

Sicily

Wildlife at Leisure

A Greentours Trip Report

6th - 13th April 2018

Led by Stefano Doglio & Alice Hunter

Daily report written by Alice Hunter.

Day 1: Friday 6th April

Arrival & transfer to Masseria degli Ulivi

Landing in glorious sunshine with a clear view of the smoking Mount Etna, the group were greeted by Stefano and Alice who had arrived earlier in the day. Having made our introductions, we piled into the vehicles and started our journey. The first exciting wildlife was spotted only a couple of miles from the airport where a White Stork circled over the motorway.

Our first stop was for lunch at a restaurant about a 20 minute drive down the road. As we arrived, a Sparrowhawk flew over. Stefano assured us that the food here was typical of Sicilian fare. It was certainly typical of the relaxed Italian attitude and there appeared to be only one person in the kitchen, but when our selected dishes eventually arrived they were delicious. In the meantime, we had had a good opportunity to get to know one another and to watch Small White butterflies, and several others less identifiable at speed, flit past outside in the sunshine.

Re-emerging into the warm Sicilian air we were greeted with a wonderful scent of Orange blossom from the neighbouring grove where a Stock Dove took flight. We climbed back into the vehicles and set off for the remainder of the journey to the hotel.

En route we spotted a few wildflowers which were recognisable even at motorway speed, the Yellow Crown Daisy being the most noticeable with swathes adorning the field margins and road verges. There were a few patches of Wild Gladiolus and we had a good view of a Common Buzzard taking off from a low perch beside the road as we passed. As we pulled into the side road just above the hotel a few keen eyed passengers spotted some Naked Man Orchids in the shelter of a stone wall.

We unloaded the luggage and there was a chance for the group to relax before dinner with some choosing to take a short walk up the road to the aforementioned orchids. Stefano and Alice took the opportunity to recce a site for the next day and on their return found Roy and Marie photographing the orchids and an Egyptian Grasshopper which was sitting on the bank. In fact there were several other orchids here too but we would identify them properly as a group the following morning.

We were treated to a delicious evening meal and retired for the night in anticipation for more wild-life delights the next day.

Day 2: Saturday 7th April Villa Vela area & the Testa dell'Acqua road

The day started quite cool but with lovely bright sunshine and we enjoyed breakfast outside on the terrace. Before the day had fully begun, Alice found a beautiful juvenile Moorish Gecko upside down on the path outside her room, possibly injured by a potential predator, and was able to show it to the group before moving it out of harm's way.

We started with a gentle walk from the hotel along the road which soon became a rough track as we headed towards a local quarry. As it was our first full day, almost everything we saw was new for the trip.

We began in a corner of the hotel car park where a rough grassy patch provided us with our first orchids of the day, *Ophrys lutea*, the Yellow Bee Orchid, and *Ophrys incubacea*. There were also a couple of spikes of Wild Gladiolus and Tassel Hyacinths. We were off to a good start!

Moving out of the grounds of the hotel there were lots more wonderful flowers. To name just a few: *Fedia cornucopiae*, a member of the Valerian family which we would go on to see regularly all week; *Adonis microcarpa*, the Yellow Pheasant's Eye in its red form; *Silene colorata*, an abundant little pink campion; *Salvia fruticosa*, a large sage with a beautiful pale mauve flower which was visited by a plethora of insects; and *Pisum sativum*, a wild pea with large blousy flowers with pink wings and a purple corolla. Alongside these were swathes of *Gelbionis coronaria*, the Yellow Crown Daisy and lots of Corn Poppies (*Papaver rhoeas*).

There were plenty more orchids too including a tongue orchid known as the Plough-Share Orchid, *Serapias vomeracea*, *Ophrys panormitana*, *Ophrys lupercalis*, *Orchis italica* and *Orchis tridentata* just coming out. There were also a couple of spikes of Giant Orchid, *Barlia robertiana* which had gone over and some seed pods of Widow Iris. Among the floral wonders we found some butterflies too; Small Blue, Orange Tip and Cleopatra were joined by a flighty Swallowtail. All of this was enjoyed to a background of calling Cetti's Warbler and Corn Bunting, the latter of which was eventually spotted atop a tree in the middle of one of the fields. Raven and Buzzard flew overhead alongside Swallows and Violet Carpenter Bees buzzed loudly from one flower to the next. There were quite a few Italian Wall Lizards sunning themselves on the dry stone walls too, including one which had a double tail, most likely caused by the original not fully dropping off but a new one growing regardless. It was certainly a fascinating sight.

We were soon retracing our steps up the track and passing the hotel entrance for a quick venture to the top of the road where we had spied those earlier orchids. As well as the Naked Man Orchids there were a few other beauties that had previously gone almost unnoticed including the Sawfly Orchid, *Ophrys tenthredinifera*, a lovely endemic species, *Ophrys lunulata*, and a lovely clump of Mirror Orchids, *Ophrys speculum*. There were also several more of the *Serapias vomeracea* and the attractive but diminutive Ground Pine, *Ajuga chamaepitys*.

Having thoroughly explored our local patch it was time for a bite of lunch and we returned to the hotel to enjoy a hearty pasta dish on the terrace. Of course, being outside, we continued our wildlife watching as butterflies flew past and Italian Sparrows chirped from the rooftops. There was plenty of chatter from us too, including a tongue in cheek debate on whether the single cloud in the sky would ever reach us but, in true Mediterranean form, it had dissipated before the meal was over.

Our afternoon began with a short drive along a road where we were to make two stops. The first was in a delightful sunny meadow where several new orchids awaited us. Alongside the Yellow Bee Orchids, we found the smaller flowered *Ophrys sicula*, and next to them some lovely *Orchis longicornu*, the Long-Spurred Orchid which were scattered across the site. Just near where we had parked we came across a single specimen of the Bumblebee Orchid, *Ophrys bombyliflora*, and a little beyond it *Serapias lingua*, followed swiftly by two closely related species, *Ophrys oxyrhynchos* and the paler *Ophrys biancae*, an endemic to the island. At the top of the slope were some fantastic examples of the previously seen *Orchis italica* and a short distance away some lovely *Ophrys explanata* which Roy Beacham discovered growing in a natural rock garden in the mossy pockets of a large limestone outcrop. These new species plus several now familiar to us took the total orchid species count at this one little spot to a whopping thirteen.

Orchids were not the only flowers to be found of course and *Gynandris sysirinchium*, Barbary Nut, were popping up through the grass to everyone's delight. There were also some lovely pinky-purple *Anemone hortensis* and a good stand of *Ruta chalepensis*, Fringed Rue. A few butterflies were spotted too including Small Blue and Brown Argus but the star find was a Green Hairstreak looking resplendent in the sun.

Moving on to our second stop for the afternoon, we pulled onto a grassy verge a mile or so down the road to find it covered with more of the Barbary Nut. Here we were exploring a section of limestone pavement which was slightly shadier in places and there were a few different flowers as a result. Just through the rickety home-made gate we came across Purple Toadflax (*Linaria purpurea*) in fine form and a short way beyond we found a nice Blue Hound's Tongue (*Cynoglossum creticum*) flowering.

The greatest surprise of the stop came a few minutes later when we almost literally stumbled over a tortoise! Stefano confirmed that it was a male Hermann's Tortoise. We spent a little while waiting to see whether he would come out of his shell having been startled and eventually he did, taking quite a turn of speed followed by a tumble off the edge of the rock he was on and into a hiding place beneath some tufty grasses.

The next surprise was found by Ian, a splendid if rather difficult to locate Praying Mantis (*Empusa pennata*). Having all eventually managed to pick out the very well camouflaged insect, we went back to our plant hunting and found a few orchids, namely Pink Butterfly (*Anacamptis papilionacea*), Mirror Orchid (*Ophrys speculum*) and Yellow Bee Orchid (*Ophrys lutea*). There was also some lovely *Cistus salvifolios* and a heather, *Erica multiflora*. There seemed to be fewer butterflies here but an orange Southern form of the Speckled Wood flitted past allowing nice views. Across the valley, Brenda spotted House Martins coming and going round some farm buildings and just before getting back into the vehicles to return to the hotel a Red-Rumped Swallow was seen zipping overhead.

