

# Orchids of the Gargano Peninsula

Mariposa Nature Tours trip report

22<sup>nd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> April 2026

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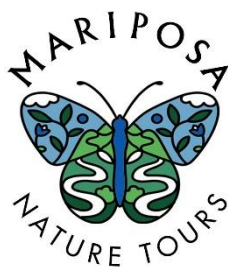


Tour leaders Jon Dunn & Andrea Corso

Trip report by Jon Dunn

(Images (clockwise from top left) *Ophrys apulica* © Malcolm; *Orchis x bivonae* © Alison;

*Ophrys bertolonii* © Jo; *Orchis italica* © Steph)



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[Please note – while some of the orchids encountered in the Gargano have common, vernacular English names, many do not. Rather than impose our own clumsy vernacular names upon the latter, we've stuck with the scientific names in the interests of accuracy and clarity. However, where a widely-used vernacular name exists, it's used (suffixed with its scientific name) in the text that follows, e.g. Giant Orchid *Himantoglossum robertianum*. Similarly, where hybrids have known formal names, they are used – e.g. *Anacamptis x gennarii* to describe *Anacamptis morio x papilionacea* – but where no such formal name could be found, we have simply described the presumed parents in question, e.g. *Ophrys bertolonii x sipontensis*].

### Day 1, arrivals day 22<sup>nd</sup> April

Everyone arrived at the rendezvous in Bari airport smoothly, some having come overland to Bari by train or bus, and after lunch at the pleasant café in Arrivals we set off north up the coast towards the Gargano peninsula.

The weather today wasn't great, with massing grey clouds overhead turning into steady rain as we headed north. Not that rain was deterring the waterbirds – passing coastal wetlands we noted Greater Flamingo, Pygmy Cormorant, Black-winged Stilt and White Stork all feeding undeterred by the falling downpour. In due course we broke our journey outside Siponto at an area of fractured limestone pavement described to Jon by his Swedish orchid-hunting friends as 'Serapias heaven', and so the site proved, with *Serapias apulica* quickly found, shortly followed by *Serapias vomeracea*, *Serapias cordigera*, and the first of many hundreds of Small-flowered Tongue-orchid *Serapias parviflora*, the latter found by Steph.



Several intriguing *Orobanch*e broomrape also caught our eye here while, overhead, notable birds seen included Red-footed Falcon, Marsh Harrier, and Lesser Kestrel. The rain gradually eased, making orchid-hunting a little less uncomfortable, although the long vegetation at our feet was soaking wet, as were our feet in no great time. Not that we cared, for there was a large and colourful consolation prize – dozens of magnificent *Ophrys apulica* in the very peak of condition, including a nice flavescent form found by Jon.

Wandering this site yielded more orchids in the form of Naked Man Orchid *Orchis italica*, and some 'gone-over' Giant Orchid *Himantoglossum robertianum*, *Ophrys garganica*, and *Ophrys incubacea*, the latter two species still just about recognisable. Not that we were worried, for we knew we'd see better examples at higher elevations.

And that's just what we did – once we reached our comfortable hotel in Monte Sant Angelo, and had had a chance to freshen up, we headed out on foot to see what we could find on the nearby roadsides. That proved to be rather a lot! In the space of just a few yards we found some fine *Ophrys garganica*, *Ophrys incubacea*, *Ophrys phryganae*, and some truly

lovely *Ophrys bertoloniformis*. Unsurprisingly, with these species in such close proximity, there was almost bound to be some hybrids to be found, and so it proved – a hybrid swarm of *Ophrys garganica* x *incubacea*, and three lovely examples of *Ophrys bertoloniformis* x *incubacea*. As an introductory taster of the orchid riches of Gargano, this wasn't bad at all.

We enjoyed a hearty first dinner at the hotel, and made for our beds for an early night, with big plans for tomorrow...

## Day 2, 23<sup>rd</sup> April

We wanted to keep our first full day of orchid-hunting in the Gargano pleasantly local and, with our hotel set right on the edge of town and on the cusp of some seriously orchid-rich countryside, this objective was easily achieved. A mere five minute drive down the road from the hotel brought us to our first roadside destination where, upon stopping the vehicles, Jon immediately spotted our first of hundreds of shiny-mirrored *Ophrys bertolonii* a few metres from the road.



And at this point, the utter orchid heavenliness of the Gargano swiftly became apparent, with new orchids coming one after another all around where we'd parked! Green-winged Orchid *Anacamptis morio* were numerous, but jostled for space with Four-spotted Orchid *Orchis quadripunctata*. Naked Man Orchid *Orchis italica* put in their first appearance of the day, but it was the *Ophrys* that stole the show, with tiny-flowered *Ophrys brutia* and *Ophrys minipassionis*, green-sepalled *Ophrys bertoloniformis*, and our first *Ophrys promontorii* all found within a few metres.



We began to slowly make our way along the road, constantly distracted. Naked Man Orchid began to become numerous, and we soon found some fine Three-toothed Orchid *Neotinea tridentata* among them too. The local sawfly orchid, *Ophrys neglecta* began to be seen in fine numbers and outstanding condition, with some plants forming dense carpets or clumps. Man Orchid *Orchis anthropophora* was becoming numerous too, while Pink Butterfly Orchid *Anacamptis papilionacea* was also frequently seen – many of the latter were 'going over', but there were still plenty of plants in immaculate condition and fresh flower.

Jon found two fine hybrid plants of Green-winged and Pink Butterfly Orchid and, nearby, we found a third example – but this one was, in addition to being a hybrid, also deeply hyperchromic and suffused with magenta pigmentation! A shallow valley to one side of the road proved a happy hunting ground, full of *Ophrys*, including some fine examples of *Ophrys apulica* and, for the keen-eyed, a peloric *Ophrys bertolonii* with one sepal rakishly sporting a stripe of brown furry lip markings.

Butterflies were on the wing here too as the sun warmed the air, with our first Scarce Swallowtail seen, including one that tantalisingly settled on a Naked Man Orchid but not for long enough for cameras to be raised, and many lycaenids, including fresh Green-underside Blue and Adonis Blue, and Green Hairstreak.

More orchid varieties continued to present themselves, with a lovely hyperchromic 'rhodochila' type Green-winged Orchid found, and a white 'alba' type of the same species. Andrea spotted our first Bumblebee Orchid *Ophrys bombyliflora* and, nearby, Jon found our first *Ophrys lupercalis*. Hybrid *Ophrys* were very much present too, with the offspring of *Ophrys bertolonii* appearing in some lysergic colour combinations,



some with orange lateral petals, almost certainly owing to some *Ophrys garganica* influence; and one plant that appeared to be a good contender for *Ophrys promontorii* x *Ophrys sipontensis*. With so many potential parents in the area, there is inevitably an element of speculation with some of these plants, and certainty is an elusive chimaera!

