

Autumn Flora of The Peloponnese

17th - 24th Oct 2021

Led by Yiannis Christofides



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Autumn Flora of the Peloponnese Trip Report

17th to 24th October 2021

Day 1 - Sunday 17th October

Both Yiannis and the 3 guests, Judy, André and Rick, arrived on time at Athens airport at midday. Having picked up the car, we drove to our first base at Mycenae, staying at the very welcoming Petit Planet Hotel, not far from the ancient site. We waited while the rain stopped and then we went for a short walk, finding our first plants. There were splashes of Autumn Squill, *Prospero* (previously *Scilla*) *autumnale*, as well as shrubs such as *Pistacia terebinthus*, with its red fruits lit up in the late afternoon light. After a wonderful dinner we retired early to catch up on sleep!

Autumn Squill © Yiannis Christofides



Day 2 - Monday 18th October

We woke to a bright day, with good views over the Argolid plain. Rick spotted some Blackcaps in the olive trees below the hotel, so we watched them for while before a cooked breakfast, complete with Greek yoghurt and fruit. We then set off for Mycenae a short distance up the road. We were

early and had the site almost to ourselves. We

soon found the first flowers of *Prospero autumnale* and then soon after *Cyclamen graecum* and wonderful drifts of *Sternbergia lutea*.



Treasury of Atreus © Yiannis Christofides

We visited the Museum there and the amazing Treasury of Atreus, containing the tomb of Agamemnon, before heading to off to our next destination. We made our first stop soon after Tripoli for our first look at Crocuses. We found many, all *Crocus hadriaticus* and Rick saw wonderful *Sternbergia lutea*. We also saw big multicoloured larvae of the Spurge Hawkmoth, plus butterflies including a Common Blue, Brown Argus and a Grayling.

Our next stop was to look for more species of *Crocus*. We initially found *Crocus hadriaticus* again, and after much searching, two specimens of *Crocus biflorus melantherus*, our target species for this location.

Another stop produced another new species, *Crocus boryi* in profusion. We had, on previous visits here found *Biarum tenuifolium* and *Spiranthes spiralis*, but despite searching we failed to find any this time. The area is heavily grazed and any plants are quickly eaten by the passing animals.

One major target area remained before our descent to Gytheio and that was the Taygetos mountains. We began our ascent up the slopes until we had gained considerable height. The habitat began to change and became progressively wooded, mostly with Oriental Planes. Here we began to see our target species, Queen Olga's Snowdrop (*Galanthus regina-olgae*).

Queen Olga's Snowdrop © André H





Peloponnese Slow Worm © André H

We stopped at the end of the made-up road and photographed these beautiful flowers which were everywhere, along with a new species, the Ivy-leaved Cyclamen (*Cyclamen hederifolium*). We searched for Salamanders, but as it was dry they remained hidden. However, we did find a fresh-water crab and an endemic Peloponnese Slow Worm. We then started the descent to the plains once more and drove the final stretch to Gytheio.

Day 3 - Tuesday 19th October

We planned a relatively relaxed day today but still with many new things to see. We set off from our hotel towards Areopolis and stopped on the way to look for *Colchicum zahnii* (previously *C. psaridis*), one of the local endemics. We stopped and walked along a side road checking the verges. We found many *Allium callimischon* much *Prospero autumnale* and eventually a few specimens of *C. zahnii*. The hillside was covered in Tree Spurge bushes (*Euphorbia dendroides*) and overhead we were entertained by aerial battles between a Raven, a Buzzard and another raptor, probably a Peregrine.



Allium callimischon © Rick B



Narcissus serotinus © Yiannis Christofides

We then moved on, not very far, to a site to see *Narcissus serotinus*, which was there in profusion. Our next stop was for supplies at a local supermarket before driving due south and stopping to see *Crocus niveus*.

This was followed by lunch and a descent to the caves at Diros, where we took the boat trip through the impressive cave system. At the exit we saw a number of interesting plants, including *Dianthus juniperinus*



Diros Caves © Rick B

ssp. bauhinatorum (previously *D. arboreus*) and *Inula crithmoides* in flower.



