

Autumn in the Peloponnese

22 - 29 October 2018

Led by Yiannis Christofides



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Autumn Flora of the Peloponnese

22nd - 29th October 2018

Led by Yiannis Christofides



Vathia © Greenwings

The Peloponnese is an interesting area, full of archaeological treasures and one of the richest places in Greece for autumn bulbs. On our trip we saw all the possible Crocuses that are in flower at this time of the year, plus Colchicums, Sternbergia and many others. We also enjoyed probably some of the best food to be had in Greece.

Day 1 - Monday 22nd October

Seven participants joined Yiannis for a trip to the Peloponnese. They arrived at Athens airport on various flights. After meeting at the airport we headed towards the Peloponnese. The weather was cloudy but dry. We arrived at our hotel, the Petit Planete, where we warmly received by our host, Vasiliki. We had an hour to relax and decompress before coming down to a beautifully prepared dinner.

Day 2 - Tuesday 23rd October

We were expecting rain today for the whole day, but the day started cloudy yet dry. We drove the short distance to the archaeological site of ancient Mycenae, where we also saw our first plants in flower as we went round the ancient ruins. We saw clumps of *Cyclamen graecum* coming out of the gaps in the rocky terrain; *Scilla autumnalis*, which had mostly finished flowering but there were still a few in bloom; a few *Arisarum vulgare* and a whole hillside covered with *Sternbergia lutea*. There were also a number of perennial plants that normally flower in spring that were flowering again, such as *Reichardia picroides*, *Psoralea bituminosa*, *Verbascum sinuatum* and a species of *Heliotropium*. There were hooded crows flying overhead and also a few Ravens. A Rock Nuthatch gave us excellent views, sitting on a rock not very far from us.

Rock Nuthatch © Greenwings



We then visited the impressive museum at the site and the amazing Tomb of Atreus down the hill and set off south towards our next destination, Gytheio. We made a detour via Sparti and Mystras to pick up lunch and make a comfort stop and drove south towards Gytheio. Unfortunately the rain was well set in and we didn't make any roadside stops for flowers. We are arrived in good time in Gytheio to have a rest, before going out to our favourite restaurant where we had an excellent meal of Greek and local specialities.

Day 3 - Wednesday 24th October



Colchicum cupanii
© Greenwings

We set off westwards towards Areoplis and made a couple of stops. Several new species were added to the list, including *Crocus boryi*, *Colchicum cupanii*, *Narcissus serotinus* and *Satureja thymbra*. We then stopped in Areopolis for our lunch and fruit and looked at the various greek shops, before heading to Limenas.

In a bend in the road we saw another of the Crocuses on our list, the very tall, endemic, *Crocus goulimyi*. We then backtracked to Areopolis and continued towards Pyrgos Dirou, stopping en-route to see the other endemic *Crocus niveus*.

We then had lunch off road in the courtyard of a little church. The weather had much improved and butterflies were out in force. We saw Red Admiral,

Clouded Yellow, some whites which never settled, but the highlight was probably the Geranium bronze which visited the geraniums planted in the courtyard.

After lunch we visited the impressive caves at Diros, where we also added *Inula crithmoides* and *Dianthus arboreus*, both growing on the coastal rocks.

We then started on the return journey, but veered off towards Mersini, where we saw some still quite good *Colchicum bivonae*, as well as the first *Cyclamen hederifolium* and a single specimen of *Spiranthes spiralis*.

Day 4 - Thursday 25th October

We spent the day today exploring the Mani peninsula. We initially set off westwards towards Areopoli where we did our shopping for lunch and then headed south. We made a roadside stop to investigate the garigue and found *Atractylis gummifera*. As we reached the end of the peninsula we turned eastwards and made a stop at Vathia, the restored Mani village with the typical tower houses. We made a short walk in the village and then carried on towards Cape Tenaro, stopping to take photos of a beautiful bay below us and at the same time observing a Griffon Vulture and a Bonelli's Eagle. Other birds seen during the day included Blue Rock Thrush, Short-toed Eagle, Stonechats and Black redstarts.



