

Cyprus

A Greentours trip report

25th February- 3rd March 2024

Leader Yiannis Christofides

February 25th. Sunny and warm weather greeted the first guests to arrive at Paphos airport. Whilst waiting for Theodora and Julian to arrive Yiannis took Rosemary and Richard to a nearby coastal area where some of the common field plants were seen. *Glebionis coronaria*, mostly yellow on Cyprus and *Sinapis alba* were painting the fields yellow. Other plants seen included *Limonium sinuatum* and *Paronychia argentea*. When all guests had arrived we drove to our hotel in the Akamas peninsula.



February 26th. After yesterday's long journeys we thought it best if we walked from our hotel to the nearby fields and explore the area on foot. Initially we found various ruderal plants such as *Erodium moschatum*, *Geranium dissectum*, *Lavatera cretica*, *Glebionis coronaria*, *Sinapis alba*, *Anchusa azurea*, *Tragopogon sinuatum* and *Geropogon hybridus*. All around were cultivated fields but with some relic habitat where we found *Olea europaea*, *Bellevalia trifoliata*, *Pistacia lentiscus* and the orchids *Ophrys flavomarginata* and *Ophrys mammosa*.

We then descended into a sheltered valley where there were more orchids. We found *Orchis punctulata* and *Anacamptis syriaca*. Cleopatra, Clouded Yellow and Orange tip

butterflies were on the wing. After exploring the valley we climbed back up and walked along the ridge, finding *Linaria chalepensis*, *Silene behen*, many *Ranunculus asiaticus* and *Cyclamen persicum*. After our picnic we walked down to the coastal area where we first explored the rock pools with *Ranunculus peltatus* and *Sedum microcarpum*.

We also found *Cistus monspeliensis* and *Cistus parviflorus*, as well as their hybrid in flower. Closer to the sea we found *Taraxacum aphrogenes*, an autumn-flowering species that had finished flowering. *Ornithogalum pedicellare* was growing with *Romulea tempskyana* on the gravelly beach. We returned to the main road and walked back to our hotel.

February 27th. Sunny and warm as we set off from our hotel towards the Baths of Aphrodite. We walked through the botanic garden, where we saw *Euphorbia thompsonii* and *Arbutus andrachne* noting the special endemics *Bosea cypria* and *Scilla morissii*, still in flower. We had two ferns in *Anogramma leptophylla* and *Adiantum capillus-veneris* by the pool.

We then walked along the coast track with wonderful views of the cliff and the slopes full of *Ranunculus asiaticus* and *Cyclamen persicum*. Other plants in flower seen included *Scandix pecten-veneris*, *Salvia fruticosa*, *Salvia viridis*, *Gagea peduncularis*, and *Theligonum*



cynocrambe. Butterflies were just emerging and we saw Holy Blue and Cleopatra. At midday we retraced our steps back to the Botanical garden. We then drove to the nearby area of Smygies in the heart of the Akamas peninsula where we had our picnic and then walked down the main track, looking at the verges. This is an area dominated by *Pinus brutia* with various understory shrubs. The geology of the area is Troodos serpentine and we saw the first plants typical of these soils, such as the endemics, *Alyssum akamasicum*, *Centaurea veneris*, *Thymus integer* and *Fumana arabica*. Soon afterwards we started seeing our first orchids. *Anacamptis syriaca* and *Ophrys elegans* were everywhere. We also saw *Ophrys levantina*, *Ophrys bornmuelleri*, *O. cinereophila* and *Orchis sezekiana*. *Dactylorhiza romana* was just emerging. Further down the track we found *O. lapethica* and *O. israelitica*. The highlight of the day was *Ophioglossum lusitanicum*!



February 28th.

Our destination today was the Paphos forest. Our first stop was to pick up our picnic for the day and look at the magnificent specimen of *Quercus infectoria* and the ancient olive trees in Polis. We then took the road to Stavros tis Psokas and our first stop was above the gorge near the village of Peristerona. As we approached the gorge we could see a Long-legged Buzzard flying above. Unfortunately it did not stay long, disappearing over the horizon. We then ventured into the nearby fields, photographing the red *Anemone coronaria* that was decorating the landscape. Other plants present were *Salvia fruticosa*, *Muscari inconstictum*, *Gagea peduncularis* and *G. fibrosa*. We then boarded our vehicle and carried on higher up, now crossing into the Troodos ophiolite, where there was a noticeable change in both geology and flora. *Pinus brutia* now dominated the habitat with an understory of *Arbutus andrachne*, *Pistacia*

terebinthus and *Cistus* species. We walked up a low hill, finding *Orchis troodi* in perfect flower. *Cistus salviifolius* was in flower.



