

Butterflies Of Greece

19th - 26th June 2023 Led by Alice Hunter & Terry Goble



Greenwings Wildlife Holidays

Tel: 01473 254658 Web: www.greenwings.co.uk Email: enquiries@greenwings.co.uk

Butterflies of Greece 19th-26th June 2023 Led by Alice Hunter and Terry Goble

This year has seen an El Nino event, which usually results in a change in weather patterns globally. In Europe this seems to have manifested itself in an unusually cool and wet spring, consequently the emergence times of butterflies seems to have been very much delayed. On this trip to Greece we were soon aware that some common butterflies were not yet on the wing, but the upside is that some species were freshly emerged and we were delighted to have such pristine specimens of Odd-spot Blue and Silver Washed Fritillaries that were less than a few days old. Regardless of the weather patterns we were able to enjoy the fantastic scenery of two beautiful yet distinct mountain ranges. The green pine forested hills of the Parnassos range contrasted with the sparse and rocky foothills of the Chelmos region. The added extra of ruins from antiquity, the warm and friendly reception from our Greek hosts and sunshine, all added to a wonderful week of wildlife watching. A special mention also must go to our guests on this trip who were superb at finding tricky species and, above all, were fun and good humoured throughout.

Day One - Arrive in Athens and drive to Hotel

The group gathered at Athens Airport. Several members had arrived the day before and stayed overnight in a near-by hotel. Terry and Martina arrived on the day the tour began and met with the rest of the group. After a quick introduction and a drink, we set off towards the minibus.

Once we had loaded the bags and boarded the bus we were soon underway heading towards Delphi and our hotel on the slopes of Parnassos. Along the route we saw a few birds and butterflies. A hovering Kestrel and Hooded Crows were seen among some hirundines, including a brief Red-rumped Swallow. The butterflies were not easy from a travelling bus but Brimstones were seen and possibly Cleopatra. We decided to stop for lunch as it was now past 1pm and people were getting peckish.

We stopped at a service station for burgers, chips and salad and some cool drinks. We sat outside on what was quite a hot day with temperatures not far from 30°C and chatted, getting to know each other. It was soon time to head off and we drove smoothly on to our hotel in Delphi. Once we had our rooms allocated and a little time to sort our luggage we met again at 5pm for a local walk.



We walked up some steps to some scrubby areas on the hillside. En route we saw Southern Comma and an adorable Ladybird Spider. Once we reached the top of the steps we walked down the hill and found some grassy areas with flowering plants (and beehives!!). We continued to see interesting species all the way around. Some of the highlights were Serville's Longlegged Cricket, a large black Longhorn Beetle and several butterfly species including Mallow Skipper, European Swallowtail, Eastern Bath White to name a few.

We wound our way around the streets to arrive back at the hotel and were greeted with the sight of a Lattice Brown, rather out of place on the wall of the hotel but looking smart with its 'Ringlet' like ocelli. Once we had taken a few photographs it was time to get ready for our evening meal.

We all met at 7:20pm and walked to Taverna Dion a few minutes down the street. We were seated outside up some steps, which gave us a great view over to the mountainside and down into the town. With Barn Swallow, House Martin and Common Swifts circling overhead and with the lively

town activity it was a beautiful ambience. The service was quick and very friendly and we enjoyed traditional Greek food in a fabulous setting. The owner gave us a Greek dessert to try, which finished the meal nicely.

A little weary after a long day, for some at least, we were happy to wander back to our rooms. We arranged to meet for breakfast at 8am and bade each other a good night.

Day Two - Mount Parnassos

We all met for breakfast, which was a buffet affair, and once everyone was sated we got prepared for a full day out. However, our first brief stop was at a supermarket in the village of Arachova, as lunches had to be organised. Whilst Alice and Terry trekked to the bakery and then back to the supermarket the rest of the group went to explore some rough grasslands adjacent to the supermarket. Tad and Kaz found a Grayling, which on further inspection was a Balkan Grayling, whilst the rest had enjoyed Black-veined Whites, plus a couple of skippers and blues.

It was now time to drive up to the upper reaches of Mount Parnassos, exploring promising habitats on route. We admired the stunning mountainous and hillside scenery as we wound our way up the road. We came to a stop at a scenic outlook, where we had great views over the slopes of Parnassos. We steadily picked up butterfly species and Antony was happy to see his first hairstreak of the tour in the form of Sloe Hairstreak. At first we saw one flitting around the base of a

Kermes Oak, then several were seen. A Subalpine Warbler was heard further down the slope and Terry and John went to explore and after a while managed to get brief sightings of a couple of birds flitting through the scrub. Back up on the grassy open area, Escher's Blue was found and also a lovely longhorn beetle nestling amongst some Mullein. A Southern White Admiral put in a surprising appearance, resting in the centre of a gravel track and giving good views. There were a few common species around, but we felt it was now time to press on.



We drove on past the turning for the ski centre and stopped shortly after at a woodland site, which had flowery meadows in wooded glades, a very picturesque setting. Perhaps the highlight of this



stop wasn't a butterfly but the two or three Balkan Goldenring Dragonflies that were whizzing around. Finally a striking male in its yellow and black splendour caught an insect and perched up for us to admire and photograph, whilst it devoured its unfortunate victim. After this it was time to focus back onto the butterflies. We had seen a number of species including a Powdered Brimstone and Adonis that seem very large for this species. Another species new for the trip was a Safflower Skipper, which gave us a tricky time nailing its identification. It was now time to return to the

minibus and head to our next stop, but we were distracted by the finding of a Nettle-tree Butterfly up on the side of the road. After photographing and watching it flit to and fro we finally set off again.

