

Italian Dolomites

Holiday Report 17 - 24 June 2016

Led by Yiannis Christofides



Cypripedium calceolus © Diane G

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Introduction

The Dolomites are a distinctive and beautiful area that takes its name from the crystalline magnesium limestone rocks that make up the peaks that tower vertically above the valleys. The shape of these mountains is unique, having risen out of the sea around 250 million years ago. Ice and wind modelled the rocks creating the steep walls, towering spires and pinnacles typical of these mountains which have always been a source of wonder and a favourite destination of rock climbers. The crevices hold a distinctive flora of magnesium loving plants.



The holiday was based in the Val di Fassa, in the village of Campitello, at a very hospitable family run hotel. Valle di Fassa lies in the north-east part of Trentino on the borders of the province of Bolzano and Belluno. The river Avisio flows through the valley and it is surrounded by the most spectacular and famous Dolomite peaks, such as the Sella Group, Sassolungo, and the Catinaccio with the Torri del Vajolet and the Marmolada. The Val di Fassa is one of the places of the area where Ladin, the oldest language in the Alpine region is still spoken.

From our base in pretty Campitello we explored the valleys of the area on day-long but easy walks and visited a number of different habitats to enjoy as wide a range for flora and fauna as possible.

The guests who joined us were Richard & Karen, Bob & Judy, Jon & Pam and Diane. The tour was led by Yiannis Christofides.



Day 1: Friday 17th June

Yiannis arrived early at Venice Treviso airport and waited for the guests, but the Italian air-traffic controllers strike played havoc with air transport and after much worry the flight from Stansted carrying 6 participants arrived with a two hour delay. Two other flights with participants were cancelled. We then set off in our mini-bus towards the Dolomites, arriving there at 8.30, when the hotel provided a good dinner.

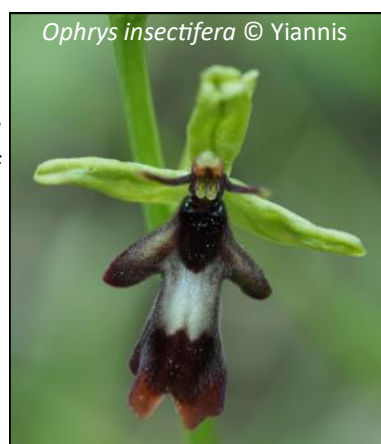
Day 2: Saturday 18th June



The morning was bright and sunny, so after an introductory talk we set off towards Canazei through a forest track. We soon found the first meadow with flowers in perfect condition and the flowers there were soon identified as *Thymus serpyllum*, *Campanula glomerata*, *Salvia pratensis*, *Silene vulgaris*, *Tragopogon pratensis*, *Aster alpinus* and *Acinos alpinus*. Due to the low temperatures butterflies were reluctant to fly but as temperatures slowly increased we saw quite a number of a ringlet, Green-veined white, Small blue, Orange tip. Some large white also appeared in the distance, but too far to be identified as Apollo.

We then entered a forested area with different plants and saw *Saponaria ocymoides*, *Corallorhiza trifida*, and in the distance down a slope many Butterfly orchids. One specimen of Bird's Nest orchid was also found, as well as several spikes of Fly orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*)

It had clouded over by now and we hurried to get to Canazei to find some shelter. A small hotel provided welcome cover and some coffee to go with our lunch. We then set off to explore the meadows by the river, but slight rain made the process difficult. However we saw several plants typical of this habitat, such as *Viola biflora*, *Moneses uniflora* and finally a few plants of *Cypripedium calceolus*, the Lady's slipper orchid. The rain was threatening again, so we decided to return to the hotel. Birds seen for the day included Magpie, Black Redstart and Fieldfare.



Day 3: Sunday 19th June

Cloudy this morning as we set off for the village of Pian. As we approached we passed several wildflower meadows which were in peak condition with thousands of plants in flower in yellow, blue, pink and red. We passed through the interesting hamlet where time appeared to stay still and entered a forested area beyond the village. We started to see

some new plants such as *Geranium pyrenaicum*, *Polygala chamaebuxus*, *Polygala alpestris*, *Erigeron alpinus* and *Botrychium lunaria*. More *Cypripedium calceolus* was found along a track. We then carried on up the main track to stop for lunch. The sky was now totally overcast and light rain had started. Despite this we carried on to reach our destination to find and see the Black Vanilla orchids, which we did, then turning back quickly for an early return to the hotel. We stopped briefly to see *Potentilla aserina* and *Hornimum pyrenaicum*.