Colchicum parlatoris © Greenwings

Plain tiger butterflies were seen on several occasions, as well as Clouded Yellows and Red Admirals. Shortly before Cape Tenaro we stopped to investigate the terraces and eventually found a clump of *Colchicum parlatoris*. More was to be seen in a lay-by a little



Crocus niveus
© Greenwings

further down and also at the Cape.

We reached the end where we had our lunch and visited the Death Oracle before starting on the backward journey. Our next stop was at an area very rich in Crocuses and found *Crocus niveus*, *Crocus boryi* growing in profusion, as well as a couple of *Crocus goulimyi*. More of that was to be seen later by the roadside. Also seen were masses of *Scilla autumnalis*, *Narcissus serotinus* and a few *Spiranthes spiralis*.



Our next stop was at a small stone-built church where we also found a *Euphorbia* bush with 6 Spurge Hawkmoth caterpillars and a couple of basking Red Admirals. We continued northwards to reach Gytheio at about 5pm.

Day 5 - Friday 26th October

Our destination today was the Parnon mountains. The weather was still excellent, warm and dry. We drove along the coast towards Molai and then turned off towards the mountains. We spotted the first Crocuses on the banks and stopped to investigate. They turned out to be *Crocus boryi*. We then drove higher up the mountain and stopped again.



Walking up the slope we started to see Crocuses that were different from what we had seen so far. The first ones looked like *C. boryi*, with white anthers but they were somewhat shorter, more open and had feathering on the outside, which fits the description for *Crocus laevigatus*. Moving upper the slope we found our first *Crocus melantherus*, with black anthers and also a lot of purple feathering on the outside. We then found another Crocus with larger petals, pale lilac in colour with pale yellow anthers and a much divided style, which is *Crocus cancellatus* ssp. *mazziaricus*. Amongst all these grew *Colchicum cupani* in clusters. This was a very

rich area for Crocuses and we spend sometime exploring. Another stop a little later on produced magnificent *Crocus niveus*.

We then continued to Lambokampos, and stopped to see *Crocus goulimyi* growing in all the fields in the village and on the road verges. It was getting near lunchtime by now so drove on a little bit towards Kyparissi and stopped for our lunch. Nearby were growing masses of *Sternbergia lutea* on the banks and a little higher up *Crocus goulimyi*, *Crocus niveus*, *Cyclamen graecum* and more *Sternbergia lutea*. We carried on a little further to admire the extraordinary landscape, where we added *Odontites linkii* and *Putoria calabrica* to the list of flowering plants. We then turned back for the return journey. At the next village we stopped for coffee and then continued with our journey back.



Day 6 - Saturday 27th October

We set off northwards today on the return journey. We checked one field with many Crocuses but they all turned out to be *Crocus boryi*. It was a sunny day and they were all open and looking very



Galanthus regina-olgae
© Yiannis Christofides

good. We then continued to Paleopanagia and started to climb higher up the Taygetos. The landscape changed to maquis and occasional forest with *Platanus orientalis* and fir trees. As we climbed to about 1000 meters we reached the end of the made-up road and our destination. The temperature had dropped considerably and more layers were called for. We could see the white bells of *Galanthus regina-olgae* that we had come to see. It was growing with *Cyclamen hederifolium*, with distinctly different leaves when compared with *Cyclamen graecum*. The other target species was the salamander that inhabits this habitat and one was located sheltering in a crevice in a rock.

We then walked a little bit higher to check the slopes for *Colchicum* seen here on previous occasions but none were found, they had probably gone over.

It was lunchtime by now and we had our picnic in the shade of the tall trees. We then started on the downward journey, and went to look for *Crocus hadriaticus*, the only missing *Crocus* of the trip. We wandered in the countryside beyond Sparta and found many *Crocus boryi* and *Bellis sylvestris*, but no *Crocus hadriaticus*. It was no getting late and we returned to Mystras, for our two night stay there.