We turned back and this time took a left turn to continue up the mountain. As we drove along a Red-backed Shrike was seen from the bus and we stopped briefly to confirm it before continuing uphill. We stopped again by a flowery meadow, which was also productive. We brought out the lunch for everyone to enjoy under the shade of a large Grecian Fir. We didn't progress very far, as we alighted from the bus a Large Tortoiseshell was down on the gravel by the road. The group were keen to see this lovely butterfly and we spent a bit of time with it as it was presumably taking in minerals. It stayed for some time and occasionally flashed a blaze of orange as it opened its wings. When the minibus was moved it eventually flew off but all had enjoyed excellent views of this often elusive butterfly. We descended into the meadow and whilst the group explored we set



out the picnic and called everyone into the shade. We enjoyed a delicious meal (given John's seal of approval!) in a lovely setting watching the butterflies go by. When we got going again we began to regularly add more species. A pristine Queen of Spain and Pearl-bordered Fritillaries were a joy to find. The underside pearls of the Queen of Spain are exquisite. Martina and John also spotted a Cardinal, which Kaz managed to get a video clip of, another great addition to our sightings. As new sightings slowed it was now time to move on again.

We drove on until the road divided with the right fork heading up to the ski centre. We stopped a little beforehand in a lay-by opposite a cleft in the limestone rocks. Here again we found some interesting birdlife as a Woodlark was heard calling and then spotted by John on the top of a pine. We also heard Coal Tit as it sped across a gap between the trees and heard a probable Short-toed

Treecreeper, but were unfortunately unable to locate it. The butterflies here were pretty good too. We finally got to grips with Clouded Apollo, the sighting of the day for some. We also found a form of the Mazarine Blue, which has a couple of orange spots on its underside hindwing (*Cyaniris semiargus* ssp. parnassica). Alice informed us that this was quite an unusual sighting at this site, so we were lucky to find this form. John also found a female Mountain Small White, with smokey markings on its wings. This was identified later from John's photograph, one of the few alpine species found.



We decided to drive up to the ski centre just for a quick look and found that the roads were pretty poor and some closed off. A distant probable Northern Wheatear was seen but little else so we decided to head back down the mountain road.



We next stopped at a small unassuming glade by the side of the road. Despite our stops being strewn with flowering plants the diversity of butterflies thus far seemed to have been a lot lower than in previous years. This may be due to the cold wet spring that has impacted numbers across Europe, underlined by the sight of Orange Tips that, even at this altitude, would normally be finished by now. However, a female Blue Argus was another fine addition as we were gradually building an impressive list of sightings

Our last proper stop produced another non-butterfly surprise as we explored temporary pools, which were still quite full. We were looking at a few puddling butterflies including blues and Nettle-tree Butterflies. Amongst the pond skaters, tadpoles and water boatmen Alice was delighted to

find Fairy Shrimps! We watched these delightful and odd creatures for a while. Some of the blues puddling were Chapman's and Common Blue and a Skipper seen was another Safflower. We then had another little session of bird watching as both Hoopoe and Wryneck could be heard calling. Whilst looking for the Wryneck a Cirl Bunting popped into view, which was great compensation for not seeing the Wryneck! Red-rumped Swallows flew over, whilst we were heading back to the minibus.

Our last stop was a very brief one looking for European Swallowtail Caterpillars amongst wild roadside Fennel. After a brief search we didn't seem able to find any until Dee came up trumps by eventually spotting a surprisingly large one. They are very handsome caterpillars in their green, black and red spotted livery. A Nightingale attempting to serenade our finding was a nice touch. Now it was time to head back to the hotel and prepare for dinner.

We all met again at 6:30pm to start the checklist. We had two days of species to catch up with. Once we had finished with any tricky identifications we ploughed ahead. During the listing Martina produced a photo of a lovely Turquoise Blue, another new species! As soon as we had completed the species lists we headed off back to Taverna Dion for our evening meal. This time the lovely setting was

Swallowtail caterpillar © Dee C

further enhanced by a family of Spotted Flycatchers swooping overhead catching insects and feeding their young just a few metres away. It was lovely to watch as we enjoyed another delicious meal and yet another complimentary dessert. Replete, we headed back to the hotel to get some sleep ahead of another full day.

Day Three - Delphi's Ancient Site and further Exploration of Mount Parnassos

We gathered at 8am for the buffet breakfast. Antony kept us up to date with the Red-backed Shrike family outside his hotel room after spotting a fledgling. We then prepared speedily to get underway and hopefully beat the crowds to the ancient Delphi Site. The site opens at 8am and we were there a little before 9am and before the crowds had gathered.

We approached this site of ancient antiquity in its glorious setting, but the group's attention was laser focused on a drain cat gang! Taking shelter in a drain covert just outside the entrance was a family of cats with four tiny and adorable kittens, timeless artefacts and buildings would just have to wait a little longer. Although we were here to enjoy the Unesco site incorporating the Temple of Apollo, the Agora, an amphitheatre and the Omphalos stone of Zeus, there were also many fantastic wildlife experiences and we were not going to let a few old rocks distract us too much.



Before we had seen it, we had heard the Western Rock Nuthatch calling noisily and saw the first of many fly from the buildings up to a tree. Once inside we strolled around as a loose group enjoying both the archaeological and wildlife delights. As the morning heated up we began to see an increasing amount of butterflies. Both Scarce and European Swallowtails, Brimstone and Cleopatra and lots of others including blues, Grayling, and Wall. We even managed a new species for the trip as Alice identified Blue-spot Hairstreak.

Other bird highlights included Black-eared Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush and young Cirl Buntings. Perhaps the best was a sighting of two Short-toed Eagles flanked by a Kestrel over the mountains rising above the site.