We moved on to a second site for the final hour of the morning, all of a mere kilometre down the road. Here a small hillside was our theatre of operation and, even from the road, we could see why it might be compelling – it was painted with thousands of flowering orchids, chiefly Green-winged and Naked Man, but on

closer inspection many more besides. Here we found our first Burnt Orchid *Neotinea ustulata*, and after some searching Jon added Milky Orchid *Neotinea lactea* to our account too. Jon's previous experience of the site also meant he could take us straight to a lovely pair of *Orchis x bivonae*, the hybrid of Man Orchid and Naked Man Orchid.

Andrea found an outstanding *Ophrys* hybrid here, one that confounded us – in the middle of a small clearing, surrounded by many *Ophrys neglecta*, *Ophrys bertolonii*, and one *Ophrys brutia*, we found five plants that were clearly none of those species, but formed from two of them – but which? *Ophrys neglecta* accounted for many of the features of the flowers, but something else was in the mix – it seemed most likely, on reflection, to be *Ophrys bertolonii*, but subsequent online research revealed several identical plants that had been attributed by local orchid-hunters to *Ophrys neglecta* x *Ophrys biscutella*.



And there was indeed a potential parent for that combination, for just a few metres downhill we found our first *Ophrys biscutella*, in a remarkable couple of square metres that hosted over a dozen other orchid species. This was pure Gargano at its best.

We headed to the Santa Maria de Pulsano church for our lunch and, once we'd had our picnic, we set out to explore the surroundings of this panoramically situated religious site. Julia hit the jackpot, discovering our first *Ophrys sipontensis*, a find followed by Steph discovering several more plants in the near vicinity, some of which were not only in immaculate condition, but still had unopened buds to come. This is one of Europe's most attractive *Ophrys*, with a deep almost black lip with silvery lip markings, and deep cherry red sepals. A prize that not even every Italian orchid-hunter has seen, and one that draws admirers from far afield. We had over a dozen plants to ourselves – sheer bliss. There were also still more *Ophrys apulica* to be seen here, including a very fine flavescent form with white sepals.



*Ophrys sipontensis* © Steph

Nearby, for the sake of completeness, we duly noted a Giant Orchid *Himantoglossum robertianum* that still had a couple of recognisable flowers hanging on – even in their prime, they're not the most attractive of things, and were here significantly in the shade of *Ophrys sipontensis*, to which they couldn't hold a candle!

The afternoon held one more site, a ridge of extensive grazing, light woodland, and limestone debris that was, naturally, crammed with orchids. *Ophrys apulica* was, again,



*Ophrys biscutella* © Andy

common here, but John's sharp eyes noticed a plant with a wide, unreflexed lip – this proved, on closer inspection, to be *Ophrys cinnabarina*, and just one of three plants in the immediate area. A later-flowering fuciflorid *Ophrys*, this was a real prize. Much less aesthetically exciting were several *Ophrys sulcata* Jon found a little higher on the ridge. These unassuming plants had serious competition nearby, for *Ophrys biscutella* was rather numerous here, and looking glorious.

Annoyingly the wind, a constant companion today from the northwest, was stiffening somewhat and, as 4 o'clock passed, we decided to call it a day. We'd seen what would, at checklist later in the evening, prove to be a very satisfactory 31 species of orchid, and overall countless thousands of orchids through the course of the day. With many hybrids and colour variations also enjoyed, this had been a superb day in the field, and all within a handful of miles of our hotel.

### Day 3, 24<sup>th</sup> April

We ventured a little further afield today, heading up the flanks of Monte Sacro on a circular route that explored the fractured limestone shards and grikes of its lower slopes, its wooded higher elevations and, ultimately, the meadows and lanes of the plateaus that head

inland from its seaward aspects. The weather was much improved today, with the sun shining almost without interruption and the wind greatly reduced.

Our first stop found us exploring the roadside and a track that led uphill from the narrow lane upon which we'd driven up from the coast. In a pattern that was becoming familiar to us, we'd no sooner got out of the vehicles than we were seeing orchids in abundance – *Ophrys incubacea*, and a hybrid between this species and *Ophrys promontorii*, right beside the layby in which we'd parked. Within a few metres were the first of thousands of Greater Tongue-orchid *Serapias lingua* we would enjoy today, exhibiting some of the great range of colour variations the species can display – some with creamy white tongues, others with deep maroon tongues.



Guests had got to grips with the differences between the two 'avocet-billed' *Ophrys*, *Ophrys bertolonii* and *Ophrys bertoloniformis*, and we found many of both species scattered among the limestone shards and small bushes that punctuated the wide grassy area that lay between the road and the forest beyond. There were, of course, some examples with flowers with characteristics intermediate between the two... Naked Man Orchid *Orchis italica* was starting to become numerous once more, and we were pleased to find a large colony of it with, in its heart, two more examples of cerise-flowered *Ophrys x bivonae*, the hybrid offspring of Naked Man and Man Orchid *Orchis anthropophora*. Sharp eyes, double-checking what appeared from a distance to be still more Naked Man Orchid, began to discern *Neotinea tridentata* also in bloom here.



We were checking all *Ophrys* carefully, mindful that we hoped to find a late example of *Ophrys archipelagi*. A colony of flowers proved to be something of a conundrum, conforming most closely with the appearance of *Ophrys liburnica*, a species considered to be a Croatian endemic. Of course, Croatia sits on the opposite side of the Adriatic, so it should be little surprise that either the same taxon exists on both seaboard, or that

the same environmental influences have wrought a similar morphological effect upon the *Ophrys* of both regions. The presence of orchids in the Gargano that look like *Ophrys liburnica* has been long-known, and while Kreutz (2024) has nailed his colours to the mast and claimed them as a regional form rather than a Croatian endemic, Andrea's Italian orchid-hunting friends consider these plants to be part of *Ophrys garganica*. If that's the case perhaps, cheekily or controversially, we might say that *Ophrys garganica* exists in Croatia too?! Our plants provided, at the very least, a talking point and a good example of the angels-dancing-on-the-head-of-a-pin subtleties of *Ophrys* taxonomical determination, which in some instances seems to have been taken rather too far.

*Ophrys minipassionis* was a mute witness to this conversation, a fine plant with lovely white sepals and canary yellow lateral petals a little way off to one side of the track proving to be much less of a headache... As we started to walk back to the vehicles a herd of the region's stolid, large grey cows came plodding slowly up the road towards us, shepherded by a group of dogs. The cacophony of cowbells and barking was the stuff of another headache altogether!