Colchicum sfikasianum
© Yiannis Christofides

We then retraced our steps to Areopolis and descended towards the coast again, stopping to look for *Crocus goulimy*. We had to search for them, confirming the view that the season was late, but eventually we found some. Several plants of Friar's Cowl were in flower as a bonus.

Next, we drove towards Gytheio and went up the hillsides to look for *Colchicum bivonae*. We did not find the site, but we found a new *Colchicum* which had not previously been seen on any of the trips, the beautiful *C. sfikasianum*. Returning to Gytheio, we visited the little island linked by a causeway. The *Cyclamen graecum* here were amazing, but the highlight was finding several specimens of *Biarum tenuifolium* in good flower. This was the end of quite an exciting day for us.

Day 4 - Wednesday 20th October

We had a sunny day for our long journey into the Mani peninsula. We set off early and drove to Areopolis and on due south from there. We made our first stop at the picturesque port of Gerolimenas, where we had coffee and drinks. Whilst waiting, a Kingfisher obligingly sat near us and was duly photographed, and a Grey Wagtail was searching for insects nearby.

We drove on a short distance and made our first floral stop. We found *Atractylis gummifera* in flower and our first *Spiranthes spiralis*, a species Rick was very keen to see. A praying mantis, *Empusa fasciata* was seen by Andre and photographed by everybody.



We continued on our way, stopping to take photographs of the landscape and also the Plain Tiger butterfly that we spotted from the vehicle. It proved quite cooperative and everybody was able to get some good images.

Our next stop was in the village of Vathia, one of the villages typical of the Mani, with its iconic tower houses. Whilst walking round the narrow streets we spotted a photogenic lizard and we also came across a pair of Rock nuthatches which gave us good close-up views.

We were now nearing the end of

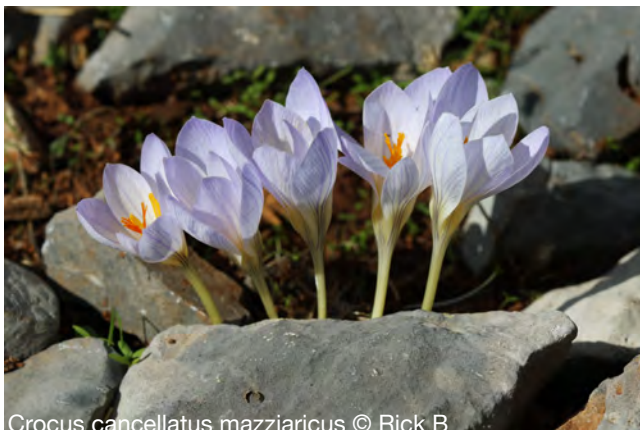
the peninsula and our next stop was to find another of the area's endemic *Colchicum*, *C. parlatoris*. It was found in good flower, and we continued the short distance to the end of cape Tenaro where we had our lunch. We found more *Colchicum parlatoris* here.

After lunch we set off on the return journey, stopping to see and photograph more *Crocus niveus*. We enjoyed the amazing landscapes of this side of the Mani peninsula. We returned to Gytheio in time to go to the little island and photograph the *Biarum tenuifolium* we had found previously in good light. As usual we had a wonderful dinner at our favourite restaurant.



Day 5 - Thursday 21st October

Our destination today was the Parnon massif. We drove due west and started to climb. Our attention was drawn to some birds and we stopped to investigate. There was a pair of Black Redstarts and then at the same time a pair of Rock Nuthatches. We got good views and photographs before setting off again.



Our next stop was to search for Crocuses. We found *Crocus cancellatus mazziaricus* straight away. This was the commonest Crocus on the hillside, in a variety of colourations. There was also *C. niveus* and a couple of specimens of *C. laevigatus*, the first for the trip. We continued our journey through the village of Lambokambos, where we saw *C. goulimyi* growing on the verges and in people's gardens.

Cotinus coggygria was in bright red/orange autumnal colour, lighting up the landscape. We made a detour for our lunch spot, near an

amazing display of *Sternbergia lutea*, *Crocus goulimyji*, *C. niveus* and *Cyclamen graecum*. We continued through high cliffs to a scenic spot to admire the view, and where also saw masses of Crag Martins on the cliff walls and a Blue Rock Thrush.