We were soon on our return journey to the hotel where the group would spend a relaxing evening while Stefano and Alice took Garth to Siracuse to buy some new boots having had the first day prove too much for his existing pair! The intrepid trio returned just in time for more delicious food and we retired to the sound of Tree Frogs calling from the quarry up the road.

Day 3: Sunday 8th April

Buscemi, Monte Lauro, Buccheri Pine Forest & around Giarratana

The day began a little cooler and slightly more overcast than the day before and so after breakfast indoors we set out, equipped for cooler weather as we were heading up into the hills. After a short drive, during which the clouds mostly disappeared, we arrived at our first stop for the day near the village of Buscemi. Getting out of the vehicles we realised that contrary to appearances from within it was rather windy out. Nevertheless, we donned coats and ventured out onto the hillside. There was quite a bit of Italian Sainfoin, *Hedysarum coronarium*, growing among the tall grasses, though only a few in good flower. Here and there, *Anemone hortensis* bloomed and a scattering of a new orchid were found on the bank. Stefano confirmed that it was *Ophrys gargarica*.

Retracing our steps we continued down a rough track which skirted the hillside. In the shallow valley below a Corn Bunting sang from the top of a dead tree and Brenda spotted a Common White-throat. Roy Bowden and Stefano enjoyed debating the species of several Hawthorn trees beside the track whilst Viv was on top Orchid spotting form and found one after another as we ambled down the slope. Yellow Bee Orchid and Mirror Orchid seemed the most common here although there were several Naked Man Orchids and some nice specimens of *Ophrys incubacea* too. Viv also found what would turn out to be our one and only flowering Widow Iris, *Hermodactylus tuberosus*, which was in a rather poor state on its way over.

On the way back uphill we spotted a beautiful Brown Argus butterfly showing off the orange lunules around the edges of its wings as it sunbathed in the grass. Alice also found 2 lovely hairy caterpillars, one quite large and brown, the other much smaller and mostly yellow. Unfortunately she was unable to identify them and neglected to take photos in her excitement to show the group!

The next occurrence was rather unexpected when a group of cross country runners came past at high speed, quickly followed by another. It transpired that we had wandered onto the race route and there were approximately 200 competitors! We moved to the side and down into one of the small fields beside the track to continue our botanising in relative peace and allow them safe passage without having to circumnavigate us. It was evidently a fortunate turn of events as we soon found more orchids including a nice example of *Orchis tridentata*, the Toothed Orchid which we had previously only found in bud. The end of the race was signalled by the arrival of a chap on horseback bringing up the rear and we returned to the vehicles.

Our next stop was at the top of Monte Lauro in a short grazed meadow which proved far more floristically rich than first appearances would have indicated. The far-reaching views from the top were pretty spectacular too, especially if you don't mind wind turbines! It was beautifully sunny up here but the wind was quite strong and gusty so coats were retained but we weren't deterred.

We were quickly realising that there were huge numbers of orchids to avoid treading on! The first was one of several extremely good examples of the Sawfly Orchid, *Ophrys tenthredinifera*, among more of the Long-Spurred, Pink Butterfly and Mirror Orchids that we had seen elsewhere. The next was another new species for the trip, the Milky Orchid, *Ophrys lactea*, which it was interesting to observe in a variety of colour forms with most showing typical pale pink colouring but some being almost completely white and others having a very dark pink lip.

Whilst wandering and marvelling at the sheer numbers of these beautiful plants there was suddenly a call from Roy Bowden that he had found a Wryneck and the whole group were able to get a good view of this extraordinary bird once they had located its position in a patch of scrub and brambles. A Stonechat was spotted atop another bush whilst Iona and Brenda saw a Pied Flycatcher. There were Woodlarks singing nearby too with a beautiful if slightly mournful descending tune.

Having watched the Wryneck for a while, we separated to explore once more and Alice came across some lovely *Saxifraga carpetana* ssp. *graeca* with delicate white flowers being blown in the wind. Roy Beacham then called that he had found another orchid and the single spike was soon identified as *Orchis provincialis*, a beautiful creamy yellow orchid. There were a few scattered flowers of *Romulea bulbocodium* looking superficially a little like a crocus and by the vehicles, some fine examples of *Echium plantagineum*, the Purple Viper's Bugloss.

We drove a short distance down the road to find a suitable and hopefully less windy spot for our picnic. We pulled in to an area of pine woodland just outside the village of Buccheri and the group spent a happy few minutes botanising along the edge of the road while Stefano and Alice prepared the lunch.

We ate lunch in lovely sunshine with only the odd gust of wind and with Swifts screaming overhead, several pairs of Goldfinch passing, a Buzzard circling on a thermal and Small White butterflies zooming around.

We went for a short walk into the woods where we found yet more orchids. They were mostly species that we had seen in some numbers before but there were quite a few more of the *Orchis provincialis* blooming beneath the pine trees and perhaps more excitingly, a single spike of *Ophrys subfusca* ssp. *laurensis*, a fairly local endemic named after Monte Lauro. Moving further into the woods, we came to a small pool which was heaving with Pool Frogs, puffing out their cheeks as they called to one another. There was Water Crowfoot growing among the reeds and several Orange Tip butterflies flew round the glade while Italian Wall Lizards sunned themselves on the rocky edges. A Chiffchaff was heard calling from the depths of the wood, a first for the year for most of the group and somehow a joyous sound indicating that spring might have arrived by the time we return home.

Moving on for the afternoon, we headed towards the town of Giarratana. On the hillside above, we made an impromptu stop beneath some Almond trees for a spectacular specimen of the Italian Sainfoin, *Hedysarum coronarium*, which must have been nearly three feet tall and covered in splendid red blooms. There were some lovely patches of *Calendula officinalis* next to the vehicles as well as some Periwinkle, *Vinca major* and a good clump of a Broomrape.

Having driven on through Giarratana itself, our next stop was on some terraces by a small stream. Here we enjoyed some *Teucrium fruticans*, a lovely Germander with a large pale mauve flower which was being visited by lots of insects. There was also a large Broomrape here which, interestingly, was being visited by a wasp and a White Spotted Rose Beetle, *Oxythyrea funesta*. There were plenty more of the plants we had been lucky to see so many of including Naked Man Orchid, *Allium subvillosum*, Borage, White Mignonette, *Anemone hortensis* and Blue Hound's Tongue. There was a mint species growing underfoot in places too which made it a pleasant experience for all the senses.

As well as flowers, we were treated to a plethora of butterflies at this stop with both Small and Large White, Orange Tip, Common Blue, Brown Argus, Wall, Small Heath, Clouded Yellow and a Swallowtail all flitting around while we wandered through. There were a couple of dragonflies near the stream too of the darter type, but none stopping long enough to get a positive identification.

We made one final stop on our way back by some farm buildings on the other side of Giarratana. Here we had nice views of Kestrel, Crested Lark and Spotless Starlings as well as numerous and noisy Italian Sparrows. There were a few flowers too, the most notable being some beautiful specimens of *Serapias vomeracea*, a patch of Pitch Trefoil, *Psoralea bituminosa*, the enormous leaves of Cardoon, *Cynara cardunculus*, and Weasel's Snout, *Misopates orontium*.

With all the stops we had managed to fit in, it had felt like a longer day than it had been but we returned to the hotel a happy bunch. Stefano and Alice returned for dinner with stories of traversing most of the back streets in Noto trying to find somewhere to buy lunch for the following day and we enjoyed another pleasant evening.

Day 4: Monday 9th April Vendicari (North & South), Marzamemi

The day dawned cloudier than we might have liked but we were hopeful that it might burn off and after another hearty breakfast we set off towards the coast. On the way we spotted a Roller sitting on a telegraph wire and on arrival at the northern end of Vendicari Marsh, we were soon aware that the list for the day would be a full one with plenty of birdsong around us and verges full of flowers.

Stefano and Alice dropped the group near the entrance and parked a short way away in a field that was signposted as the carpark. Walking back to join the rest, they had a fantastic view of the normally skulking Sardinian Warbler which was sitting on top of a fence. We admired a new plant before we had even entered the reserve, the large pink flowered *Convolvulus althaeoides* or Mallow-leaved Bindweed. Next, we paused to look at the map of the reserve before entering and were amused that one of the prohibited activities denoted appeared to be taking a Kangaroo for a walk... of course it was to imply that one shouldn't introduce foreign species, but the picture was far more entertaining!

