

Greece – Reptiles & Amphibians of the Peloponnese

Naturetrek Tour Report

9th – 16th April 2022



© Bobby Bok



Leopard Snake (*Zamenis situla*) © Bobby Bok



Peloponnese Wall Lizard (*Podarcis peloponnesiacus*) © Bobby Bok



Nose-horned Viper (*Vipera a. meridionalis*) © Bobby Bok

Tour report and images compiled by Bobby Bok



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Summary

A superb inaugural herpetology tour to the beautiful Greek Peloponnese Peninsula resulted in enjoying 37 species of reptiles and amphibians, alongside a host of typical Mediterranean birds, butterflies, orchids and mammals!

Day 1

Saturday 9th April

Arriving in the Greek capital of Athens, we began our journey south, crossing the Corinth Canal and driving in a westerly direction towards the beautiful Verde al Mare Hotel. We had a delicious dinner at the hotel, after which the sun had set and, complete with headtorches we ventured out to some very interesting marshland close to the hotel. Despite a surprisingly cool wind and overall dry conditions, it didn't take us long to find the endemic subspecies of Balkan Spadefoot Toad (*Pelobates balcanicus chloae*) alongside Green Toads (*Bufo viridis*). An inspection of a fantastic cacophony in nearby reedbeds revealed European Tree Frogs (*Hyla arborea*), Marsh Frogs (*Pelophylax ridibundus*) and Epirus Water Frogs (*Pelophylax epiroticus*).

Day 2

Sunday 10th April

Breakfast at the hotel was excellent as always, with many Greek culinary delights, and we soon headed out to explore the surroundings. In nearby pine forest we quickly found several Hermann's Tortoises (*Testudo hermanni*), Marginated Tortoises (*Testudo marginata*), Glass Lizards (*Pseudopus apodus*), Balkan Green Lizards (*Lacerta trilineata*), Snake-eyed Skinks (*Ablepharus kitaibellii*), an eft Greek Newt (*Lissotriton graecus*) and several Worm Snakes (*Xerotyphlops vermicularis*). The main target was eluding us however, until participant Robin spotted a well-camouflaged Nose-horned Viper (*Vipera ammodytes meridionalis*) amongst dry vegetation! A superb find which made us all very happy indeed. After a wonderful morning we were ready for lunch and enjoyed a picnic of fresh bread, local cheeses, meats, olives, and tomatoes. Following lunch we moved to some rocky coastal habitats, but it was a tad windy and it was unusually quiet for sightings. A slightly inland location, which was more sheltered from the wind, did immediately deliver and we saw several Balkan Whip Snakes (*Hierophis gemonensis*), more Glass Lizards, Balkan Green Lizards and the first Greek Algyroides (*Algyroides moreoticus*). The remainder of the afternoon was allocated for relaxation at the hotel. During dinner the wind picked up again and light rain started to fall but we were all keen to find chameleons at the coast. Luckily Dan quickly found a small African Chameleon (*Chamaeleo africanus*) so we could get back inside. A small keen group were keen to continue searching so went back to the marshland finding more individuals of the same species as the previous night, including more of the endemic subspecies of Balkan Spadefoot Toad.

Day 3

Monday 11th April

After a great stay in Kalogria we would head south to Lake Kaiafa. Following breakfast, we could quickly stop to admire some small flocks of Greater Flamingo and Dalmatian Pelican close to the road, and a second stop added Black-winged Stilt and Glossy Ibis. A gorgeous hatchling Pond Terrapin (*Emys orbicularis*) was crossing the path here. This species proved to be plentiful during our stop for lunch as well, alongside Balkan Terrapin (*Mauremys*

rivulata), both species enjoyed in crystal-clear waters. In the evening we had a stroll in some interesting habitat where we found a European Tree Frog and even some adult African Chameleons.

Day 4

Tuesday 12th April

After breakfast, in the beautiful early morning light, we revisited the site to photograph the African Chameleons. We also encountered some more Grass Snakes, Dice Snakes, Peloponnese Wall Lizards, Balkan Green Lizards, European Pond Terrapins, European Tree Frogs and Snake-eyed Skinks.

