

# The Reptiles & Amphibians of the Peloponnese

Naturetrek Tour Report

23rd – 30th April 2025

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Marsh Frog



Loggerhead Turtle



European Glass Lizard



Hermann's Tortoise

Tour report by Gary Powell  
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Tour participants: Gary Powell (leader) with seven Naturetrek clients

## Day 1

Wednesday 23rd April

The group started our Greek adventure in the very early hours of the morning; we left the UK in heavy rain, hoping that at least some of the same may have fallen in the Peloponnese region to assist us in our attempts to locate rare amphibians! Athens was a lovely 23°C; we left the bustle of the city as soon as possible and headed for our first location, roughly three hours away. Just before reaching our hotel, we stopped at a nearby lake for a first look, and immediately found a number of Epirus Water Frogs *Pelophylax epeiroticus*, in an artificial pond near the shore. Noting lots of suitable herp habitat around the lake, we decided to come back when the temperature was better for reptiles.

After a very welcome first meal at our hotel, we made a short trip to a spot known for the rare and endemic Balkan Spadefoot Toad *Pelobates balcanicus chloeeae*, but unfortunately the much-needed rain hadn't fallen, and the species remained hidden. We were not short of sightings though: as soon as we stepped from the van we encountered a Green Toad *Bufo viridis* sat on the sand, and very quickly many frogs were found, both the Epirus Water Frog that we had seen earlier, and the more widespread Marsh Frog *Pelophylax ridibundus*. The air was filled with the sound of calling amphibians, and we soon managed to track down some very loud Common Tree Frogs *Hyla arborea* on their vantage points in nearby bushes. We also found our first reptile, a juvenile Eastern Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* in one of the few areas that held water; we were also entertained by a number of dung beetles going about their business.

## Day 2

Thursday 24th April

The whole group was keen to get exploring, so we headed out for a pre-breakfast visit to the lake. Stopping at a small chapel on the shore, we watched Dalmatian Pelicans and Greater Flamingoes in the distance, and Black-winged Stilts and Kentish Plovers right next to us. We had seen a big pile of rubbish dumped near the lake, and flipping through this we quickly found a Dice Snake *Natrix tessellata* and our first Balkan Whip Snake *Hierophis gemonensis* (both subadults), as well as a Worm Snake *Xerotyphlops vermicularis* under a rock.

After a successful mission, breakfast tasted even better, and we enthusiastically headed for our next stop, a nearby forest. We very soon found the first of many Hermann's Tortoises *Testudo hermanni* and a lucky Grass Snake in the path as we drove nearby. Our target was the Nose-horned Viper *Vipera ammodytes*, and although the leader got a very quick glimpse of one, no-one else did, unfortunately. But there were abundant Snake-Eyed Skinks *Ablepharus kitaibelii*, and there were a few other snake sightings; but everything was wary and moving incredibly fast in the heat. We did observe a large adult Balkan Whip Snake feeding on an unlucky Balkan Green Lizard *Lacerta trilineata*, and just before our lunch stop one of the group spotted a turtle in a ditch alongside some Marsh Frogs. This subtly-patterned little creature was our first Pond Terrapin *Emys orbicularis*. There was a huge amount of amphibian activity on the ground, and we saw hundreds of metamorph Green Toads, Tree Frogs and Marsh Frogs throughout the rest of the day.

We explored more areas of suitable habitat around the lake and forest, but it was too hot for much reptile activity, other than a large Green Lizard. There were some beautiful Ant Lions about on the sandy substrate, and we spent some time observing a Woodchat Shrike on a tree before dinner. After another unsuccessful attempt to find the Balkan Spadefoot Toad, we headed to a sand dune very near to the hotel. This was a possible site for African

Chameleon *Chameleo africanus*, and eventually, after a lot of hard searching by torchlight, one of the group found a large adult specimen to end a very long, but very good day on a high note!

## Day 3

Friday 25th April

Before we left the Kalogria region, we had another sighting of Pond Terrapin in a stream next to the car park, and then we had one last look at a favourite spot around the lake, where we quickly found four Balkan Whip Snakes: two juveniles, a sub-adult and an adult. Our first stop as we headed south gave us a few very brief sightings of lizards, and the large, freshly-shed skin of a Four-lined Snake *Elaphe quartorlineata*, but sadly we couldn't find its owner! There was abundant bird activity: we saw a large flock of Greater Flamingoes taking off, as well as Glossy Ibises near the lagoons.