Our first port of call once inside the reserve were two new looking hides just a short way up the path. These gave us great views over one of the lagoons and we got our first sight of Greater Flamingos feeding. As we entered, a few of the group were just in time to see a Squacco Heron taking flight and we spent a good few minutes here taking in all the birdlife on and around the water.

Among others there were Cattle and Little Egrets, Shelducks, Shoveler, lots of Coots and a Gull-billed Tern. A Marsh Harrier was also spotted quartering low over the reedbed in the distance.

As we walked on there were a few new plants to note. The first was *Aristolochia rotunda*, which was growing in clumps right outside the hides. As we rounded the corner onto the wooden boardwalk we saw the next, Great Bindweed, *Calystegia silvatica*. At the far end of the boardwalk we came across some rather lovely Buck's Horn Plantain, *Plantago coronopus* and we got our first proper glimpse of the sea as we approached the beach. To either side of the path here there was suddenly a burst of colour with lovely cushions of Large Yellow Restharrow, *Ononis natrix*, patches of pale pink Sea Stock, *Matthiola sinuata*, studded with darker pink *Silene colorata*, and tiny white annual Daisies, *Bellis annua* plus the impressive deep pink *Centaurea sphaerocephala*, all amongst beautiful Hare's Tail Grass, *Lagurus ovatus* with its wonderfully fluffy flower heads.

Another, slightly more unusual plant of note consisted of washed up brown matted balls which littered the shore like the remnants of a child's ball pit. These were the fibrous remains of a sea grass, *Posidonia oceanica*, which is endemic to the Mediterranean and has been found to be one of the world's oldest living organisms.

Turning right, we headed for another hide. On the way we spotted a few more lovely plants including the Annual Asphodel, *Asphodelus fistulosus*, and Yellowwort, *Blackstonia perfoliata*. There appeared to be a mass of insects following us along the path too and these turned out to be rather flighty Tiger Beetles which, when they paused long enough to be admired, were rather attractive shiny brown with hints of green and a pattern of white spots. The fences either side of the path held numerous Italian Wall Lizards soaking up every last second of sunshine before darting out of harm's way as we approached.

Reaching the next hide we were delighted with views of a Black-winged Stilt and a Black-necked Grebe as well as Great Crested and Little Grebes. There were a few ducks too including Pochard and Teal plus more Shoveler. There was also a rather charming if somewhat noisy Fan-Tailed Warbler which appeared to be nesting just in front of the hide and gave us good views. We all agreed that Zitting Cisticola was a far more descriptive name as it "zitted" loudly overhead!

On our way back Roy Beacham and Alice stopped to watch a solitary bee remove sand from a snail shell in order to use it as a nest chamber. Further on we had nice views of a pair of Crested Lark on the path and a Linnet posed wonderfully atop a nearby shrub. At the boardwalk junction we continued along the coast towards the Tonnara or Tuna Factory. We found a nice patch of *Serapias parviflora*, the Small-flowered Serapias growing beside the path and were surprised to note a spike of *Barlia robertiana* here too although it was over. As we rounded the corner near the disused factory we were treated to a great view of a Spoonbill feeding in the shallows quite close. Unfortunately the hide which would have given us an even clearer view was yet to be opened.

Continuing on, we passed an ancient species known as a Joint Pine, *Ephedra fragilis*, which was growing over a low wall and spent a few minutes investigating the eco-museum the other side of the factory and were amused by the English translation for some of the species there, the favourite being the "Littern Bittern"! Outside, we found Squirting Cucumber, *Ecballium elaterium*, one flower of which held a yellow crab spider, although despite Alice's best efforts it was not ready to give up the secret of how it got its name.

Wandering back through the ruins of the Tonnara we spotted a Tree Sparrow atop a column and found Caper bushes growing through the stonework as well as the lovely creamy *Antirrhinum siculum* flowering from seemingly every crevice. A Six-spot Burnet moth was seen nectaring on the *Centaurea sphaerocephala* as we retraced our path.

Returning to the vehicles we were somewhat surprised by the apparently sudden influx of people and so we decided to move on elsewhere to have our picnic lunch but not before Stefano had bought some Carob beans from a local nut vendor for us to try.

Our lunch spot was only a couple of miles down the road and was most notable for the quantity of Small White butterflies flapping over the arable fields around us. There was the familiar "zit" of Fan-tailed warblers, and Small Tree Mallow *Lavatera cretica* was scattered through the verge while a type of Darkling Beetle was an unexpected find as it wandered across the road.

Having eaten we headed out for another short journey to the other end of the marsh. Here we had a rather different habitat with rough meadows, shrubby maquis and stony paths as opposed to boardwalks across reedbeds and sandy shoreline. Almost as soon as we were out of the vehicles we were finding things of interest. Marie came across a splendid and large beetle, *Buprestis cupressi* which, although not an endemic species, records are limited to Vendicari on Sicily. The larvae feed on Prickly Juniper, *Juniperus oxycedrus*, which we also saw and which is much more common here than elsewhere on the island.

There were lots of butterflies, particularly in the grassy and flower-rich meadow near the entrance. Notable were Swallowtail which is always lovely to see and an Eastern Dappled White. They were joined by at least half a dozen other common species too. Wandering on, we found lots more flowers to look at as well, mostly more of what we'd found previously but a few new ones sneaking in such as Love-in-a-Mist, *Nigella damascena*, the small, pale-flowered *Sideritis romana* and, in the pockets of rockier sections, *Sedum caeruleum*, with attractive tiny blue flowers set against red leaves. Among them, the white flowers of *Bellardia trixago* joining the Yellow Bartsia, *Parentucellia viscosa* and smaller pinkish *Parentucellia latifolia*, all three of which are semi-parasitic.

At the top of the hill we were rewarded with fabulous views over the bay back to the Tonnara we had walked round that morning. We enjoyed the sunshine for a few minutes, a few of us taking the opportunity to explore further in the immediate surroundings before heading back to the vehicles.

Our last stop of the day was not for wildlife but for ice cream - the neighbouring village of Marzamemi provided us with a perfect harbourside spot for gelato before we returned to the hotel.

Day 5: Tuesday 10th April Anapo Gorge (West) & Pantalica

Once again we woke to an overcast day though this time it took longer to lift. By the time we arrived at our first port of call in the western end of the Anapo Gorge, the clouds looked less threatening but there was still a little bit of a chilly breeze from time to time. We began our walk and had barely left the carpark when we started to see all manner of birds and flowers.

Among the first birds spotted were Firecrest and Subalpine Warbler whilst Wren and Chiffchaff called from the woods around us. As we continued along the disused railway track there were plenty of flowers to look at and many, such as Pitch Trefoil, we had seen before but not in such numbers. There was a lot of White Campion, *Silene latifolia*, which was rather unusual as it appeared to have an inflated calyx tube like a Bladder Campion which was more noticeable when in seed. Another new plant for the trip was *Convolvulus elegantissimus* closely related to the Mallow-leaved Bindweed from the previous day but with very narrow, lobed silvery leaves.

In the valley bottom, a short way down the track was a particularly attractive meadow full of Crown Daisies, Poppies and Borage. As we were photographing it, three Mallard got up from the river and flew overhead. Back on the main track there were yet more lovely plants to look at including Shepherd's Needle, *Scandix pecten-veneris*, Oriental Bugle, *Ajuga orientalis*, and the seemingly ever-present Honeywort, *Cerinthe major*. A little further on there were lots of rather impressive *Silybum marianum*, Milk Thistles, with impressive spiky bracts and beautifully white-veined leaves. Nearby, Alice found a Longhorn Bee asleep in a Marigold and elsewhere there were masses of Bush Cricket nymphs sitting nicely for photographs in a variety of flowers. Viv found a different pea, *Vicia narbonensis* which had a very dark purple flower and nearby we came across some Man Orchids, *Orchis anthropophora* which were a new species for the trip. There were masses of Yellow Bee and Naked Man Orchids too plus a good scattering of Toothed, Mirror, Pink Butterfly and *Ophrys incubacea*.

Eventually it was deemed that we should turn around and head back but before we did so, we stopped for a light snack and were able to enjoy views of a Peregrine Falcon on the rock face above us, while *Scorpiurus muricatus* and *Coronilla valentina* were noted as new plants around us.