We were passed by an empty coach heading downhill, bearing an intriguing slogan that seemed to imply it was something to do with orchids... once we were loading up at our vehicles, a car sign-written with orchids stopped, and the driver and Andrea chatted for a while – it transpired that today was a local orchid festival, and some 300 people were expected to come up onto Monte Sacro to enjoy the orchids, with an emphasis on children



*Ophrys minipassionis* © Jon



*Orchis italica* © Tracey

and education. What a welcome initiative this was to see, and a fine rebuff of those who piously espouse online that nature should only be enjoyed and appreciated by a chosen, select few kindred spirits. Setting such sanctimony aside, we decided that our exploration of Monte Sacro would give a body-swerve to where the 300 people would be found – we'd seek peace and quiet and orchids elsewhere on the mountain!

We took ourselves along a small side-road, parking in the shade and exploring beneath the trees of the forest that spilled over the craggier aspects of the area. The richness of the area was immediately apparent, with Greg delighted to find four species of orchid within one square metre of where he stood – Greater Tongue-orchid, Green-winged Orchid *Anacamptis morio*, Pink Butterfly Orchid *Anacamptis papilionacea*, and *Ophrys biscutella*. The latter was to be a particular feature of this site, with many outstanding examples of it in full bloom, some sporting three or four large and colourful flowers set attractively in a column up on side of the flowerspike. Both pink and white-sepalled forms were present too, and we took our time to appreciate their beauty.



Distraction came in the form of some gorgeous Four-spotted Orchid *Orchis quadripunctata*. Yesterday's many examples had been somewhat windblown, but today's plants were resplendent, growing from the limestone in abundance in natural rock gardens. Their delicate structure and intense cerise colouration were a delight. We also started to see our first Southern Dwarf Iris *Iris pseudopumilla* – rich, purple blooms that were a punch of colour in clearings of the woodland. As the day wore on we would see many more of these, and also their pale ivory-yellow forms too.

We were back in the vehicles and driving the ten minutes along the lanes to our chosen lunch site when Jon, in the lead vehicle, stopped and jumped out to check something he'd seen from the corner of his eye. Sure enough, a new species! On a grassy slope beneath some light oak trees were several Roman Orchid *Dactylorhiza romana*, their primrose-yellow flowers distinctive enough to have caught his eye from a moving vehicle. We parked up, and everyone came onto the slope to enjoy them. Nearby, John made a further discovery – several Dense-flowered Orchid *Neotinea maculata*, another new orchid for the day. We decided that this slope, with its abundant orchids (there were still more Four-spotted Orchid to enjoy here too) would make a fine alternative lunch site, so the guides brought our picnic out of the vehicles, and we made ourselves comfortable, enjoying the view not only of the orchids but the wider landscape beyond, with the distant music of cowbells and the closer sound of birdsong our soundtrack.



Before we left after lunch, a confiding Western Green Lizard *Lacerta bilineata* proved a distraction for us all, basking on a rock right beside us, and tolerant of the very closest approach. We took turns to take his portrait while he watched us unconcerned.

A five minute drive took us to the end of the increasingly narrow road where, surrounded by fields blanketed with wildflowers, we stopped for a couple of hours wandering and orchid-hunting. The potential of the area was immediately apparent, with a fine *Ophrys sipontensis* in bloom beside *Ophrys incubacea*, and swathes of Naked Man Orchid to be seen too. We still had *Ophrys archipelagi* very much in mind, but it wasn't to be – the next two hours, while full of orchids, did not deliver the elusive *archipelagi*. We saw masses of flowers, but all species we'd already seen. Not that this was a problem – the many *Ophrys neglecta*, *Ophrys biscutella*, and Naked Man Orchid in particular were a feast for the eyes, after all.



We had a final site to visit on the way home, and one that Jon was hopeful would deliver the goods. A relatively compact area of shattered limestone pavement running parallel to a narrow, quiet road proved to be heaving with orchids of all kinds – and many *Ophrys* among them. *Ophrys biscutella*, *O. bertolonii*, *O. bombyliflora*, *O. garganica*, *O. incubacea*... we were doing very well indeed for bee orchids, and were having to avoid being distracted by still more Greater Tongue-orchid and *Neotinea tridentata*. Several ‘gone-over’ orchids looked like they might have been *O. archipelagi*, their faded flowers lacking the detail we needed in order to be sure. Were we too late?

Happily, we were not. Jean and Julia were the stars of the afternoon, finding a fine plant with two flowers that were instantly recognisable for the species, the top and freshest of all its flowers being in perfect order – we could see the complex and marbled speculum, and the characteristic green ‘shoulders’ of the labellum too. A rather spindly plant, the light breeze of the afternoon was wafting it around, proving something of a challenge for the photographers. Nearby, Jon found a distinctive hybrid *Ophrys* that was shorter and sturdier – with a long, dark, hairy lip that betrayed its *Ophrys bertolonii* parentage, it also sported two shiny spots on the lip that came from the *Ophrys biscutella* side of its genesis.

We set off for the half hour drive home, passing through fields of Pink Butterfly and Green-winged Orchid, and woodlands with clumps of *Narcissus poeticus*, feeling justly pleased with ourselves – we’d enjoyed another day of wall-to-wall orchids, and had found some fine new species for our weekly tally which, when we settled down at checklist in the evening before dinner with a refreshing drink at hand, proved to be sitting on 37 species for the week.

#### Day 4, 25<sup>th</sup> April

Another local day today, exploiting the orchid bounty to be found within a short drive of our hotel, found us first of all having to negotiate leaving Monte Sant Angelo when the town was busy filling with Italians coming to celebrate Festa della Liberazione, Italian Independence Day. Many cars and coaches were pouring into the town packed with people... fortunately, we were going against the flow of the traffic, so once we’d weaved our way around the many pedestrians wandering in the middle of the road heading into the pretty town centre on foot, we had open road ahead of us, and orchids to see.

Our first stop was just a few minutes down the road, a field margin where Jon knew we should find a colony of Lady Orchid *Orchis purpurea*, a rather scarce species in these parts. Sure enough, there were a couple of dozen plants hiding in the hedge that bordered the field, and these were



duly admired, as were some Wild Peony *Paeonia mascula* that shared the hedge with the orchids.



A short drive towards Maremonti brought us to our next stop, where we spent an hour exploring a small field that harboured a good variety of orchid species with which we were becoming very familiar now – *Ophrys incubacea*, *O. neglecta*, *O. bombyliflora*, *O. bertolonii*, and *Ophrys bertoloniformis* in particular. The site also holds *Ophrys sipontensis*, though we could not find a flowering example of it on this occasion. There was, however, a hybrid *O. bertolonii* x *O. sipontensis* that Jon was familiar with from the previous year – while this was flowering again, Fate had

intervened and somewhat spoiled the show, for some sort of larva had spun a web among the orchid's flower buds, meaning that as the flowers opened they had become rather contorted and compacted together.