Despite the rain and cold temperatures Ringlet butterflies were on the wing when there was a ray of sun. *Erebia medusa*, Woodland ringlet, Wood white and Berger's Clouded or Pale Clouded yellow were seen.

Day 4: Monday 20th June

The weather forecast was better than for the previous days, but the danger of rain had not passed, so we decided to stay close to the village and explore the area near the river between Campitello and Canazei, which we were forced to abandon the first day due to the weather. The first species to be seen, one that we were hoping to see again was found by Bob, a clump of *Cypripedium calceolus* in perfect condition. We then came across the first specimens of *Pseudorchis albida*, a small orchid with white flowers. Walking across the flowery meadows we found *Geranium sylvaticum*, *Symphytum officinale*, *Gentiana germanica* and *Trollius europaeus*. We were nearing Canazei by now and there was a unanimous decision to go and have coffee, some strudel and our lunch in a cafe.

Fortified now we took the return route following a path nearer the forest looking for different plants now. We found *Viola biflora*, *Moneses uniflora*, *Maianthemum bifolium*, *Antennaria dioica*, *Chrysosplenium alternifolium* (Golden-leaved saxifrage), many *Saxifraga paniculata* on the rocks, growing with *Potentilla crantzii*. The sun was out now and this encouraged the butterflies to appear. A meadow proved particularly fruitful with Green-veined white, Woodland ringlet, Red admiral and Speckled Wood being seen. We then followed the path southwards, finding more *Cypripedium calceolus* and *Corallorhiza trifida*.



Gymnadenia nigra © Diane G



Near Campitello © Diane G



Potentilla crantzii © Diane G

Day 5: Tuesday 21st June

Today we caught the cable car to go up to Col Rodella. At the top the impressive mountain ranges of Sasso Lungo, Marmolada and the Selva mountains towered all around us. We set off to explore an area of igneous rock next to the cable car station. Many interesting plants were also seen here such as *Linaria alpina*, *Draba aizoides*, *Biscutella laevigata* and *Androsace vitaliana*.

Moving up the slope we saw *Primula minima* and more *Androsace vitaliana*. We negotiated the steep slope finding *Soldanella minima* and *S. alpina*. *Pulsatilla alpina* ssp. *apiifolia* was in good flower everywhere. Most of the *Pulsatilla vernalis* had gone over but we found a patch with plants still in good flower. Other plants seen on the slopes included *Gentiana verna*, *G. acaulis*, *Geum montanum*, *Ranunculus montanus*, *R. pyrenaicus*, *Primula farinosa* and *P. halleri*, *Crocus vernus* and *Pulmonaria australis*. Marmots were very common on the slopes and we also saw Snowfinch and Alpine Choughs.



Day 6: Wednesday 22nd June

Short drive to Alba di Canazei and cable car to Ciampac. We slowly ascended through the valley looking at the plants. The meadows were full of *Pulsatilla alpina apiifolia* and *Trollius europaeus*. Higher up we found *Pulsatilla vernalis*, with the flowers initially nodding. *Primula minima* was frequent and there also patches of *Androsace vitaliana*. The meadows were full of *Gentiana verna* and *Gentiana acaulis* in peak condition. Patches of *Crocus vernus* in shades of blue and white were found throughout the day. We also saw *Ranunculus montanus* and the white *Ranunculus pyrenaicus* with the characteristic strap-like leaves. *Soldanella alpina* and *S. pusilla* were also very common everywhere. Moving towards the scree slopes we found the first flowering plants of *Anemone baldensis* and then on the scree *Geum reptans*, *Thlaspi rotundifolium*, *Androsace alpina* and *Draba aizoides*.