Returning to the vehicles we drove through the hillside town of Ferla and stopped for lunch at an information centre near Pantalica. There were Corn Buntings and Crested Larks singing nearby as Swallows flew low over the crop in a neighbouring field.

Continuing on, we stopped at the incredible pre-Roman necropolis of Pantalica for the afternoon. From here we had wonderful views down into the valley and were able to follow a path round to some fascinating caves which had been an early settlement and even a small church. There were a few interesting plants here too of course including Tree Spurge, *Euphorbia dendroides*, Small-flowered Catchfly, *Silene gallica*, and Woolly Trefoil, *Trifolium tomentosum*. We were also able to get a good comparison between Membraneous and Roman Nettles which were growing next to one another and there was absolutely masses of Fringed Rue growing everywhere.

We were lucky to get another view of Peregrine Falcon, possibly even the same individual as earlier in the day and a Kestrel too, perched in a tree on the top of the hill. There were also several species of butterflies including Green-underside Blue, as well as Small Heath, Small Copper and Swallowtail. Just before turning back Alice found an endemic Striped Bush Cricket.

It was soon time to wend our way back to the hotel for yet another delicious evening meal in their restaurant.

Day 6: Wednesday 11th April

Noto Antica, near Testa dell'Acqua &
Cava Grande di Cassibile

The day dawned brighter than previous days but still chilly as we set off for another local destination, Noto Antica, destroyed by a massive earthquake in 1693. The huge walls were certainly impressive as we drew up and we were greeted with lots of lovely birdsong in the trees around us. Entering the ancient walled town, we found that nature was doing its best to reclaim the surviving stonework.

As we explored a rocky patch looking for flowers we heard a Turtle Dove calling from the hillside opposite and our search paid off with Mirror Orchid and *Serapias lingua* being found along with Branched Broomrape, *Orobanche ramosa*. Climbing the steps to the Royal Castle, we found *Osyris alba* growing from a crack in the wall and reaching the top we were greeted by a wall topped with wonderful carpet of Starry Clover, *Trifolium stellatum* and studded with Yellow Bartsia, *Parentucellia viscosa*.

Wandering on along the main path through the historic site, we found the usual suspects of Yellow Bee Orchid and Naked Man Orchid plus *Ophrys incubacea*. There was quite a lot of rather lovely *Salvia fruticosa* blooming beside the track as well as *Lathyrus ochrus*, *Lathyrus annuus* and *Lathyrus clymenum*. A Green-underside Blue butterfly posed obligingly for photos and a Small Copper zipped past while a Nightingale sang from the trees nearby. Alice also found some Six Spot Burnet Moth caterpillars on a rock and an Egyptian Grasshopper.

Returning to the vehicles we had excellent parting views of a Sardinian Warbler but we were soon moving on to our next stop near Testa dell'Acqua. Here, we were met in rather comical fashion by three Italians in suits who, it transpired, were Estate Agents wishing to sell the land and Stefano proved a potential customer. After some discussion they left us in peace to explore and we were once more wondering where to put our feet as we found ourselves surrounded by Mirror Orchids, Tassel Hyacinths and all sorts of other floral delights. Again, the birdsong here was delightful with Nightingales, a Song Thrush and Robin all singing at once from the wooded valley and a Great Spotted Woodpecker drumming in amongst them.

Further into the field we came across some rather large and superb specimens of *Serapias vomeracea* as well as *Gladiolus italicus* and *Asphodeline lutea* which seemed to have been opening more by the day and were beginning to look really good. Roy Beacham joined Alice and Stefano in getting great views of a Western Whip Snake beneath a bush and a variety of now familiar orchids were recorded.

A few of the group ventured down to the river and in doing so found a superb specimen of Sawfly Orchid, *Ophrys tenthredinifera*, as well as a Collared Flycatcher. There were also tadpoles of the Sicilian Green Toad in the gentle flowing water.

Our next stop would be for lunch and whilst Alice was preparing it the group found some lovely flowers including Barbary Nut which seemed almost to open before our eyes, lots of Wild Clary, *Salvia verbenaca*, and a few orchids to boot. Brenda also spotted a most unusual bird sighting for the area, a small flock of Chough in a meadow where cattle were grazing. The rest of the group were

content with a few passing passerines including a Serin which sang briefly from the telegraph wire overhead before moving on.

It was only a short hop down the road and we enjoyed refreshments (mostly the super-thick and delicious hot chocolate!) at a cafe on the edge of the Cava Grande di Cassibile, an enormous and impressive gorge with a series of deep river pools at the bottom and a staggering cave dwelling on the opposite wall.

Rather than venture into the depths of the gorge, appealing though it looked, we stuck to a track that led along the top edge. Here we found plenty to delight us with the first discoveries being of the orchid persuasion! Alongside the familiar Yellow Bee Orchid we found once more the smaller variety, *Ophrys sicula* and amongst the long grasses, *Ophrys oxyrhynchos* and *Ophrys panormitana*. There was also a near perfect specimen of *Ophrys lupercalis* as well as more of the Pink Butterfly Orchid, Mirror Orchid and Naked Man Orchid. As well as the common *Serapias vomeracea*, we found the smaller *Serapias lingua* and lots of Tassel Hyacinths.

There were a number of new and mostly diminutive plants too including *Evax pygmaea*, *Teucrium polium*, the tiny Felty Germander, and *Malva cretica*, a rather pretty little Mallow. Among these, we saw a nice variety of butterflies too with Small Heath, Small Copper, Brown Argus and Orange Tip joined by the more elusive Eastern Dappled White and the blousy Swallowtail. Overhead a Woodlark sang whilst Meadow Pipit, Raven and Peregrine Falcon were also spotted. Roy Bowden was then successful in finding a Blue Rock Thrush and some Crag Martins.

Day 7: Thursday 12th April

Anapo Gorge (East), Bibbinello & Manghisi terraces

Our penultimate day began with sunshine and breakfast on the terrace once more. Having enjoyed the wonderful spread, we set out in good spirits for the Eastern end of the Anapo Gorge. Those in the minibus enjoyed views of Turtle Dove in the carpark which flew as we arrived, meanwhile, Alice's car had nice views of a Grey Wagtail and a Jay instead.

As we set off we passed under a new tree for the trip, the Nettle Tree, *Celtis australis* which had flowered earlier in the year and was already developing fruit. It was only a few feet to the first tunnel on the track, the entrance cutting to which sheltered Maidenhair ferns. The tunnel navigated, we emerged onto a bridge over the river where an Elder stood beneath us in full bloom and birdsong rang loudly from the trees against the water.

Among the new plants was *Aristolochia altissima*, alongside which several more ferns were discovered though not all identified. Once again we found masses of Naked Man and Yellow Bee Orchids. The Manna Ash, *Fraxinus ornus*, was in bloom and a good stand of *Osyris alba* produced a lovely honey-like scent.

There were quite a few butterflies on the wing with Southern Speckled Wood and Green-underside Blue being notable. There was also a lovely damselfly, a Copper Demoiselle, which perched perfectly on a bramble leaf for the group to photograph. A short way further on a Sardinian Warbler

was spotted nesting just below the track and a few stopped to watch the adults come and go with food for their young.

We were soon at the second tunnel of the day which was slightly longer. Alongside the almost obligatory ferns at the entrance were some wonderful specimens of another new orchid, *Ophrys subfusca* ssp. *archimedeae*. Inside the tunnel, nearer to the far end, some observant members of the group found a large *Tegenaria* sp. spider.

Once out in the light the other side we continued to find more flowers. There was a superb specimen of the endemic *Ophrys lunulata* and shortly afterward a very good specimen of *Ophrys bertolonii* which was also new for the trip. A pair of Blue Rock Thrushes were spotted high up on the opposite wall of the gorge and subsequently admired again on the return journey.

Continuing on, several large Egyptian Grasshoppers (and one juvenile) were found and one stayed put very well for photographs on the lower branch of a Hazel tree having narrowly avoided flying into Viv's hair! A little way further down the track and we once again crossed the river.

We stopped for a quick snack and watched several Grey Wagtails fly over and a Robin in the nearby trees. A freshwater crab, *Potamon fluviatile* was spotted in the shallows and some fish in the deeper parts though we weren't able to get a clear enough view to identify them.

