria hispanica*, and the champion *Silene conoidea*. Initially it all seemed rather quiet around the spring itself though we were aware of plenty of activity down by the shore. But as we walked round a variety of unusual birds appeared. Graceful Warblers and Great Reed Warblers sang from the reed tops whilst less long-lasting views were had of Bluethroat and a Paddyfield Warbler. A Marbled Duck allowed good but brief views and so too did two Little Bitterns, one in the scope. As we walked down towards the lake occasional Marsh Harriers appeared but more frequent were the Black Kites. A Squacco or two hunted by the little channel and we saw Little and Great White Egrets, as well as Grey Heron and Spoonbill, flying over. Waders were plentiful by the shore with most of them being Kentish Plovers. However a little scanning revealed Little Stints, Dunlin, Greenshank and Avocets. Near the latter were a beautiful pair of Slender-billed Gulls and beyond them a long line of Greater Flamingos. It was a great surprise to realise that the huge flocks of waders swirling and arcing over the water amongst the flamingos were in fact Red-necked Phalaropes. There were thousands of them. In fact with Michael's various other flocks spotted as we drove down the lake a guess work figure in excess of ten thousand could be deduced. What is certain is that there more than a couple of thousand! We walked back to the spring passing around its other edge. This proved a wonderful spot with several very nice Isabelline Shrikes and Black-headed Buntings in view and a group of perhaps four Clamorous Reed Warblers hopping out of the reeds to fossick in the surrounding saltmarsh vegetation.

It was good to get back to a breakfast and tea all prepared and with table and chairs set up. There had been a lot to see - other birds seen but not mentioned above included a mystery *Vanellus*

'lapwing', Savi's Warbler, two Shelduck and a load of Shoveler, Green Sandpiper, Common Snipe, Black-headed Yellow Wagtail, Hoopoes, Bee-eaters, Isabelline and Northern Wheatears.... the list goes on!

Back at the main road we awaited the rest of the group and potted by the roadside watching a large group of Black Kites circle over the nearby cliffs. All reunited we headed southeast towards Sarvestan. Sadly the lake's usual immaculate views were absent this morning due to a thick sandy haze. So we headed for the mountains. The road from Sarvestan took us towards Kherameh and we didn't stop until we'd reached a pass over the intervening mountain ridge. This was in beautiful unspoilt habitat with mixed acer and pistachio woodlands running up slopes to cliffs above. One of the most striking plants on the way up was what looked rather like a broom with large prunus-like flowers. These had been a mystery to us for a couple of years but thankfully Dot solved that one during the evening and we now know that they are *Amygdalus arabica*! The dwarf shrubby *Ephedra pachyclada* was very architectural. At the start point of our walk there was little to see but things soon warmed up with *Gladiolus persicus* and just a few *Gentiana olivieri* in flower. Geraniums were common and so too the buttercup *Ranunculus cicutarius*. Terry found a delicate *Corydalis* (seems to be *verticillata*) and there were plenty of little *Viola occulta*, *Conringia perfoliata* and assorted crucifers and astragaluses to keep us happy. It wasn't long before the cry went up 'a yellow tulip!' and we all rushed over to see it. There were red ones nearby too and the further up the slopes one went the commoner they all became. There were also *Gagea stipitata* and right near the top of the slope *Gagea alexeenkoana*. *Bellevalia shirazana* had finished flowering but not the *Dionysia revoluta* which competed for our attention with the tulips and the wonderful crinkly leaves of *Rheum turkestanorum*. Up at the highest levels reached we found *Tulipa biflora* and the lovely little pink *Fritillaria gibbosa* in flower. Birdlife was more noticeable by sound than by sight. However we did watch a Long-legged Buzzard soar along the ridgetop and some while later a Short-toed Eagle came in and landed on a ridgetop juniper. Nearer at hand were White-cheeked Bulbuls and White-throated Robins the latter had a hard time keeping the Cuckoos at bay. Plain Leaf Warblers were not uncommon.

Back down at the pass we all convened for our picnic. The yoghurt and dates were particularly appreciated! Then it was downhill to have a look at *Dionysia sarvestanica* though only through the 'scope. We did find a little in lemon yellow flower amongst all the *Dionysia revoluta*! Then it was the two hour journey back to Shiraz which took us through some lovely scenery. Latterly this included mile upon mile of vineyards, these cultivated in a very different style from the one's we are more used to seeing.

We arrived back at the hotel at five and so I went off with Mehran for another attempt to get the university authorities to allow us access to their land. No success again but instead we found a sneaky backway in (if you can be sneaky on a campus of over a hundred thousand students!). We walked up to the valley behind and found the legendary *Dionysia michauxii*, now a good couple of weeks past its flowering time, as well as a superb Bruce's Scops Owl. Then it was into town for our evening meal where an Iranian classic called Deez-ee was served to most of us. This meal involved decanting the 'soup' from one's stew and then pulverizing the stew with a mortar and consuming

the latter product with bread and herbs and eating the 'soup' separately. Complicated but very delicious!

## Day 5      April 19<sup>th</sup>      Journey to Semirom

We started the day's long journey at eight. It's not so much long as 'slow' the total distance being maybe 300km. First we headed out of the city and northwest to Sipadan only stopping some way past there where a hillside with little red dots caught our attention. This was our first encounter with *Tulipa systola*. The brilliant red flowers were a startling sight. Growing with them were a few *Muscari neglectum* and two *Bellevalias* – *decolorans* and *macrobotrys*, the latter already in seed. Next was another more accessible tulip stop where all were able to see the wonderful red goblets. Growing with them here were various *Astragalus* species and the strange *Matthiola longipetala*. It wasn't long before we had to stop again, this time in a gorge where the cliffs angled sharply upwards. A great spot for *Dionysias* and so it proved with our first pink one - the lovely bryoides. Crag Martins and Red-billed Chough wheeled overhead.

Now we descended towards Yasuj and found ourselves entering a belt of Zagros Oak woodland, very fine scenery indeed, and quite a contrast with the bleak hills we'd just left. We pulled up to search for orchids and soon found some. Joan was the first to the *Orchis stevenii*, a kind of 'military orchid'. It was the only one we could find and was a rather small specimen. Nearby was a rather fine *Ophrys transhyrcana* and we soon found several more of this large-flowered bee orchid. Over on some scree, growing amongst plentiful *Viola* was the smelly-flowered *Aristolochia olivieri*. We'd already surmised this must be there because of the number of Festoon (*Zerynthia louristana*) butterflies flitting about the slopes. Also noted were Brimstone and Clouded Yellow, and in the bird line, Common Redstart.

Then it was onwards and as we got close to Yasuj suddenly the great Denar Massif reared behind the town. The peaks reach 4409m and even though these were the south facing slopes, well more of a wall really, there was plenty of snow clinging to the precipitous slopes. We bypassed the town, the capital of the province whose name is so long and province so small that on maps the latter is obliterated by the former! We headed for Sisakt, always through oak woodland, leaving the main road and climbing steadily towards the town. We stopped amid the oaks and had a picnic. The views away to the west showed hazy mountain range after mountain range - it was a pity we couldn't see the views better today. The oak forest was rather odd, all the trees were well spaced apart, rather like a parkland, and many had at some point in the past, been heavily coppiced. And there was no regeneration.

After the picnic we headed higher to the town itself and to a little valley that entered the national park right on the corner of town. With time now seriously limiting us we used the 4wds to take us just a little higher up the track. Rather a mistake as first Hassan got stuck and then Hossaiyan put his in the river! Took a while to get the latter out! Luckily no major damage to the vehicles! Meanwhile the rest of us walked up a path that took us at an angle across a steep scree slope. It

wasn't far which was good because even on the path the going was a touch slippery! At some cliffs which dripped with water we found our quarry, *Dionysia termeana*. This species is found only on the Denar Massif and must be rare judging by its preference for tufaceous cliffs with dripping water! It was in fine form for though a rather straggly species it does have brilliant yellow flowers and hangs beautifully from its cliff home. The other plant of particular note here was the lovely rose coloured *Ajuga austro-iranica*, its very woolly-haired leaves having purple undersides. Then it was to Semirom, still a journey of nearly three hours. It was well gone dark when we arrived - about eight-thirty. We were welcomed at the Arash Hotel like long lost friends though we were probably the first foreigners they'd had to stay in this year-old hotel. A great meal of lamb-shank stew was much appreciated by the travel weary group!

## Day 6      April 20<sup>th</sup>      Bohorse Mountain and Aghdak

The night had been wet and at times windy and so it was with some trepidation that we drew back the curtains in the morning. However things improved over an excellent breakfast and though heavy cloud was still plentiful as we drove through town it didn't look too bad. The road north out of Semirom heads uphill seemingly only briefly but by the time we pulled up just minutes out of town we were up at around 3000m above sea level. And getting out of the vehicles we soon realised it. The wind hadn't dropped much and it was freezing! Not really, but it certainly felt it. The scene in front of us seemed barren - soil and rock and just some unpleasant astragalus bushes to hamper the walking - it certainly didn't promise a floral extravaganza. However we were soon peering at little *Corydalis verticillaris* and *Gagea tenuifolia*. Then somebody piped up that they'd found a frit. It was the diminutive little purple-black flowered *Fritillaria zagrica*, the blooms with little yellow touches at the end of the tepals. Then it was the turn of Jill to call another frit, this one a big surprise here as we had never found *Fritillaria gibbosa* at this site. We went on to find a few more though it was the numbers of *zagrica* that impressed, where in previous year's we'd had to be content with finding one in flower, here were at least a hundred. *Tulipa biflora* was common but rarely open in this weather. Then we found the first *Tulipa systola*. By now we'd spotted the pink on the rocks above. These were easily accessible and so soon we were walking from rock to rock, trying to decide which of the beautiful cushions of *Dionysia mozaffarianii* we were going to photograph. Oh to heck with it, let's do them all! We'd hit them perfect again with every cushion seeming at its peak. Some were magnificent with blooms so crowded none of the unusual foliage could be seen. Where it could the distinctive three-pronged leaves were noted. The flowers varied from mid-pink to bright pinky-violet with most at the latter end of the spectrum, some with yellowish centres too. Thoughts of hybrids with the few small plants of *Dionysia revoluta* also present were soon discarded though. *Dionysia mozaffarianii* was of course named after the professor we'd met a few days earlier in the restaurant near Persepolis! Also in fine forms on said rocks was the 'false dionysia' *Draba pulchella*. Aside from the flowers there was a bit of bird life about and the Snow Voles had left plenty of trails. Kestrel, Red-billed Chough and Brown-necked Ravens were joined in the skies by Swifts and Crag Martins. Passerines were unusually scarce, probably the strong wind causing this, and we only saw Shorelarks, Rock Sparrows, Blue Rock Thrushes, White-throated Robins and Pied Wheatears. I almost forgot the *Gageas fistulosa* and *gageoides* too!

We moved down the road a short distance to some rugged cliffs where the 'scope was used to admire the many *Dionysias* on the cliff face with both *mozaffarianii* and *iranshahrii* present. Then it was out onto the Vanak road. We started noticing tulips almost immediately in the roadside steppe but held off stopping until the top of a small pass (still over 2800m!). Here were a few *Tulipa systola* and *Tulipa biflora* and also a lovely lime-yellow *Astragalus*. However it was down the other side that we really had to stop as the density of tulips reached new heights. It was a staggering show with little dots of red all over the steppe. We took many photos, especially of groups with the fabulous snow-streaked Pashmaku range beyond. Amongst all this red was bright blue *Muscari neglectum* and just one yellow tulip - still *Tulipa systola* though! We drove onwards, getting just a few kilometres under our belt and passing through magnificent montane steppe scenery with apple orchards (Semrom is famous for its apples) softening the landscapes. Next stop was by a wet flush covered in *Muscari* and the gorgeous *Fritillaria reuteri*. This elegant fritillaria blooms in abundance where it can keep its feet in shallow water, but exists in only a narrow belt through the central Zagros. The tubby mahogany to chestnut brown bells are lined and edged with yellow and each plant holds two to six making for a wonderful show.