Day 6 - Sunday 28th October

We drove the short distance to Mystras and our guests were dropped off at the top entrance whilst Yiannis drove the van to the lower entrance and walked up to meet them. We then wandered round some of the more significant churches and looked at the mosaics. Nature had reclaimed large areas of the hill and wild plants were everywhere. We saw a large patch of *Crocus boryi* and many plants of *Allium callimischon*, as well as *Sternbergia lutea*. We finally saw the main church of the complex and then continued on our way.

It was nearing lunchtime so we drove to a square near the village of Parori where we had our picnic. We then walked up the nearby gorge looking at the plants and birds. We saw two Bullfinch, Black Redstart and Crag Martins flying up to the walls of the gorge. The rest of the group reached the little church in the recess of a big cave and then returned the same way. We then returned to our hotel for a rest and dinner in the square.

Day 7 - Monday 29th October

We set off early for our return journey to Athens. We still had to see *Crocus hadriaticus*, so we made a couple of stops and finally found it growing with many *Crocus melantherus* and also *Colchicum cupanii*, thereby completing our task of seeing all the autumn flowering Peloponnese crocuses. We reached the airport in good time for all to take our various flights.



Crocus biflorus ssp. melantherus
© Yiannis Christofides

Peloponnese Plant Checklist		20th	21st	22nd	23rd	24th	25th	26th
Ephedraceae								
Ephedra foeminea		✓		✓				
Pinaceae/ Cupressaceae								
Abies cephalonica	Grecian Fir					✓		
Juniperus oxycedrus	Prickly Juniper							
Pinus brutia	Turkish Pine						✓	
Pinus nigra	Black Pine					✓		
Monocotyledons								
Amaryllidaceae								
Galanthus regina-olgae						✓		
Narcissus serotinus			✓	✓				
Sternbergia lutea		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Araceae								
Arisarum vulgare	Friar's Cowl	✓					✓	
Biarum tenuifolium				✓				
Iridaceae								
Crocus biflorus ssp. melantherus					✓			✓
Crocus boryi			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Crocus cancellatus ssp. mazziaricus					✓			
Crocus goulimyi			✓	✓	✓			
Crocus hadriacticus								✓
Crocus laevigatus					✓			
Crocus niveus			✓	✓	✓			
Liliaceae								
Allium callimischon						✓	✓	
Colchicum cupanii			✓		✓			
Colchicum parlatoris				✓				
Colchicum bivonae			✓					
Colchicum psaridis			✓					
Prospero autumnalis		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Smilax aspera					✓		✓	
Urginea maritima		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Orchidaceae								
Spiranthes spiralis	Autumn Lady's Tresses		✓	✓				
Dicotyledons								
Aceraceae								
Acer monspessulatum					✓			
Acer sempervirens							✓	
Anacardiaceae								
Cotinus coggygria	Smoke Bush				✓	✓		
Pistacia lentiscus	Lentisk	✓						
Pistacia terebinthus	Terebinth	✓						
Asteraceae								
Atractylis gummifera			✓					
Bellis sylvestris	Southern Daisy		✓			✓		
Inula crithmoides	Golden Samphire		✓					
Dittrichia graveolens	Stinking Fleabane				✓			
Dittrichia viscosa	Sticky Fleabane		✓					
Ptilostemon chaemepeuce	Shrubby Ptilostemon		✓					
Reichardia picroides	Common Brighteyes	✓						
Taraxacum hellenicum					✓			
Boraginaceae								
Heliotropium sp.	Heliotrope	✓						
Campanulaceae								
Campanula versicolor							✓	
Caryophyllaceae								
Dianthus arboreus			✓					
Convolvulaceae								
Convolvulus elegantissimus		✓						
Cucurbitaceae								
Ecballium elaterium	Squirting Cucumber	✓						