On the way back we marvelled at the sheer numbers of Lizards basking on almost every section of wooden fencing. We heard a Tawny Owl call which seemed almost alien in the middle of such a bright, sunny day and a Peregrine circled overhead.

Once back at the vehicles we moved on a short distance to a lunch spot where Turtle Doves called but couldn't be seen and a Swallowtail flew past time and again. There was a False Acacia blooming nearby and swathes of the fluffy flowered thistles, *Galactites tomentosa*, which one could be forgiven for thinking were something far more exotic.

We made two stops on the way back to the hotel, the first appeared to be a standard meadow was one of the most orchid-filled places you could imagine. Taking a step in any direction could prove tricky with more *Ophrys lutea*, possibly than we had seen on the rest of the trip combined! There were plenty of *Ophrys speculum* and *Serapias vomeracea* too, including one pale, creamy coloured example. Along with these were more Naked Man, Sawfly, Toothed and Pink Butterfly Orchids as well as *Serapias parviflora*, *Ophrys bertoloni* and a hybrid of sawfly crossed with... something else! Of course, orchids weren't the only flora, but they were probably the most spectacular. Among *Silene colorata*, Bird's-foot Trefoil and Tassel Hyacinth they were only a part of the carpet of colour. All of this was topped off with noisy song from Fan-Tailed Warbler and Spotless Starling in the background. On the way to our next meadow, those in the car were treated to a wonderful clear view of a male Pallid Harrier which flew over the minibus to land in a field next to the road.

Our final stop was at a terrace above the Manghisi river where we found yet more orchids, including what Stefano described as the best clump ever of *Ophrys biancae*. They were spectacular! There was also a lovely *Ophrys oxyrhyncos* or two and some very white *Serapias vomeracea* as well as the usual orchid suspects which we had grown to know and love. Crossing the road as we walked back up to the vehicles we were treated to a fantastic display of *Orchis italica* as a last hurrah.

Our final evening was spent enjoyably with another lovely meal and a final rundown of the checklists which we had been adding to all week. A Nightingale sang in the hotel grounds as we retired for the night.

Day 8: Friday 13th April Transfer to Catania & Departure

The final day dawned bright and we were rather sad to be leaving such a beautiful sunny place with the thought of a return to dreary weather in the UK. It was not all as bad as it could have been though as there were Turtle Doves on the telegraph wires outside the hotel and as we approached the airport we spotted a number of White Storks nesting on top of small pylons. We said our farewells at a petrol station as Alice had to go elsewhere to return her car and so the group continued the last couple of miles in the minibus without her. It was a wonderful week and we had plenty to reflect on during our onward journeys.

Systematic Lists

Itinerary

Day 1	6th April 2018	Arrival & transfer to Masseria degli Ulivi
Day 2	7th April 2018	Villa Vela & the Testa dell'Acqua road
Day 3	8th April 2018	Buscemi, Monte Lauro, Buccheri Pine Forest & around Giarratana
Day 4	9th April 2018	Vendicari North & South, Marzamemi
Day 5	10th April 2018	Anapo Gorge West & Pantalica
Day 6	11th April 2018	Noto Antica, near Testa dell'Acqua & Cava Grande di Cassibile
Day 7	12th April 2018	Anapo Gorge East, Bibbinello & Manghisi terraces
Day 8	13th April 2018	Transfer to Catania & Departure

Systematic List Number 1 Plants

The listing is alphabetical within each family.

Selaginellaceae

<i>Selaginella denticulata</i>	Mediterranean Selaginella	Anapo Gorge East
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Pteridophyta

<i>Adiantum capillus-veneris</i>	Maidenhair Fern	Pantalica & Anapo Gorge East
<i>Ceterach officinarum</i>	Rustyback Fern	Noto Antica & Anapo Gorge East
<i>Polypodium sp.</i>	A Polypody	Anapo Gorge East
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken	Anapo Gorge

Pinaceae

<i>Pinus halepensis</i>	Aleppo Pine	Scattered
<i>Pinus pinea</i>	Stone Pine	Buccheri

Cupressaceae

<i>Cupressus sempervirens</i>	Italian Cypress	Scattered
<i>Juniperus oxycedrus</i>	Prickly Juniper	Vendicari dunes

Ephedraceae

<i>Ephedra fragilis</i>	a Joint Pine	Vendicari North
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Fagaceae

<i>Quercus ilex</i>	Holm Oak	Widespread
<i>Quercus pubescens</i>	Downy Oak	Scattered
<i>Quercus coccifera</i>	Holly Oak	Anapo Gorge West
<i>Quercus dalechampii</i>	an Oak	Anapo Gorge

Salicaceae

<i>Salix sp.</i>	Willow	Scattered, e.g. Anapo Gorge
<i>Populus nigra</i>	Black Poplar	Scattered

Juglandaceae

<i>Juglans regia</i>	Walnut	Scattered
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Ulmaceae

<i>Celtis australis</i>	Nettle Tree	Anapo Gorge East
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Moraceae

<i>Ficus carica</i>	Fig	Widespread & common
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Santalaceae

<i>Osyris alba</i>	Osyris	Villa Vela, Noto Antica & Anapo Gorge East
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Urticaceae

<i>Parietaria officinalis</i>	Common Pellitory	Scattered
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<i>Urtica membranacea</i>	Membraneous Nettle	Pantalica & Anapo Gorge East
<i>Urtica pilulifera</i>	Roman Nettle	Pantalica
<i>Aristolochiaceae</i>		
<i>Aristolochia altissima</i>	a Birthwort	Anapo Gorge East
<i>Aristolochia rotunda</i>	Round-leaved Birthwort	Vendicari North
<i>Polygonaceae</i>		
<i>Rumex bucephalophorus</i>	a Dock	Scattered, locally common
<i>Chenopodiaceae</i>		
<i>Halimione portulacoides</i>	Sea Purslane	Vendicari North
<i>Salicornia europaea</i>	Glasswort	Vendicari North
<i>Aizoaceae</i>		
<i>Carpobrotus acinaciformis</i>	Red Hottentot Fig	Vendicari, leaves only
<i>Caryophyllaceae</i>		
<i>Silene latifolia</i>	White Champion	Scattered, locally common
<i>Silene colorata</i>	a Catchfly	Widespread & very common
<i>Silene gallica</i>	Small-flowered Catchfly	Pantalica & Cava Grande
<i>Silene vulgaris</i>	Bladder Champion	Scattered
<i>Stellaria media</i>	Chickweed	Near Giarratana & Anapo Gorge East
<i>Ranunculaceae</i>		
<i>Adonis microcarpa</i>	Yellow Pheasant's-eye	Villa Vela
<i>Anemone hortensis</i>	an anemone	Widespread & common
<i>Clematis vitalba</i>	Traveller's Joy	Leaves in Anapo Gorge
<i>Nigella damascena</i>	Love-in-a-mist	Vendicari South, Pantalica
<i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i>	Water Crowfoot	Buccheri
<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>	Bulbous Buttercup	Scattered e.g. Anapo Gorge
<i>Ranunculus millefoliatus</i>	a Buttercup	Villa Vela
<i>Capparaceae</i>		
<i>Capparis spinosa</i>	Caper	In leaf only at Vendicari North, Anapo Gorge & Noto Antica
<i>Papaveraceae</i>		
<i>Papaver dubium</i>	Long-headed Poppy	Anapo Gorge West & possibly elsewhere
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Corn Poppy	Widespread & common
<i>Fumariaceae</i>		
<i>Fumaria capreolata</i>	White Ramping-Fumitory	Villa Vela & Anapo Gorge
<i>Fumaria officinalis</i>	Common Fumitory	Villa Vela & Anapo Gorge West
<i>Cruciferae</i>		
<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	Garlic Mustard	Anapo Gorge East
<i>Biscutella didyma</i>	Biscutella	Widespread & common
<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	Shepherd's Purse	Anapo Gorge West
<i>Diplotaxis eruroides</i>	White Rocket	Scattered

<i>Lobularia maritima</i>	Sweet Alison	Widespread
<i>Matthiola sinuata</i>	Sea Stock	Vendicari North

Resedaceae

<i>Reseda alba</i>	White Mignonette	Widespread & common
<i>Reseda lutea</i>	Wild Mignonette	Cava Grande

Crassulaceae

<i>Sedum caeruleum</i>	a Stonecrop	Vendicari
<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	Navelwort	Widespread