We left the Vanak road and took a dirt track up a narrow valley to a secluded area of orchards between rocky ridges. Today was Friday so the locals were all out having picnics and a couple of families had come this way - no wonder, it is a pleasant spot. Still there were enough of the venerable old walnut trees by the fortified farm to allow us in as well and Mehran and co soon had the picnic under construction. It turned out we were taking the picnic not just on the roots of a convoluted old walnut but in a bed of the little buttercup relative *Ceratocephalus testiculatus*, its near relative *Ceratocephalus falcatus* flowered on the drier slopes. After the picnic we walked back down hill a little to a steep slope where the wonderful scarlet goblets of *Anemone biflora* glowed as the afternoon sun finally shone and the cold wind eased.

Some of us walked up through the orchards and past the old fortified farmyard complete with huge wooden door, and past several very fine old walnuts, to a little gorge. Inside, on the overhanging walls, was a cascade of *Dionysia revoluta*. Though this is a rather untidy plant it is impressive in this situation with large numbers and large plants. In the deepest stage the leaves had not become revolute and were just flat! Huge *Celtis* trees emerged from beside vast boulders and there were also willows, *Berberis* and huge umbellifers including a *Xanthogalum* species.

Then it was a short drive to another little gorge. This one tiny - just metres long. But on the far side of it the cliffs held some lovely *Dionysia iranshahrii*. Cushions of this tight-growing grey foliaged species were numerous among the rocks and some were, once again, in perfect bloom. In fact they were really quite incredible and the somewhat difficult stream crossing, using a plank bought along especially for the occasion, was attempted by most. Many photographs were taken of this memorable show! By the stream were a few *Tulipa biebersteiniana*, the brilliant yellow flowers glowing in the afternoon sun. Crag Martins wheeled past and a pair of Western Rock Nuthatches had a nest on the cliff face.

## Day 7      April 21<sup>st</sup>      Hanna and Miorok

A beautiful morning which was especially appreciated by those up at six-fifteen for the morning birdwatching. We went up to the north side of Bohorse Mountains and took an inviting looking track a couple of kilometres into the montane steppe. Alighting we found ourselves in a perfectly still and absolutely clear morning yet the water around us had a thin veneer of ice on it. During the next ninety minutes we wandered up the slope towards the mountain seeing many birds but first of all a Red Fox who quickly scarpered. We saw many fox prints and two sets of what were presumably Wolf prints heading steadily up a stream valley no doubt to a lookout which observed our approach! Most common among the birds, approximately in equal measure were Bimaculated Lark, Grey-necked Bunting and Shorelark. Wheatears were represented by several Pied Wheatears and a couple of Northern Wheatears. The lovely variegata race of Stonechat gave us fabulous views and we enjoyed no less than three Hoopoes. A little rather nondescript warbler flitting in the astragalus bushes was a female Menetries Warbler. Linnets were common and overhead Swifts arced through the brilliant blue sky. Many tulips were in flower and gageas too, the latter including *Gagea dshungarica*. Along a stream we found several *Merendera (Colchicum) wendelboi* still in flower and on the gravelly slopes were plenty of *Fritillaria zagrica*.

After breakfast we headed east out of town across the rolling steppe country to Hanna, about forty minutes drive away. We stopped at the top end of the village and left Reza to prepare tea as we walked over to a hillside where *Dionysia bryoides* abode. As we walked up the short slope to these plants we encountered plenty of lovely *Anemone biflora* in flower along with the bright white and yellow stars of *Tulipa biflora*. The *Dionysia* was in fine form with little pink patches decorating rocks both almost flat and vertical. The variety of colour was perhaps greater than with the other two *Semirom* 'pinks' with some almost white, others varying shades of pink and some almost magenta-pink. Growing with them were *Alyssum lanceolatum* and at least two drabas as well as the white *Arabis aucheri*. Gageas were plentiful with *gageoides* and in particular the elegant little *stipitata* forming the bulk. One or two were lucky enough to find *Fritillaria gibbosa* in good flower. Grey-necked Buntings and Chukar were the birds seen and Painted Lady and Mallow Skipper the butterflies.

Then we moved over to the slopes below Hanna dam. Unfortunately the evidently tardy spring in Iran was really late here and it seemed as if everything was at least a couple of weeks behind. The *Iris lycotis* was not even in bud and *Eremostachys molucelloides* had hardly got past the fluffy leaf stage! In partial recompense there was a significantly good show of Gageas! The rather fine *Gagea chomutowae*, with large (for a Gagea) purple-tipped yellow flowers and a long round fistulose basal leaf, was found by Terry, and other species present included *Gageas alexeenkoana* and *stipitata*. On the far side of the hill, near a desert race Little Owl, there was a lovely display of *Tulipa systola* and *Leontice leontopetalum*.

The good people running the dam allowed us into their compound to take our picnic down by the river, there being little other shade in the area. It was a very pleasant spot with shady willows lining a deep and fast flowing river emitting from the dam. Chiffchaffs were rather common in the

trees and other birds included Lesser Whitethroat, Whinchat, a couple of Redstarts, Syrian Woodpecker, Purple Heron and overhead, a Long-legged Buzzard. Lunch done, we headed a couple of miles round the reservoir for a spot of birding. This proved a great little spot with the highlight probably being the ninety or so Red-necked Phalaropes that we eventually got quite close too. Waterfowl were common and varied. On the main lake we had seen lots of Black-necked and a few Great Crested Grebes, Tufted Ducks and Wigeon, and on the arm of the lake we were by there were also two Greylag Geese, a few Ruddy Shelduck, several each of Gadwall, Shoveler and Teal, and quite a lot of Garganey. A Grey Heron and a Spoonbill represented the heron family whilst waders seen were Ruff and Collared Pratincole. Black-headed and Slender Billed Gulls perched along the island along with Sandwich and Common Terns whilst a single Gull-billed Tern flew past. There were even a few passerines including Calandra Lark, Linnets and several Red-throated Pipits.

We decided to look for the Iris in an area north of Semirom but this proved to be a little higher and so the plants were only just in leaf, however it did give us the chance to photograph a memorable scene of massed sunlit *Tulipa biflora* with snowy mountains as a backdrop. We continued to a lower plain, but no *Iris lycotis*, however *Iris songarica* was there though only in bud. It was a fascinating semi-desert or high steppe habitat stretching away apparently unchanging into the distance. Plants included a shrubby yellow asteracean amongst many unidentified species. We did however know the lovely blue *Moltkia caerulea*, the odd-looking *Matthiola chenopodifolia*, an *Ornithogalum*, and the sadly only in bud *Linaria michauxii*. Little shrubs of *Ajuga chamaecytisus* were in fine flower. Mehran found an Olivier's Agama which sat patiently in his palm as all photographed this wonderfully camouflaged beast. We set off for Semirom but were further delayed by a beautiful display of *Eremurus persicus* in nice flower.

After dinner several of us went out on a night drive. Just outside Semirom we spotted a Golden Jackal and had good views as it crossed the road. Then at the top of the first little pass we spotted another and all got out to have a look. As we got good close views of this animal as it pattered off there came a shout from Reza. It was a Wolf. It had crossed the road in front of the bus and walked up the bank near us, only to turn and walk/trot slowly past us at really rather close range! A fabulous sight - its bushy tail was longer than the nearby jackal and aside from being larger and bigger headed it had a black line down its back and the thick fur was a speckled greyish-brown as opposed to the sandy colour of the jackals. Elated we continued for another hour seeing a total of three more Golden Jackals, a Red Fox and a Cape Hare.

## Day 8      April 22<sup>nd</sup>    Journey to Chelgerd

A fine sunny morning meant that the Kuh-e Denar stood out magnificently well to the south of us and after our farewells to the friendly staff at the Arash we were off towards those very mountains. It took us an hour and a half to reach the a river where we made our first stop. Olivaceous Warbler and several Willow Warblers sang as we walked down to the river bank and the cliff where the strange yellow-flowered *Primula gaubiana* flowered at the base. It seems to

prefer the dampest of spots yet the whole plant and in particular the stems are covered in a white meal. Other plants one does not readily associate with getting wet are *Dionysias* yet here was *Dionysia revoluta* in some profusion flowering happily whilst water dripped right onto the blooms and foliage!

We now turned north towards Gandoman stopping at the Karobas Pass. Bit of a misnomer really as in fact one goes down to it - or at least the pretty mountainous bit with all the plants is where one drops off a plateau and into a deeply incised valley. We pulled up having espied the spots of yellow above. A short steep walk or a longer easy one saw most up to the limestone rocks that proved to be a little piece of floral heaven. First the *Dionysia*. This was *zagrica*, a tight cushion forming species with little slightly orangey-yellow flowers. The cushions as usual varied greatly but some were up around twenty centimetres across and some were covered completely with blooms. Growing with them was a wonderful mix of *Anemone biflora*, here the red form, and wide open, *Fritillaria imperialis* in its majestic glory, and a yellow *Fibigia* and red *Tulipa systola*. White-throated Robins put in regular appearances and there was a very obliging Isabelline Shrike. Two Plain Leaf Warblers flew into the top of a *Pistacia* and we also saw Common Redstart and Raven. We moved half a mile down the road and took on a rather tricky little walk to another *Dionysia*. Many sensibly elected to stay by the bus and watch! Those that made it saw *Dionysia bolivarii* flowering in perfection. This large flowered large-bracted species has flowers on stems unlike any of the cushion forming species and in fact appeared more like a miniature *Primula gaubiana*. The delightful flowers of *Amygdalus arabica* covered these strange bushes though they looked rather more normal now the foliage was starting to appear. They were certainly attractive to the bees from a large group of hives.

Then it was to an already delayed lunch. We stopped in a little mixed walnut and quince grove set between white hills covered in very little other than a fine white marly scree. However, what vegetation there was, was exceptional. Aside from the runs of *Colchicums* (species?) and the thistly *Gundelia* there were some lovely purple *Gladiolus atroviolaceus*, large specimens of *Bellevalia longistyla*, the pretty *Salvia multicaulis* and a superb specimen of the smelly-flowered *Aristolochia olivieri*. Best though was the even smellier *Eminium intortum* which had a few specimens crouching on the inhospitable looking soil. With the *Aristolochia* inevitably there was the festoon *Zerynthia louristana* and by the picnic were Common Blue, Brown Argus and Scarce Swallowtail.

Now we headed on to Gandoman and then west to the lakes around Naghan. A sea of yellow *Tulipa biebersteiniana* met us near the shores of one lake and many pictures were had of these shining in the afternoon sun, especially with a large snowy mountain for a background. Then there was a quick stop for birding but this proved unsuccessful as there were only Black-necked and Great Crested Grebes along with the abundant Coot on the water.

Then we were into Ardal Gorge where sure enough, *Dionysias* lit up the spectacular cliffs. As Red-billed Choughs wheeled overhead we looked at more *Dionysia revoluta* and some just gone past flowering specimens of a tight cushion forming species - possibly *Dionysia khuzestanica*. Further up the road, Reza made another of the day's brews as we took a quick look at a riverside where *Scilla*

*persica* usually flowers. They were still in bud this year. The *Bellevalia pycnantha* was in fine flower and on the cliffs so too was *Arabis ottonis-schultzei* and *Alyssum lanceolatum*. Three Common Sandpipers flew up river and a pair of White Wagtails flitted from rock to bridge and back. Best though was a lovely male Semi-collared Flycatcher that joined Chiffchaff and Blackcap in a willow sat in the fast moving snow-melt waters.

We left as dusk descended and it took another hundred minutes to reach Chelgerd where we settled into the Kouhrang Hotel and enjoyed a rather late dinner.