We now started on the return journey down the valley, finding the bright green cushions of *Silene acaulis* with a few flowers, *Dryas octopetala* and cushions of *Loiseleuria procumbens* covering the rocks.

Birds seen were Black-eared wheatear, Raven and Black Redstart, butterflies Green-veined white, Red admiral and Clouded yellow



Day 7: Thursday 23rd June

We set off on foot from Campitello to visit some of the meadows above the village. Apart from the usual set of *Salvia pratense*, *Onobrychis montana*, *Campanula glomerata*, *Trifolium pratense* and *T. montanum* other plants and orchids had come into flower since we visited almost a week ago. We saw *Campanula rotundifolia*, *Dianthus sylvestris*, *Campanula spicata* and several orange lilies *Lilium bulbiferum*, *Gymnadenia odoratissima*, one plant of *Traunsteinera globosa* and many *Orchis ustulata* (Burnt tip orchid).

Wandering through the meadows we also found several plants of *Anthericum liliago* (*St Bernard's lily*) and also the very beautiful *Orobanche gracilis*. The weather had turned and it was now very hot, so we appreciated the shade of a large tree for our lunch and a rest. We then continued down through the meadows, finding more *Gymnadenia odoratissima* and *Orchis ustulata*. On the verge by the path we found several plants of white swallow-wort *Vincetoxicum hirundinaria*, *Saxifraga paniculata*, whilst the bright pink cushions of *Saponaria ocymoides* were dotted here and there.

As it was very hot we were in need of more refreshments which we took in a cafe in the village before continuing on the road by the stream, where we saw the resident Dipper and also several plants of *Platanthera bifolia* and *Ophrys insectifera*.

Birds for the day included Cuckoo and Green Woodpecker (both heard) and Magpies. Butterflies seen were Red Admirals, Small Tortoiseshell, Green-veined white, Small blue, Clouded yellow and Woodland Ringlet.

Day 8: Friday 24th June

Departure day for our return to Venice for our flights homeward.