Saxifragaceae

<i>Saxifraga graeca (carpetana)</i>	a Saxifrage	Monte Lauro
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Platanaceae

<i>Platanus orientalis</i>	Oriental Plane Tree	Anapo Gorge
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Rosaceae

<i>Crataegus laevigata</i>	Midland Hawthorn	Buscemi
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn	Scattered
<i>Cydonia oblonga</i>	Quince	Anapo Gorge East
<i>Eriobotrya japonica</i>	Loquat	Near Giarratana & Anapo Gorge West
<i>Prunus dulcis</i>	Almond	Scattered
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn	Locally common
<i>Pyrus amygdaliformis</i>	Almond-leaved Pear	Widespread & very common
<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>	Salad Burnet	Anapo Gorge & Cava Grande
<i>Sarcopoterium spinosum</i>	Thorny Burnet	Testa dell'Acqua road & Cava Grande
<i>Rubus spp.</i>	Bramble species	Widespread - not identified to species

Fabaceae

<i>Acacia cyanophylla</i>	Blue-leaved Wattle	Widespread, especially along roadsides
<i>Anagyris foetida</i>	Foetid Bean Trefoil	Scattered, not in flower
<i>Anthyllis tetraphylla</i>	Bladder Vetch	Villa Vela, Anapo Gorge West & Cava Grande
<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>	Pink Kidney Vetch	Widespread
<i>Calicotome spinosa</i>	Thorny Broom	Widespread & common
<i>Ceratoniasiliqua</i>	Carob Tree	Widespread in small numbers
<i>Coronilla scorpioides</i>	Annual Scorpion Vetch	Anapo Gorge West
<i>Coronilla valentina</i>	a Scorpion vetch	Anapo Gorge
<i>Hippocrepis unisiliquosa</i>	a horseshoe vetch	Near Testa dell'Acqua
<i>Hedysarum coronarium</i>	Italian Sainfoin	Buscemi, Giarratana & scattered on roadsides
<i>Lathyrus annuus</i>	Annual Yellow Vetchling	Scattered
<i>Lathyrus clymenum</i>	a Vetchling	Widespread & very common
<i>Lathyrus ochrus</i>	Winged Vetchling	Scattered
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Birdsfoot Trefoil	Scattered
<i>Melilotus italicus</i>	a Melilot	Villa Vela
<i>Ononis natrix</i>	Large Yellow Restharrow	Vendicari, Cava Grande & Anapo Gorge East
<i>Pisum sativum</i>	Wild Pea	Widespread

<i>Psoralea bituminosa</i>	Pitch Trefoil	Scattered, lots in the Anapo Gorge
<i>Robinia pseudacacia</i>	False Acacia	Scattered on roadsides mostly
<i>Scorpiurus muricatus</i>	Scorpiurus	Anapo Gorge West
<i>Trigonolobus purpureus</i>	Asparagus Pea	Widespread & very common
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover	Widespread
<i>Trifolium stellatum</i>	Star Clover	Widespread & common
<i>Trifolium tomentosum</i>	Woolly Trefoil	Pantalica
<i>Vicia lutea</i>	Yellow Vetch	Widespread
<i>Vicia narbonensis</i>	a Vetch	Anapo Gorge

Oxalidaceae

<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i>	Bermuda Buttercup	Widespread and very common
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Geraniaceae

<i>Erodium malacoides</i>	Mallow-leaved Stork's-bill	Hotel carpark
<i>Erodium sp.</i>		There were others not identified
<i>Geranium molle</i>	Dovesfoot Cranesbill	Widespread
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb Robert	Scattered, e.g. Anapo Gorge

Linaceae

<i>Linum bienne</i>	Pale Flax	Scattered
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Euphorbiaceae

<i>Euphorbia characias</i>	Large Mediterranean Spurge	Widespread & common
<i>Euphorbia dendroides</i>	Tree Spurge	Locally numerous, e.g. Pantalica
<i>Euphorbia helioscopia</i>	Sun Spurge	Widespread & common
<i>Mercurialis annua</i>	Annual Mercury	Vendicari North & Anapo Gorge
<i>Ricinus communis</i>	Castor Oil Plant	Scattered on roadsides

Rutaceae

<i>Citrus aurantiacum</i>	Seville Orange	Cultivated
<i>Citrus limon</i>	Lemon	Cultivated
<i>Citrus sinensis</i>	Orange	Cultivated
<i>Ruta chalepensis</i>	Fringed Rue	Widespread & locally abundant

Anacardiaceae

<i>Pistacia lentiscus</i>	Mastic Tree	Widespread & abundant
<i>Pistachia terebinthus</i>	Terebinth	Pantalica

Rhamnaceae

<i>Rhamnus alaternus</i>	Mediterranean Buckthorn	Scattered
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Malvaceae

<i>Lavatera cretica</i>	Small Tree Mallow	Vendicari
<i>Malva cretica</i>	a Mallow	Cava Grande, Bibbinello & Manghisi terrace
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	Common Mallow	Anapo Gorge

Thymelaeaceae

<i>Daphne laureola</i>	Spurge Laurel	Cava Grande in leaf
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Guttiferae

Hypericum perforatum Perforate St John's-Wort In bud Anapo Gorge East

Cistaceae

Cistus creticus a Cistus Widespread
Cistus salvifolius Sage-leaved Cistus Widespread

Tamaricaceae

Tamarix sp. a Tamarisk Venticari

Cucurbitaceae

Ecballium elaterium Squinting Cucumber Venticari North

Cactaceae

Opuntia ficus-indica Prickly Pear Widespread

Myrtaceae

Eucalyptus sp. Gum Trees Variety of species widely planted, as at Venticari North
Myrtus communis Common Myrtle Villa Vela & Venticari

Araliaceae

Hedera helix Ivy Widespread

Apiaceae

Daucus carota Wild Carrot Widespread & reasonably common
Daucus spp. Carrot species Other species probably present
Eryngium campestre Field Eryngo Cava Grande in leaf
Eryngium maritimum Sea Holly Venticari North in leaf
Ferula communis Giant Fennel Widespread & common
Ferulago nodosa Ferulago Scattered, swollen nodes on stems distinctive
Foeniculum vulgare Fennel Scattered
Scandix pecten-veneris Shepherd's Needle Near Giarratana, Anapo Gorge & Noto Antica
Smyrniium olusatrum Alexanders Pantalica & near Testa dell'Acqua
Smyrniium perfoliatum Perfoliate Alexanders Widespread & common
Thapsia garganica Thapsia Scattered
Tordylium apulum Tordylium Scattered

Ericaceae

Erica multiflora a Heather Scattered

Primulaceae

Anagallis arvensis Scarlet Pimpernel Widespread & common in both blue flowered form & red
Cyclamen hederifolium Ivy-leaved Sowbread Leaves noted, Anapo Gorge

Plumbaginaceae

Limonium spp. Sea Lavender species Leaves noted, Vendicari North

Oleaceae

Fraxinus ornus Manna Ash Widespread but flowering well in the Anapo Gorge

Olea europea Olive Widely cultivated, some wild too

Apocynaceae

Nerium oleander Oleander Scattered, mostly on roadsides

Vinca major Greater Periwinkle Near Giarratana & near Testa dell'Acqua

Gentianaceae

Blackstonia perfoliata Yellow-wort Vendicari North

Centaureum erythraea Common Centaury Villa Vela & Vendicari North

Rubiaceae

Asperula arvensis Blue Woodruff Widespread

Convolvulaceae

Calystegia silvatica Great Bindweed Vendicari & Anapo Gorge

Convolvulus althaeoides Mallow-leaved Bindweed Vendicari

Convolvulus elegantissimus a Bindweed Anapo Gorge, Pantalica & Cava Grande

Boraginaceae

Alkanna tinctoria Dyer's Alkanet Cava Grande & Bibbinello

Anchusa azurea Large Blue Alkanet Villa Vela

Borago officinalis Borage Common & widespread

Cerinthe major Honeywort Widespread & abundant

Cynoglossum creticum Blue Hound's-Tongue Scattered at most stops

Echium plantagineum Purple Viper's-Bugloss Common & widespread

Lamiaceae

Ajuga chamaepitys Ground Pine Scattered

Ajuga orientalis Oriental Bugle Anapo Gorge

Corydanthus capitatus a Thyme Vendicari & Noto Antica in leaf

Marrubium vulgare White Horehound Pantalica in leaf

Mentha sp. Mint species Near Giarratana & Bibbinello

Micromeria nervosa a Micromeria Widespread

Phlomis fruticosa Jerusalem Sage Scattered

Prasium majus Prasium Widespread

Rosmarinus officinalis Rosemary Widespread

Salvia fruticosa Three-leaved Sage Widespread

Salvia verbenacea Wild Clary Widespread

Sideritis romana a Sideritis Vendicari, Anapo Gorge & Pantalica

Teucrium fruticans Tree Germander Near Giarratana, Vendicari

Teucrium polium Felty Germander Flowering at Cava Grande, leaf only near Testa dell'Acqua & Bibbinello