Undaunted, we examined the *Ophrys* of the field closely, Jon finding a *O. bertolonii* x *O. neglecta* hybrid (*Ophrys x pulsanoi*) that drew some attention. The shadier parts of the field, shadowed by a large stand of trees that bordered one side of it, held Pink Butterfly Orchid in good condition. Ralph found an intriguing *Ophrys*, resembling *Ophrys neglecta* but notably different in several aspects – the flowers being half the size of normal *O. neglecta*, and their margins being cinnamon coloured rather than the usual pale yellow we expect to see. Furthermore, the lips of the flowers were folded back rather than presented flat. An odd – and attractive – plant, but what was it? We considered the possibility of a hybrid with *Ophrys bombyliflora* but decided, on the whole, that this was probably simply a very contrived example of *Ophrys neglecta*. Probably!



The main site for the heart of the day, taking us through to lunchtime and into the early afternoon, lay back towards Monte Sant Angelo; a large network of open fields threaded by tracks. With the sun shining brightly and the wind very light, this was a happy hunting ground for us, with countless Green-winged Orchid and Pink Butterfly Orchid to enjoy, not to mention swathes of Naked Man Orchid too. *Ophrys garganica* was particularly numerous here also. Sharp eyes began to spot Burnt Orchid *Neotinea ustulata*, and more hybrids between Green-winged and Pink Butterfly Orchid too.



Jon and Steph, wandering a little more widely, found a small valley in which, to their delight, in addition to some white *alba* forms of Green-winged Orchid, they found three *Ophrys sipontensis*, including one particularly fine and resplendent example that boasted three large and immaculate flowers. Jon went and gathered the rest of the widely scattered group to enjoy this plant, finding some of them watching active raptor migration with Andrea. During the course of the day we logged several notable species passing by, including Red-footed Falcon, Pallid Harrier, and Honey Buzzard.

Steph meanwhile found a cricket near the *Ophrys sipontensis* that proved, when Andrea had consulted an Italian *Orthoptera* expert, to be a rare, endemic species, *Prionotropis appula*. Jon and Andrea were torn away from this gem by news of a large mixed colony of Man Orchid and Naked Man Orchid in which Julia had found several *Orchis x bivonae*, their hybrid offspring. In a pleasing role-reversal, it was time for the leaders to be led by the guests! Julia and Alison took Jon and Andrea to see these magnificent hybrids, one of which was handily posed right alongside both parents, allowing for an instructive photo opportunity.



After lunch, we headed back into the Foresta Umbra, with at least one new orchid on our minds. A track that led up into the forest was walked, and here on the trackside we found initially *Orchis*



*quadripunctata* and then, a little uphill, our first Sparse-flowered Orchid *Orchis pauciflora*, with its intense sherbet lemon coloured flowers. Nearby, we saw first of all Violet Limodore *Limodorum abortivum* spikes not quite yet ready to bloom, and then a Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*, found by John, that was in bud also and a day or two from

starting to flower.

The trackside supplied several lovely *Ophrys biscutella* too, before we explored the wooded margins of a network of hilltop meadows, hoping to find either Violet Limodore or Bird's-nest Orchid in bloom. While we couldn't find an early-flowering example of either, there was ample consolation in the form of over 30 immaculate Roman Orchid *Dactylorhiza romana* instead.

We headed back to Monte Sant Angelo in the mid-afternoon, arriving there at 4pm to find the worst of the volume of visitors had left, but the town was still busy. This gave us a chance to explore the old town ourselves on foot, some enjoying gelato ice creams, others a

cold beer, admiring the architecture, or shopping for pasta to take home as gifts for friends and family. At evening checklist we found ourselves on 39 species for the week – rather more if we counted the non-flowering species we'd seen...

### Day 5, 26<sup>th</sup> April

Today was our transfer day, when we would move our centre of operations from Monte Sant Angelo to the pretty northern fishing village of Peschici. We had a route planned that would maximise our chances of connecting with some of the later-flowering species that might now be just about getting underway, given the pause in proceedings imposed by the cold snap that had greeted our arrival, and the subsequent days of increasing warmth we'd now enjoyed.

First, though, we made a brief pit-stop at the extensive colony of Man and Naked Man Orchid that we'd so enjoyed seeing the day before, as Malcolm and Jean were hoping for an opportunity to photograph the half dozen *Orchis x bivonae* hybrids in their midst. Not a problem! And indeed, a pleasure for us all to enjoy second-helpings of these beautiful flowers.



The stop wasn't a long one – just half an hour – but long enough for us to spread out across the larger site and see what we could find, and add to the day's tally. Plenty of old familiars were enjoyed anew, many of which we would not see again as the day progressed, for we were heading into different territory for much of today, abandoning the Gargano's open grazed areas for light woodland.

Our first stop in just such habitat saw us exploring the gently rising slopes of predominantly oak woodland, the site's dampness borne testament by the many ferns growing from the branches of the trees above our heads. There, on the woodland floor, we found initially Roman Orchid *Dactylorhiza romana*, and the faintly spotted leaves of another *Dactylorhiza*, one not yet in flower... or was it? Before long we found the first of several *Dactylorhiza*



*fuchsii* in bloom, their lower flowers fully open, and our 40<sup>th</sup> species of the week to date.

It's not all about numbers, of course, and the next hour was a joy wandering beneath the trees enjoying many Dense-flowered Orchid *Neotinea maculata* and more Roman Orchid, a great many Greater Tongue-orchid *Serapias lingua*, and on the higher elevations more *Ophrys biscutella* and *Orchis quadripunctata*. Other wildflowers included some pretty Bulbous Saxifrage *Saxifraga bulbifera*. Down near the vehicles, on our way back to move on to the next woodland site, we found a handful of fully-flowering *Neotinea tridentata* for good measure.

A little way back down the road brought us to a small woodland car park at the head of some walking trails through the woods. One such led us through the trees towards an open hilly area upon which we knew we would find more Sparse-flowered Orchid *Orchis pauciflora*, and with any luck nearby some Elder-flowered Orchid *Dactylorhiza sambucina* too. But before these yellow-flowered gems could be seen, Tracey discovered some Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*, and these ones included some with opened flowers – countable therefore as flowering plants! This was a lovely surprise for us all.

That distraction aside, we headed the short way uphill to the meadow on top, where we joined a small herd of grazing cattle, their cow-bells a melodious accompaniment to our orchid-hunting for the next hour or so. Here we found the anticipated Sparse-flowered Orchid, with its rich, intense yellow flowers, and still more Man Orchid and *Ophrys biscutella*. Jon, scouring the lower slopes and checking all the *Dactylorhiza* found several Elder-flowered Orchid, allowing for direct comparisons with the nearby Roman Orchid.