We then retraced our journey back to the main road and continued until we had gained some height. The dominant trees here were Grecian Fir, Black Pine and Prickly Juniper (*Abies cephalonica*, *Pinus nigra* and *Juniperus oxycedrus*). We saw *Crocus cancellatus*, *Crocus niveus* and *C. hadriaticus* here. We usually find *Crocus biflorus melantherus* here, but none were to be seen, again confirming our view that the season was late. This was our last stop for the day.



Sternbergia lutea © André H

Day 6 - Friday 22nd October



Mystras © André H

We set off in morning on the return journey north. We drove to Sparti and then on to Mystras, the abandoned byzantine city. Yiannis dropped the group off at the top, drove the vehicle down and walked up. We visited some of churches there to see the frescos and also looked for flowers. There were *Cyclamen*, *Sternbergia* and *Crocus boryi*. *Allium callimischon* was in flower here too.

Afterwards we drove the short distance to Parori, had our picnic and walked up the gorge. There were *Cyclamen graecum* and *C.*

hederifolium in flower, as well as *Allium callimischon* and *Arisarum vulgare*. There were several specimens of *Campanula versicolor* in good flower too. On the face of the remains of the quarry we saw Rock Nuthatches and Black Redstarts. We visited the little church in the grotto and returned early to our base at Mystras.



Campanula versicolor © André H

Day 7 - Saturday 23rd October

Our last full day in the Peloponnese today. Our target today was to find more of the *Crocus biflorus melantherus* and *Crocus laevigatus* that we had seen a few specimens of on the first day and also more *Biarum tenuifolium*. We drove north and turned towards Karyes. We could see the Crocuses in the fields so we stopped and started our search. Most were *Crocus laevigatus*. We also found many *Biarum tenuifolium*. We continued our search at other stops finding other *Crocus* such as *C. hadriaticus*. Eventually we stopped again at the site where we had first found *C. biflorus melantherus*, now finding more specimens.



Crocus biflorus melantherus
© Yiannis Christofides

Our last destination was Mount Menalon. We made a diversion through Tripoli and began to ascend. The habitat became progressively more wooded. Our first stop produced *Crocus cancellatus* and *C. hadriaticus*. There were Clouded Yellow, Small Copper and Brown Argus butterflies on the

wing. At our last stop we found another mantis, *Mantis religiosa*, more Spurge Hawkmoth caterpillars and *Spiranthes spiralis*, to round off the day. We reached our destination of the Petit Planet hotel in good time for dinner.

The roads were quiet the following morning for our return to Athens, and our respective flights back home.