Around the site of The Temple of Apollo there were small pools, here we saw Balkan Goldenring and Keeled Skimmer Dragonflies. We also were delighted to witness a Rock Nuthatch bring food to its peculiar shaped nest, beautifully camouflaged on the rock face. Heading on we reached the Stadium, where the Pythian games were enjoyed, including athletic and musical events and chariot racing. On the return journey we found a Spoon-winged Lacewing (Nemoptera coa), probably the sighting of the day as it hung from a piece of vegetation (This was the



second, with the first one found by John - excellent but not in its classic pose). We then walked on down and were heading out as the area was getting very busy and the day was getting hotter. We were looking forward to the cooler temperatures of the mountain foothills.

We had a brief stop to take on more water. The hot temperatures meant that we were drinking much quicker than anticipated. We then stopped at the bakery and collected some savoury lunches for the group and then finally headed up to the mountain air.

We arrived at a large open meadow, which had some lingering pools of water, containing similar species to previous stops. The fact that there was so much water still around was testimony to the cool, wet springs experienced throughout Europe, as by now many of these have usually dried up long ago. We set off on a track to the left of the meadow that eventually led around to a chapel. On our way we saw many fritillaries, almost all of which were Pearl-bordered Fritillary, although Kaz and Tan found and photographed a gorgeous Cardinal. There were a few other blues, Brown Argus and skippers around, but not the diversity expected this time of year.

Around the chapel we did see a few Brimstones, Cleopatras and a Clouded Apollo, but like all the Clouded Apollos seen today, it did not settle. We headed back through the meadow and on the return leg, Antony and Dee found a lovely Greek Mazarine Blue and a little further we also found the nominate Mazarine Blue. At the temporary pools we found a few Field Crickets which we could hear them most of the way around and a couple of dragonflies including another Keeled Skimmer and a Broad-bodied Chaser. It was a hot day despite the altitude and cooling breeze, but people still wanted to soldier on and see more species.



We stopped at a roadside meadow on the way back down the mountain with vetch on one side of the road and Everlasting Pea on the other. Here it slowly became increasingly productive and we added a couple of new species as we found Turquoise Blue and Amanda's Blue, including a mating pair. Then Martina found a Milky Owlfly, a sighting to rival the Spoon-winged Lacewing! This glorious insect was seen clinging to a grass stem and was much admired and photographed. It even overshadowed a delightful Jewel Beetle that we had found a little earlier sporting blue, red and green colouring. Weary, but happy we headed back for a brief break before listing and dinner.

We reconvened at half past six and sorted out any identification queries and compiled the checklist. Tad showed a picture of a skipper he found and this seemed to match Large Skipper, another new species for the trip. Once we had completed these

tasks we headed back to Taverna Dion for another delicious dinner. The wildlife did not stop for dinner and as we sat at our table, up on the steps, we watched the hirundines and swifts in their aerobatic display and the family saga of the Spotted Flycatchers and their fledglings. After dinner we headed back to the hotel, but a few wanted to see the Kotschy's Gecko, seen the previous night by Terry. Whilst some were a little weary and went to bed, Terry, Martina, Antony and John

stayed out to the bitter end and were rewarded with sightings of two gecko species, a few pipistrelle type bats and a glow worm! Now it was finally dark on the longest day and time to get some sleep.

Day Four - Grass Jewels, Galaxidi and transfer to Kalavryta

We were down for breakfast at 8am, with the intention of leaving at 9am. Today was transfer day and we had a leisurely drive to our new hotel in Kalavryta ahead of us. Prior to leaving Dee had a last motherly check on her family of swallows nesting just outside the hotel. We then set off more or less on time.

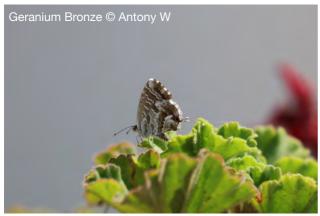
Our first stop was just a short drive away, but what a stop it was! Very productive for a host of different creatures. Our main target was the Grass Jewel, Europe's smallest butterfly, but there

were several other wonderful creatures to entertain. We parked up and hopped over a crash barrier to began to walk up a stone track. We were seeing plenty of butterflies, Balkan Marbled Whites, both Swallowtails and then a new for the trip Freyer's Grayling, thankfully an easier species to identify than many of the other Graylings. As we continued we also came across a few antlions, which were impressively large insects with delicately marbled wings. There are also many birds around including our old favourite Western Rock Nuthatch, Blue Rock Thrush and new for the trip and lifer for John, a Sombre Tit. Reptiles were also well catered for as we had a lovely, vivid green Balkan Green Lizard and a Spur-thighed Tortoise. Finally as we reached the apex of our walk we began to see Grass Jewels furiously flitting three inches above the ground. These diminutive butterflies are delicately pretty and we spent some



time photographing these little beauties. It was soon time to head back and continue on our journey.

A brief stop for petrol a little further on gave us another opportunity for some butterfly watching. A



row of planted geraniums were successfully searched for a couple of Geranium Bronze butterflies. They have lovely markings on their underwings and are not much bigger than the Grass Jewels! The day was beginning to get very hot and we were thankful for the air conditioning in the bus. We drove onto the town of Galaxidi where we were to be taking lunch. We parked in the shade and first had a short walk through some mixed woodland. We saw a few butterflies, a couple of Small Whites and some more Freyer's Graylings. We came to a cave-like dwelling that

had been home to a hermit, but we only found a handful of orange underwing moths. We walked on, but generally the woods were quieter than expected and so we headed down to the harbour.

Walking around the harbour, Antony decided to cool his feet in the cool waters, not a bad idea! In the harbour were a number of fish species including the intricately marked Rock Goby, Thicklipped Mullet and a few wrasse and bream species. We also noted sea cucumbers, anemones and a couple of attractive crabs. We then sat down for lunch in this picturesque town, before enjoying an ice cream and continuing our journey. It was turning into a very hot day as temperatures were above 33°C. We were looking forward to the cooler temperatures of the higher altitudes.