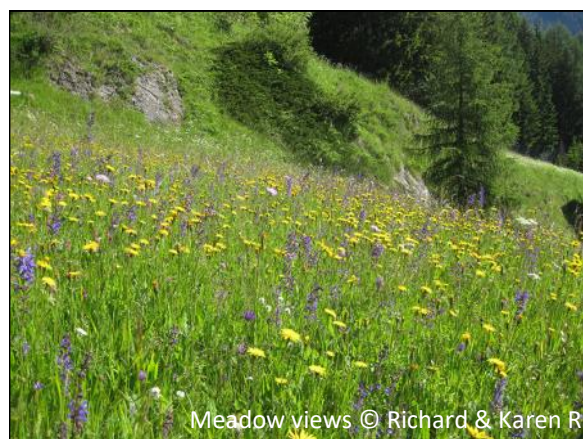


Photo Gallery





Thlaspi rotundifolium © Diane G



Androsace alpina © Diane G



Plant hunters at 'work' © Richard & Karen R



Salvia pratensis © Diane G



Crocus vernus © Diane G







Traunsteineria globosa © Richard & Karen R



Bartsia alpina © Richard & Karen R



Enjoying the sun and scenery © Richard & Karen R



Draba aizoides © Richard & Karen R



Loiseleuria procumbens © Richard & Karen R



Lilium bulbiferum © Richard & Karen R



Trifolium alpinum © Richard & Karen R



Polygala chamaebuxus © Richard & Karen R



Snowfinches © Diane G



Alpine Chough © Diane G



Black-eared Wheatear © Diane G



Marmot © Diane G



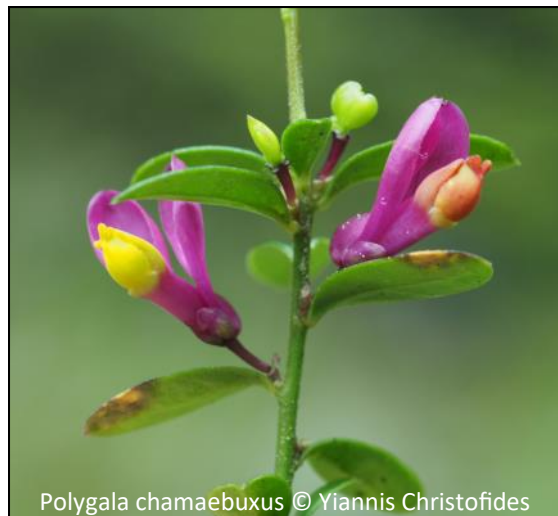
Landscape view © Richard & Karen R



Erebia medusa © Yiannis Christofides



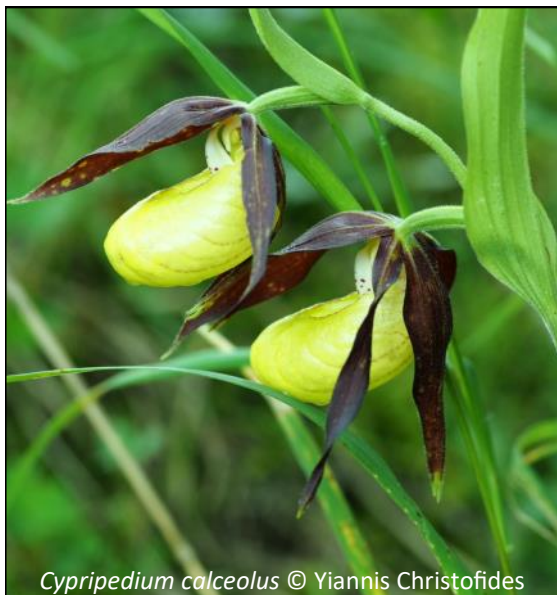
Draba azoides © Yiannis Christofides



Polygala chamaebuxus © Yiannis Christofides



Group shot © Yiannis Christofides



Cypripedium calceolus © Yiannis Christofides



Soldanella alpina © Yiannis Christofides



Homogyna alpina © Yiannis Christofides



Landscape view © Yiannis Christofides

Holiday Itinerary

Day	Date (June)	Locations & Weather
1	17	Arrival at Treviso airport and transfer to Dolomites
2	18	Weather initially sunny, then showery during the day. From Campitello to Canazei and return
3	19	Campitello to Pian and Val Duron. Fine initially then rain
4	20	Campitello to Canazei and back
5	21	Cable car to Col Rodella. Walk part of the Friedrich Augustus way. Return by cable car. Warm and partially sunny
6	22	Short to Alba di Canazei to take cable to Ciampac. Warm and sunny
7	23	Very hot. Meadows near Campitello.
8	24	Departure for Venice airports

Species checklist

	SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH NAME	DAY
	FERNS		
	Asplenium ruta-murale		day 2
	Asplenium serpentrionale		
	Botrychium lunaria	Moonwort	day 3
	GYMNOSPERMS		
	Pinaceae		
	Picea abies		day 2
	ANGIOSPERMS: DICOTYLEDONS		
	Apiaceae		
	Laserpitium latifolium		day 3
		Cow Parsley	
	Apocynaceae		
	Vincetoxicum hirundinaria		day 7
	Asteraceae		
	Achillea atrata		day 3
	Achillea millefolium		common
	Antennaria alpina		day 5
	Antennaria carpatia		day 5
	Aster alpinus		day 2
	Buphthalmum salicifolium		day 2
	Carduus defloratus		day 7
	Centaurea montana		day 7
	Erigeron acer		day 2
	Erigeron alpinus		day 3
	Homogyne alpina		day 4
	Leucanthemum vulgare		day 7
	Petasites paradoxus		day 2
	Pilosella officinarum		day 2
	Taraxacum agg.		day 2-7
	Tragopogon pratense		day 2
	Tussilago farfara		day 5
	Boraginaceae		
	Echium vulgare		day 7
	Myosotis alpestris		day 5
	Myosotis sylvatica		day 2
	Pulmonaria australis		day 5
	Symphytum officinale		day 4
	Brassicaceae		
	Biscutella laevigata		day 2, 5
	Draba aizoides		day 5
	Kernera saxatilis		day 4
	Pritzelago alpina		day 5
	Thlaspi rotundifolium		day 6