## Day 9      April 23<sup>rd</sup>      Dasht-e Laleh & Sheikh Ali Khan

A lovely sunny morning revealed the stunning scenery surrounding the hotel. The rather bedraggled village itself lay at the head of a valley with snowy slopes rising all round. The scene to the south was of great snow banks reaching diagonally across slopes in what appeared almost a herring-bone pattern. However it wasn't until we'd started out for the *Fritillaria* fields that we saw the high peaks of Zard Kuh rise behind this forward range. Zard Kuh and the whole ridge which it bestrides was completely covered in snow. This mountain is the highest in the Zagros at 4548 metres but it is more the extent of the alpine territory that surrounds it that impresses. The road out of Chelgerd to the west rises through a landscape that is almost entirely snow-covered at this season for almost eighty kilometres.

We stopped by the Koohrang Spring. Stripe-necked Terrapins were already out sunning themselves on the rocks and green Edible Frogs chorused in the water weeds. Water Cress grew along one side of the pond. We saw several Red-throated Pipits, in company with a Little Ringed Plover on the nearby wet field and further out were Black-headed Yellow Wagtails and further still Armenian Gulls and Common Terns.

At Dasht-e Laleh, the fritillary fields, we passed the gate and pulled up with a hundred metres or so. There was a sea of Crown Imperials across the undulating clayey landscape. We spread across the hillsides leaving Reza to make the mid-morning pot of tea! The numbers of these frits are difficult to comprehend. More than a million for sure as they not only stretched up the valley in front of us and several smaller parallel ones but also for several kilometres up the main valley. And often they were dense - in fact the local dock, *Rumex chalepensis*, bare earth and the Crown Imperials were perhaps about equal in measure of ground cover over wide areas. There was little variation in colour from the straight orange though the odd dark one was seen and one or two of the group saw yellow ones, these still in bud. Lower down little else was in flower, except *Gageas*, and there was some variety of these with no less than six species found during this stop. *Gagea fistulosa*, *gageoides*, *confusa*, *tenuifolia* and *alexenkoana* were all seen all over the site and *Gagea chomutowae* was found higher up. Behind the clayey slopes was a steep mountainside of hard gritty conglomerate which had very little growing on it except on the frequent bands of soil between the rocks. These had a variety of colour forms of *Fritillaria persica*, some beautiful *Tulipa systola*, the smelly *Biebersteinia multifida*, *Bellevalia longistyla*, and *rosularia*, *arabis*, and *geraniums*. Birdlife was

confined to a Lesser Kestrel, some Alpine Choughs and some very confusing wheatears which look like they must be hybrids between Black-eared and Pied. Tail, back and wing patterns were typical Black-eared whilst head, throat and breast were from Pied! Lizards scurried hither and thither and Painted Ladies flew past at regular intervals. It was a good spot for reptiles generally with a large sandy Agama and two snakes, *Coluber rhodorachis*, a fast moving little non-venomous snake, known locally as the Gafari Snake, and the larger *Coluber ravergeri* (Leopard Snake). Whilst supping the chai two Little Owls were seen perched in a tree.

After tea we moved up the valley a couple of miles to a little stream. We pottered here whilst the gang set up the picnic. The stream was home to many *Bellevalia pycnantha* and *Fritillaria reuteri* but these were only just coming out. The ground hugging *Ornithogalum sigmoideum* was in good flower and so too a pretty little buttercup. Much of the ground flora here was made up of a mix of long narrow-leaved species not in flower, the *Colchicum* having already done so and *Allium hirtifolium* and *Eremurus spectabilis* still to bloom. After the picnic was finished we spotted Long-legged Buzzards flying over the ridge, these joined by Alpine Choughs.

After a brief break back at the hotel we went up the road towards Sheikh Ali Khan. This takes one into the most extraordinary landscape of alpine splendour. Rounding a bend at around 2900m one is confronted with a large alpine tableland through which cuts the Kouhrang River. Much of the tableland is snow-covered and the impressive heights of the main Zard Kuh and its long ridge are most certainly so. After a photo stop we moved on up the road only to be stopped by a road disrupted by a landslip. No matter we had the two 4wds with us and so these ferried us in two groups through the old Bakhtiari nomad village, now just opening up for summer, to a spot where *Merenderas* flowered abundantly. This was *Merendera (Colchicum) wendelboi* and its pink, magenta or almost white flowers dotted the almost bare turf. Also here were *Gagea fistulosa* and *Corydalis verticillaris*. Northern Wheatears and Persian (Red-tailed) Wheatears were easy to see but best bird was definitely the adult Imperial Eagle that soared above the ridge. As we returned towards the bus and another Reza cup of tea we spotted several migrants in the fields below. There were White Wagtails and Yellow Wagtails, the latter in two new races for us, the yellow and green headed *lutea* and the dark-grey headed (with white supercilium) *superciliaris*. Grey-necked and Ortolan Buntings joined Crested Lark and several Red-throated Pipits.

Most of the group headed back to the hotel but a small group of us decided to tackle the snowy heights back up the road. We drove right up above 3000m to where only the road and some rocky outcrops were snow-free. Pulling up we immediately spotted a Radde's Accentor. This sang beautifully and John later found two more. White-throated Robins was also seen. Best though was the two Imperial Eagles that Mehran spotted sitting atop a virtually completely snow-covered ridge. One took off and flew along to the other one and then flew off altogether. No luck searching for animals though we did see bear tracks across the snow. However on the way down we saw three characters walking along the road. We stopped and picked them up learning that they were the snow plough drivers and they had broken down. They had walked ten kilometres already and had another fifteen to go. It was already nearly dark and close to freezing. They seemed rather pleased to be picked up and taken home!

## Day 10      April 24<sup>th</sup>      The Kouhrang Valley

A cloudy morning with just a hint of rain in the air as we left at eight-thirty for the Kouhrang Valley. It took us about twenty-five minutes to come within sight of the deep dark-walled gorge that the river makes through an alpine tableland that was heavily streaked with snow - we were after all driving along at 2300-2500m for much of the way. We admired this spectacle and the fabulous white ridges of the Zard Kuh for another twenty minutes before the road dipped down and we crossed the large river pulling up at the far side. We left Reza with the usual instruction (tea at ten-thirty!) and walked along the riverbank for half a mile to some low cliffs. Common Sandpipers were along the river and Grey-necked Bunting was seen through the 'scope. At the little cliff we found our quarry - a superb display of *Dionysia archibaldii*. This is a rather unusual species with large pale to rich pink flowers with a yellow centre above foliage that rather resembles *Dionysia revoluta* in its sometimes straggly nature and the revolute leaves. Most of these plants were nicely compact though with a few hanging from overhangs. The foliage of *Corydalis rupestris* (but not the yellow flowers) was evident and further along the little fern *Cystopteris fragilis* too. There was lots of fine silty mud by the river and in this were impressed the footprints of a variety of animals including some great Otter pugmarks as well as Fox and what seemed most likely to be Wild Cat. A Red-fronted Serin flew over and as we walked back along the track there were plenty more birds to be seen on the shrubby hillside above. Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers, Black-eared and Northern Wheatears, White-throated Robins and plenty of Rock Sparrows. Back at the cup of tea there was Buzzard and Armenian Gull seen along the river course.

Now we moved up the pass a little stopping below another small cliff. On this was shining yellow cushions of *Dionysia lamingtonii* however we clearly couldn't get near all the good ones! We walked over to one little group but even these were up above us. It was a great place for *Gageas* though with *fistulosa*, *glacialis*, *tenuifolia*, *confusa*, *gageoides* and probably *dubia* joining the many *Corydalis verticillaris* and *Ranunculus kochii*. Kestrels and Blue Rock Thrush were on the rock face, a See-see Partridge flew off, and on the slope John located Plain Leaf Warbler. We moved a little further uphill stopping by the entrance to a tiny gorge. This was a beautiful thing - all in miniature with vertical walls all of twenty feet high and a flat silty floor dotted with *Merendera wendelboi* that narrowed to barely wider than a person in places. Two spots on the walls had abundant *Dionysia lamingtonii* in perfect flower - what a stunning sight. And below them was the delicate *Puschkinia scilloides*. Birds included Spotted Flycatcher and several Chukar.

We attained the pass itself where snow ruled down to road level on one side but everything was clear on the other - such is the impact of aspect in such places! We dropped down the south side a little before setting up the picnic. As Mehran and Reza and co worked we pottered about enjoying the *Merenderas* and *Puschkinias*. Several White-throated Robins were seen and at least three Red-tailed (or Persian) Wheatears too.

The rain was just beginning as we set off down to Samsami and sadly never let off all afternoon, later becoming quite heavy at times. We made a brief stop by a field littered with *Leontice leontopetalum* and this grew with its close relative *Bongardia chrysogonium* and some very fine

*Bellevalia longistyla*. Then it was the long haul up to the Charee Pass but the weather was just getting worse and having got over the 2820m snow-covered top we were then confronted with thick fog and cloud as we got low enough on the far side to try and find the new *Dionysia* species recently found in this area. So there was nothing for it but to give up and turn for home, rain, getting lighter, all the way.

In the evening it cleared and after dinner a couple of us went out for a night drive. The road had been washed out again up at Sheikh Ali Khan so we couldn't go far in that direction so this was also largely aborted. We saw four Red Foxes and two Green Toads.

## Day 11      April 25<sup>th</sup>    To Aligoudarz

It was pretty miserable looking outside at six am but I still went ahead with a little reconnoitre of the Kouhrang Canyon. Jahangir, having driven me to the spot, took some extra sleep whilst I walked downwards into the canyon. Almost immediately I noticed another *Bellevalia*, this time a more compact type though still lax-flowered. It seems nearest to *Bellevalia koeiei* but that was known only from the type anyway! The dark cliffs opposite held the expected *Dionysia archibaldi*. In some areas it grew in such profusion that the cliff started to take on a pink hue - in one particular twenty by thirty metre section of cliff it covered about fifteen per cent of the surface! A pair of Rock Doves had taken up residence on a small ledge amid all this splendour - what an amazing spot to live! Red-billed Chough also enjoyed the cliffs and down in the river was a Dipper. The rain came on more now - too strong to allow photography of the 'just about in flower' *Corydalis rupestris* on one cliff wall.

Back at the Koohrang we all breakfasted and packed as the rain increased in intensity. By the time we left it was pretty unpleasant outside but no matter as we were to spend the next couple of hours journeying. The scenery was not up to much through the misted windows but would have been good had we been able to see it. As we neared Daran the rain eased and by the time we pulled up at the nearby village of Analujeh it had practically ceased. Over the next couple of hours the skies cleared, the sun came out, and it was all thoroughly pleasant. And the fauna, flora and scenery in this spot was quite magical too and even the appearance of a steady stream of motorbikes from the village below couldn't disturb our tranquility. Nor even the locals killing a young male Ibex they'd caught in a distinctly inhumane trap. At least they dispatched it and went off to prepare it for a meal. Another mammal then took centre-stage - the delightful little Rufescent Pika. This cute and cuddly relative of the rabbit is rather Chinchilla-like in appearance and at this season was a busy little creature indeed as it collected all manner of vegetable matter from the surface and took it to its hole. In fact they were quite common and at least ten were seen. They kept a wary eye on the sky, and the reason soon became clear as a fabulous pair of Imperial Eagles showed us (and the Pikas) just how good they are in the air. They circled and swooped and stooped and generally appeared to be having a dam good time! There were Chough too and numerous passerines. Plain Leaf Warblers were seen up close and no less than three species of *Rhodopechys/Bucanetes* finches with John seeing a pair of Desert Finches and myself one each of

Mongolian Trumpeter Finch and Crimson-winged Finch. A pair of Rock Thrushes gave us memorable views and the Blue Rock Thrushes hardly less so. There were Persian Wheatears and several of those strange (but constant??) hybrids between Pied and Black-eared Wheatears. Both Eastern and Western Rock Nuthatches were seen, the latter with the characteristic little narrow black eyestripe of the local race.