We soon crossed the impressive Rio-Antirrio Bridge, and after a quick comfort stop we started to head into the Peloponnese, eventually climbing from sea-level to 950 metres and the town of

Kalavryta. En route we had one more stop that proved excellent for hairstreaks adding White-letter Hairstreak to our sightings. Other notable butterflies included Lattice Brown and Tad and Martina photographing a skipper, later identified as Hungarian Skipper, another new species. There were also a few Beautiful Demoiselles flying around and some larger dragonflies deep in the shaded of the riverbank. We agreed that as time was now pressing we would return to this spot to try for Purple Hairstreak, given the amount of oaks. Boarding the bus we continued



on to Hotel Filo-Xenia and got settled and ready for the meeting at 6:30pm to complete the checklist. Despite some confusion we finally tallied our butterfly sightings to 69 and a probable Balkan Grayling. We were hoping to reach 90+ so still had a little way to go. We then set off to dinner at a local restaurant and enjoyed a meal outside in the cooling evening, watching the birds swoop by. It was a lovely meal in a relaxed and fun atmosphere.

After dinner we walked back to the hotel and bade each other a goodnight as the light began to fade on another very enjoyable day.

Day 5 - Exploring Mount Chelmos

We all met in the restaurant at 8am for another buffet breakfast. The breakfast was pretty good and had a wide range of pastries, fruits, cereals, toasts, spreads etc. After a few cups of coffee we were all ready to face the day and agreed to meet at the minibus at 9am.

We wound our way up through the town, gaining altitude as we did so. We kept an eye out for Shrikes on route, but mostly saw Red-backed Shrikes, Northern Wheatear and a couple of Black



Redstarts. We arrived at our first destination, but that was covered in goats and more pertinently by large guard dogs who did not look best pleased to see us. A quick change of plan saw us continue on over the highest part where we planned to return to and drive on down the other side of the pass.

We eventually stopped beside a concrete barrier with a track that ran off back up the slope. We walked into the meadow area and searched the track. There seemed to be a few butterflies, but not much we hadn't already seen, although finding a Hungarian Skipper for everyone to see was helpful. Next we had a slight confusion with some rather

tatty blues. These were quite difficult to identify, but we thought we had not seen them previously. After a little head scratching we finally realised that they were another form of Mazarine Blue, specific to the Peloponnese (*Cyaniris semigargus* ssp. *helena*). Later we had a few fresher specimens that were clearly this form of Mazarine.

Pleased with this sighting we continued searching and saw Clouded Apollo, Queen of Spain and Glanville Fritillaries and a few other familiar species,





We then saw a very deep orange butterfly whizzing in and instantly recognised it as a Greek Clouded Yellow. The darker and deeper orange was very distinctive. A while later we added Inky Skipper to our sightings, which made this stop feel very productive despite the slow start. It was, however, time to move on and we made our way lower down the slope to another more extensive track.

The track started just off the road and forked left to a quarry and then right along the hillside. We explored all

around the tracks and up to the quarry. John soon found a Peloponnese Wall Lizard. These striking

lizards have red and light brown stripes in the male and a red throat in the breeding season, the less ostentatious female was seen too and we spent a little time photographing these attractive reptiles. The butterflies were mainly familiar ones and we were unable to add much but Long-tailed Blues were new for most of the group. We managed to see a few specimens and Alice found the eggs of the Long-tailed Blues on some Spanish Broom. We had another identification conundrum when we stalked an odd looking fritillary. After a little debate



it was agreed to be a Spotted Fritillary of the form *meridionalis*. Although not a new species, it was an unusual butterfly and nice to see.

We moved on to the highest point in the trip today in the hope of finding Odd-spot Blues. The fact that its larval food plant was not yet in bud didn't augur well. We searched for about an hour with no luck and only a few other butterflies on the wing. We did find fresher forms of the *helena* form of Mazarine Blue and another Greek Clouded Yellow. Antony also found an unusual skipper that turned out to be a Large Grizzled Skipper, which was a nice find. We also saw a few Linnets flying around and more Northern Wheatears. The 'cronking' of Ravens alerted us to three passing over. With no Odd-spot Blues to be found, we decided that it may be more productive further down the road and moved on to another site.

We drove a little way away to an impromptu stop which seemed to host a few more flowering plants. However, it only produced familiar species so we didn't stop long and headed further down the mountain. At our penultimate stop we spent a little time exploring another flowery meadow. Sightings were steady and we did see some very nice Turquoise Blues, Mazarine Blue, Clouded Apollo and a Large Tortoiseshell batted through quickly. After about forty minutes we decided that a cold drink and an ice cream was needed and headed back to the village to cool down on this hot day.

We stopped for a quick search amongst some Opoponax hispidus, a relative of Fennel, for



Southern Swallowtail caterpillars. Sadly we failed to find any, so cut our losses and headed into town for some cold and delicious local ice cream. After a relaxing and cooling break some went to explore the shops and others went back to the hotel. We agreed to meet at 6:30pm for a run through the checklist.

We went through the checklist and as now customary, on this occasion Tad, showed us a photograph of a different blue. After careful consideration despite the butterfly lacking the black dots on the hind upper wing it was deemed to be a

Balkan Zephyr as the gap in the orange spots on the underside hindwing was diagnostic. With that cleared up we added it to the list and got ready for dinner.

We walked a short way to a local Pizzeria and ordered four pizzas between the group as they were large and filling. After a relaxed and enjoyable meal we dispersed, agreeing to meet again at 6:15am for roosting butterfly photography.