Solanaceae

Solanum nigrum Black Nightshade This or similar at Anapo Gorge

Scrophulariaceae

Antirrhinum siculum Sicilian Snapdragon Widespread
Bellardia trixago Bellardia Venticari South
Linaria purpurea Purple Toadflax Testa dell'Acqua road & Bibbinello
Linaria triphylla Three-leaved Toadflax Widespread & common
Misopates orontium Weasel's Snout Near Giarratana, Venticari & Anapo Gorge

Parentucellia latifolia Southern Red Bartsia Scattered & locally common
Parentucellia viscosa Yellow Bartsia Venticari South, Pantalica & Noto Antica

Scrophularia peregrina Nettle-leaved Figwort Villa Vela & Anapo Gorge
Verbascum sinuatum a Mullein Scattered, in leaf
Veronica arvensis Wall Speedwell Anapo Gorge West & Cava Grande

Orobanchaceae

Orobanche ramosa Branched Broomrape Villa Vela, Anapo Gorge, Pantalica
Orobanche sp. Broomrape species A number of species were seen but not all identified

Acanthaceae

Acanthus mollis Bear's Breech Widespread & common

Plantaginaceae

Plantago coronopus Buck's-horn Plantain Venticari
Plantago maritima Sea Plantain Venticari
Plantago serraria a Plantain Cava Grande & Anapo Gorge
Plantago sp. Plantain species We probably overlooked others

Caprifoliaceae

Sambucus nigra Elder Anapo Gorge & near Testa dell'Acqua

Valerianaceae

Centranthus ruber Red Valerian Widespread
Fedia cornucopiae Fedia Widespread & very common
Valerianella spp. corn salad species Scattered, none in fruit so positive identification difficult. 11+ species occur.

Dipsacaceae

Scabiosa sp. Scabious species There was probably more than one, none identified.

Asteraceae

Asteriscus aquaticus Venticari North
Bellis annua Annual Daisy Locally common, e.g. Venticari & Monte Lauro
Bellis sylvestris Southern Daisy Widespread
Calendula arvensis Field Marigold Scattered
Calendula officinalis Pot Marigold Widespread

<i>Centaurea ssp.</i>	Star thistles	A variety seen but mostly not in full flower & not identified
<i>Centaurea sphaerocephala</i>	a Knapweed	Vendicari North
<i>Cynara cardunculus</i>	Cardoon	In leaf near Giarratana
<i>Dittrichia viscosa</i>	a Stink Aster	Buccheri
<i>Evax pygmaea</i>	an Evax	Cava Grande
<i>Galactites tomentosa</i>	Galactites	Widespread & abundant
<i>Glebionis coronarium</i>	Crown Daisy	Widespread & abundant
<i>Helichrysum stoechas</i>	a Curry Plant	Scattered, mostly in bud
<i>Pallenis spinosa</i>	Spiny Starwort	Scattered
<i>Phagnalon rupestre</i>	a Phagnalon	Scattered
<i>Phagnalon saxatile</i>	a Phagnalon	Vendicari, Anapo Gorge & Cava Grande
<i>Scolymus grandiflorus</i>	a Scolymus	Vendicari
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Groundsel	Scattered
<i>Silybum marianum</i>	Milk Thistle	Scattered, common in places e.g. Anapo Gorge
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Smooth Sow-Thistle	Scattered
<i>Tragopogon porrifolius</i>	Salsify	Widespread
<i>Urospermum dalechampi</i>	a Urospermum	Vendicari, Anapo Gorge, Noto Antica
<i>Urospermum picroides</i>	a Urospermum	Villa Vela & Vendicari

Monocotyledons

Posidoniaceae

<i>Posidonia oceanica</i>	Posidonia	Strange looking brown balls at Vendicari
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Liliaceae

<i>Allium roseum</i>	Rosy Garlic	Villa Vela & Vendicari North
<i>Allium subhirsutum</i>	a Garlic	Vendicari North
<i>Allium subvillosum</i>	a Garlic	Scattered
<i>Asparagus acutifolius</i>	an Asparagus	Widespread in leaf
<i>Asparagus tenuifolius</i>	an Asparagus	Vendicari in leaf
<i>Asphodeline lutea</i>	Yellow Asphodel	Scattered
<i>Asphodelus fistulosus</i>	Hollow-stemmed Asphodel	Scattered
<i>Asphodelus microcarpus</i>	Common Asphodel	Widespread & abundant
<i>Muscari comosum</i>	Tassel Hyacinth	Widespread
<i>Ornithogalum collinum</i>	a Star of Bethlehem	Scattered. Leaves linear with a white stripe.
<i>Ornithogalum montanum</i>	a Star of Bethlehem	Scattered. Leaves broad with no white stripe.
<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i>	Butcher's Broom	Anapo Gorge West
<i>Smilax aspera</i>	Common Smilax	Widespread in leaf
<i>Urginea maritima</i>	Sea Squill	Widespread in leaf

Amaryllidaceae

<i>Pancratium maritimum</i>	Sea Daffodil	Leaves noted at Vendicari North
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Agavaceae

<i>Agave americana</i>	Century Plant	Scattered on roadsides
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Dioscoraceae

Tamus communis Black Bryony Villa Vela, near Testa dell'Acqua & in the Anapo Gorge

Iridaceae

Gladiolus italicus Field Gladiolus Scattered
Hermodactylus tuberosus Widow Iris Scattered, mostly in seed, one poor flower specimen at Buscemi
Gynandiris sisyrinchium Barbary Nut Testa dell'Acqua, Vendicari & Cava Grande di Cassibile
Romulea bulbocodium a Romulea A few on Monte Lauro

Palmae

Chamaerops humilis Dwarf Fan Palm Vendicari, Noto Antica
Phoenix dactylifera Date Palm Scattered

Araceae

Arum italicum Italian Lords-and-Ladies Widespread

Juncaceae

Juncus spp. Rush species Several at Vendicari not identified

Cyperaceae

Carex sp. Sedge species Several at Vendicari not identified

Poaceae

Arundo donax Giant Reed Vendicari & Anapo Gorge
Briza maxima Large Quaking-grass Scattered, e.g. Anapo Gorge
Lagurus ovatus Hare's-tail Grass Vendicari

Orchidaceae

Aceras anthropophorum Man Orchid Anapo Gorge & Noto Antica
Barlia robertiana Giant Orchid Dead spikes widespread.
Ophrys bertolonii Bertoloni's Bee Orchid Anapo Gorge & Bibbinello
Ophrys biancae Testa dell'Acqua road & Manghisi terrace. Endemic to Sicily.
Ophrys bombyliflora Bumblebee Orchid One on Testa dell'Acqua road.
Ophrys explanata Testa dell'Acqua road & Anapo Gorge. Stigmatic cavity wider than tall. Endemic to Sicily.
Ophrys lupercalis A reasonably widespread & common *fusca* type.
Ophrys incubacea Fairly widespread, seen daily.
Ophrys lunulata A Sicilian endemic, local & quite rare. Villa Vela & Anapo Gorge.
Ophrys lutea Yellow Bee Orchid Widespread & very common.
Ophrys oxyrhynchos Testa dell'Acqua road, Cava Grande & Manghisi terrace. Endemic to Sicily & southern Italy.
Ophrys panormitana Reasonably widespread.
Ophrys passionis var. garganica Buscemi