The flowers weren't left out with another new *Dionysia* centre-stage. This was the large yellow-flowered *Dionysia caespitosa*, one of the species with a 'stalked' inflorescence. Most of the nearer plants hadn't yet flowered but there were several very fine ones round the corner. There were *Anemone biflora*, *Bellevalia tristis* and *Leontice* there too.

After a picnic at this memorable spot we headed west towards Aligoudarz passing through Daran. The wide valleys of this part of the Zagros were bounded by high mountain massifs in each direction. These valleys are very rich agriculturally and the whole region exuded an air of wealth not found in the Bakhtiari region. We stopped by an area of steppe at quite a high altitude and took a walk over it. There was little in flower though we did find some nice things. Most notable (other than Fox, Little Owl & Meadow Pipit!) were abundant *Tulipa humilis*, though all were closed as the sun had gone in. *Bellevalias* and gone-over *Iris persica* were on the sparsely vegetated ridges. *Viola modesta*, a pretty *Hesperis*, and *Gagea caroli-kochii* and *Gagea ova* were choice finds. Then it was on to Aligoudarz where we settled into the Tourist Inn. Set on the edge of town overlooking fields and little strips of remnant steppe running down to the river, this is a pleasant spot. A quick pre-checklist wander down to the river proved very good for both flowers and birds. The former were mainly arable weeds but included nice species such as *Centaurea depressa*, *Androsace maxima*, *Lithospermum arvense*, *Anchusa arvensis* and an abundance of crucifer species. After a flock of eight Whinchats and several Common Whitethroats, a Lesser Grey and then a Woodchat Shrike appeared. Other birds included Sand Martins, Common Sandpipers, Hoopoes, Corn Bunting, Common Redstart and Cuckoo.

Then it was checklists and a fine and varied evening meal at the Tourist Inn's restaurant.

## Day 12      April 26<sup>th</sup>      Ghaly Kuh – the road to Shulabad

It was back to the same old bright sunny morning theme again today. It was a perfect day to explore the snowy mountains shining impressively to our south. We started at eight to get as much in as possible.

We drove through a scene of rural productivity as the landscape rose gently along our route. Arable fields were kept spick and span and crops were growing nicely, no doubt the recent rain/snow will have done the crops here a power of good. We passed a couple of villages and then entered the mountains where a river emerged from a deep valley.

We briefly looked at a slope with abundant *Fritillaria imperialis* and *Bellevalia longistyla*. There were some really very nice *Fritillaria persica* and a quite a bit of a new fritillary, *Fritillaria chlororhabdota*, recently split from *Fritillaria assyriaca*. It has the most unusual narrow green and brown striped flowers. Half a mile further on, as tea was brewed, we walked along a stream that took us to some low cliffs where grew *Dionysia haussknechtii*. Unfortunately little of it was in flower here so instead we walked up above the gorge and soon found cliffs festooned with yellow mounds of flowers. These were classic *Dionysia haussknechtii*, some cushions with flowers so tight foliage could barely be seen, and some cushions were impressively large, a couple were half a metre across! Many were in perfect flower and there were some that were within easy reach of the camera. Along the stream grew *Bellevalia pycnantha*. *Tulipas humilis* and *stapfii* (or the green-leaved form of *systola* if you prefer) were in flower, the latter going over. *Gageas* were represented by *Gagea confusa* by the stream, *Gagea tenuifolia* and *Gagea gageoides* on the slopes and *Gagea fistulosa* in a splendid display by a snow patch. A green flowered *Hesperis* was a nice find. Birdlife was pretty good with Crimson-winged Finch and Desert Finch, Linnets and plenty of Plain Leaf Warblers.

Next we moved further up the pass stopping by a meadow which sloped up to the base of a snow patch. Almost immediately we found the strange and beautiful local form of *Iris reticulata* – and some eventually went on to see quite a few. Again Crimson-winged Finch was seen as were Black-headed and Grey-necked Buntings. White-throated Robin was very common and Plain Leaf Warblers were quite so. Shorelarks and Bimaculated Larks were among the ground dwellers. There was a great show of tulips here, most notably the *Tulipa humilis*.

We took our picnic amongst a wonderful display of Crown Imperials and *Fritillaria persica* drew our attention too. The shining red goblets of *Tulipa systola* were just opening up. Down by the river we looked at tracks in the mud – certainly a few mammals about up here!

After lunch we moved to a viewpoint over the fast-flowing river below. Before us was a great snowy wall culminating in the 4000m+ peak of Ghaly Kuh. A cliff descended below us and we took a look at its top where more of the lovely *Dionysia haussknechtii* was in flower. Growing with it was a gorgeous *Viola* which also had a cushion forming habit – this one *Viola pachyrhiza*, with lovely violet and white flowers. Eastern Rock Nuthatches called loudly from the complicated cliffs. There were some choice finds on the ridgetop here too with plenty of *Fritillaria zagrica* in good flower. Growing with it was a strange plant that was altogether larger and had a number of pale yellow-green bells. It seemed that maybe this plant was at least influenced by something akin to *Fritillaria chlorantha*, a species known from the area. As this was debated we watched a small group of Wild Boar through the telescope. These were feeding on the splendid alpine meadows spread out below the magnificent snowy peaks of ‘Carpet Mountain’, in Farsi, Ghaly Kuh.

It was late afternoon already. So now we decided to split up with some of the group returning to Aligoudarz and others of us staying on until after dark. There were two impetuses behind this decision. One was a want to see some more of what lay ahead, the other was the fresh bear tracks we’d seen by the snow in the morning.

So now we aimed toward the 2900 metre pass over the side of Ghaly Kuh though we didn't have time to reach the top before dark (there are two new *Dionysias* just down the other side!). We stopped on a high tableland where damp turf glowed between snow patches. Radde's *Accentors* were common and we had a fabulous view of a Golden Eagle as it took off and soared against the white peak in front of us. A Lanner was seen too. There were plentiful now familiar bulbs in flower on these heights but it was a very soggy green meadow by the road that brought us something new. At one end of the field grew plenty of *Merendera* (*Colchicum*) *wendelboi* but at the other even wetter end there was lots of *Colchicum* *varians*. A single rather poor specimen of *Fritillaria* *straussii* was found.

Now we headed up a long stream valley with impressive slopes on both sides made up of a very fine almost white scree that held at a very steep angle. Indeed as we rose, the snow patches that ran down these slopes had obviously given way in mini-avalanches at intervals. A striking contrast was made by the almost black (oil shales?) rocks that formed a band in places. Further colour was added to the landscape by the bright pink almond trees that managed to keep a toe hold on the steep screes growing with occasional junipers, cherries and honeysuckle trees. Otherwise plants were scarce! A local appeared on a motorbike, stopping to chat for a while.

We watched Common Sandpipers and Dippers along this stretch as we waited for dusk to descend. Once it was dark I perched atop the 4wd and we started slowly back searching the slopes with the lamp. At regular intervals we came across Red Foxes and Cape Hares but no sign of a bear. However, just as we reached the cliff top where we'd enjoyed the *Viola* *pachyrhiza* earlier in the day we caught some green eyeshine and even the briefest glimpse told of a cat. I jumped off the roof and everyone got out and over the next ten minutes we were treated to one of the highlights of the trip as a very large looking male Steppe-race Wild Cat hunted methodically along the bench below us. A fabulous end to a fabulous day.

## Day 13      April 27<sup>th</sup>                      Golestan Kuh & Journey to Isfahan

We left Aligoudarz at nine and headed east. An hour or so out of town we spotted a damp area of valley floor where there were flowers in profusion. The whole area was covered in a wonderful mixture of *Fritillaria* *reuteri* and *Bellevalia* *pycnantha*, both only just coming into bloom. Other plants here included *Muscari* *neglectum* and both *Gagea* *ova* and *Gagea* *stipitata*.

We pulled up at Golestan Kuh at about 11.30. It is a long steady haul up what seems an imperceptibly sloping approach from Daran but twenty kilometres of such is enough to get one up quite high – it was still something of a surprise to find that the carpark was 2600m above sea level. Golestan Kuh is another of the 'fritillary field' reserves. However it was still early spring here and the main show would not be open for another twenty days or so. Of course we'd seen plenty of these already so it was with other species that our interest lay. By a damp streamside we found the buds of more *Fritillaria* *reuteri* growing amongst *Ranunculus* *polyanthemos*. With these were a fine

display of *Colchicum varians*. Further up stream were the delightful pink umbels of *Primula auriculata*.

Birdlife was good with plenty of 'mountain birds'. Rock Buntings were common and there were some fine male Rock Thrushes about. Rock Sparrow too! Several Chukar flew away from us and overhead a flock of twenty-one Alpine Chough called noisily. White-throated Robins, Water Pipit and Grey-necked Buntings were the other birds seen.

Further up the valley by a little col and by the nearest snow patches was a most wonderful show of flowers, one of the best we'd seen on the tour. A grassy meadow was yellow with buttercups and gageas but it was the massed starry white flowers of *Tulipa humilis* that drew the photographers attention. We later found a rich pink variant. *Bellevalia tristis* was really quite common and on the gravelly col there was a very fine form of *Tulipa systola* with squat bright flowers and very crinkly glaucous leaves. Some *Fritillaria zagrica* were in flower and as we wandered a little on the far side of the col there were several in fine condition. Growing with it was a large flowered form of *Corydalis verticillata* some with white flowers and others with bright pink.

Just as we arrived back at the picnic which had been organized just below the now very full carpark (it was a Friday and so everyone was there for a picnic) the rain hit us. And quite hard too. We all huddled in the bus trying as best we could to consume our picnic without getting ourselves or the bus any messier! Then it was off to Isfahan. We arrived at the latter about four thirty and settled into the very comfortable Sadaf Hotel just five minutes walk from the main square. After a break we went to see Isfahan's famous bridges with Merhan before taking our evening repast in Restaurant 33 where most tried the classic Persian dish *Khoresht-e Fesenjaan* (Pomegranate and Walnut Stew) – it was excellent.

## Day 14      April 28<sup>th</sup>      Isfahan

Now the following account is based entirely on the previous year's tour of the city as I didn't participate this year (see below for what I did!).

We started our tour of this magnificent city after a substantial breakfast courtesy of the very comfortable Hotel Sadaf. Mehran took us first to the Jame Mosque (the Friday Mosque) which is not only one of the oldest and largest in Iran but also exhibits a wide variety of Islamic building and art styles from the Selcuk period through the Mongols to the Safavid period. Much of the building, which covers many acres, is made of brick and one of the domes has nothing but brickwork, some of it very fine. Most spectacular were the Mehrabs, particularly the one built by the Mongols under Timur. This plaster masterpiece must have taken an age to construct. Also of great interest were the various 'sanctuaries' surrounding the main mosque. One of these, built for the Mongolians, had a design rather reminiscent of the shape of their yourtas, except here they were all joined together. So large broad and very low arches, each with a hole of light in the roof, made for a dark and very atmospheric and indeed spiritual place. One could easily imagine the

imam sitting on the carpet, his book illuminated by the shaft of light from the ceiling, and surrounded by attentive and contemplative audience. It rather spoils the effect when the attendant switched the electric lights on!