We returned to the vehicles to get our picnic lunches out and eat them in the sunshine, but yet another distraction awaited us – several Italian Festoon *Zerynthia cassandra* were on the wing, and often settling to bask in the sunshine and our admiring camera viewfinders! This was a new butterfly for many of us. Festoon-admiration and lunch eventually dispensed with, we moved on to drive northwest around the Gargano's limestone massif, stopping at two further wooded sites at which we hoped to find a new *Ophrys* for the week, *Ophrys parvimaculata*. Our journey yielded drive-by views of unmistakeable Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, and our first woodland site for *Ophrys parvimaculata* gave us both that lovely bee orchid, with its understated green and brown flower tones, and our first in-the-field Pyramidal Orchid too. Not to mention some lovely cyclamen for good measure...

The second of the *Ophrys parvimaculata* sites was most productive, with almost a dozen of these orchids seen well and easily, and in immaculate condition. Andrea, meanwhile, finally found himself a snake after days of disappointed searching for such – a young Italian Whip Snake *Hierophus viridiflavus carbonarius* that he handled carefully and showed to all



interested in herps. Even Jon, an avowed snake phobic, was seen to admire it from a respectful distance!

A little under an hour's drive took us from here to our lovely, welcoming base for the remainder of the tour, a seafront hotel in Peschici. We had time for a little wander along the seafront beneath screaming Alpine Swift that zoomed overhead, before checklist and a delicious dinner.

## Day 6, 27<sup>th</sup> April

Our new base in the north of the Gargano Peninsula was handily placed for us to enjoy a wonderful start to the new day, a colony of the eponymous *Ophrys montis-gargani* just a few minutes away from where we were staying. The cold wind of the start of the week was now a distant memory, for today dawned clear and sunny, promising a hot day ahead, but happily these distinctive orchids were, at this time of day, for the most part all growing in the shade of surrounding bushes and trees, and as such were perfect for photography.

At first glance, arriving at the site, our hearts sank a little – there was much evidence of mowing and strimming of the open areas, but mercifully this did not extend into the surroundings, and before very long Jon had found our first flowering plants. These all had white sepals and, of course, the long ‘horns’ that protrude on either side of the flowers’ thin, wasp abdomen-shaped lips; the species is famous for these elegant protuberances.

Jon knew the site well, and hence nearby was able to lead the group to still more flowering plants, these ones with the candy-pink sepals seen on so many of the *Ophrys* tribe. *Ophrys*



*Ophrys montis-gargani* © Malcolm



*Ophrys montis-gargani* © Tracey

*montis-gargani* was going down well with everyone, with Tracy heard to say that they were her new favourites of the week. Valerie and Greg were exploring the roadside nearby, and Greg discovered there the crowning glory of the *Ophrys montis-gargani* experience – a dense clump of five flowerspikes growing together on top of a wall, placing the flowers at eye level for us all.

Before we left the site we walked onto an open hillside, hoping for *Anacamptis* – on the lower elevations, beside the *Ophrys montis-gargani*, we’d seen Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, but we could find no evidence of any further *Anacamptis* species here.

We did, however, enjoy magnificent views of Peschici in the near distance. We set off then for the coastal countryside in the region of Capota, passing along the northern coastal road that links the villages and small towns that overlook the Adriatic here.

Mindful of the chance of a Lizard Orchid *Himantoglossum hircinum* starting to bloom, it was with half an eye on the roadsides and, before too long, Jon pulled to the side of the road to run back to check some flowerspikes he’d noticed high on an embankment overhead.



Ophrys apifera © Jon

They certainly looked long and tall enough for Lizard Orchid... but, in the event, they proved to be another orchid altogether, Lady Orchid *Orchis purpurea*, their flowers for the most part already finished, giving them a sparse-flowered impression. Thank goodness we'd seen Lady Orchid in immaculate condition in the damper, cooler conditions at higher elevation earlier in the week – our site knowledge paying off, and the old adage of a bird in the hand being worth two in the bush springing to mind. Nonetheless, Lady Orchid was now on today's list of recorded species.

Both Lizard Orchid and Violet Limodore *Limodorum abortivum* were in mind at our next stop, open pine woodland near the coast, bordered by open rough grassland, a conjunction that meant we stood a chance of both in their respective favoured habitats. The day had really heated up by now and, almost at sea level, the humidity in the air was amplifying the impression of heat. We gave the greater site an hour before heading inland for lunch in greener, cooler surroundings. The law of diminishing returns was kicking in here and, while we found Small-flowered Tongue-orchid *Serapias parviflora* in bloom beneath the pines, the closest we came to Violet Limodore were a couple of emergent spikes that had yet to bloom.

Happily, our lunch site was much more orchidaceous altogether. We parked at the side of a minor road, with a low wall to sit upon in the welcome shade of some low trees, and once food was dispensed with and our water bottles replenished, we set off into what Jon described as the *Serapias* field of dreams, a large ruderal field interspersed with small thickets of bushes. *Serapias* of several species abound in here, and we anticipated seeing thousands of flowering plants in the next few hours. This plan was immediately interrupted by John, forging ahead of the rest of the group, who announced he'd found a Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera* in bloom – and, sure enough, so he had.



Empusa pennata © Malcolm

In the next couple of hours we found dozens more examples of Bee Orchid, of both pink- and white-sepalled forms – always a pleasing orchid species this, and today was no exception for us all. Meanwhile the *Serapias* were in fine form, with Small-flowered Tongue-orchid and Greater Tongue-orchid *Serapias lingua* also supplemented by many *Serapias bergonii* and *Serapias vomeracea*. There were, inevitably, plants of intermediate form also to be seen in the fields but, with so many potential parent species all growing side-by-side, it would be a brave orchid-hunter indeed who declared with certainty what the parent species of these might be!

The field having seen no grazing in the past year, old, dry thistle plants proved to be something of an occupational hazard as we walked through the long grass, and we also were mindful of the possibility of ticks in this habitat, brushing any adventurous invertebrates from our trousers as we went. Other invertebrates were much more welcome altogether – Steph found more examples of the charming little stone crickets *Prionotropis*



Swallowtail Papilio machaon © Steph

*appula*, while Malcolm and Jean found a lovely example of the mantis *Empusa pennata*, and Cleopatra *Gonepteryx cleopatra* were commonplace, the males' flaming orange forewings catching our eyes as they sailed past us. Happily, for once with this butterfly, they were in a settling kind of mood despite the heat in the air, and allowed several of us opportunities to photograph them, as did some confiding Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*.

Our orchid-hunting meanwhile was turning up more *Ophrys*, with some fresh examples of *Ophrys neglecta* and *Ophrys incubacea* seen, and Alison's keen eyes spotting Bumblebee Orchid *Ophrys bombyliflora* hiding in the dense ground cover.

With the heat of the day mounting, it seemed like a good idea to stop for cold drinks and ice creams on the way home. We found a small café that, while the proprietor seemed a little overwhelmed by the sudden arrival of thirsty, hot orchid-hunters, was able to supply our needs! Suitably fortified, we made our way back along the coast towards Peschici.

Our list for the week had now sailed into the higher forties, resting this evening on 46 species. Might we add more tomorrow? Time would tell...