Campanulaceae		
Campanula glomerata		day 2
Campanula rotundifolia		day 7
Campanula spicata		day 7
Phyteuma orbiculare		day 2
Caryophyllaceae		
Cerastium uniflorum		common
Dianthus sylvestris		day 7
Saponaria ocymoides		day 2
Silene acaulis		day 5, 6
Silene doica		day 2
Silene vulgare		day 2
Stellaria nemorum		day 4
Cistaceae		
Helianthemum cannum		day 3
Helianthemum nummularium		day 2
Crassulaceae		
Rhodiola rosea		day 6
Dipsacaceae		
Knautia arvensis		day 2
Ericaceae		
Loiseleuria procumbens		day 5
Rhododendron ferrugineum		
Vaccinium myrtillus		
Vaccinium vitis-idea		day 2
Fabaceae		
Anthyllis vulneraria		day 2
Astragalus alpinus		day 2
Lotus corniculatus		day 2
Onobrychis montana		day 2
Trifolium alpinum		day 5
Trifolium badium		
Trifolium montanum		day 4
Trifolium pratense		day 2
Trifolium repens		common
Vicia sepium		day 2
Gentianaceae		
Gentiana acaulis		day 5
Gentiana punctata		day 5
Gentiana verna		day 5
Gentianella germanica		day 4
Geraniaceae		
Geranium pyrenaicum		day 3
Geranium sylvaticum		day 2
Globulariaceae		
Globularia cordifolia		day 2

Lamiaceae			
Acinos alpinus			day 2
Ajuga genevensis			day 3
Ajuga pyramidalis			day 2
Horminum pyrenaicum			day 3
Lamium album			day 2
Salvia pratensis			day 2
Stachys recta			day 2
Teucrium montanum			
Thymus serpyllum			day 2
Lentibulariaceae			
Pinguicula alpinus			day 2
Onagraceae			
Epilobium angustifolium			
Orobanchaceae			
Bartsia alpina			day 5
Melampyrum sylvaticum			
Orobanche gracilis			day 7
Pedicularis elongata			day 7
Pedicularis verticillata			day 3
Rhinanthus minus			day 2
Papaveraceae			
Chelidonium majus			day 4
Plantaginaceae			
Linaria alpina			day 5
Plantago media			day 2
Veronica chamaedrys			day 4
Polygalaceae			
Polygala alpestris			day 3
Polygala chamaebuxus			day 3
Polygala nicaeensis			day 2
Polygonaceae			
Persicaria bistorta			day 2
Persicaria vivipara			day 3
Primulaceae			
Androsace vitaliana			day 5
Androsace alpina			day 6
Primula farinosa			day 5
Primula halleri			day 5
Primula minima			day 5
Primula veris			day 2
Soldanella alpina			day 5
Soldanella minima			day 5
Soldanella pusilla			day 6
Pyrolaceae			
Moneses uniflora			day 2
Orthilia secunda			
Pyrola media			day 4
Pyrola minor			

	Ranunculaceae		
	Actaea spicata		day 4
	Anemone baldensis		day 6
	Aquilegia atrata		day 2
	Caltha palustris		day 3
	Clematis alpina		day 2
	Pulsatilla alpina ssp. apiifolia		day 5
	Pulsatilla vernalis		day 5
	Ranunculus aconitifolius		
	Ranunculus montanus		day 5
	Ranunculus pyrenaicus		day 5
	Trollius europaeus		day 2
	Rosaceae		
	Alchemilla sp		day 2
	Aruncus dioica		
	Dryas octopetala		day 6
	Geum montanum		day 5
	Geum rivale		day 4
	Geum reptans		day 6
	Potentilla asarina		day 3
	Potentilla crantzii		day 4
	Potentilla erecta		
	Potentilla nitida		
	Rosa pendulina		day 7
	Rubus idaeus		
	Sanguisorba minor agg.		day 3
	Santalaceae		
	Thesium alpinum		day 2
	Salicaceae		
	Salix helvetica		day 6
	Saxifragaceae		
	Chrysosplenium alternifolium		day 4
	Saxifraga paniculata		day 2, 7
	Saxifraga hederifolia		day 2
	Scrophulariaceae		
	Scrophularia canina		day 3
	Verbascum nigrum		day 7
	Valerianaceae		
	Valeriana		day 7
	Violaceae		
	Viola biflora		day 2
	Viola tricolor subsp. subalpina		day 7