Then we were whisked across the city's sprawling bazaar (by bus) to the great central square and the great Imam Mosque. The gate is a magnificent sight. The huge arched portal was covered in the most beautiful mosaic of blue, dark blue and white tiles and seemed like perfection itself until Mehran pointed out that the architects had left one or two spots unfinished – man cannot be seen to create perfection in the sight of god. The huge twin minarets soared above the gate through which we entered perhaps the most beautiful mosque in all the Islamic world. We wandered round with our cameras taking vast numbers of pictures of the blue-tiled walls, the great dome and the towering minarets. He then showed us the way in which they are renovating the dome using a very complicated yet elegant solution. They divide the dome into sixteen sections and use a template to shape the plaster and tiles and then cut this into pieces, number the backs, and then re-assemble on the dome surface using the numbers to guide them – easy! He then took us to the centre of the main dome and the black stone laid in the centre of the floor. This spot provides the most wonderful clear echoes – it is said seven – to any clear sound made there. We proceeded to try out various sounds, some of them much to the amusement of Mehran, and had pleasing success with getting a number of clear echoes back.

Mehran quickly took us across the square to the King's Pavilion in the Ali Ghapu Palace. After a brief spot of 'speak to your friend in the opposite corner' we were out on the large balcony where the king and his favourites watched Isfahan's famous Polo matches. The goalposts still stand at each end. Again the light was superb and with the square still largely tourist free it was a wonderful opportunity to appreciate the beauty of the place.

Then it was on to the Masjed-e Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque. This had a beauty and serenity all of its own. The ceiling was quite stunning and the 'peacock's tail' effect made from natural light falling at an angle on part of the elegantly adorned roof was an indication of the exacting workmanship required to produce such magnificence.

Meanwhile Hassan and myself had started early so as to have a full morning exploring the semi-deserts of Gavekhoni well to the east of Isfahan. It took us a good while to divest ourselves of the city and its long arms of industrial estates. We stopped for breakfast ninety minutes east of the city in an area almost devoid of vegetation, indeed almost nothing seemed to be there. However one of the most beautiful plants of the trip was our prize, the gorgeous architectural *Linaria michauxii*. Then it was on to Gavekhoni. Two hours east of the city was the last town before the desert. We took a track out into the wilderness – apparently a route frequented at night by smugglers. It was a good dirt road but the banks were high and it took us a while to get a good view out over the semi-desert through which we were passing. It was obviously a superb area. We could see the vast area of fossilized sand dunes the other side of the Gavekhoni River (these are the home of Pleske's Ground Jay) and around was a sparsely vegetated landscape with occasional pools of water. Plantlife included many chenopods and zygophyllaceae. But it was the birds that were

exceptional. Around a large pool we could hear several Black-winged Pratincoles, these sometimes coming in close overhead. There were Greater Flamingoes on the wetland as well as Purple and Grey Herons, Kentish Plover, Temminck's Stint, a Broad-billed Sandpiper, Turnstone and a couple of Marsh Sandpipers, a very respectable little haul of waders in the middle of the desert. Lesser Short-toed Larks were common. I then took a walk along the banks of the river channel, fringed in tamarisk and other shrubs. Rufous Bush Robins sang with several warblers. These included some choice species, notably Blyth's Reed Warbler, Booted Warbler, Scrub Warbler, and a Menetries Warbler. Shrikes were common – I saw Isabelline, Woodchat, Great Grey and Lesser Grey, all in thirty minutes. Best, and completely unexpected, were a pair of Grey Hypocolius! Then we had to hightail it back to Isfahan to lunch.

Lunch was taken at a superb traditional restaurant of the sit down on the carpet type. Truly excellent food in the most beautiful surroundings. In the afternoon we were left to explore by ourselves. Most of us shopped in the main bazaar with gay abandon. Those rugs are after all so nice – I just couldn't resist another lustrous Turcoman, the wool woven so finely that the rug shone like silk and was almost as malleable. Then there were the carpet bags – a long search for the right size eventually yielded results though there were plenty of big and small ones! Jewellery was everywhere, especially lapis lazuli and turquoise, all set in silver, either the cheap Afghan variety or better. Then there were the ceramics. Not my scene, but the tiles were rather beautiful with their elegant Islamic designs. There were art galleries, copper and metalwork shops, toy shops, local clothes shops and of course bag shops – you really need these in Isfahan as it is quite possible to outstrip the capacity of your own luggage!

To rest from the shopping one could sit in the wide open expanses of the great square or better still visit the tea shop above the main bazaar which had a really magnificent view over the square, palaces and mosques. As dusk gathered so did we. Mehran took us to Isfahan's finest restaurant for the evening where we enjoyed a slap-up meal for our last get together before the journey home. It was a nice evening but eventually we had to rush off to the airport. Here check-in proceeded rapidly and we were soon boarding the ten o'clock flight to Tehran

## Day 15      April 29<sup>th</sup>      Return

A six o'clock start for the airport half an hour away. All went smoothly with check-in and those of us heavily overladen with presents bought in Isfahan were pleased to encounter no excess baggage charges. Then it was into the departure lounge for more shopping before the flight home which of course featured ... wine and champagne!



## *Betulaceae*

*Populus tremula* Scattered throughout

## *Boraginaceae*

[*Alkanna bracteosa* Pashmaku, Vanak]  
*Anchusa arvensis* Near Isfahan  
*Anchusa italica* Near Ardal where common  
*Asperugo procumbens* Scattered  
[*Cerithe minor* Scattered in leaf]  
[*Cynoglossum creticum* Scattered]  
*Echium italicum* Scattered throughout  
*Lappula squarrosa* Scattered in the north  
[*Lindelofia* sp. sp noted in the Vanak area]  
*Lithospermum arvense* Scattered  
*Moltkia coerulea* Just going over north of Semirom  
*Nonea caspica caspica* Scattered throughout  
[*Nonea caspica melanocarpa* steppe SE of Aligoudarz]  
*Nonea persica* Karobas Pass  
*Nonea pulla* Approach to Ghaly Kuh  
*Nonea suchtelenoides* Dasht-e Arjan  
*Nonea* sp. Other Noneas were seen, especially in Shiraz area, and in the Gavekhoni area a yellow species was common in the semi-desert  
*Onosma bulbotrichum* By Shulabad road  
*Paracaryum undulatum* Bamu National Park  
*Solenanthus circinnatus* Widespread  
[*Solenanthus stamineus* Gulestan Kuh]

## *Brassicaceae*

*Aethionema arabicum* widespread  
*Aethionema elongatum* Near the Karobas Pass & Sarvestan-Kherameh Pass  
[*Alyssum bracteatum* Hanna area – on cliffs]  
[*Alyssum inflatum* Kuh-e Bohorse]  
*Alyssum lanceolatum* Semirom area and Ardal – on cliffs  
*Alyssum stapfii* Dasht-e Arjan & Hanna – on steppe  
*Arabis aucheri* near Vanak on cliffs  
*Arabis ottonis-schulzii* Ardal Gorge on cliffs & possibly Vanak too?  
*Calepina irregularis* ?probably this species at Analujeh  
*Capsella bursa-pastoris* Widespread  
*Cardaria draba* Widespread  
*Clypeola jonthlaspi* Scattered throughout  
*Conringia perfoliata* small yellow flowers. Perfoliate leaves and long fruits.  
Sarvestan/Kherameh Pass  
*Descurainia sophia* Scattered  
[*Draba aucheri* scattered throughout on cliffs]  
*Draba pulchella* cliffs in Semirom area  
[*Draba rosularis* Hanna]  
*Matthiola chenopodifolia* Hanna & semi-deserts north of Semirom

Matthiola longipetala	Widespread – the form with long narrow sinuous brown petals
Moricandia sinaica	?probably this species on cliffs at Aghdak near Vanak
[Octocerus lehmannianum	Hanna. Pinnate grey leaves – steppe-desert.]
Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum	pools near Chelgerd and Aligoudarz
[Stroganovia affghana	Chelgerd. On screes.]
Thlaspi bulbosum	?possibly this species scattered at higher altitudes
[Thlaspi kotschyannum	Pashmaku on open soils]
[Thlaspi perfoliata	Scattered]

### *Campanulaceae*

Campanula ??????	Dwarf white flowered species growing in cracks and crevices near Shiraz
Campanula leucoclada	Naghst-e Rostam. Striped Petals, strongly toothed leaves.
Campanula polyclada	In gorge along road to Arsanjan. Striped Petals, barely toothed leaves.
[Legousia falcata	In oak woods near Sisakht]

### *Cannabaceae*

[Humulus lupulus	scattered in Shiraz area]
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### *Capparaceae*

[Capparis spinosa	Scattered in Shiraz area]
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### *Caryophyllaceae*

Cerastium glomeratum	Ghaly Kuh
Holosteum umbellatum	Widespread
Moenchia mantica	Sarvestan-Kherameh Pass
Petrohagia sp	scattered
[Silene chlorifolia	Various places in central Zagros]
Silene conica	Delijan, Sisakht & Aligoudarz
Silene conoidea	Dasht-e Naz, Bamu, Sarvestan-Kherameh Pass
[Silene latifolia subspecies persica	Bamu]
[Silene noctiflora	in the gorge near Aghdak]
[Silene spergulifolia	scattered]
Vaccaria hispanica	Sarvestan-Kherameh Pass

### *Cistaceae*

Helianthemum salicifolium	Persepolis
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### *Convolvulaceae*

[Convolvulus acanthocladus	above Persepolis and at Naghst-e Rostam]
[Convolvulus arvensis	scattered]
[Convolvulus assyricus	Low spiny cushions of white flowers. Near Shiraz]
Convolvulus leiocalycinus	By Maharlu Lake

### *Crassulaceae*

Pseudosedum multicaule	Hanna
Rosularia sempervivum	Generally common on rocks in Shiraz area
Umbilicus tropaeolifolius	Scattered in Shiraz area. Unusual trailing species.
Umbilicus erectus	Common in Shiraz area

### *Cupressaceae*

Cupressus sempervirens	The ancient Persian 'tree of life'. Scattered
Juniperis excelsa	Locally common

### *Cyperaceae*

Blysmus compressus	Scattered
[Eleocharis palustris	Chelgerd area]
[Eleocharis quinqueflora	Chelgerd area ]
Kobresia sp	Noted near Aghdak, Vanak

### *Cucurbitaceae*

Bryonia cretica	?probably this species at Persepolis
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### *Dipsacaceae*

[Pterocephalus canus	near Gandoman]
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### *Ephedraceae*

Ephedra pachyclada	Widespread in Shiraz area
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### *Equisetaceae*

[Equisetum ramossissimum	Dasht-e Laleh]
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### *Euphorbiaceae*

[Euphorbia densa	Pashmaku, Semirom]
Euphorbia petiolata	dry steppe near Daran and south of Analujeh
[Euphorbia szovitsii	Golestan Kuh]
[Euphorbia turcomanica	near Hanna]

### *Fabaceae*

Subgenus Calycophysa section Poterion – conspicuous spines and round inflated pods	
Astragalus fasciculifolius	near Shiraz – white pods
Astragalus glaucacanthus	inflated pink fruits in the Gandoman and Semirom areas
Subgenus Calycophysa section Halicacabus – round inflated pods +/- hairy pods	
Astragalus ebenoides	Sarvestan/Kherameh Pass (hairy pods)
Astragalus anthylloides	Sarvestan/Kherameh Pass (large swollen pods)
Subgenus Phaca section Chlorostachys – large plants, showy mass of flowers	
Astragalus siliquosus	near hotel at Aligoudarz. Yellow flowers.
Subgenus Phaca section Caprini – yellow petals, acaulescent plant, flat pods	
Astragalus iranshahrii	??Probably. Hairy leaves. Steppe SE of Aligoudarz

Astragalus pseudoutriger	??Probably. Glabrous leaves. Pashmaku
Astragalus ovinus	Shulabad road. Yellow flowers.
Subgenus Cercidothrix section Proselius	– round glaucous leaves
Astragalus campylosema	??Probably. Hanna on dry steppe
Astragalus pagh-soleimanuensis	SE of Aligoudarz on steppe
Astragalus brachycarpus	??Probably. Sry slopes near Semirom
Subgenus ????? section Acanthoplace	– horribly prickly shrub! Long spines!
Astragalus horridus	The name describes it well – ubiquitous in Shulabad area and locally common elsewhere
[Cercis siliquastrum	Sisakht]
Ebenus stellata	Shiraz area. Bush with spines and yellow-red flowers – sadly not yet in flower in 2007
Lathyrus pseudo-cicera/sphaericus	scattered
Lathyrus aphaca	Aligoudarz
[Lens flexuosus	in leaf near Semirom]
[Vicia hybrida	Steppe near Gulestan Kuh]
[Vicia narbonense	Sisakht]
Vicia sativa	Scattered

### *Fagaceae*

Quercus brantii Widespread and locally dominant south of Daran

### *Fumariaceae*

Corydalis oppositifolia kurdica Only in Golestan-Kuh  
Corydalis rupestris Kouhrang Gorge en route to Samsami and Analujeh. Very beautiful bright yellow cliff dweller with glaucous foliage  
Corydalis verticillaris Widespread near snow  
Fumaria bracteosa Scattered in Shiraz area  
Fumaria parviflora Hanna and Shiraz

### *Gentianaceae*

Gentiana olivieri Locally common

### *Geraniaceae*

Biebersteinii multifida Locally common  
Erodium cicutarium Persepolis  
Erodium gruinum Persepolis  
Erodium malacoides Persepolis  
Geranium linearilobum Sarvestan/Kherameh Pass. pale blue flowers (like pale Geranium sylvaticum), very slender leaf lobes, overall shape of leaf is elongated (like a human hand, fingers together)  
[Geranium persicum Sarvestan/Kherameh Pass. Deeper coloured flowers (almost like Geranium sanguineum), leaves more round in overall shape]  
Geranium stepporum/tuberosum Widespread. I don't differentiate between these forms or species!