By lunchtime we were at Lake Kaiafas, and spent a very pleasant hour looking at Balkan Terrapins *Mauremys rivulata*, Pond Terrapins and some introduced Red-Eared Sliders *Trachemys scripta*. There were also frequent sightings of Grass and Dice Snakes in the lake, and our first opportunity to watch Peloponnese Wall Lizards *Podarvis peloponnesiacus* taking the sun on some rocks. Next was a quick look at an area where we planned to look for chameleons at night; this little scouting session was a success, as we found a good-sized adult Four-lined Snake. After a very pleasant dinner, after which we found a few Mediterranean House (or Turkish) Geckos *Hemidactylus turcicus* outside the hotel, we headed back to our chosen chameleon spot. The team proved to be very good at spotting them, and got five adults in just under an hour, to bring a great day to a satisfying end.



Balkan Whip Snake



Balkan Green Lizard

## Day 4

Saturday 26th April

Continuing south, we made a search on some coastal dune habitat, again hoping to find Nose-horned Viper, but again with no joy. There were some Peloponnese Wall Lizards and Snake-Eyed Skinks *Ablepharus kitaibelii* though, and the view from the beach café was stunning as we enjoyed a morning coffee break. Anticipation was high for our lunchtime stop, and we weren't disappointed: we spent some quality time observing at least ten Loggerhead Turtles *Caretta caretta* in an artificial harbour. This stop is always a highlight, and it feels like a real privilege to see these magnificent, serene animals up close.

We arrived in Pylos in glorious sunshine, and everyone was thrilled with the hotel and its wonderful location overlooking the sea. After a few long days of activity, we took the night off to enjoy a break and get ready for more herping, although we still managed to have great views of Peloponnese Wall Lizards on the castle behind the hotel.

## Day 5

Sunday 27th April

Today, we visited a few locations in and around Gialova, a short drive from our hotel. A stop near a wooded stream gave us our first amphibians for a few days: Greek Stream Frogs *Rana graeca*. The leaf litter held many Snake-eyed Skinks, as well as our first Greek Algyroides *Algyroides moreoticus*, two of which we found mating on a shaded rocky bank. As the heat increased, we went to the lagoon and searched an old abandoned warehouse, where we found a few Mediterranean House Geckos seeking moisture and protection under some old wooden boards, and a very quick Green Lizard. We finally had some rain in the afternoon: a brief thunderstorm which certainly brought out the mosquitoes!

During a break back at the hotel one of the team, unable to resist some extra herping, found a Dahl's Whip Snake *Platyceps najadum* near the castle, but the leader's attempts to catch it to show the rest of the clients were unsuccessful. Our night excursion was to look in another location for African Chameleons, and although they weren't as easy to find tonight, two more individuals were spotted, bringing our total in three evening searches to eight. We also had an unexpected treat as, after hearing them in the distance on a few occasions, we actually had a glimpse of a Golden Jackal, as it crossed the path in front of us!

## Day 6

Monday 28th April

With our time in Greece running out, we were still keen to add some new species to our list, and a thorough search through an olive grove proved ideal: Kotschy's Gecko *Mediodactylus lotschii* and Limbless Skink *Ophiomorus punctatissimus* were found, and then, just as we were thinking of leaving, we got a very impressive Glass Lizard *Pseudopus apodus*, which seemed to be a firm favourite with the team.

After a hike up to a beautifully located chapel overlooking Gialova Lagoon, we headed back to our Pylos base and followed up on a local lead, which gave us Peloponnese Wall Lizard, Limbless Skink and Worm Snake in a big area of scrubland, one which warrants further exploration. We had an early night, because tomorrow we would be heading north.

## Day 7

Tuesday 29th April

The herping omens were immediately good today; we found very colourful Peloponnese Wall Lizards at a motorway service station. Worm Snakes and a Hermann's Tortoise were added before we got to our first main stop at Doxa Lake. This turned out to be a real treat, with lots of Erhard's Wall Lizard *Podarcis erhardii*, a few Ionian Wall Lizards *Podarcis ionicus*, and a few Green Lizards around lunchtime, and then both species of slow-worm (Greek *Anguis graeca* and Peloponnese *Anguis cephalonnica*) under the same wooden board! Almost next to them, we found another Hermann's Tortoise, and a new amphibian for the trip, Agile Frog *Rana dalmatina*, of which we then found a few more. Although we didn't find any adult specimens, one of the group found a metamorph Fire Salamander *Salamandra salamandra*, and we left the area feeling full of enthusiasm, ready to move on to higher elevations.

On arrival at Lake Styμφalia, we decided on a brief stop to look over the area, and found a number of Worm Snakes, a Dice Snake and a beautiful Leopard Snake *Zamenis situla*, as well as Limbless Skink, Green Lizard and Eastern Peloponnese Wall Lizard *Podarcis thais*. That was not a bad haul from a nondescript roadside area! We had

the option to rest up at the very picturesque hotel just before dinner, but as this was our final opportunity for herping, we decided on one last local trip. Although the wind had picked up and the temperature had dropped, we found another Peloponnese Slow-worm, and a male Eastern Peloponnese Wall Lizard with beautiful blue flanks. The weather conditions were very different in this part of the Peloponnese, so after a lovely final dinner together, we retired to our rooms to use the wood burners!