Around noon we continued the tradition of lunch with chelonians and had lunch with Loggerhead Turtles (*Caretta caretta*). In the afternoon we hiked up to a beautiful Venetian castle on a very scenic mountain top and enjoyed great views all around. Under stones we also found the first Limbless Skinks (*Ophiomorus punctatissimus*).

After lunch most of the group rested but Bobby and Robin had itchy feet and headed out in search of more reptiles. After some initial fruitless searching, their perseverance finally paid off when they struck gold and found a beautiful Leopard Snake (*Zamenis situla*).

Back at the hotel we enjoyed a fabulous dinner at our hotel and went out to search for more chameleons. We quickly found Turkish Geckos (*Hemidactylus turcicus*), European Tree Frogs, European Pond Terrapin, and a few juvenile African Chameleon. We also met a small group of Belgian herpers who were after the same targets. Along the way back to the hotel we stopped at a small building where we knew we would find another addition to the list and easily found several Moorish Geckos (*Tarentola mauritanica*).

Day 5

Wednesday 13th April

On the agenda for today was one of the most beautiful places in the world. Not only is the scenery beautiful but we found a wide variety of amphibians and reptiles such as Marsh Frog, Greek Stream Frog (*Rana graeca*), Marginated Tortoise, Peloponnese Wall Lizard, Greek Rock Lizard (*Hellenolacerta graeca*), Greek Algyroides, Balkan Green Lizards, Peloponnese Slow Worm (*Anguis cephalonica*), Glass Lizard, Balkan Whip Snake and Grass Snake.

At the second stop we visited another waterfall where we saw Marsh Frog, Greek Stream Frog, Greek Algyroides and Balkan Green Lizard. Some stunning olive groves delivered Hermann's Tortoise, Glass Lizard and Peloponnese Wall Lizard. In the late afternoon a small group visited a known Sand Boa spot. Despite a great effort we didn't find this species but instead Dan found a young Dahl's Whip Snake (*Platyceps najadum*) which was a big highlight as well. After dinner we took it easy, searched a bit around the castle outside of Pylos, but as it was rather cold, we didn't see much and called it an early night.

Day 6

Thursday 14th April

Before breakfast Bobby, Dan, Robin, and Julie went for a morning stroll. The Bay of Navarino was beautifully lit by the rising sun. While the scenery alone was worth getting up early, there was a mammal swimming in the bay. An adult Mediterranean Monk Seal was making its way along the coast and allowed us to observe it for a moment. What a sight! In the morning we hiked up to a chapel with a stunning view of the entire Pylos area. Here we saw species such as Marginated Tortoise, Peloponnese Wall Lizard, Balkan Green Lizard, Glass Lizard and Balkan Terrapin. In the afternoon some participants rested whilst a small group ventured south. Around a Venetian fortress we found Marginated Tortoise, Glass Lizard, Greek Algyroides, Peloponnese Wall Lizard and Balkan Whip Snake. On the way back to the hotel we stopped in an extensive olive grove where we found

Marginated Tortoise, Kotschy's Gecko (*Mediodactylus kotschyi*), Balkan Green Lizard, Peloponnese Wall Lizard, Greek Algyroides, Snake-eyed Skink, Worm Snake, and a stunning female Eastern Montpellier Snake (*Malpolon insignitus*). After admiring this snake for a while we made our way back to the hotel, had dinner and prepared for the evening excursion. Sadly, we didn't find all targets due to the cold night temperatures, but at least there were plenty of Kotschy's Gecko to be admired by everyone.

Day 7

Friday 15th April

Time to head north! During a coffee break we saw the last Western Peloponnese Wall Lizards before entering the range of Eastern Peloponnese Wall Lizard (*Podarcis thais*). A second stop delivered that species along with our first Ionian Wall Lizard (*Podarcis ionicus*), Kotschy's Gecko and another Montpellier Snake. Higher in the mountains we enjoyed our lunch and found many species such as Marsh Frog, Hermann's Tortoise, European Pond Terrapin, Snake-eyed Skink, Limbless Skink, Peloponnese Slow Worm, Greek Slow Worm (*Anguis graeca*), Eastern Peloponnese Wall Lizard, Balkan Green Lizard and even two more Leopard Snakes. The last rays of sunshine proved to be very good for finding snakes and the group was delighted to enjoy photographing another Nose-horned Viper. In the picturesque mountain village of Kefalari we found a very cozy stay at the Arxontiko Kefalari. We enjoyed a very traditional (and vast) Greek meal in the local Tavern.