### *Haloragaceae*

[Myriophyllum spicatum

in the waters around Chelgerd]

### *Juglandaceae*

Juglans regia

Scattered throughout

### *Lamiaceae*

Acinos arvensis

widespread

Ajuga austro-iranica

the pretty little rock-dwelling Ajuga at Sisakht and on the Karobas Pass

Ajuga chamaecistus tomentella

the often spiny little shrub with bright and large red/white flowers. Locally common in many places in Semirom and Shiraz areas

Eremostachys laciniata

Scattered throughout – spectacular tall white flowered species

Eremostachys molucelloides

Locally common in drier areas especially near Semirom

Lamium amplexicaule

Scattered

Lamium maculatum

Scattered

Lallemantia peltata

near Karobas Pass

Lallemantia iberica

?probably this species at Persepolis

Salvia multicaulis

widespread

Salvia palaestina

Local in the Shiraz area

[Scutellaria nepetifolia

?probably this species at Aligoudarz]

[Scutellaria persica

Hanna steppes]

[Stachys kurdica

????probably. cliffs on road east of Persepolis.]

Stachys lavandulifolia

Scattered – locally common

Teucrium sp

several very pretty species

[Teucrium orientale

Kherameh road]

### *Malvaceae*

Malva parviflora

Persepolis. Karobas Pass

### *Moraceae*

Ficus johannis

?probably this species in the Shiraz area

### *Orobanchaceae*

Orobanche ramosa

Semirom & Shiraz area

### *Papaveraceae*

Glaucium corniculatum

widespread

Glaucium elegans

Probably this species on the Kherameh road. Several other species noted including a large yellow one in Shiraz!

Hypecoum pendulinum

scattered

[Papaver lacerum

Hanna]

Roemeria hybrida

Scattered throughout

Roemeria refracta

widespread

Papaver rhoeas

Scattered

### *Plantaginaceae*

*Plantago lanceolata* Scattered

### *Platanaceae*

*Platanus orientalis* Scattered

### *Plumbaginaceae*

[*Acantholimon embergeri* (?) possibly this species flowering well on Kherameh Road]  
[*Acantholimon radeanum* (?) possibly this species on the Kherameh road]

### *Polygonaceae*

*Rheum turkestanicum* Scattered in Semirom and Shiraz area  
*Rumex chalepensis* By stream at Dasht-e Laleh

### *Primulaceae*

*Dionysia revoluta* Noted in a variety of localities including Semirom and the Kherameh/Sarvestan Pass. Much bushier than most species with strongly revolute leaves with half a dozen coarse teeth. Flowers yellow. Some 'bushes' more than a metre across.

*Dionysia archibaldii* A revolute-leaved species related to *revoluta*. Less coarse in habit though Grey-Wilson's suggestions that the rather loose greyish cushions reach up to 20cm diameter in the wild look like an underestimate given the large hanging cushions draping from the walls of the gorge that the Kouhrang River flows through. Pretty rather large violet-pink flowers.

*Dionysia caespitosa* Umbellate species with rather neat cushions of yellow flowers. In flower above the village of Analujah near Daran at an altitude of 2700m (just above where we park though!)

*Dionysia boliviarii* Related to *caespitosa* and previously considered a subspecies of it. A small population in flower near the Karobas Pass

*Dionysia diapensiifolia* Common on vertical cliffs (only!) northeast of Shiraz especially near Persepolis. Distinctively long flowering tubes, flowers yellow. In 2006 we saw populations in several places in the Shiraz area including to the south of Bamu National Park where a high ridge had plants growing 'on the ground'. In 2007 we confirmed that the yellow *Dionysia* in Bamu National Park is this species

*Dionysia termeana* Another yellow flowered species confined to the Zagros's second highest range the Kuh-e-Dinar. Found above Sisahkt on strange wet tufaceous cliffs.

*Dionysia haussknechtii* Very fine cushion forming yellow-flowered species typically with dense with an often almost complete covering of flowers. Abundant in the mountains south of Shulabad. There seem to be two forms – one much hairier than the other though whether specific rank has been given to these yet is unknown.

*Dionysia lammingtonii* Quite common on west facing parts of Kuh-e Kelk and on the pass

between Kuh-e Gheysar and Kuh-e Cheri where plenty not far from the road! Especially nice were those in a little roadside gorge. Very nice yellow flowered species with the flowers often completely obscuring the dense greyish tight foliage.

Dionysia iranshahrii	Pale purple-pink flowers on dense silvery-grey cushions on limestone cliffs in the Semirom area – we found it in several locations.
Dionysia michauxii	The legendary site for this behind the University in Shiraz was visited by Mehran and myself during this trip and the plants found. They had finished flowering at least two weeks prior to our visit.
Dionysia mozaferiani	Species with almost unlobed petal limbs and green distinct leaf rosettes and three-lobed leaves on limestone cliffs near Semirom. Flowers pinky-purple.
Dionysia bryoides	Beautiful pinky-purple flowering species with minutely glandular corolla. Found in a variety of places near Semirom and also between Shiraz and Semirom
Dionysia zagrica	Karobas Pass. An extensive population was found this year with plenty of them still in flower. The flowers are abundant but tiny and a deep orange yellow
Dionysia sp	A Dionysia growing on cliffs near Ardal had tight cushions of tiny minutely glandular leaves and small zagrica like flowers – we know not what it is!?
Dionysia sarvestanica	Found on the Kherameh-Sarvestan Pass where common but past Flowering – ‘scope views of what may have been some in flower!
[Glaux maritima Primula auriculata	near Hanna Reservoir, Semirom] between Semirom and Shiraz and also at Golestan-Kuh. What may have been this species in flower on inaccessible cliff ledges in the Kouhrang river gorge in 2005 but needs checking!
Primula gaubaeana	Endemic yellow flowered species looking rather like a lax Dionysia. On riverside cliffs between Semirom and Sisakht.
Androsace maxima	Scattered – in seed mostly

### *Pteridophyta*

Adiantum capillus veneris	Wet cliffs
[Asplenium ruta-muraria	Kouhrang Valley]
Ceterach officinarum	Scattered
Cheilanthes catanensis	Noted at Persepolis
Cheilanthes fragrans	Persepolis
Cheilanthes marontae	Sarvestan-Kherameh Pass
Cystopteris fragilis	Kouhrang Valley
[Woodsia alpina	?possibly this species on the Kuh-e Cheri before Samsami]

### *Ranunculaceae*

Adonis annua	Semi-deserts east of Isfahan
Adonis ericalycina/aleppica	Large red flowered species along roadsides south of Aligoudarz
Adonis flammea	Karobas Pass & Sisakht area
[Adonis microcarpa	scattered]
Anemone biflora	The yellow/bronze coloured form scattered here and there and a stunning red form abundant near Aghdak, Semirom, and above the Karobas Pass
Ceratocephala falcata	widespread

Ceratocephala testiculata	Scattered. Near Chelgerd
Ficaria (Ranunculus) kochii	Common near snow
[Ranunculus amblyolobus	Golestan Kuh]
Ranunculus arvensis	Arable weed
Ranunculus aucheri	widespread – the common buttercup
[Ranunculus brachylobus	Mountainsides] – may not be correct?
Ranunculus cicutarius	Sarvestan/Kherameh Pass
[Ranunculus constantinopolitanus	Shulabad]
Ranunculus diversifolius	One or more members of this group common.
Ranunculus elbursensis	Wet areas with Fritillaria reuteri and Ranunculus polyanthemos
Ranunculus farsicus	This local species was found in Dasht-e Arjan
[Ranunculus koeiei	on pass before Samsami]
Ranunculus kotschyii	widespread in the north – generally on open soil
[Ranunculus millefolius	dry slopes east of Aligoudarz]
[Ranunculus oxyspermus	damp grassland by river on Shulabad road]
Ranunculus polyanthemos	widespread in wet areas
Ranunculus rufosepalus	?probably this species. By snow near Cheshmeh Bimeh, Zard Kuh
Ranunculus sphaerospermus	the tiny white water crowfoot
[Ranunculus straussii	roadsides northeast of Shiraz]
Thalictrum isopyroides	?or similar. Widespread

### *Rosaceae*

Amygdalus arabica	This distinctive large shrub/small tree with at this season bare ephedra-like green branches and large pinky-white flowers is common in the Shiraz area and scattered further north
Amygdalus eriocarpa	Widespread
Cerasus brachypetala	Scattered throughout
Hulthemia persica	common in semi-desert areas, on this tour only north of Semirom
Prunus prostrata	?probably this species at Analujeh
Sanguisorba minor	Karobas Pass

### *Rubiaceae*

Asperula fragillima	crevices in limestone gorge near Ardal
Galium aparine	Scattered
Galium ibicinum	cliffs above river at top end of Ardal Gorge

### *Santalaceae*

Thesium arvense	Hanna
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### *Scrophulariaceae*

Bungea trifida	Pale yellow flowered form near Hanna, Semirom. Noted near Gavekhoni too
Linaria michauxii	Stunning orange and purple striped flowers in steppe south of Qom and on this year's tour, near Gavekhoni
[Linaria simplex	Semirom. Has tiny yellow flowers.]
[Misopates orontium	near Sisakht]
Veronica armeniaca	Probably this species at Golestan Kuh

[Veronica gentianoides  
Veronica orientalis  
Veronica persica

Pashmaku, Semirom]  
near Hanna  
Isfahan

### *Solanaceae*

Hyoscyamus kotschyanus

Hanna. Aligoudarz

### *Thymelaeaceae*

Daphne mucronata  
[Daphne  
[Daphne stapfii

Widespread shrub. Is this the same as Daphne angustifolia?  
Rhomboid-leaved species in the steppe south of Qom]  
near Shiraz. Fragrant white-flowered species ]

### *Ulmaceae*

Celtis sp

Some fine trees in the narrow gorge above Aghdak, Vanak

### *Urticaceae*

Parietaria judiaca

scattered

### *Violaceae*

[Viola kitabeliana  
Viola modesta  
Viola occulta  
Viola pachyrhiza

?or similar. Between Gandoman and Semirom]  
Scattered, mostly northern  
Sarvestan/Kherameh Pass & near Sipadan  
Cliffs between Aligoudarz and Shulabad

### *Zygophyllaceae*

Peganum harmala  
Zygophyllum fabago

Drier areas  
Gavekhoni

# Monocotyledons

## *Amaryllidaceae*

*Ixiolirion tartaricum*

widespread, mostly southern

## *Araceae*

*Arum elongatum*

*Eminium lehmanii*

*Eminium intortum*

?probably this species from Semirom north and west on screens below the pass on Ghaly Kuh, Shulabad road on marly hillsides south of Gandoman

## *Colchicaceae*

*Colchicum kotschy*

*Colchicum soboliferum*

*Colchicum (Merendera) wendelboi*

*Colchicum varians*

*Colchicum persicum*

Common in leaf north and west of Semirom, and Dasht-e Arjan

In leaf and seed near Hanna

Common by snow above Chelgerd and scattered elsewhere. This is the common spring-flowering 'colchicum' in the central Zagros By the river north of Chelgerd, in very wet meadows before the last pass on Ghaly Kuh (growing in same meadow as wendelboi but in the really wet part!) and also along the stream at Golestan Kuh.