### Day 7, 28<sup>th</sup> April

We set off today in high spirits, all set for a final full day of orchid-hunting on the Gargano peninsula. Our travels today would take us down the pretty and scenic eastern coast of the peninsula, and through the Foresta Umbra too.

We opened our account near Vieste, at a site at which Jon and our 2025 Orchids of the Gargano group had enjoyed some interesting *Ophrys apulica* variations, in particular a plant with an intricately patterned, mosaic lip. Most pleasingly, this very plant was there again this year, and looking particularly fine and resplendent. Nearby, we found at last some *Ophrys paolina*, which allowed for a comparison of the lip shape and structure of the two species, in particular the trapezoidal shape of *O.*



Traditional fishing stations © John



*paolina's* lip. The site also had a final gift for us before we moved on, in the form of a hyperchromic *Ophrys apulica* with deep purple sepals – this plant stood out a mile and was easy to spot from a distance.

We moved south through the Foresta Umbra, and stopped for an hour in a particularly lush, green location before lunch. Stretching our legs, we found several fine *Ophrys biscutella* which, bathed in the aqueous sunlight streaming through fresh green leaves high over our heads, shone like beacons on the woodland floor. Our return to the vehicles for lunch was serenaded by a small herd of cows, their cowbells echoing as they threaded their way through the trees. Lunch was interrupted by another sound altogether, one that electrified Andrea – a bird calling distinctively as it moved through the canopy overhead. Andrea recognised it as a *Phylloscopus* warbler, but which one was it? It sounded strikingly like a Greenish Warbler, but this would be a very rare bird indeed in Italy. Andrea fumbled for his phone, and managed to record the bird calling – so he at least had a record of it to share with European experts. The jury, at the time of writing, is out on it... watch this space.

From here we dropped down to the coast and ridgeline near Mattinata. We had a couple of orchid targets here, *Ophrys lojaconoi* and Fragrant Orchid *Anacamptis fragrans*. The former wasn't hard to find – Jon knew where he'd seen them flowering the previous year, so it was a matter of simply walking along the road to the right area and, lo and behold, there they were. At first two plants high overhead on a bank... and latterly, a dozen more at ground level found by Steph.

And it was Steph to whom we had to award the plaudits for finding Fragrant Orchid, for half an hour later a call went up from the south side of the ridge – she'd found a lovely clump in full bloom, with four spikes to enjoy. Their jagged, cherry-red flowers were much admired and, of course, we duly inhaled their perfume – their eastern Mediterranean counterpart, Bug Orchid *Anacamptis coriophora*, is said to smell of bugs, while Fragrant Orchid is reputed to have a more pleasant fragrance. The group felt, on the whole, that they did indeed smell quite nice. Jon, outvoted by the group, detected a hint of wet socks about them!



Other orchids present here included a great many Pyramidal Orchid in their prime, some rather wizened and elderly Naked Man Orchid, and still more *Ophrys apulica*. Generating much excitement among those who saw them were several Italian Marbled White *Melanargia arge* – Ralph and Jon spotted the first of these, eliciting a carefree dash downhill in pursuit of the insect by Jon to confirm the identification... Others, meanwhile, were



enjoying a pink *Empusa pennata* mantid perched upon a Pyramidal Orchid, an altogether more obliging insect indeed.

The day had grown rather hot by mid-afternoon, so there were no murmurs of dissent when we elected to head for home one final time – a chance to explore lovely Peschici some more, have a paddle in the mirror calm Adriatic, and

look forward to a cold drink before another delicious dinner that evening.

### Day 8, departures day, 29<sup>th</sup> April

With our group's flights falling into two tranches, we departed the hotel at different times this morning. Jon took the early birds, leaving after an early breakfast at 6:30am for a smooth journey straight down to Bari. Andrea, meanwhile, took the other half of the group at 9am on a more meandering route back to Bari, incorporating some birding en route – and, of course, some more orchids, including fine *alba* Green-winged Orchid, and fresh *Neotinea tridentata*.

Jon and Andrea would like to take this opportunity to thank the guests for joining us. Jon had joked that he felt like Danny Ocean in *Ocean's Eleven*, for this was a dream-team of guests all of whom had travelled with him and/or Mariposa before. The group's spirit and camaraderie was exceptional, and their orchid-hunting skills finely honed – we all enjoyed the fruits of one another's discoveries as the week passed by all too quickly. The stories and laughter shared was a feature of every single day. What a joy this tour was from start to finish – the Gargano Peninsula's orchids more than playing their part in contributing to a terrific week. And our final species tally? A very pleasing 49 species. Well done, everyone – forza Team Mariposa!

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### Orchids of the Gargano Peninsula 22<sup>nd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> April 2026

Notes to the list: the taxonomy of European orchids is in a state of considerable flux, with extreme positions adopted (and emotions engendered) by adherents of splitting into many species (i.e. Delforge, Kreutz), or of lumping into few species (i.e. Kühn, Pedersen, Cribb). What constitutes a species is a moot point – for the purposes of recording what we find in granular detail, the latter lumping approach is unhelpful, so this checklist follows the approach of Delforge *et al.* 'Taxa' is a useful umbrella term for what may, or may not, depending on one's taxonomic position, be a valid species...

Some 90 orchid taxa have been recorded on the Gargano over the full extent of the flowering season. In the interests of economy of space and user-friendliness of this checklist, taxa included on the list are those recorded flowering on the Gargano Peninsula in the months of March, April and May – while we certainly will not see all the taxa on the checklist, we may find late-flowering examples of early taxa, or conversely early examples of later-flowering taxa, depending on the conditions of the year in question.

Where common, vernacular English names exist for taxa, these are also included in the checklist alongside the binomial scientific name. 'nf' = not flowering