Day Six - Foothills of Chelmos

We all met at the early time of 6:15 am and drove to the monument a few minutes up the hill. We alighted in the dim early morning light and were surprised to see no moths gathered on the monument walls. We started our search for roosting butterflies to photograph and managed to find a couple. One was a Small Skipper and the other a Common Blue. While these were nice to see, this felt like a poor result for such an early start. In previous years there had been much more to admire in the moths settled in the pools of light where the floodlights hit the wall of the war memorial and a wider variety of roosting insects. Nevertheless, as the sun spread down the valley highlighting pockets of mist among the hills, we decided to head back to the hotel and get ready for breakfast. On the way back John added Pallid Swift and Blue Tit to his bird haul. We arrived and had a few minutes to get ready before meeting up again at 8am.

Breakfast was the usual buffet affair and we had plenty of time to relax and enjoy our morning meal. We then re-convened at the mini bus for 9am and headed off to our first stop. We continued up the slopes but passed the road we'd taken yesterday and headed towards the Cave Lakes. We stopped a little way after to explore a track that had rough pastures, a little scrub and woodland and market gardens full of veg and fruits. We had a nice variety of butterflies and our first brief sighting of a very fresh Great Banded Grayling, in more usual years a very common butterfly. We enjoyed several sightings of Large Tortoiseshell, but as usual none seemed to want to settle and batted through very quickly. As we searched for more butterflies we were serenaded by the

beautiful liquid song of the Nightingale adding to the ambience of the walk. Cetti's and Subalpine Warblers could also be heard and a distant Hoopoe evoked a mediterranean atmosphere. The Cleopatras were looking very fresh and a couple settled briefly giving half a chance to admire and photograph. There were also a few notable dragonflies as Broad-bodied Chaser and Greek Goldenring, similar to the Balkan Goldenring of earlier in the week but with more yellow and a narrower geographical distribution, were both evident. After an enjoyable hour or so it was time to move on.

A brief roadside stop produced a Glanville Fritillary, a few Black-veined Whites and the now customary whizz-by of a Great Banded Grayling. Alice had noted the presence of all three Small White species and pointed out a Mountain Small White. The brief stop concluded, we were on our way again to find a spot for early lunch.





Our third stop was beside a lovely river and adjacent to a rack and pinion railway line. This turned out to be an excellent stop. After our packed lunch we wandered down to the stream edge and watched the stunning Beautiful Demoiselles flitting up and down the stream dazzling in the shafts of light penetrating the overhanging woodland... delightful! We also noted a Marsh Frog sitting quietly by the bank, before it suddenly leapt into the stream. There were also butterflies to enjoy and numerous Large Tortoiseshell floated by without

stopping. A sudden cry from John alerted us to a butterfly he was photographing. It turned out to be the undoubted highlight of the day as we feasted our eyes on a superb Camberwell Beauty. As if to attempt to compete with the Camberwell Beauty, a Large Tortoiseshell elected to descend and settle. In quick succession we had two amazing butterflies. After spending time enjoying these cracking butterflies it was with some reluctance, time to move on.

Camberwell Beauty © Antony W

We drove on up to Mega Spileo Monastery,

embedded in the sheer cliffs above the valley. The monastery commanded panoramic views of the



mountains and valleys stretching out before us. Jackdaws and Kestrels along with a host of swifts and hirundines swooped about around us as we set off on a short walk. We soon added a new butterfly as a couple of Purple Hairstreak descended and flew around before heading out of sight. A Lattice Brown sheltering under a leaf was a nice find and we took some time to photograph this intricate brown butterfly. We also added a couple of new birds as Crag Martins swooped up the cliff face and a Grey Wagtail was seen. There was also a Kestrel taking food to a nest that lay just out of sight on a ledge behind some vegetation. When we returned to the van it registered 40°C, although the real temperature was more like 35°C it was a very hot day.

Our next stop had to be abandoned as a large truck was grading the area! Alice decided this was a good opportunity to explore

the other side of Kalavryta, which she had not done much of previously. We stopped at a track passing by a cemetery and alighted from the bus. We paused to drink water on this hot day, prior to setting off. This impromptu site proved to be pretty good as a variety of species were found on the sunny banks. We added a new blue, Eastern Baton Blue, which was a 'lifer' for most and new to the trip. Lots of Painted Ladies zoomed by and one or two actually stopped for photographs. There were a few Great Banded Graylings around, but none stopped or settled. The heat and the early morning was enough for some to call time on this sweltering day. A couple went back to the hotel with Alice and a few more stayed with Terry to revisit the war memorial above the town to look for the now mythical Zephyr Blue. After a while of searching and thinking we may draw a blank, small numbers suddenly appeared in a couple of different parts of the site and all enjoyed excellent views of this pretty little blue. Happy we all walked back to the hotel to cool off and get

ready for dinner.

We met at 6:30pm to complete the checklist. It was Martina's turn to come up with the late entry as she produced a photograph of a Knapweed Fritillary at the end of the listing, here an Eastern Knapweed Fritillary, *Melitaea ornata*. We added it into our sightings and got ready to leave at 7:10pm. For our last night in the region Alice had booked a meal at The Grand Chalet, which offered an amazing dining experience. Delicious and plentiful food aside, the semi-alfresco tables looked over the Vouraikos Gorge below and across to the distant mountains,



a really beautiful setting for our meal. The staff were also very friendly and explained the local

traditions of the food and we ended the evening with a traditional drink with cinnamon and cloves and toasted 'Yamas' to an excellent day.

After a thoroughly enjoyable but tiring day we arranged to meet in the morning and said goodnight as we trooped off to get some sleep. The only dark cloud was the dark clouds gathering over the hills. We were hoping for the incoming storm to pass over during the night.