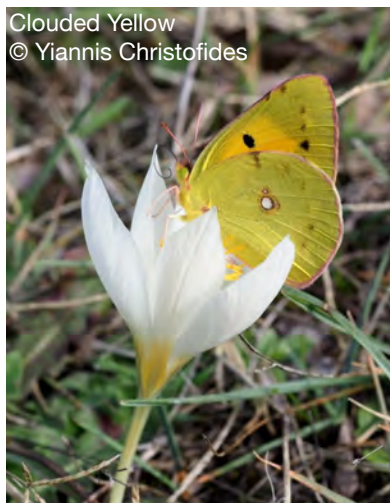
Species Checklists

Plants		18th Oct	19th Oct	20th Oct	21st Oct	22nd Oct	23rd Oct
1 Ephedraceae							
A Joint Pine	<i>Ephedra foemina</i>		✓				
2 Pinaceae/Cupressaceae							
Grecian Fir	<i>Abies cephalonica</i>	✓			✓		
Prickly Juniper	<i>Juniperus oxycedrus</i>				✓		
Turkish or Calabrian Pine	<i>Pinus brutia</i>	✓					
Black Pine	<i>Pinus nigra</i>				✓		
3 Pteridophyta							
Rusty Back Fern	<i>Ceterach officinarum</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Maidenhair Fern	<i>Adiantum capillus-veneris</i>					✓	
Black Spleenwort	<i>Asplenium adiantum-nigrum</i>	✓					
Mediterranean Clubmoss	<i>Selaginella denticulata</i>					✓	
Monocotyledons							
4 Amaryllidaceae							
Queen Olga's Snowdrop	<i>Galanthus regina-olgae</i>	✓					
Late Narcissus	<i>Narcissus serotinus</i>		✓	✓			
Yellow Sternbergia	<i>Sternbergia lutea</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
5 Araceae							
Friar's Cowl	<i>Arisarum vulgare</i>	✓	✓			✓	
A Biarum	<i>Biarum tenuifolium</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓
6 Iridaceae							
A Crocus	<i>Crocus biflorus ssp. melantherus</i>	✓					✓
A Crocus	<i>Crocus boryi</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓
A Crocus	<i>Crocus cancellatus ssp. mazziaricus</i>				✓		✓
Fall Crocus	<i>Crocus goulimyi</i>		✓	✓	✓		
Adriatic Crocus	<i>Crocus hadriaticus</i>	✓			✓		✓
Smooth Crocus	<i>Crocus laevigatus</i>				✓		✓
A Crocus	<i>Crocus niveus</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓
7 Lilliaceae							
An Allium	<i>Allium callimischon</i>	✓				✓	✓
An Allium	<i>Allium chamaespathum</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Mediterranean Meadow Saffron	<i>Colchicum cupanii</i>	✓			✓		✓
A Colchicum	<i>Colchicum parlatoris</i>			✓			
Chequered Autumn Crocus	<i>Colchicum bivonae</i>	✓					
A Colchicum	<i>Colchicum zahnii</i>		✓				
A Colchicum	<i>Colchicum sfikasianum</i>		✓		✓		
7 Asparagaceae							
Butcher's Broom	<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i>	✓					
Autumn Squill	<i>Prospero autumnale</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

Plants			18th Oct	19th Oct	20th Oct	21st Oct	22nd Oct	23rd Oct
	Sea Squill	<i>Drimia numidica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8	Smilacaceae							
	Smilax	<i>Smilax aspera</i>				✓	✓	
9	Orchidaceae							
	Autumn Ladies' Tresses	<i>Spiranthes spiralis</i>			✓		✓	✓
	Dicotyledons							
10	Aceraceae							
	Cretan Maple	<i>Acer sempervirens</i>		✓				
11	Anacardiaceae							
	Smoke Bush	<i>Cotinus coggygia</i>				✓		
	Lentisk	<i>Pistacia lentiscus</i>			✓	✓		
	Terebinth	<i>Pistacia terebinthus</i>	✓					✓
12	Asteraceae							
	Stemless Atractylis	<i>Atractylis gummifera</i>			✓			
	Southern Daisy	<i>Bellis sylvestris</i>	✓			✓		
	Common Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>				✓	✓	
	Golden Samphire	<i>Inula crithmoides</i>		✓				
	Sticky Fleabane	<i>Dittrichia viscosa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Shrubby Ptilostemon	<i>Ptilostemon chamaepeuce</i>			✓			
	Common Brighteyes	<i>Reichardia picroides</i>		✓	✓			
	A Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum hellenicum</i>	✓			✓		✓
13	Boraginaceae							
	A Heliotrope	<i>Heliotropium sp.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		
14	Campanulaceae							
	A Bellflower	<i>Campanula versicolor</i>			✓	✓	✓	
15	Caryophyllaceae							
	Ligneous Pink	<i>Dianthus juniperinus ssp. baehinorum</i>		✓				
16	Convolvulaceae							
	Field Bindweed	<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>						✓
17	Curcurbitaceae							
	Squirting Cucumber	<i>Echballium elaterium</i>	✓					
18	Ericaceae							
	Autumn Heath	<i>Erica manipuliflora</i>			✓	✓		
19	Euphorbiaceae							
	Mediterranean Spurge	<i>Euphorbia characias</i>	✓					
	Tree Spurge	<i>Euphorbia dendroids</i>			✓			
	Upright Myrtle Spurge	<i>Euphorbia rigida</i>				✓		
20	Fabaceae							
	Carob	<i>Ceratonia siliqua</i>	✓					✓
	Judas Tree	<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i>	✓			✓		✓