|    | Taxa                                                      | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 | Day 6 | Day 7 | Day 8 |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|    | <b>GENUS ANACAMPTIS</b>                                   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 1  | Fan-lipped Orchid <i>Anacamptis collina</i>               |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 2  | Fragrant Orchid <i>Anacamptis fragrans</i>                |       |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     |       |
| 3  | Green-winged Orchid <i>Anacamptis morio</i>               |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |       |       |
| 4  | <i>Anacamptis palustris</i>                               |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 5  | Pink Butterfly Orchid <i>Anacamptis papilionacea</i>      |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |       |
| 6  | Pyramidal Orchid <i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>            |       |       |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |       |
|    | <b>GENUS CEPHALANTHERA</b>                                |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 7  | White Helleborine <i>Cephalanthera damasonium</i>         |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 8  | Sword-leaved Helleborine <i>Cephalanthera longifolium</i> |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 9  | Red Helleborine <i>Cephalanthera rubra</i>                |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|    | <b>GENUS DACTYLORHIZA</b>                                 |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 10 | Common Spotted Orchid <i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>         |       |       |       |       | ✓     |       |       |       |
| 11 | Roman Orchid <i>Dactylorhiza romana</i>                   |       |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |       |       |       |
| 12 | Elder-flowered Orchid <i>Dactylorhiza sambucina</i>       |       |       |       |       | ✓     |       |       |       |
| 13 | Frog Orchid <i>Dactylorhiza viridis</i>                   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|    | <b>GENUS EPIPACTIS</b>                                    |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 14 | Small-leaved Helleborine <i>Epipactis microphylla</i>     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|    | <b>GENUS GYMNADENIA</b>                                   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 15 | Chalk Fragrant Orchid <i>Gymnadenia conopsea</i>          |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|    | <b>GENUS HIMANTOGLOSSUM</b>                               |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 16 | Lizard Orchid <i>Himantoglossum hircinum</i>              |       |       |       | nf    | nf    |       |       |       |
| 17 | Giant Orchid <i>Himantoglossum robertianum</i>            | nf    | ✓     | ✓     |       | nf    | nf    | nf    |       |
|    | <b>GENUS LIMODORUM</b>                                    |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 18 | Violet Limodore <i>Limodorum abortivum</i>                |       |       |       | nf    | Nf    | nf    |       |       |
|    | <b>GENUS NEOTINEA</b>                                     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 19 | Milky Orchid <i>Neotinea lactea</i>                       |       | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 20 | Dense-flowered Orchid <i>Neotinea maculata</i>            |       |       | ✓     |       | ✓     |       |       |       |
| 21 | Three-toothed Orchid <i>Neotinea tridentata</i>           |       | ✓     | ✓     |       | ✓     |       |       |       |

|    | Species name                                         | Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 | Day 6 | Day 7 | Day 8 |
|----|------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 22 | Burnt Orchid <i>Neotinea ustulata</i>                |       | ✓     |       | ✓     | ✓     |       |       |       |
|    | <b>GENUS NEOTTIA</b>                                 |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 23 | Bird's-nest Orchid <i>Neottia nidus-avis</i>         |       |       |       | nf    | ✓     |       |       |       |
| 24 | Common Twayblade <i>Neottia ovata</i>                |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|    | <b>GENUS OPHRYS</b>                                  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|    | <b>Ophrys fusca group</b>                            |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 25 | <i>Ophrys lojaconoi</i>                              |       |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     |       |
| 26 | <i>Ophrys lucifera</i>                               |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 27 | <i>Ophrys lupercalis</i>                             |       | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|    | <b>Ophrys obaesa group</b>                           |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 28 | <i>Ophrys sulcata</i>                                |       | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|    | <b>Ophrys lutea group</b>                            |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 29 | Yellow Bee Orchid <i>Ophrys lutea</i>                |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |       |       |       |
| 30 | <i>Ophrys phryganae</i>                              | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |       |       | ✓     |       |
| 31 | <i>Ophrys pseudomelena</i>                           |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |       |       | ✓     |       |
|    | <b>Ophrys speculum group</b>                         |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 32 | Mirror Orchid <i>Ophrys speculum</i>                 |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|    | <b>Ophrys tenthredinifera group</b>                  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 33 | Bumblebee Orchid <i>Ophrys bombyliflora</i>          |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |       | ✓     |       |       |
| 34 | <i>Ophrys neglecta</i>                               |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |       |       |
|    | <b>Ophrys apifera group</b>                          |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 35 | Bee Orchid <i>Ophrys apifera</i>                     |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     |       |       |
|    | <b>Ophrys bornmuelleri group</b>                     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 36 | <i>Ophrys parvimaculata</i>                          |       |       |       |       | ✓     |       |       |       |
|    | <b>Ophrys tetraloniae group</b>                      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 37 | <i>Ophrys conradiae</i>                              |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|    | <b>Ophrys fuciflora group ('Late Spider-types')</b>  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 38 | <i>Ophrys apulica</i>                                | ✓     | ✓     |       | ✓     | ✓     |       | ✓     |       |
| 39 | <i>Ophrys celiensis</i>                              |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 40 | <i>Ophrys cinnabarina</i>                            |       | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 41 | <i>Ophrys paolina</i>                                |       |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     |       |
| 42 | <i>Ophrys gracilis</i>                               |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 43 | <i>Ophrys lacaitae</i>                               |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|    | <b>Ophrys oestriifera group</b>                      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 44 | <i>Ophrys montis-gargani</i>                         |       |       |       |       |       | ✓     |       |       |
| 45 | <i>Ophrys mattinatae</i>                             |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|    | <b>Ophrys argolica group</b>                         |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 46 | <i>Ophrys biscutella</i>                             |       | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |       | ✓     |       |
|    | <b>Ophrys exaltata group</b>                         |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 47 | <i>Ophrys archipelagi</i>                            |       |       | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |
| 48 | <i>Ophrys classica</i>                               |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 49 | <i>Ophrys tarquinia</i>                              |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|    | <b>Ophrys sphegodes group ('Early Spider-types')</b> |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 50 | <i>Ophrys brutia</i>                                 |       | ✓     |       | ✓     | ✓     |       |       |       |
| 51 | <i>Ophrys liburnica</i>                              |       |       | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |
|    | <b>Ophrys incubacea group</b>                        |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 52 | <i>Ophrys incubacea</i>                              | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     |       |       |
| 53 | <i>Ophrys minipassionis</i>                          |       | ✓     | ✓     |       |       |       |       |       |
| 54 | <i>Ophrys garganica</i>                              | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | ✓     | nf    |       |       |