Day Seven - Odd-spot Blue, Vouraikos Gorge and transfer to Sun Hotel

We met for breakfast as usual at 8am and were ready to leave for our last full day at 9am. As the Odd-spot is a key target species, and with more species emerging with each passing day, we decided to return to the same site as before to see if any had emerged in the last two days. We wound up through the mountain roads once again. We stopped as before at the same site. The overnight storm had given way to warm morning sunshine, but with a fresh breeze.

We fanned out walking up the hillside, except for Martina, who walked a little way down from the minibus. Walking slowly a few butterflies were seen. Lots of the *helena* form of Mazarine Blue.



drinking from a puddle that lingered here.

As we were leaving a bird with a strange 'pinging' call was again seen and this time we were determined to identify it. After a little debate and a look at Alice and John's photographs we realised it was in fact a Tawny Pipit, not what we expected up a mountain. Mission accomplished, we headed off back to the hotel; to collect our bags from storage.

One we had loaded up we set off again to a site we had previously visited. We decided to return as it seemed promising and a few days had lapsed so other species may have emerged in this rather slow and



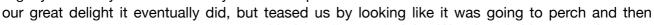


unusual summer. A Mediterranean Skipper and Green Hairstreak were added to our list. A Small Pincertail Dragonfly was a cracking addition to our dragonfly species, as we ate our lunch in the shade very happy with our sightings. There were also a few other fritillaries around and we saw Lesser Spotted and one fresh fritillary that was too quick for identification. It was thought to be a possible High Brown fritillary but without being certain we decided not to add it to our list unless we could confirm this.

It was now time to visit our last wildlife focussed site, in the mouth of the Vouraikos Gorge. It was a spectacular setting befitting the largest and perhaps the gaudiest butterfly in Europe. It was also the reason we had been carrying around stinky bananas for the past few days! We mixed the banana with a splash of Ouzo and spread it thickly on leaves and rocks. We then went to explore

the area to see what we could find. It was an excellent place for dragonflies and had many Pincertails and Keeled Skimmers. A Violet Dropwing was a gorgeous little dragonfly to find and was even a first for Alice who had longed to find one for as long as she'd been visiting this area. During this time we finally had a sighting of our quarry as the impressive Two-tailed Pasha glided along the path heading for our bait.

We all gathered around the baited area and waited slightly anxiously for the butterfly to show up. To



Violet Dropwing © Alice Hunter



whizzing off out of sight. We played this cat and mouse game for about half an hour until finally one settled and was feeding on the banana mush. Cameras whirred and clicked and smiles spread on many faces as this stunning butterfly stayed still for at least five minutes. Eventually we saw three individuals but only one settled. Whilst we were engrossed in the sightings of the Pashas we had only dimly been aware of the gathering storm clouds. A flash of lighting was our signal to leave as we needed to get to our final hotel. After an excellent day in the field we headed off for a bit of touristy sight-seeing.

We pulled in off a slow and busy highway and headed towards a service station. We parked up and everyone took an opportunity to use the facilities and then to go and look at the spectacular Corinth Canal. It was an amazing feat of endeavour and engineering to dig this canal by hand and is quite an attractive canal, despite its setting in a slightly run down area. A few ice creams later and we headed off to The Sun Hotel, via a few backroads to avoid the motorway traffic and a busy seaside road as we approached. On arrival we took to our allocated rooms to relax and reflect on a great day.

We met again at 6:30pm for a last checklist and then returned to our rooms to get ready for our last dinner together as a group. We had dinner outside despite the ominous looking clouds. There was some cover so thought it would be nicer to eat with an ocean view and a slightly cooler atmosphere than . The storm over the sea was quite spectacular and we all enjoyed a little storm watching as we ate our meal, forked lightning spearing down in the distance. Dee shared the thanks of the group and gave each leader a card with comments in, which was a lovely touch and very much appreciated. After our meal we headed off to bed to get an early start in the morning for the airport run.

Day 8 26th June Drive to airport and flight to Gatwick

We decided to skip the hotel breakfast and set off early, grabbing breakfast on route. The traffic was slow for a short period, but cleared to give a good run to the airport. Firstly we dropped off the 'Vercors Massive', John, Antony and Dee. We hugged goodbye and thanked them for their help and humour throughout the trip. We then arrived at the airport via a diesel stop and bade farewell to Tad and Kaz, who had been a delight all week. Lastly we left Martina at a coffee shop as her flight was a little later. Her willingness to explore had led to finding some cracking butterflies. We hugged and said farewell as the tour came to a close and we headed in our respective directions either homeward or, for a lucky few, on to more adventures in Bulgaria.

Systematic Species Checklists

	Butt	erflies	19th June	20th June	21st June	22nd June	23rd June	24th June	25th June
lmag ☆	go sightings are marked with	n a √, caterpillars are marked with a	day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7
	Family Papilionidae								
1	Scarce Swallowtail	Iphiclides podalirius		1	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Swallowtail	Papilio machaon		√ ☆	✓	✓		☆	✓
3	Clouded Apollo	Parnassius mnemosyne		√	✓		✓		
	Family Pieridae								
4	Orange Tip	Anthocharis cardamines		1	✓		✓		
5	Black-veined White	Aporia crataegi		1	✓		✓	✓	
6	Greek Clouded Yellow	Colias aurorinia					✓		
7	Clouded Yellow	Colias crocea	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Cleopatra	Gonepteryx cleopatra	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
9	Powdered Brimstone	Gonepteryx farinosa		✓					
10	Brimstone	Gonepteryx rhamni	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Wood White	Leptidea sinapis		√	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	Large White	Pieris brassicae		√	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Mountain Small White	Pieris ergane		✓	✓			√	
14	Southern Small White	Pieris mannii			✓			✓	
15	Small White	Pieris rapae		1	✓	✓		✓	✓
16	Eastern Bath White	Pontia edusa	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	Family <i>Lycaenidae</i>								
17	Green Hairstreak	Callophrys rubi							✓
18	Purple Hairstreak	Neozephyrus quercus						✓	
19	Sloe Hairstreak	Satyrium acaciae		✓	✓	✓		✓	
20	Ilex Hairstreak	Satyrium ilicis			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21	Blue-spot Hairstreak	Satyrium spini			✓				
22	White-letter Hairstreak	Satyrium w-album				✓			
23	Small Copper	Lycaena phlaeas		✓	✓			✓	
24	Sooty Copper	Lycaena tityrus			✓				
25	Brown Argus	Aricia agestis	✓	1	1	1	✓	✓	✓
26	Blue Argus	Aricia anteros		√					
27	Geranium Bronze	Cacyreus marshalli				1			
28	Holly Blue	Celastrina argiolus		√	√	√	√	√	√
29	Small Blue	Cupido minimus		√					
30	Mazarine Blue	Cyaniris semiargus		√	√				

