

# A Greek Odessey



## The Mediterranean Monk Seal Quest

5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> September 2025



# Introduction

I organised a last minute trip to Greece to see Mediterranean monk seals, a species I had wanted to see for a while. I flew with Ryanair (both flights delayed) from Stansted to Athens.

I booked the seal trip with [christoskotselis@gmail.com](mailto:christoskotselis@gmail.com)

and the herp trip with [greecebirdtours@gmail.com](mailto:greecebirdtours@gmail.com)

Both guides were good, I enjoyed their company and was happy with both trips.



Little Owl





Passenger



# Friday 5<sup>th</sup> September

After very delayed arrival the previous evening and a fire alarm in the middle of the night, my 6.30am pickup left me with little sleep. We headed to Kamena Vourla where my guide picked up our boat and we headed off to the Lichadonissia islands to search for Mediterranean monk seals.

The sea was quite choppy and there was quite a breeze which took the edge of the 30 degree plus temperature. We searched all round the islands without any luck, we did have plenty of common and sandwich terns feeding in the shallow bays. There were plenty of gulls on the rocks and the odd flyover hirundine but little else. We headed to Kavos Beach for lunch in a beachside café, hounded by a plague of wasps. Refreshed we headed back out on the water again to resume our search trying a few other spots and locating a couple of Yelkouan shearwaters in the process. No luck with the seals so we headed to shore.



**Sandwich Tern**





Stroggili





**Yelkouan shearwater**

After checking in at the hotel headed to Saint Seraphim wetlands for a few hours birding. The wetlands was quite dry but in the odd damp area there were good congregations of birds. Plenty of herons and egrets, spoonbills and a nice selection of waders grey plover, dunlin, snipe, common and marsh sandpipers. The shoreline held quite a few birds greater flamingos in the shallows and Kentish plovers and little stints on the beach. A little gull lurked with the mixed tern flock which contained a whiskered tern along with the commoner species. We drove round the drier areas and found a few nice birds short toed eagle, lesser kestrel and woodchat shrike of note. As the sun set we headed for some food in town then back to the hotel. I set the moth trap up on my seaview balcony, not really hopeful and checked it at 1am and although not a great many moths some really nice species passenger, geometrician, *Palpita vitrealis* and Mediterranean corn borer of note.



**Greater Flamingos**



**Fried Egg Jellyfish**

# Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September

We were out on the water by 8.30am and continued our search for seals, the sea was very calm and only a very gentle breeze. By 10am we were watching a young female Mediterranean monk seal. She was dozing underwater in the shallows for a few minutes before surfacing for a few minutes and repeating. We stayed with her for over an hour, she showed little interest in us, but knew we were there and she showed very well at times. With such amazing views we left her in peace and . Very happy we cruised round the islands finding some interesting jellyfish and a few of the common birds before heading back to the harbour to get a late lunch. We headed back to Athens arriving early evening and I checked into my hotel and set up the moth trap. I had a few nice moths despite the very urban setting *Eublemma cochylioides* and Old World Webworm of note..



**Mediterranean Monk Seal**





**Mediterranean Monk Seal**



## Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April

Early September is not the best time to see wildlife in Greece, but with an evening flight home I was keen to do something during the day so I opted for some herping. 34 degrees in September is not the best time to see them but I was here so we tried. It was a more relaxed start to the day before heading off into the local fields looking for herps, the first site we visited was a stream with a couple of Balkan water frogs in attendance along with several dragonflies southern skimmer and violet dropwing of note. Next stop was a vineyard with suitable rocks and litter to flip but no luck. We tried around the Temple of Artemis but only had a few butterflies and dragonflies, but it was a very nice place to visit.



**Violet Dropwing**





Vravron Temple





**Sage Skipper**

We took a quick stop for a cold drink and ice cream before trying another field with a derelict building and some rubbish, under an old mattress was a smallish Glass lizard I had a good view but it disappeared pretty quickly and we could not refind it. A further stop produced a Kotschy's Gecko and a black rat and a hoopoe. Other stops produced Balkan green lizard, Snake eyed skink, Mediterranean house Gecko, kingfisher, more Balkan water frogs, swallowtail butterfly, emperor dragonfly and brown hare. Most of these were far too quick for photographs but I think we did not do too bad with herps and other wildlife in the very hot temperatures. I got the evening flight back to the UK and eventually got home.



**Balkan Water Frog**





**Medieval Frankish Tower**



# Lists





# Birds - 53

Sand Martin	Barn Swallow	Red Rumped Swallow
Gull Billed Tern	Common Tern	Sandwich Tern
Hooded Crow	House Sparrow	Yellow Legged Gull
Mediterranean Gull	Grey Plover	Black Headed Gull
Ruff	Common Sandpiper	Shag
Grey Heron	Great White Egret	Magpie
Collared Dove	Sardinian Warbler	Great Tit
Blue Tit	Yelkouan Shearwater	Dunlin
Little Gull	Little Stint	Kentish Plover
Kestrel	Lesser Kestrel	Short Toed Snake Eagle
Spoonbill	Purple Heron	Little Egret
Cattle Egret	Greater Flamingo	Corn Bunting
Crested Lark	Northern Wheatear	Woodchat Shrike
Stone Curlew	Marsh Sandpiper	Snipe
Gull Billed tern	Jay	Little Owl
Cetti's Warbler	Goldfinch	Moorhen
Mallard	Hoopoe	Spotted Flycatcher
Feral Pigeon	Kingfisher	



**Short Toed  
Snake eagle**



# Mammals

Mediterranean Monk Seal	Black Rat	Brown Hare
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Mediterranean Monk Seal

# Herps

Mediterranean House Gecko	Kotschy's Gecko	Glass Lizard
Balkan Green Lizard	Balkan Water Frog	Snake Eyed Skink



Balkan Water Frog



# Butterflies and Moths

Large White	Southern Small White	Swallowtail
Speckled Wood	Red Admiral	Mediterranean Skipper
Sage Skipper	Tree Grayling	



**Eublemma cochylioides**

Achyra nudalis	Aporodes floralis	Bee Moth
Crescent dart	Dark mottled Willow	Dark Swordgrass
Eublemma cochylioides	Euchromius ocella	Euzophera fuliginosella
Geometrician	Hypotia corticalis	Idaea filicata
Idaea infirmaria	Loryma egregialis	Mediterranean corn borer
Mesophleps silacella	Oak Processionary Moth	Old World Webworm
Palpita vitrealis	Passenger	Penestoglossa dardoinella
Pigmy footman	Pine Processionary	Plain Wave
Portland Riband Wave	Pseudozarba bipartita	Rush veneer
Scarce bordered straw	Silver Y	Small Mottled Willow
Small Ranunculus	Symmoca signatella	Tree Lichen Beauty
Vestal		





Tree Grayling



# Selected Others

Fried egg Jellyfish	Purple striped jellyfish	Grey Mullet
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**Purple Striped jellyfish**

Emperor Dragonfly	Southern Skimmer	Violet Dropwing
Blue Tailed Damselfly	Red veined darter	
Pubescent Carpenter Bee	Blue Winged Grasshopper	Lamenting grasshopper
Acrosternum heegeri	Antlion	Truxalis nasuta



**Southern Skimmer**



# Selected Plants

Annual Saltmarsh- aster	Asparagus	Cynanchum acutum
Euphorbia serpens	European Turn-sole	Greek Cyclamen
Mastic Tree	Redshank	Silverleaf nightshade
Small Caltrops	Squirting Cucumber	Water plantain



**Greek Cyclamen**

flickr