Plants			18th Oct	19th Oct	20th Oct	21st Oct	22nd Oct	23rd Oct
	Tree Medick	<i>Medicago arborea</i>		✓				
	Hairy Vetch	<i>Vicia villosa</i>		✓				
21	Fagaceae							
	Kermes Oak	<i>Quercus coccifera</i>	✓		✓	✓		✓
	Valonia Oak	<i>Quercus ithaburensis ssp. macrolepis</i>		✓	✓			
22	Lamiaceae							
	Grey Calamint	<i>Calamintha incana</i>		✓			✓	
	A Micromeria	<i>Micromeria sp.</i>						✓
	A Skullcap	<i>Scutellaria sp.</i>					✓	
	Mediterranean Thyme	<i>Thymbra capitata</i>				✓		
23	Oleaceae							
	Olive	<i>Olea europaea</i>						✓
24	Platanaceae							
	Oriental Plane	<i>Platanus orientalis</i>	✓				✓	✓
25	Primulaceae							
	Greek Cyclamen	<i>Cyclamen graecum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Ivy-leaved Cyclamen	<i>Cyclamen hederifolium</i>	✓				✓	✓
	Peloponnese Cyclamen	<i>Cyclamen repandum ssp. peloponnesiacum</i>			✓	✓		
26	Rosaceae							
	Common Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyne</i>	✓					
	Spiny Pear	<i>Pyrus amygdaliformis</i>	✓					
	Spiny Burnet	<i>Sarcopoterium spinosum</i>	✓	✓	✓			
27	Scrophulariaceae							
	Wavy-leaf Mullein	<i>Verbascum sinuatum</i>					✓	
	A Mullein	<i>Verbascum macrurum</i>		✓				
28	Valerianaceae							
	Mountain Valerian	<i>Valeriana montana</i>					✓	
29	Verbenaceae							
	Chaste Tree	<i>Vitex agnus-castus</i>	✓					
30	Zygophyllaceae							
	Caltrops	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>	✓					

Butterflies & Moths			18th Oct	19th Oct	20th Oct	21st Oct	22nd Oct	23rd Oct
1	Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>				✓		✓
2	Southern Small White	<i>Pieris mannii</i>				✓		✓
3	Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias croceus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Cleopatra	<i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i>	✓			✓	✓	
5	Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>						✓
7	Long-tailed Blue	<i>Lampides boeticus</i>		✓	✓			
8	Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	✓					
9	Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>						✓
11	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>						
13	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>		✓	✓	✓		
14	Plain Tiger	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>			✓			
15	Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>		✓				
16	Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	✓			✓	✓	
17	A Grayling	<i>Hipparchia sp.</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓
18	Hummingbird Hawkmoth	<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>	✓	✓	✓			
19	Spurge Hawkmoth	<i>Hyles robertsi</i>	✓					✓



Birds			18th Oct	19th Oct	20th Oct	21st Oct	22nd Oct	23rd Oct
1	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>				✓		
2	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			✓	✓	✓	
3	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>				✓		
4	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>				✓	✓	
5	Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			✓			
7	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
8	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>						✓
9	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓					
10	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>			✓			✓
11	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓
12	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
13	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domestica</i>	✓	✓	✓			
14	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓					
15	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓			✓		
16	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>	✓					
17	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			✓	✓		✓
18	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓		✓			✓
19	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	✓					
20	Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>			✓			
21	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓			
22	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>		✓	✓	✓		
23	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>		✓	✓			
24	Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓	✓		
25	Western Rock Nuthatch	<i>Sitta neumayer</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	
26	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	✓			✓	✓	
27	Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>			✓	✓		
28	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			✓			
29	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>				✓		
30	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>						✓

Other notable species

Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis muralis</i>
Peloponnese Slow Worm	<i>Anguis cephalonica</i>
Fresh Water Crab	<i>Potamon fluviatile</i>
An endemic snail	<i>Codringtonia eucineta</i>
Praying Mantis	<i>Mantis religiosa</i>
Conehead Mantis	<i>Empusa fasciata</i>