	Butte	erflies	19th June	20th June	21st June	22nd June	23rd June	24th June	25th June
lmaç	go sightings are marked with	a √, caterpillars are marked with a	day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7
31	Greek Mazarine Blue	C. semiargus ssp. parnassica		✓	✓				
32	Peloponnese Mazarine Blue	C. semiargus ssp. helena					1		✓
33	Grass Jewel	Freyeria trochylus				✓			
34	Balkan Zephyr Blue	Kretania sephirus					1	✓	
35	Long-tailed Blue	Lampides boeticus					✓		
36	Lang's Short-tailed Blue	Leptotes pirithous		✓	✓				
37	Pontic Blue	Neolysandra coelestina					1		
38	Silver-studded Blue	Plebejus argus		✓			✓		✓
39	Amanda's Blue	Polyommatus amandus			✓		✓	✓	✓
40	Adonis Blue	Polyommatus bellargus		✓	✓		✓		✓
41	Meleager's Blue	Polyommatus daphnis							
42	Turquoise Blue	Polyommatus dorylas		✓	✓		1		
43	Escher's Blue	P. escheri ssp. dalmatica		✓					
44	Common Blue	Polyommatus icarus	1	✓	✓	✓	1	✓	✓
45	Chapman's Blue	Polyommatus thersites		✓					✓
46	Eastern Baton Blue	Pseudophilotes vicrama						✓	
47	Odd-spot Blue	Turanana endymion							✓
	Family Nymphalidae								
48	Nettle Tree Butterfly	Libythea celtis		✓	✓			✓	
49	Peacock	Aglais io		✓	✓				
50	Small Tortoiseshell	Aglais urticae						✓	
51	Two-tailed Pasha	Charaxes jasius							✓
52	White Admiral	Limenitis camilla		✓					
53	Southern White Admiral	Limenitis reducta		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
54	Camberwell Beauty	Nymphalis antiopa						✓	
55	Large Tortoiseshell	Nymphalis polychloros		✓	✓		✓	✓	
56	Comma	Polygonia c-album		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
57	Southern Comma	Polygona egea	✓		✓				
58	Red Admiral	Vanessa atalanta		✓					
59	Painted Lady	Vanessa cardui	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
60	Cardinal	Argynnis pandora		✓	✓				
61	Silver-washed Fritillary	Argynnis paphia							✓
62	Pearl-bordered Fritillary	Boloria euphrosyne		✓	✓				
63	Queen of Spain Fritillary	Issoria lathonia		✓	✓		√	√	

	Butterflies			20th June	21st June	22nd June	23rd June	24th June	25th June
lmag ☆	o sightings are marked with a	√, caterpillars are marked with a	June day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7
64	Glanville Fritillary	Melitaea cinxia		✓	✓		✓	✓	
65	Spotted Fritillary	Melitaea didyma		✓			✓	✓	✓
66	Eastern Knapweed Fritillary	Melitaea ornata						✓	
67	Lesser Spotted Fritillary	Melitaea trivia	✓						✓
68	Great Banded Grayling	Brintesia circe			☆			✓	
69	Balkan Grayling	Hipparchia aristaeus ssp. senthes		1	√			1	
70	Freyer's Grayling	Hipparchia fatua				✓			✓
71	Meadow Brown	Maniola jurtina	✓	✓	1	✓	✓	✓	✓
72	Balkan Marbled White	Melanargia larissa	✓	✓	✓	1	✓	✓	✓
73	Small Heath	Coenonympha pamphilus	✓	✓	1	1	1	✓	✓
74	Large Wall Brown	Lasiommata maera					1		
75	Wall Brown	Lasiommata megera		✓	✓				
76	Lattice Brown	Kirinia roxelana	✓					✓	✓
77	Speckled Wood	Pararge aegeria		✓	✓	1			✓
	Family Hesperiidae								
78	Mallow Skipper	Carcharodus alcaea	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
79	Dingy Skipper	Erynnis tages					1		
80	Inky Skipper	Erynnis marloyi					1		
81	Mediterranean Skipper	Gegenes nostrodamus							✓
82	Large Skipper	Ochlodes sylvanus	✓					✓	✓
83	Large Grizzled Skipper	Pyrgus alveus			1		1		
84	Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper	Pyrgus armoricanus		✓					
85	Safflower Skipper	Pyrgus carthami		✓					
86	Grizzled Skipper	Pyrgus malvae			✓		✓		
87	Hungarian Skipper	Spialia orbifer				✓	✓		√
88	Essex Skipper	Thymelicus lineola		✓			✓	✓	√
89	Small Skipper	Thymelicus sylvestris	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓





	Moths				21st June	22nd June	23rd June	24th June	25th June
lmag	Imago sightings are marked with a √, caterpillars are marked with a		day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7
1	Forester sp.	Adscita sp.		✓					
2	A Yellow Underwing	Catocala nymphaea	✓	✓	✓				
3	A Tineid	Euplocamus ophisa				✓		✓	
4	A Crambid	Eurrhypis cacuminalis							
5	Purple-barred Yellow	Lythria purpuraria		✓			✓		
6	Hummingbird Hawkmoth	Macroglossum stellatarum		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Mullein Moth	Shargacucullia verbasci						☆	
8	A Pyralid	Synaphe moldavica		✓	✓		✓	✓	
9	Four Spot Moth	Tyta luctuosa					✓		
10	Crepuscular Burnet	Zygaena carniolica							✓
11	Narrow-bordered 5-Spot Burnet	Zygaena lonicerae					✓		1
12	Transparent Burnet	Zygaena purpuralis		✓			✓	✓	✓
13	A Burnet	Zygaena punctum			✓				

	Dragonflies & Damselflies			20th June day 2	21st June day 3	22nd June day 4	23rd June day 5	24th June day 6	25th June day 7
1	Beautiful Demoiselle	Calopteryx virgo				✓		✓	✓
2	White Featherleg	Platycnemis pennipes							✓
3	Migrant Hawker	Aeshna mixta							✓
4	Greek Goldenring	Corulegaster helladica					✓	✓	
5	Balkan Goldenring	Cordulegaster heros		✓	✓				
6	Broad-bodied Chaser	Libellula depressa			✓				
7	Keeled Skimmer	Orthetrum coerulescens			✓				✓
8	Small Pincertail	Onychogomphus forcipatus							✓
9	Southern Skimmer	Orthetrum brunneum					✓		
10	Violet Dropwing	Trithemis annulata							✓

Fish

Rock Goby Saddled Seabream Grey Mullet Mediterranean Damselfish Cow Bream Gobius paganellus Oblada melanura Mugil cephalus Chromis chromis Sarpa salpa

	Birds			20th June	21st June	22nd June	23rd June	24th June	25th June
	eies seen are marked with a led with JpJ	√, those heard but not seen are	June day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7
1	Yellow-legged Gull	Larus micahelis				✓			✓
2	Cory's Shearwater	Calonectris diomedea							✓
3	Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
4	Common Buzzard	Buteo buteo		✓	✓	✓			
5	Short-toed Eagle	Circaetus gallicus			✓				
6	Collared Dove	Streptopelia decaocto	✓			✓		✓	✓
7	Cuckoo	Cuculus canorus		171					
8	Common Swift	Apus apus	✓	✓	✓			✓	
9	Pallid Swift	Apus pallidus						√	
10	Ноорое	Upupa epops		✓	121				
11	Wryneck	Jynx torquilla		171					
12	Woodlark	Lululla arborea		✓			171		
13	Crag Martin	Ptyonoprogne rupestris						✓	
14	Swallow	Hirundo rustica	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
15	Red-rumped Swallow	Cecropis daurica	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
16	House Martin	Delichon urbicum	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
17	Robin	Erithacus rubecula		171	171		171		
18	Nightingale	Luscinia megarhynchos		171				✓	
19	Northern Wheatear	Oenanthe oenanthe		?			✓		✓
20	Black-eared Wheatear	Oenanthe hispanica			✓				
21	Blackbird	Turdus merula		171	171	171	✓	✓	
22	Blue Rock Thrush	Monticola solitarius			✓				
23	Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla			171	121	171	✓	
24	Eastern Subalpine Warbler	Sylvia cantillans		✓					
25	Whitethroat	Curruca communis		✓					
26	Lesser Whitethroat	Curruca curruca		✓					
27	Spotted Flycatcher	Muscicarpa striatus	✓	✓	✓	✓			
28	Black Redstart	Phoenicurus ochruros		✓			✓		
29	Goldcrest	Regulus regulus		171	171				
30	Coal Tit	Periparus ater		✓			171		

	Birds				21st June	22nd June	23rd June	24th June	25th June
	cies seen are marked with a ked with	a \checkmark , those heard but not seen are	June day 1	June day 2	day 3	day 4	day 5	day 6	day 7
31	Blue Tit	Cyanistes caeruleus						✓	
32	Sombre Tit	Poecile lugubris				✓			
33	Tawny Pipit	Anthus campestris							✓
34	White Wagtail	Motacilla alba				✓	✓	✓	
35	Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea						✓	
36	Rock Nuthatch	Sitta neumayer			✓	✓		121	
37	Red-backed Shrike	Lanius collurio	✓	✓			✓		✓
38	Woodchat Shrike	Lanius senator	✓						✓
39	Magpie	Pica pica	✓					✓	✓
40	Jay	Garrulus glandarius			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
41	Hooded Crow	Corvus cornix	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
42	Jackdaw	Corvus corone						✓	
43	Raven	Corvus corax					✓		
44	Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs		✓	✓		171		
45	Linnet	Carduelis cannabina					✓	✓	✓
46	Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis	✓	√	√				
47	Greenfinch	Chloris chloris	✓	✓	√		✓		
48	Cirl Bunting	Emberiza cirlus		✓	✓		✓		
49	Corn Bunting	Emberiza calandra		1			272		171

Ende	Reptiles & Amphibians Endemic species are noted with a 🛪		19th June day 1	20th June day 2	21st June day 3	22nd June day 4	23rd June day 5	24th June day 6	25th June day 7
1	House Gecko	Hemidactylus turcicus			✓				
2	Balkan Green Lizard	Lacerta trilineata			✓	✓			
3	Kotschy's Gecko	Mediodactylus kotschyi			✓				
4	Marsh Frog	Pelophylax ridibundus						✓	✓
5	Wall Lizard	Podarcis muralis		✓					
6	Peloponnese Wall Lizard	Podarcis peloponnesiacus					✓	✓	✓
7	Spur-thighed Tortoise	Testudo graeca				✓			

Photo Gallery

