## Day 8

**Wednesday 30th April**

Today it was time to depart, and we had the journey back to Athens to think back on a successful trip, during which we had explored some wonderful locations, and found 33 species of reptiles and amphibians, and a huge amount of other spectacular wildlife.

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## Species lists

### Reptiles

E=Endemic, N=Near-endemic, I=introduced		April 2025						
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Mediterranean House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus turcicus</i>			✓		✓		✓
Kotschy's Gecko	<i>Mediodactylus kotschy</i>						✓	
European Snake-eyed Skink	<i>Ablepharus kitaibelii</i>		✓		✓	✓		
Limbless Skink - E	<i>Ophiomorus punctatissimus</i>						✓	✓
Greek Algyroides - N	<i>Algyroides moreoticus</i>					✓	✓	✓
Balkan Green Lizard	<i>Lacerta trilineata</i>		✓			✓	✓	✓
Peloponnese Wall Lizard - E	<i>Podarcis peloponnesiacus</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓
Eastern Peloponnese Wall Lizard - E	<i>Podarcis thais</i>							✓
Ionian Wall Lizard - N	<i>Podarcis ionicus</i>							✓
Erhard's Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis erhardii livadiacus</i>							✓
European Glass Lizard	<i>Pseudopus apodus</i>						✓	
Peloponnese Slow-worm - N	<i>Anguis cephallonica</i>							✓
Greek Slow-worm	<i>Anguis graeca</i>							✓
African Chameleon	<i>Chamaeleo africanus</i>		✓	✓		✓		
European Worm Snake	<i>Xerotyphlops vermicularis</i>		✓				✓	✓
Balkan Whip Snake	<i>Hierophis gemonensis</i>		✓	✓				✓
Dahl's Whip Snake	<i>Platycephalus najadum</i>					✓		
Four-lined Snake	<i>Elaphe quartuorlineata</i>			✓				
Leopard Snake	<i>Zamenis situla</i>							✓
Eastern Grass Snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Dice Snake	<i>Natrix tessellata</i>		✓	✓				✓
Hermann's Tortoise	<i>Testudo hermanni</i>		✓					✓
European Pond Terrapin	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>		✓	✓				
Red-eared Slider - I	<i>Trachemys scripta</i>		✓					
Balkan Terrapin	<i>Mauremys rivulata</i>			✓			✓	
Loggerhead Turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>				✓			

### Amphibians

N=Near-endemic		April 2025						
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Fire Salamander	<i>Salamandra salamandra</i>							✓
Green Toad	<i>Bufo viridis</i>	✓	✓					
Common Tree Frog	<i>Hyla arborea</i>	✓	✓			✓		
Agile Frog	<i>Rana dalmatina</i>							✓
Greek Stream Frog	<i>Rana graeca</i>					✓		
Marsh Frog	<i>Pelophylax ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Epirus Water Frog - N	<i>Pelophylax epiroticus</i>	✓	✓					

### Mammals

		April 2025						
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>					✓		

## Birds (H = Heard only)

D = dead		April 2025						
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		✓					
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		✓					
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓				
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>		✓					
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>				✓	✓	✓	
Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	✓						
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		✓					
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>						✓	
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		✓					✓
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>		✓	✓				
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		✓	✓		✓		
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>		✓	✓		✓		
Kentish Plover	<i>Anarhynchus alexandrinus</i>		✓	✓				
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>				✓			
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>		✓					
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>		✓	✓		✓		
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>			✓				
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	✓	✓					
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>					✓		
Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>			✓				
Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>		✓					
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>			✓				
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>			✓				
White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>		✓					
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>			✓				
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus</i>			✓				
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo pygmaeus</i>		✓					
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			✓				
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>			✓				
Little Bittern	<i>Botaurus minutus</i>			✓				
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>		✓					
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		✓			✓		
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			✓				
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	✓	✓					
Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>						✓	
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓					
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓						
Eurasian Scops Owl	<i>Otus scops</i>	✓	H	H				
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		H					

D = dead		April 2025						
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>		✓	✓	✓			
Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i>							✓
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			✓		✓		
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			✓				
Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>				✓			
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>		✓					
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓					
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>						✓	
Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>			✓				
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓					
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓					
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>		✓					
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>			✓				
Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>							✓
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis rufula</i>		✓	✓				
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>			✓		✓		
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			✓				
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>		✓					✓
Common Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>					✓		
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>		✓	H				
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>				✓			
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>							✓
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		✓	✓	✓			
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>			✓	✓	✓		
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>					✓		
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>							✓
European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>				D			
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>					✓		
Eastern Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe melanoleuca</i>					✓		
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓					
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>				✓	✓		
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>							✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>							H