Ericaceae								
Arbutus unedo	Strawberry Tree				✓	✓		
Arbutus andrachne	Greek Strawberry Tree				✓	✓		
Erica manipuliflora			✓					
Erica arborea	Tree Heath					✓		
Euphorbiaceae								
Euphorbia acanthothamnos	Greek Spiny Spurge	✓						
Euphorbia characias	Mediterranean Spurge		✓					
Euphorbia dendroides	Tree Spurge		✓					
Euphorbia rigida	Upright Myrtle Spurge				✓			
Fabaceae								
Ceratonia siliqua	Carob	✓						
Cercis siliquastrum	Judas tree	✓						
Medicago arborea	Tree Medick		✓					
Psoralea bituminosa	Pitch Trefoil	✓						
Spartium junceum	Spanish Broom					✓		
Fagaceae								
Quercus coccifera	Kermes Oak	✓						
Quercus macroplepis	Valonia Oak		✓					
Lamiaceae								
Calamintha incana	Calamint		✓					
Micromeria sp.		✓						
Phlomis fruticosa	Jerusalem Sage		✓					
Satureja thymbra	Thyme-leaved Savoury		✓					
Scutellaria sp.							✓	
Thymus capitatus	Mediterranean Wild Thyme		✓					
Malvaceae								
Malva sylvestris	Common Mallow						✓	
Oleaceae								
Olea europaea	Olive	✓						
Phyllirea latifolia	Mock Privet					✓		

Platanaceae								
Platanus orientalis	Oriental Plane					✓		
Primulaceae								
Cyclamen graecum		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Cyclamen hederifolium	Ivy-leaved Cyclamen		✓		✓	✓		
Rosaceae								
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn					✓		
Pyrus amygdaliformis	Almond-leaved Pear		✓					
Sarcopoterium spinosum	Spiny Burnet		✓					
Rubiaceae								
Rubia tenuifolia	Madder	✓						
Putoria calabrica					✓			
Scrophulariaceae								
Verbascum sinuatum	Wavy-leaved Mullein	✓						
Verbascum macrurum	Mediterranean Mullein					✓		
Scrophularia sp.			✓					
Odontites linkii					✓			
Solanaceae								
Solanum nigrum	Black Nightshade	✓						
Urticaceae								
Parietaria judaica	Pellitory-of-the-wall						✓	
Valerianaceae								
Valeriana montana	Mountain valerian						✓	
Verbenaceae								
Vitex agnus-castus	Chaste Tree					✓		
Verbena officinalis	Vervain					✓		
Zygophyllaceae								
Tribulus terrestris	Caltrops	✓						
Pteridophyta								
Ceterach officinarum	Rustyback	✓						
Asplenium adiantum-nigrum	Black Spleenwort	✓				✓		
Asplenium trichomanes	Maidenhair Spleenwort						✓	

Dryopteris villari						✓		
Polypodium cambricum	Southern Polypody					✓		
Adiantum capillus-veneris	Southern Maidenhair Fern						✓	
Selaginella denticulata							✓	





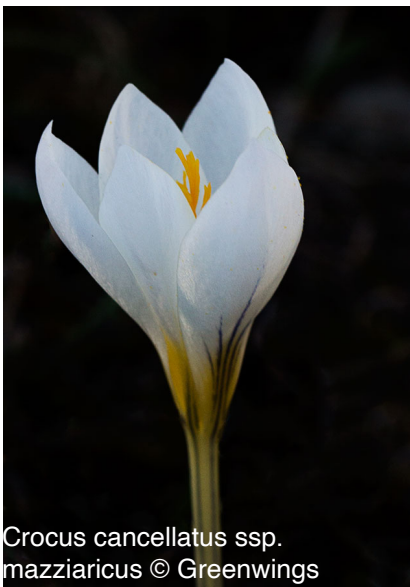
Spiranthes spiralis
© Greenwings



Galanthus regina-olgae
© Greenwings



Cyclamen graecum
© Yiannis Christofides



Crocus cancellatus ssp. mazziaricus
© Greenwings



Spurge Hawkmoth Caterpillar
© Greenwings



Colchicum bivonae
© Greenwings



Colchicum cupanii
© Greenwings



Clouded Yellow
© Greenwings



Colchicum cupanii
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