Day 8

Saturday 16th April

Our last morning was spent at another lake in the vicinity. Here we could add Common Wall Lizard (*Podarcis muralis*) to our list, and found more Ionian Wall Lizards, Balkan Green Lizards, Snake-eyed Skinks and Robin found another Leopard Snake. We also found Fire Salamander (*Salamandra salamandra*) larvae. We had our lunch surrounded by snow-capped peaks before, sadly, it was time for the drive back to Athens and to the airport!

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Species lists

Reptiles (H = Heard only, L = Leader only)

	E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		Date							
	Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	Reptiles									
1	Loggerhead Sea Turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>				3				
2	Green Sea Turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>								
3	Hermann's Tortoise	<i>Testudo hermanni</i>	5	30		L			2	
4	Marginated Tortoise - N	<i>Testudo marginata</i>		2	1		2	2		
5	Balkan Terrapin	<i>Mauremys rivulata</i>			10	1		2		
6	European Pond Terrapin	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>			10					
7	African Chameleon	<i>Chamaeleo africanus</i>		1	2	2A				
8	Turkish Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus turcicus</i>		2		1H				
9	Kotschy's Gecko	<i>Mediodactylus kotschyi</i>				12+		6	1	
10	Moorish Gecko	<i>Tarentola mauritanica</i>								
11	Greek Keeled Lizard - N	<i>Algyroides moreoticus</i>		4	3		1	1	A	
12	Greek Rock Lizard - E	<i>Hellenolacerta graeca</i>					10+			
13	Balkan Emerald Lizard	<i>Lacerta trilineata</i>				1	5	2	10+	
14	Ionian Wall Lizard - N	<i>Podarcis ionicus</i>							20+	
15	Common Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis muralis</i>								3
16	Peloponnese Wall Lizard - E	<i>Podarcis peloponnesiacus</i>			1		3	2		
17	Eastern Peloponnese Wall Lizard - E	<i>Podarcis thais</i>				1			1	
18	European Snake-eyed Skink	<i>Ablepharus kitaibelii</i>		10	L	L	10+	10	10+	
19	Limbless Skink - E	<i>Ophiomorus punctatissimus</i>				2	1	1	10+	
20	Peloponnese Slow Worm - N	<i>Anguis cephalonica</i>					2		2	
21	Greek Slow Worm	<i>Anguis graeca</i>							1	
22	European Glass Lizard	<i>Pseudopus apodus</i>		4	3		5	5		
23	Eurasian Worm Snake	<i>Xerotyphlops vermicularis</i>		3			1	2	10+	
24	Eastern Montpellier Snake	<i>Malpolon insignitus</i>						1	10	
25	Grass Snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>			1		1			
26	Dice Snake	<i>Natrix tessellata</i>	2			1				
27	Balkan Whip Snake	<i>Hierophis gemonensis</i>		4			2	2	4	
28	Dahl's Whip Snake	<i>Platyceps najadum</i>					1	1		
29	Leopard Snake	<i>Zamenis situla</i>				1			2	
30	Nose-horned Viper	<i>Vipera ammodytes</i>		1					1	

Amphibians

	E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		Date							
	Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	Amphibians									
1	Fire Salamander	<i>Salamandra salamandra</i>							J	J
2	Greek Smooth Newt	<i>Lissotriton graecus</i>		1						

3	Balkans Spadefoot - E	<i>Pelobates balcanicus chloeeae</i>	7							
4	Green Toad	<i>Bufo viridis</i>	5							
5	Common Tree Frog	<i>Hyla arborea</i>	3	1		1				
6	Epirus Water Frog - N	<i>Pelophylax epiroiticus</i>	H							
7	Marsh Frog	<i>Pelophylax ridibundus</i>	20+	20+		H			H	
8	Stream Frog	<i>Rana graeca</i>					2			