	MONOCOTYLEDONS	
	Asparagaceae	
	Polygonatum odoratum	day 2
	Colchicaceae	
	Colchicum autumnale	day 7
	Iridaceae	
	Crocus vernus	day 5
	Liliaceae	
	Lilium bulbiferum	day 7
	Maianthemum bifolium	day 4
	Paradisea liliastrum	day 7
	Paris quadrifolia	day 2
	Veratrum album	day 3
	Orchidaceae	
	Corallorhiza trifida	day 2
	Cypripedium calceolus	day 2-4
	Epipactis atrorubens	day 7
	Gymnadenia albida	day 4
	Gymnadenia conopsea	day 2
	Gymnadenia odoratissima	day 7
	Gymnadenia nigra	day 3
	Neottia nidus-avis	day 2
	Neottia ovata	day 3
	Ophrys insectifera	day 7
	Orchis militaris	day 3
	Orchis ovalis	day 6
	Orchis ustulata	day 7
	Platanthera bifolia	day 2
	Traunsteinera globosa	day 7
	Poaceae	
	Briza minima	day 7
	Tofieldiaceae	
	Tofieldia calyculata	day 3

	ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	BIRDS									
	Apodidae									
	Common Swift	Apus apus		x		x			x	
	Hirundinidae									
	Crag Martin	Ptonoprogne rupestris		x	x		x		x	
	House Martin	Delichon urbica		x	x	x	x		x	
	Motacillidae									
	Tree Pipit	Anthus trivialis								
	Grey Wagtail			x	x				x	
	White Wagtail			x		x	x		x	
	Turdidae									
	Ring Ouzel	Turdus torquatus								
	Blackbird	Turdus merula		x	x	x			x	
	Fieldfare			x	x	x			x	
	Muscicapidae									
	Robin	Erithacus rubecula		x						
	Black Redstart	Phoenicurus ochruros			x	x	x		x	
	Family Sylviidae									
	Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla		x		x				
	Phylloscopidae									
	Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita				x				
	Paridae									
	Great Tit	Parus major				x				
	Corvidae									
	Magpie	Pica pica		x					x	
	Jay								x	
	Carrion Crow	Corvus corone				x				
	Raven	Corvus corax					x	x		
	Alpine Chough	Pyrrhocorax graculus					x			
	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus				x	x			
	Fringillidae									
	Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs		x	x	x			x	
	Serin	Serinus serinus								
	Bullfinch	Pyrrhula pyrrhula				x				
	Snowfinch						x	x		
	Emberizidae									
	Yellowhammer	Emberiza citrinella			x					
	Wheatear Black-eared							x		
	Cuckoo							x	x	
	Dipper					x	x	x	x	
	Green Woodpecker								x	
	MAMMALS									
	Alpine Marmot Deer	Marmota marmota			x	x				

	ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	BUTTERFLIES									
	Papilionidae									
	Apollo	Parnassius apollo							x	
	Pieridae									
	Large White	Pieris brassicae			x					
	Clouded Yellow	Colias						x	x	
	Mountain Green-veined					x		x	x	
	Orange tip			x	x	x			x	
	Wood White	Leptidea sinapis			x	x			x	
	Lycaenidae									
	Small Blue	Cupido minimus		x						
	Nymphalidae									
	Red Admiral				x	x		x	x	
	Painted Lady								x	
	Small Tortoiseshell	Aglais urticae							x	
	Satyridae									
	Arran Brown									
	Erebia medusa	Woodland ringlet			x	x			x	
	Small Heath	Coenonympha pamphilus							x	
	Speckled Wood	Pararge aegeria				x			x	
	Other									
	Roman Snail	Helix pomatia		x						
	Chrysolina coerulans								x	
	Euclidia glyphica	Burnet companion							x	
	Panorpa								x	
	Pseudopanthera maculata								x	
		Chimney-sweep moth								
	Phyllopertha horticola					x				