We then continued our journey higher, stopping to observe the massive dykes of the Troodos ophiolite and to see *Phlomis cypria* and *Andrachne telephioides*. Our next stop was at the enclosure at Stavros where we saw moufflon, but also the leaves of *Cyclamen cyprium*, *Viola alba* and *Turritis laxa* in flower and the endemic oak *Quercus alnifolia*. We looked for the cypriot Coal Tits and eventually had good views of them.

After lunch we continued our journey higher up where we walked to have views of the endemic *Cedrus brevifolia*. On our return journey we stopped to see *Arabis purpurea*, just starting to flower on the rock faces.

We made our final stop and walked on a track off the road. Here we found *Anemone coronaria* pink forms, *Bellevalia trifoliata*, *Ajuga chamaeepitys*, *Himantoglossum robertianum*, many *Ophrys flavomarginata* and *Allium neapolitanum*.

February 29th. A pre-breakfast walk near the hotel produced a remarkable sighting of 2 male and 2 female Francolins together. Another was seen later flying across the vehicle. Our first stop was the Pegeia forest, dominated by *Pinus brutia* and with an understory of *Juniperus phoenicea*,



Pistacia lentiscus, *Cistus creticus*, *Cistus salviifolius* and *Cistus monspeliensis*. Plants in flower included *Gagea fibrosa*, *Ornithogalum pedicellare* and *Bellevalia nivalis*. From the orchid list we saw *Anacamptis syriaca*, *Ophrys levantina*, *Ophrys flavomarginata*, *Ophrys mammosa* and *Ophrys cinereophila*. We also found *Ophioglossum lusitanicum* again. Greenfinch was calling from the trees. There were Cleopatras, Orange Tips and Red Admiral butterflies.

Our next destination was the Episcopi environmental centre where we had our picnic and looked at the exhibits. We then descended to the base of the Episkopi rock and looked at plants growing on steep rock faces. We found *Verbascum levanticum*, *Polypodium cambricum* and *Umbilicus rupestris*. We continued our journey stopping at a hillside with phrygana where we saw *Ajuga chamaepitys*, *Anchusa undulata* subsp. *hybrida*, *Vicia peregrina*, *Ophrys sicula*, *Ophrys flavomarginata*, *Ophrys iricolor* and *Anacamptis syriaca*.

March 1st. Warm and sunny again today as drove up the Diarizos valley towards Troodos. We observed the rocks of the Mamonia complex geological formation and saw the specialist habitat of pseudo-steppe. We stopped after about 45 minutes and soon after saw freshly emerged Eastern Festoons flying. We found the food plant, *Aristolochia parviflora* and photographed a resting Festoon. *Convolvulus coelesyriacus* was also in flower on the banks, as well as a specimen of *Ophrys alasiatica*. We continued higher, stopping at the village of Omodos to see the impressive grape press. Our next destination was the higher slopes of the Troodos forest. Above Platres *Pinus nigra* started to dominate the landscape and even higher *Juniperus foetidissima* started to appear. We reached the summit and found our target species *Crocus cypricus* flowering in profusion on the slopes. We then retraced our steps, stopping for our picnic, and started to descend. Before reaching the coast we stopped to photograph an extraordinary field of Anemones in all colours, finding *Ophrys astarte* as well. Our final stop was to see the rocks of Aphrodite.



March 2. Sunny and warm as we set off to explore the two archaeological sites of Paphos. Our first destination was the Tombs of the Kings. As we entered we could see *Cyclamen persicum* and *Ephedra foeminea* growing on the rocks. On top there was a good example of garigue where we found the endemic *Helianthemum obtusifolium* as well as *Fumana thymifolia*, *Thymus capitatus*, *Ruta chalepensis*, *Salvia verbenaca* and other plants typical of this habitat. We then walked further into the site, looking at the magnificent tombs before ending up on the sand dunes where we saw a different set of plants. There were *Paronychia argentea*, *Senecio glaucus* subsp. *cypricus* and *Centaurea aegialophila*. We continued our walk round the site, finding *Ornithogalum pedicellare* and *Moraea sisyrrinchium*. *Anacamptis collina* had finished but we found *Ophrys sicula* and *Ophrys flavomarginata*.

We then moved to the Paphos archaeological site where we had our picnic and looked at the mosaics. We saw *Ricinus communis*, *Moraea sisyrrinchium*, *Bellevalia trifoliata*, *Allium neapolitanum*, *Withania somnifera*, and *Lycium ferocissimum*. Swallowtail and Clouded yellow butterflies were on the wing. Birds seen included Isabeline and Northern wheatears, Crested larks and Black Redstarts. We exited the site and continued our

walk round the perimeter fence, adding *Enarthrocarpus arcuatus*, *Anthemis rigida* and *Crithmum maritimum* to our list. We saw more Stonechats and Wheatears

March 3rd. Having some time before the flight we decided to explore near the airport. We visited the fields near the sewage plant where we saw Spur-wing Plovers.