Birds

	E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		Date							
	Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	Birds									
1	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>				1				
2	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>				1				
3	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>							2	
4	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>					10			
5	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>				1			✓	
6	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>		10	20	8				
7	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		10+	20	25				
8	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>			1					
9	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyophaga melanocephala</i>			1					
10	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>			1				✓	
11	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	10	10	5					
12	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>				5				
13	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>			1	5				
14	Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>		3	3					
15	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	1		1					
16	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>				2			1	
17	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>				L				
18	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>				H				
19	Eurasian Scops Owl	<i>Otus Scops</i>		H						
20	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>			2					
21	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			1	1				
22	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>						2		
23	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>							✓	
24	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>			1	✓				
25	Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>			1	✓				
26	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>				✓				
27	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>			✓					
28	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓	✓	✓			✓	
29	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓	✓					
30	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>				✓		✓	✓	
31	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>			✓					
32	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>				1				
33	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			✓					
34	Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>			✓					
35	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>							✓	

	E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		Date							
	Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
36	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>			✓				H	
37	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		L						
38	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>							✓	
39	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>			✓					
41	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>			✓					
42	Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>							✓	

Other

	E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		Date:							
	Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	Mammals									
1	Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>		✓	✓				✓	
2	Stoat	<i>Mustela erminea</i>		✓						
3	European Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>								
4	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>						✓		
5	Mediterranean Monk Seal	<i>Monachus monachus</i>						✓		
6	Soprano Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>				✓				
7	Nathusius Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>				✓				
8	Horseshoe Bat sp						4			
	Butterflies									
1	European Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>					✓			
2	Southern Swallowtail	<i>Papilio alexanor</i>		✓						
3	Scarce Swallowtail	<i>Iphiclides podalirius</i>			✓					
4	Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>					✓	✓		
5	Small White	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>				✓				
6	Eastern Bath White	<i>Pontia edusa</i>		✓	✓					
7	Eastern Dabbled White	<i>Euchloe ausonia</i>			✓					
8	Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>					✓			
9	Gruner's Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis gruneri</i>								
10	Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>		✓						
11	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>					✓			
12	Cleopatra	<i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i>		✓						
13	Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>					✓			
14	Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>		✓						
15	Long-tailed Blue	<i>Lampides boeticus</i>					✓			
16	Holly Blue	<i>Celastria argiolus</i>		✓						
17	Green-underside Blue	<i>Glaucopsyche alexis</i>					✓			
18	Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>		✓	✓					
19	Common Blue	<i>Polommatus icarus</i>		✓	✓					
20	Peacock Butterfly	<i>Inachis io</i>				✓	✓			
21	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>				✓	✓			
22	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>				✓	✓			
23	Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>		✓						

	E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic I=Introduced		Date:							
	Common name	Scientific name	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
24	Speckled Wood	<i>Parage aegeria</i>				✓	✓			
25	Oriental Marbled Skipper	<i>Carcharodus orientalis</i>			✓					
	Dragonflies									
1	Common Bluetail	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>		✓		✓				
2	Vagrant Emperor	<i>Anax ephippiger</i>							✓	
3	Lesser Emperor	<i>Anax parthenope</i>							✓	
4	Hairy Dragonfly	<i>Brachytron pratense</i>		✓						
5	Keeled Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>		✓						
6	Red-veined Darter	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>		✓	✓					
	Others									
1	Blue-black Spider Wasp	<i>Anoplius viaticus</i>								
2	Velvet Ant	<i>Tropidotilla ltoralis</i>				✓				
3	Hummingbird Hawkmoth	<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>							✓	
4	Cutworm Moth	<i>Cucullia calendulae</i>								
5	Carpenter Bee sp	<i>Xylocopa sp</i>				✓				
6	Oil Beetle	<i>Meloe tuccius</i>				✓				
7	Copper Chafer	<i>Protaetia cuprea</i>		✓						
8	Egyptian Bird Locust	<i>Anacridium aegyptium</i>		✓	✓					
9	Mediterranean Banded Centipede	<i>Scolopendra cingulata</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
10	Glow-worm	<i>Lampyris noctiluca</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11	Weevil	<i>Lixus pulverulentus</i>								
	Orchids	Orchidaceae								
1	Pyramidal Orchid	<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>								
2	Four-spotted Orchis	<i>Orchis quadripunctata</i>								
3	Yellow Bee-Orchid	<i>Ophrys lutea lutea</i>								
4	Naked-man Orchid	<i>Orchis italica</i>								