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|  | Species name                                                      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  | <b>MISCELLANEOUS FAUNA</b>                                        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Green Huntsman Spider <i>Micrommata ligurina</i>                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Italian Three-toed Skink <i>Calchides calchides</i>               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Italian Wall Lizard <i>Podarcis siculus</i>                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Western Green Lizard <i>Lacerta bilineata</i>                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Apulian Stone Grasshopper <i>Prionotropis appula</i>              |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Gargano Scorpion <i>Euscorpius garganicus</i>                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Italian Whip Snake <i>Hierophis viridiflavus</i>                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Owl-fly <i>Lebelloides coccajus</i>                               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Egyptian Locust <i>Anacridium aegyptium</i>                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Conehead Mantis <i>Empusa pennata</i>                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | European Rose Chafer <i>Cetonia aurata</i>                        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Migrant Hawker <i>Aeshna mixta</i>                                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Green-eyed Hawker <i>Aeshna isoeles</i>                           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Dark Spreadwing <i>Lestes macrostigma</i>                         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Silver Y <i>Autographa gamma</i>                                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Yellow Shell <i>Camptogramma bilineata</i>                        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Nine-spotted Moth <i>Amata phegea</i>                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Forester <i>Adscita</i> sp.                                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |                                                                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | <b>BUTTERFLIES recorded, with thanks to Ralph for compilation</b> |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Grizzled Skipper <i>Pyrgus</i> sp.                                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Small Skipper <i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>                        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Swallowtail <i>Papilio machaon</i>                                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Scarce Swallowtail <i>Iphiclides podalirius</i>                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Italian Festoon <i>Zerynthia cassandra</i>                        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Large White <i>Pieris brassicae</i>                               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Small White <i>Pieris rapae</i>                                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Green-veined White <i>Pieris napae</i>                            |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Eastern Dappled White <i>Euchloe ausonia</i>                      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Orange Tip <i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>                          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Clouded Yellow <i>Colias croceus</i>                              |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Cleopatra <i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i>                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Brimstone <i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>                                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Painted Lady <i>Vanessa cardui</i>                                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Red Admiral <i>Vanessa atalanta</i>                               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Queen of Spain Fritillary <i>Issoria lathonia</i>                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Knapweed Fritillary <i>Melitaea phoebe</i>                        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Italian Marbled White <i>Melanargia arge</i>                      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Small Heath <i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>                          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Speckled Wood <i>Pararge aegeria</i>                              |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Wall Brown <i>Lasiommata megera</i>                               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Green Hairstreak <i>Callophrys rubi</i>                           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Small Blue <i>Cupido minimus</i>                                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Holly Blue <i>Celastrina argiolus</i>                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Green-underside Blue <i>Glaucopsyche alexis</i>                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Baton Blue <i>Pseudophilotes baton</i>                            |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Brown Argus <i>Aricia aegestis</i>                                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Chapman's Blue <i>Polyommatus thersites</i>                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Adonis Blue <i>Polyommatus bellargus</i>                          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|                                                            |                                                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|                                                            | Common Blue <i>Polyommatus icarus</i>                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            |                                                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>BIRDS recorded, with thanks to Andy for compilation</b> |                                                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Greater Flamingo <i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>            |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Feral Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i>                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Woodpigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>            |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>                         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Alpine Swift <i>Tachymarptis melba</i>                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Common Swift <i>Apus apus</i>                         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Pallid Swift <i>Apus pallida</i>                      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Ruff <i>Calidris pugnax</i>                           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Curlew Sandpiper <i>Calidris ferruginea</i>           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>                         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Little Stint <i>Calidris minuta</i>                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>            |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Spotted Redshank <i>Tringa erythropus</i>             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Collared Pratincole <i>Glareola pratincola</i>        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Slender-billed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Little Gull <i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Mediterranean Gull <i>Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus</i> |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Yellow-legged Gull <i>Larus michahellis</i>           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Little Tern <i>Sternula albifrons</i>                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Caspian Tern <i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Whiskered Tern <i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>              |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Scopoli's Shearwater <i>Calonectris diomedea</i>      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Yelkouan Shearwater <i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | White Stork <i>Ciconia ciconia</i>                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>            |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Squacco Heron <i>Ardeola ralloides</i>                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Sacred Ibis <i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                                            | Honey Buzzard <i>Pernis apivorus</i>                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |                                                      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  | Short-toed Eagle <i>Circaetus gallicus</i>           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>              |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Pallid Harrier <i>Circus macrourus</i>               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Montagu's Harrier <i>Circus pygargus</i>             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Black Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i>                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Common Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>                            |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | European Bee-eater <i>Merops apiaster</i>            |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Great Spotted Woodpecker<br><i>Dendrocopos major</i> |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | European Green Woodpecker <i>Picus viridis</i>       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Lesser Kestrel <i>Falco naumanni</i>                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Red-footed Falcon <i>Falco vespertinus</i>           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Monk Parakeet <i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Golden Oriole <i>Oriolus oriolus</i>                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Woodchat Shrike <i>Lanius senator</i>                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>                              |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Jackdaw <i>Corvus monedula</i>                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Hooded Crow <i>Corvus cornix</i>                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Raven <i>Corvus corax</i>                            |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Marsh Tit <i>Poecile palustris</i>                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Blue Tit <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Great Tit <i>Parus major</i>                         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i>                      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Crested Lark <i>Galerida cristata</i>                |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Zitting Cisticola <i>Cisticola juncidis</i>          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Great Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | House Martin <i>Delichon urbicum</i>                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Greenish Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Long-tailed Tit <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Cetti's Warbler <i>Cettia cetti</i>                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Eastern Orphean Warbler <i>Curruca crassirostris</i> |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Sardinian Warbler <i>Curruca melanocephala</i>       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Eastern Subalpine Warbler <i>Curruca cantillans</i>  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Whitethroat <i>Curruca communis</i>                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Firecrest <i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Nuthatch <i>Sitta europaea</i>                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Short-toed Treecreeper <i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>                  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |                                                          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  | Mistle Thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>                           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | European Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Nightingale <i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Common Redstart <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Rock Thrush <i>Monticola saxatilis</i>                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Stonechat <i>Saxicola torquata</i>                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Whinchat <i>Saxicola rubetra</i>                         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>               |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Italian Sparrow <i>Passer italiae</i>                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | White Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>                      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Black-headed Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava ssp. feldegg</i> |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Blue-headed Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava ssp. flava</i>    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Tawny Pipit <i>Anthus campestris</i>                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Greenfinch <i>Chloris chloris</i>                        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>                        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Serin <i>Serinus serinus</i>                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Corn Bunting <i>Emberiza calandra</i>                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Cirl Bunting <i>Emberiza cirlus</i>                      |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |                                                          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

[www.mariposanature.com](http://www.mariposanature.com)



Gargano landscape © Jo

## Galleries

All images that follow were kindly shared by tour participants



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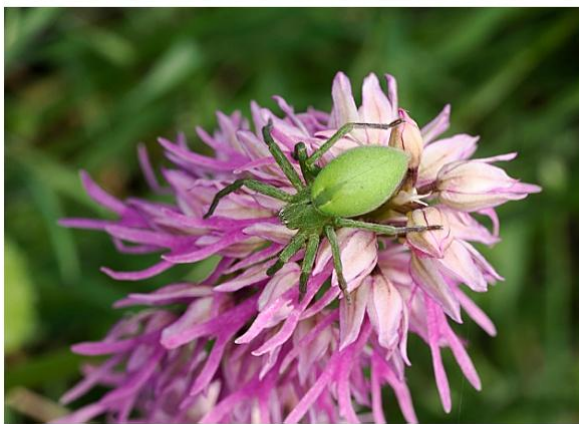
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Images © Steph

**And finally...** Our [Orchids of the Gargano Peninsula](#) tour for 2027 is already taking bookings. We can't wait to return to this orchid wonderland next year. And in the meantime, we've other orchid tours in 2027 visiting other species-rich areas of Europe with places still available to join us (see below), and have some further exciting orchid tours in the pipeline for 2028 – watch this space!

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[Orchids of Crete](#)

[Orchids of Sicily](#)