Abundant in leaf in the Shiraz region!

## *Liliaceae*

*Allium akaka*

[*Allium dictioscordum*

[*Allium haemetophyllum*

*Allium hirtifolium*

*Bellevalia cyanopoda*

*Bellevalia decolorans*

[*Bellevalia fominii*

*Bellevalia glauca*

*Bellevalia koeiei*

*Bellevalia longistyla*

*Bellevalia macrobotrys*

*Bellevalia pycnantha*

*Bellevalia saviczii*

*Bellevalia shirazana*

*Bellevalia tristis*

*Eremurus persicus*

*Eremurus spectabilis*

*Fritillaria chlororhabdota*

Cesme Dimeh and Kuh-e Cheri. 2007 only in leaf probably this species on the Kherameh road]

Hanna area]

Widespread, some in bud noted in the Semirom area

In seed south of Sipadan

Steppe south of Qom]

In flower (just) south of Sipadan

Plants resembling this species in abundant flower by the Kouhrang River gorge. However they do not match this species exactly and may be something else – koeiei is only known from the type gathering

Widespread, especially in north

In flower south of Sipadan

Common along streamsides and wet flushes.

Scattered in the Semirom area and to the north

in fruit on the Kherameh-Sarvestan Pass

Rather like a small alpine equivalent of pycnantha. Various high mountain sites in the north.

Locally common just south of Yasuj and in Semirom area. In 2007 we only saw it in flower north of Semirom

Common in Semirom area and noted in bud in Shulabad area. Only in bud in 2007

A fine 'striped' species found in the hills south of Aligoudarz.

Fritillaria gibbosa	In 2007 in flower on the Kherameh/Sarvestan Pass, on Bohorse Mountain and at Hanna
Fritillaria imperialis	Amazing 'square kilometres' of them in flower near Chelgerd though also noted frequently in that general area as well as in the Semirom and Shiraz areas – clearly a locally abundant plant! This year seen from the southernmost place visited, Dasht-e Arjan all the way up to Aligoudarz!
Fritillaria persica	Distribution rather follows the previous species though it likes slightly drier spots. All were pale green, pale brown or yellow
Fritillaria reuteri	Exceptionally beautiful yellow and deep maroon-chocolate often almost spherical flowers. Dominant or co-dominant (with <i>Bellevalia pycnantha</i> ) along stream edges.
Fritillaria straussii	A few dwarf plants seen at 2800 west of Chelgerd and a couple of fine specimens in good flower on Kuh-e Cheri. In 2007 just one seen not far short of the last pass on Ghaly Kuh
Fritillaria zagrica	Dark brown flowers tipped with gold – but otherwise similar to <i>pinardii</i> . Widespread but usually just the very last flowers hanging on. 2007 saw numbers of plants in fine bloom in many high altitude localities especially Bohorse Mountain and Ghaly Kuh. Sometimes occurs as a green-flowered form – but the identity of the rather larger green-flowered plant on Ghaly Kuh is not known.
Gagea alexeenkoana	Scattered throughout. Tall with greyish-green narrow 5-angled basal leaves like <i>taurica</i> in Turkey
Gagea caroli-kochii	Very small-flowered species with just one or two flowers and with 1mm wide leaves, both cauline and basal. Noted on gravels and rocks in the Semirom and Analujeh areas
Gagea chlorantha	Grows on very wet rock faces. Reddish underside to tepals. Kuh-e Cheri
Gagea chomutowae	a large species seen at several localities north of Semirom – fistulose leaves like <i>fistulosa</i> , cauline leaves up to 6cm long and 7mm wide, inflorescence sub-dichotomously branched, tepals with purplish tinge to the underside (and often upperside) tip.
Gagea confusa	Common near snow. Single large elliptical basal leaf and flowers slightly 'waisted' looking almost fritillaria-like.
[Gagea dubia	??seen between Khonsar and Chelgerd.]
Gagea dzhungarica	Like <i>confusa</i> but with dichotomously branched as opposed to umbellate inflorescence. Noted near Hanna and Golestan Kuh
Gagea fistulosa	Widespread and locally abundant near snow
Gagea gageoides	Widespread. Tiny, with small flowers and bulbils everywhere, wiry stems.
Gagea glacialis	scattered by snow. Doubtfully distinct from <i>fistulosa</i> as seems to be just a small version of it!
[Gagea olgae	Scattered – inflorescence is branched. tepals 5-9mm]
Gagea ova	Characteristically pale flowered species common in dry steppe – mostly seen between Aligoudarz and Isfahan
Gagea stipitata	Quite common in gravelly places. Tepals often but not always have reddish tinge to underside
[Gagea tenera	?possibly this species on cliffs on Kuh-e Cheri]

Gagea tenuifolia	The common narrow leaved species in rocks and gravelly mountainsides in the Semirom and Chelgerd areas
Gagea villosa	large species with very hairy pedicells and umbellate heads – in seed only around Gandoman and Dasht-e Arjan
Gagea sp	A large greenish-yellow flowered species found on Ghaly Kuh has remained unidentified. Of particular note were its inner and outer tepals being markedly different in size with the large tepals being very long acuminate. It does not seem to be in the Iranian Flora. I found it in a number of places in the area so locally not uncommon
Muscari caucasicum	Noted in Bamu National Park
Muscari neglectum	Widespread
[Muscari tenuiflorum	Pretty ‘tassel’ type species with ivory fertile flowers with black lobes. Scattered throughout.]
[Ornithogalum arcuatum	?Noted between Chelgerd and Semirom. 2005 Semirom]
[Ornithogalum brachystachys	Common near Karobas Pass and Gandoman area. Turkish flora includes this within narbonense but looks a good one to me!]
Ornithogalum sigmoideum	Distinctive species with fruiting heads reflexed and the flowers just about so too! In fact this often happens ‘underground’ so species appears to have a mass of flowers at ground level. Common at Dasht-e Laleh. A little further east than mentioned in Flora Iranica
Ornithogalum orthophyllum	Scattered
[Ornithogalum pycnanthum	elegant ovoid quite dense flowering heads in the Semirom and Shiraz Areas. Also noted near Karobas Pass.]
Ornithogalum cuspidatum	A wide leaved species with flat heads of large white starry flowers – widespread. In 2007 only noted in Dasht-e Arjan
Puschkinia scilloides	Kuh-e Cheri before Samsami
Scilla persica	Locally common in the Chelgerd area in arable fields etc. In bud only in 2007
Tulipa biflora	Scattered – locally abundant in Shiraz and Semirom areas
Tulipa biebersteiniana	Semirom and north of Chelgerd. 2007 – superabundant in fields near Naghan Lakes
Tulipa humilis	Colonies here and there – e.g. mountains between Aligouzarz and Shulabad and also around Semirom.
Tulipa sp	We still don’t know for sure what the tulips were in the Shiraz area – most likely they are a yellow form of Tulipa systola
[Tulipa montana	Scattered south of Qom. Seen in the Isfahan region]
[Tulipa sylvestris	between Khonsar and Chelgerd]
Tulipa systola	Locally common throughout area. The green-leaved plants growing in the Shulabad area had previously been called Tulipa stapfii but it seems all are one and the same

### *Iridaceae*

Crocus cancellatus	Leaves at Gulestan Kuh. Many locals selling the bulbs here too!
Gladiolus atrovioleaceus	scattered
Gladiolus persicus	Locally common in the Shiraz area
Iris hymenospatha	In seed. Occasional plants at a number of localities.
Iris lycotis	Fantastic large almost black flowered iris. The usual wonderful

[Iris meda	display at Hanna near Semirom was only in bud this year
[Iris pseudacorus	in leaf at Gulestan Kuh]
Iris reticulata	in leaf by river at Hanna - ?probably this species]
	an unusual looking form of this was seen in mountains near
	Shulabad – in fine flower this year
Iris songarica	?probably this species in leaf south of Qom. Semirom area. In bud
	north of Semirom

### *Orchidaceae*

Dactylorhiza umbrosa	Kuh-e Dinar – in leaf only in 2007
[Limodorum abortivum	near Sisakht in the oak woods]
Ophrys khuzestanica	?probably this species at Dasht-e Arjan
Ophrys transhyrcana	near Sisakht in the oak woods
Orchis stevenii	near Sisakht in the oak woods

## Systematic List Number 2      Birds

The taxonomy and order of the following list largely follows Voous (1977, List of Recent Holarctic Bird Species).

### Itinerary

April 16 <sup>th</sup>	Dasht-e Arjan
April 17 <sup>th</sup>	Persepolis, Naghsht-e Rostam & Bamu National Park
April 18 <sup>th</sup>	Maharlu & the Sarvestan-Kherameh Pass
April 19 <sup>th</sup>	journey to Semiron via Sisakht
April 20 <sup>th</sup>	Kuh-e Bohorse then Aghdak (Vanak)
April 21 <sup>st</sup>	Hanna
April 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Journey to Chelgerd via Karobas Pass & Ardal Gorge
April 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Dasht-e Laleh & Sheikh Ali Khan above Chelgerd
April 24 <sup>th</sup>	Samsami, the Kouhrang Valley & Charee Pass
April 25 <sup>th</sup>	to Aligoudarz via Analujeh
April 26 <sup>th</sup>	Ghaly-Kuh & the Shulabad Road
April 27 <sup>th</sup>	Golestan Kuh and to Isfahan
April 28 <sup>th</sup>	Gavekhoni (IG only)

Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	1 at Maharlu & several Gavekhoni
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Noted on Hanna Reservoir & Naghan Lakes
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	Noted on Hanna Reservoir & Naghan Lakes
Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	c.35 at Arjan Lake
Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	2 males at Maharlu
Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	2 at Aligoudarz
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	3+ at Maharlu & 1 near Chelgerd
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Singles on three days
Great White Egret	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>	3+ at Maharlu
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Noted on 3 days. Max of 12 at Gavekhoni
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	1 at Gavekhoni
Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	3 at Arjan Lake, 1 at Maharlu and 1 at Hanna Reservoir
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	Thousands at Maharlu and 12 at Gavekhoni
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	2 at Hanna Reservoir
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	4 at Hanna Reservoir
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	2 at Maharlu
Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	c.10 at Hanna Reservoir
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Noted at Hanna Reservoir
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Noted at Arjan Lake and Hanna Reservoir
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Seen at most wetlands
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	c.50 at Hanna Reservoir
Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Noted at Maharlu and Hanna Reservoir
Marbled Duck	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>	1 at Maharlu
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Noted at Hanna Reservoir and Naghan Lakes
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Quite common in Shiraz area
Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circus gallicus</i>	1 on the Sarvestan-Kherameh Pass

Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	2+ at Maharlu
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	2 females, either this species of Pallid Harrier <i>Circus macrourus</i> at Maharlu
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	1 in the Kouhrang Valley
Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	Widespread in low numbers – noted on 10 days
Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>	2 adults at Dasht-e Laleh, 2 adults at Analujeh and 1 adult Ghaly Kuh
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	1 immature Ghaly Kuh
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumannii</i>	Scattered records - uncommon
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Widespread
Lanner	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	1 at Ghaly Kuh
Chukar	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>	Widespread – heard more than seen
See-see Partridge	<i>Ammoperdix griseogularis</i>	1 in the Kouhrang Valley
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	Heard at Maharlu
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Scattered
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Noted at Arjan Lake and Naghan Lakes
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Several at Hanna Reservoir and at Maharlu
Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	20+ at Maharlu
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	6+ at Maharlu
Black-winged Pratincole	<i>Glareola nordmanni</i>	14+ at Gavekhoni
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	1 near Chelgerd
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Noted at Maharlu and Gavekhoni
	<i>Pluvialis</i> sp	Golden Plover sp at Gavekhoni
	<i>Vanellus</i> sp	'Lapwing' sp at Maharlu
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	Maharlu
Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	1 at Gavekhoni
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	1 at Maharlu and 6 at Gavekhoni
Broad-billed Sandpiper	<i>Limicola falcinellus</i>	1 at Gavekhoni
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Noted at Hanna Reservoir
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	1 at Maharlu
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Maharlu and Hanna Reservoir
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	2 at Gavekhoni
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	3 at Maharlu
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	1 at Maharlu
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Scattered along the larger rivers
Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	1 at Gavekhoni
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	c.10,000 at Maharlu and c.90 at Hanna Reservoir
Slender-billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>	4+ at Maharlu and 2 at Hanna Reservoir
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Scattered
Armenian Gull	<i>Larus armenicus</i>	Noted around Chelgerd and Aligoudarz
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	1 at Hanna Reservoir
Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	Noted at Hanna Reservoir
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Noted at Hanna Reservoir and near Chelgerd
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	Widespread - both feral and wild forms
Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Common near Shiraz and near Isfahan
Striated Scops Owl	<i>Otus brucei</i>	aka Bruce's Scops Owl. Behind the University at Shiraz. Seen down to five metres! (leaders only)
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Scattered throughout

Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	Scattered throughout
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Widespread
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	Noted at Naghsht-e Rostam
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	Widespread
Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	Scattered throughout
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Widespread in low numbers
Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus syriacus</i>	4 on the Sarvestan-Kherameh Pass
Middle-spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus medius</i>	2 in Arjan National Park
Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	Scattered throughout
Bimaculated Lark	<i>Melanocorypha bimaculata</i>	Very common in mountains in the north
Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	2 en route to Ghaly Kuh
Lesser Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella rufescens</i>	Common at Gavekhoni
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	Widespread
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Scattered, mostly in the Chelgerd area
Shorelark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	Noted in all high mountains areas
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Aligoudarz and Gavekhoni
Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	Scattered
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Widespread
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	Scattered in southern half of trip
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	Ardal Gorge only
Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	2 on the Kherameh-Sarvestan Pass
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Scattered in north
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	1 near Aligoudarz
Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	1 at Hanna Reservoir and 6+ near Chelgerd
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava lutea</i>	3 at Sheikh Ali Khan above Chelgerd
Grey-headed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava superciliaris</i>	2+ at Sheikh Ali Khan above Chelgerd
Black-headed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava feldegg</i>	Scattered
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Scattered throughout. Personata race birds seen at Gavekhoni
White-cheeked Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>	Locally common in the Shiraz area
Grey Hypocolius	<i>Hypocolius ampelinus</i>	A pair seen feasting on berries along the Gavekhoni River (IG only)
Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	Scattered
Radde's Accentor	<i>Prunella ocularis</i>	3 at Sheikh Ali Khan above Chelgerd and 1 at Ghaly Kuh
Rufous Bush Robin	<i>Cercotrichas galactotes</i>	1 at Persepolis and 3+ at Gavekhoni
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	Noted at Persepolis
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	1 at Maharlu
White-throated Robin	<i>Irania gutturalis</i>	Common everywhere
Eversmann's Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus erythronotus</i>	A male seen by one of the group at Kuh-e Bohorse
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	1 in Arjan National Park
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Scattered throughout
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	1 below Hanna Reservoir, 8 at Aligoudarz and 20+ Gavekhoni
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	Scattered
Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	Scattered
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Widespread
Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>	Shiraz and Semirom areas

Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	Arjan National park, Sisakht and Kouhrang Valley. Note that from Semirom north to Isfahan by far the commonest wheatear was a taxon that appeared intermediate between Pied and Black-eared
Finsch's Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe finschii</i>	Noted only in Shiraz area
Red-tailed Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe xanthopyrna</i>	Quite frequent in the Chelgerd area and a few north to Aligoudarz
Mourning Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe lugens</i>	2 at Persepolis
Eastern Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe picata</i>	A male at Persepolis
Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	Scattered
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Widespread in low numbers
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Scattered in the Shiraz and Sisakht areas
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	Heard at Aghdak, Vanak
Graceful Warbler	<i>Prinia gracilis</i>	Noted at Barmshur, Maharlu
Scrub Warbler	<i>Scotocerca inquieta</i>	2 at Persepolis, 1 at Analujeh, heard elsewhere
Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	1 at Barmshur, Maharlu
Paddyfield Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>	1 at Barmshur, Maharlu
Blyth's Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>	1 at Gavekhoni
Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	Noted at Barmshur, Maharlu
Clamorous Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>	4 at Barmshur, Maharlu
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	Quite common at Barmshur, Maharlu
Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Hippolais pallida</i>	Scattered
Booted Warbler	<i>Hippolais caligata</i>	1 at Gavekhoni
Upcher's Warbler	<i>Hippolais languida</i>	A few in the Shiraz area
Menetries' Warbler	<i>Sylvia mystacea</i>	A male in Arjan National Park, a female above Semirom and a male at Gavekhoni
Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>	A few in the Shiraz area
Barred Warbler	<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>	1 seen well at Arjan National Park
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	1 above Semirom
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	scattered in Aligoudarz area
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Common in Arjan National park where seen feeding inside Crown Imperial flowers, either garnering insects from within or the copious nectar? Also 1 on the Karobas Pass
Plain Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus neglectus</i>	Scattered throughout – noted on 7 days
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Noted in the Semirom and Chelgerd areas
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Noted in the Chelgerd area
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Scattered
Semi-collared Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula semitorquata</i>	A male at the top of the Ardal Gorge
Common Babbler	<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>	Only seen in the Persepolis and Bamu areas
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	Heard near Sisakht
Sombre Tit	<i>Parus lugubris</i>	1 on the Sarvestan-Kherameh Pass
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	Scattered in the south
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Scattered in Shiraz and Semirom areas
Eastern Rock Nuthatch	<i>Sitta tephronata</i>	Widespread and common
Western Rock Nuthatch	<i>Sitta neumayer</i>	2 at Analujeh and 1 at Ghaly Kuh
Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	2 at Aghdak, Vanak
Isabelline Shrike	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	Scattered throughout

Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	2 males at Gulestan Kuh
Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	Scattered in the north
Great Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	2+ at Gavekhoni
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	Scattered throughout
Masked Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	1 at Arjan National Park
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Scattered in Shiraz area
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Widespread
Alpine Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>	4 at Sheikh Ali Khan, Chelgerd
Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	Scattered throughout
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	Common except around Shiraz
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus corone cornix</i>	Widespread
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Widely scattered
Brown-necked Raven	<i>Corvus ruficollis</i>	Noted on two days at or east of Semirom and also 1 at Gavekhoni
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Widespread – except Shiraz
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Common around habitation
Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	Widespread
Red-fronted Serin	<i>Serinus pusillus</i>	1 in the Kouhrang Valley
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Scattered
Twite	<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>	1 above Semirom and noted on Ghaly Kuh
Crimson-winged Finch	<i>Rhodopechys sanguinea</i>	c.6 near Kuh-e Denar and singles at Analujeh and Ghaly Kuh
Desert Finch	<i>Rhodopechys obsoleta</i>	Scattered throughout
Mongolian Trumpeter Finch	<i>Bucanetes mongolicus</i>	1 at Analujeh
Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	2 between Chelgerd and Aligoudarz
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	Scattered in north
Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	A male at Sheikh Ali Khan
Grey-necked Bunting	<i>Emberiza buchanani</i>	Widespread from Semirom northwards
Black-headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>	Scattered
Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	Widespread

## Systematic List Number 3      Mammals

The taxonomy for the following has been taken from 'A Guide to the Mammals of Iran' by Harrington (1977) and as such some of the names may be a little out of date!

Wolf	<i>Lupus lupus</i>	1 seen on a night drive about four kilometres west of Semirom by many of the group and another seen on another night drive on the lower slopes of Pashmaku, also about four kilometres from Semirom. Tracks and dung etc frequent in the Semirom area and also on Ghaly Kuh
Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>	5 on night drive west of Semirom. Heard each night at Aligoudarz
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	Seen frequently on night drivers with a maximum of 4 (!) at Chelgerd
Weasel	<i>Mustela nivalis</i>	1 at Aghdak, Vanak and 1 in the yet to be occupied nomad encampments at Sheikh Ali Khan above Chelgerd
Large Grey Mongoose	<i>Herpestes edwardsi</i>	1 on the Sarvestan-Kherameh Pass
Small Indian Mongoose	<i>Herpestes auropunctatus</i>	Noted pre-tour by Kirsten and John Phillips in the Shiraz area
Striped Hyena	<i>Hyaena hyaena</i>	3 seen very well on night drive in Bamu National Park
(Steppe) Wild Cat	<i>Felis libyca</i>	1 male seen very well on night drive on Ghaly Kuh, also tracks seen there and along the Kouhrang River
Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	2 seen on night drive in Bamu National Park and 5 seen on Ghaly Kuh. Plenty of sign seen elsewhere and also a dead boar seen in Arjan National Park, quite probably killed by a Leopard
Rufescent Pika	<i>Ochotona rufescens</i>	10+ at Analujeh
Cape Hare	<i>Lepus capensis</i>	Scattered throughout
Social Vole	<i>Microtus socialis</i>	1 seen on Ghaly Kuh
Common Vole	<i>Microtus arvalis</i>	1 seen at Golestan Kuh

### Signs noted -

Long-eared Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus auritus</i>	A dead one seen in the Gavekhoni area
Brown Bear	<i>Ursos arctos</i>	Tracks noted in Sheikh Ali Khan above Chelgerd and also on Ghaly Kuh
Stome Marten	<i>Martes foina</i>	Tracks noted at a variety of localities
Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Tracks in the mud alongside the Kouhrang River

## Systematic List Number 4

## Reptiles & Amphibians

The taxonomy for the following has been taken from 'The Lizards of Iran' by Anderson (1999) and from 'Snakes of Iran' by Latifi (1991).

<i>Agrionemys horsfieldi</i>	Horsfield's Tortoise	Quite frequent in the Aligoudarz area
<i>Mauremys caspica</i>	Stripe-necked Terrapin	Noted at Spring before Dasht-e Laleh
<i>Laudakia nupta</i>	Large-scaled Rock Agama	Common in Shiraz area
<i>Trapelus ruderatus</i>	Olivier's Agama	1 north of Semirom
<i>Ophisops elegans</i>	Snake-eyed Lizard	Very common everywhere
<i>Lacerta princeps</i>	Zagrosian Lizard	Ardal Gorge
<i>Coluber rhodorachis</i>	Gafari Snake	1 at Dasht-e Laleh
<i>Coluber ravergieri</i>	Leopard Snake	1 at Dasht-e Laleh
<i>Rana ridibunda</i>	Marsh Frog	Widespread
<i>Rana esculenta</i>	Edible Frog	What may be this species in the Spring before Dasht-e Laleh
<i>Hyla</i> sp	Tree Frog	heard in the Semirom area
<i>Bufo viridis</i>	Green Toad	Noted in the Semirom area every day