<i>Ophrys sicula</i>		Scattered. Testa dell'Acqua road, Cava Grande & Anapo Gorge.
<i>Ophrys speculum</i>	Mirror Orchid	Fairly widespread, seen daily.
<i>Ophrys subfusca archimedeae</i>		Anapo Gorge
<i>Ophrys subfusca laurensis</i>		Buccheri pine woods
<i>Ophrys tenthredinifera</i>	Sawfly Orchid	Scattered.
<i>Orchis italica</i>	Italian Man Orchid	Widespread & common.
<i>Orchis lactea</i>	Milky Orchid	Most on Monte Lauro, a few going over at Bibbinello.
<i>Orchis longicornu</i>		Scattered.
<i>Orchis papilionacea</i>	Pink Butterfly Orchid	Widespread & reasonably common.
<i>Orchis provincialis</i>		Monte Lauro & Buccheri
<i>Orchis tridentata</i>	Toothed Orchid	Scattered.
<i>Serapias lingua</i>	Tongue Orchid	Testa dell'Acqua road & Cava Grande.
<i>Serapias parviflora</i>	Small-flowered Tongue Orchid	Vendicari & Bibbinello
<i>Serapias vomeracea</i>	Ploughshare Orchid	Widespread & reasonably common

Systematic List Number 2 Butterflies

Papilionidae

Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>	Scattered
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Pieridae

Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	Scattered records
Small White	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>	Widespread
Eastern Dappled White	<i>Euchloe ausonia</i>	Vendicari & Cava Grande
Orange-Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>	Widespread in small numbers
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>	Small number of scattered records
Cleopatra	<i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i>	Widespread in small numbers

Lycaenidae

Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>	Testa dell'Acqua road
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	Scattered
Little Blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>	Scattered
Green-underside Blue	<i>Glaucopsyche alexis</i>	Pantalica, Noto Antica
Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>	Scattered
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	Near Giarratana, Vendicari South

Nymphalidae

Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	Near Cava Grande
Painted Lady	<i>Cynthia cardui</i>	Pantalica & Cava Grande

Satyridae

Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Widespread & reasonably common
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	Southern form widespread in suitable habitat
Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	Near Giarratana

Systematic List Number 3

Birds

Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Vendicari North
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Vendicari North
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	Vendicari North
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Vendicari North
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Vendicari North
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Several at Vendicari North
Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	Vendicari North
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Vendicari North
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	Near Catania
Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	Vendicari North
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus phoenicopterus</i>	Quite a few at Vendicari North
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Vendicari North
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Vendicari North
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Vendicari North & Anapo Gorge
Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Vendicari North
Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	Vendicari North
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Vendicari North
Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	A male near Manghisi terrace
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Near Catania
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Seen daily
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Scattered records
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Anapo Gorge, Pantalica & Cava Grande
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Heard only at Anapo Gorge
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Several at Vendicari North
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Vendicari North
Yellow-legged Herring Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	Scattered records
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	Vendicari North
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	Widespread
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oneas</i>	Near Catania
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Widespread
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Widespread
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Noto Antica, Anapo Gorge East & Villa Vela
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	Heard only Anapo Gorge East
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Widespread & very common
Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>	2 seen near the hotel
Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	One on a wire near Vendicari North
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Near Cava Grande
Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Monte Lauro
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus major</i>	Heard near Testa dell'Acqua
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	Widespread & reasonably common
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	Monte Lauro & Cava Grande
Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	Cava Grande
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Widespread & common
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cercopis daurica</i>	One seen along Testa dell'Acqua road
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	Scattered
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Monte Lauro & Cava Grande
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Anapo Gorge East
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Heard more often than seen, scattered.

Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Anapo Gorge & near Testa dell'Acqua
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	Heard outside the hotel almost daily, & at Noto Antica as well as Anapo Gorge East.
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	Testa dell'Acqua road & Monte Lauro
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Anapo Gorge East & Cava Grande
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Widespread & common
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Heard near Testa dell'Acqua
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	Heard daily
Fan-tailed Warbler	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Widespread & reasonably common
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	Heard at Vendicari North
Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	Heard at Vendicari North
Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	Scattered, e.g. Anapo Gorge
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	Widespread & common
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Monte Lauro & Noto Antica
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Buccheri, Anapo Gorge & near Testa dell'Acqua
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>	Anapo Gorge West
Collared Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>	Near Testa dell'Acqua
Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	Monte Lauro
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	Widespread
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Widespread
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	Anapo Gorge
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Widespread
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Very common & widespread
Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	Small flock near Cava Grande
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus corone cornix</i>	Widespread & common
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Seen most days
Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	Widespread & common
Italian Sparrow	<i>Passer italiae</i>	Widespread & very common.
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	Vendicari North
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Scattered records
Serín	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	Scattered
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Widespread & common
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Vendicari North & Noto Antica
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Near Giarratana
Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	Widespread & reasonably common

Systematic List Number 4

Amphibians and Reptiles

Green Toad	<i>Bufo siculus</i>	Tadpoles near Testa dell'Acqua
Italian Pool Frog/Hybrid Frog	<i>Rana bergeri/kl.hispanica</i>	Buccheri pine woods
Italian Tree Frog	<i>Hyla intermedia</i>	Heard nightly from the hotel.
Moorish Gecko	<i>Tarentola mauretunica</i>	A juvenile at the hotel
Italian Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis sicula</i>	Widespread & reasonably common
Sicilian Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis wagleriana</i>	Seen on at least three days
Western Whip Snake	<i>Heriophis viridiflavus</i>	At the hotel & near Testa dell'Acqua.
Hermann's Tortoise	<i>Testudo hermanni</i>	Testa dell'Acqua road

Systematic List Number 5

Mammals

Crested Porcupine	<i>Hystrix cristata</i>	Alice found a quill near Testa dell'Acqua. Reputedly introduced into Sicily & parts of mainland Italy, from North Africa by the Romans.
Savi's Pine Vole	<i>Pitymys savii</i>	The holes seen on Monte Lauro must have been caused by this species
Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	Villa Vela

Systematic List Number 6

Other Invertebrates

Arachnida

A spider	<i>Tegenaria sp.</i>	Anapo Gorge East - tunnel number 2!
A Yellow Crab Spider	<i>Misumena vatia</i>	Vendicari North

Coleoptera

A Darkling Beetle	<i>Blaps sp. (possibly gigas)</i>	Vendicari lunch stop
Metallic Wood-Boring Beetle	<i>Buprestis cupressi</i>	Vendicari South
Tiger Beetle	<i>Calomera littoralis</i>	Numerous at Vendicari North
Seven-spot Ladybird	<i>Coccinella septempunctata</i>	Hotel carpark
Glowworm	<i>Lampyris noctiluca</i>	Hotel carpark
White Spotted Rose Beetle	<i>Oxythyrea funesta</i>	Near Giarratana
Bloody-nosed Beetle	<i>Timarcha tenebriosa</i>	Widespread large black beetle

Crustacea

Freshwater Crab	<i>Potamon fluviatile</i>	Anapo Gorge East
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Hemiptera

Green Shield Bug	<i>Palomena prasina</i>	Buscemi
A Ground Bug	<i>Spilostethus saxatilis</i>	Monte Lauro
A Squash Bug	<i>Haploprocta sulcicornis</i>	Pantalica

Hymenoptera

Long-horned Bee	<i>Eucera longicornis</i>	Anapo Gorge
European Velvet Ant	<i>Mutilla europaea</i>	Vendicari South (actually a wingless wasp)
A solitary Bee	<i>Rhodoanthidium striatum</i>	Vendicari North. Uses snail shells as a nest & was seen cleaning one out!
Violet Carpenter Bee	<i>Xylocopa violacea</i>	Widespread & reasonably common

Lepidoptera

Green Forester Moth	<i>Adscita statices</i>	Manghisi terrace
Silver-Y Moth	<i>Autographa gamma</i>	Bibbinello
Six-Spot Burnet Moth	<i>Zygaena filipendulae</i>	Vendicari North, caterpillars at Noto Antica

Mantidoea

A Praying Mantis	<i>Empusa pennata</i>	Testa dell'Acqua road
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Odonata

Copper Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx haemorrhoidalis</i>	Anapo Gorge East
A Darter	<i>Sympetrum sp.</i>	Near Giarratana

Orthoptera

Egyptian Grasshopper	<i>Anacridium aegyptium</i>	Villa Vela, Noto Antica & Anapo Gorge East
Sicilian Striped Bush Cricket	<i>Odontura arcuata</i>	Pantalica