Narcissus serotinus © Rick B



Mask of Agamemnon © André H



Spiranthes spiralis © Rick B



Queen Olga's Snowdrop
© Yiannis Christofides



Sternbergia lutea © Rick B



Plain Tiger © Yiannis Christofides



© Rick B



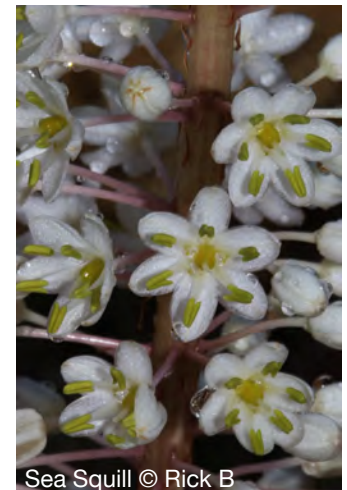
Vathia © Yiannis Christofides



Friar's Cowl © André H



Codringtonia eucineta © André H



Sea Squill © Rick B



Sternbergia lutea © Yiannis Christofides



© Rick B



Crocus laevigatus © André H



Scarabaeus sp. © André H



Cyclamen graecum © Yiannis Christofides



Praying mantis on Sea Squill © André H



Crocus cancellatus mazziaricus © André H



Crocus boryi © Rick B



© André H



© Rick B



Allium callimischon © André H



Sea Squill © Yiannis Christofides



Sternbergia lutea © Yiannis Christofides



Crocus cancellatus mazziaricus © Yiannis Christofides



Cyclamen graecum © André H



Small Copper © André H



Sternbergia lutea © Yiannis Christofides



Daucus sp. © André H



Spiranthes spiralis © Rick B



Colchicum cupanii © Yiannis Christofides



Lion Gate, Mycenae
© Yiannis Christofides



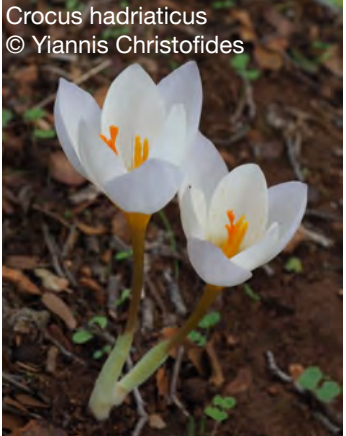
Crocus hadriaticus © André H



Spurge Hawkmoth caterpillar © André H



Crocus niveus © André H



Crocus hadriaticus
© Yiannis Christofides



Southern Small Whites © André H



Crocus goulimyji © Rick B



© André H



Cyclamen graecum © Rick B



Spiranthes spiralis
© Rick B



Cyclamen graecum
© Yiannis Christofides



Colchicum parlatoris © Yiannis Christofides



Crocus goulimyi © André H



Lion Gate, Mycenae © André H



Cyclamen sp. © André H



Spiranthes spiralis
© Yiannis Christofides



Cyclamen graecum © Yiannis Christofides



Stembergia lutea © André H



Crocus niveus © Rick B



Conehead Mantis © André H



Spiranthes spiralis © André H



Biarum tenuifolium
© Yiannis Christofides



Colchicum cupanii © André H



Crocus cancellatus mazziaricus
© Yiannis Christofides



Crocus goulimy © Yiannis Christofides



Conehead Mantis on Crocus © Rick B



Crocus goulimy © Rick B



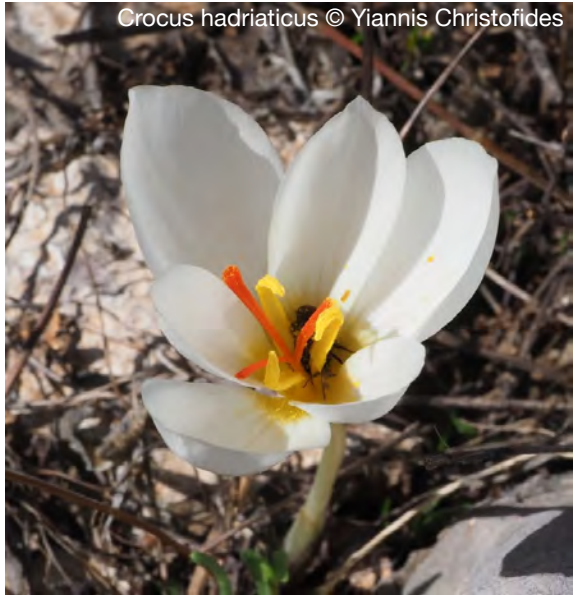
Clouded Yellow © Rick B



Crocus niveus © Yiannis Christofides



Crocus goulimyi © André H



Crocus hadriaticus © Yiannis Christofides



Colchicum cupanii
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