



## **Flowers of Crete Report on Achievements in 2009**

### **Reserve at Pezoulia**

Dr Rosemary John and I continued our study of the species growing on the reserve 'Pezoulia' at Vrahassi – the land generously offered as a nature reserve by Jane and David Sharp. This work continued into the summer, when vegetation died back completely and, so far, around 150 species have been identified with at least nine confirmed endemics.

Pressure of work and ill health has prevented us from going to the reserve over the autumn period, but we hope to be able to start surveying again shortly.

### **Programme of speakers**

Our programme of speakers started off with an excellent presentation by Nicholas Turland, Associate Curator and Co-Director, Flora of China Project, Missouri Botanical Gardens, and co-author of the reference book 'Flowers of Crete'. Nick gave a talk with slideshow presentation on the Endangered Endemic Flowers of Crete. The event was well attended with over 150 people staying on for refreshments and chat. The venue, BioAroma, the essential oils factory on the outskirts of Aghios Nikolaos, was kindly provided by Sakis and Kallia Padiaditis, as were the excellent refreshments.

There was a raffle to raise funds for Flowers of Crete with a first prize of a week-end cruise for six people out of Heraklion. This wonderful prize was donated by Yiorgos Nicolaides of Crete-Sailing – [www.crete-sailing.com](http://www.crete-sailing.com)

The next event was a slideshow and talk by Julia Jones, President and Founder of Flowers of Crete. This talk was entitled Flowers of the Lassithi and once again it was held at BioAroma. As was to be expected, we did not draw a capacity audience, but nevertheless, the evening drew a crowd of 50 and was well received.

The final event of the year was a presentation by Dr Jennifer Moody Research Fellow of the University of Texas at Austin, and co-author of 'The Making of the Cretan Landscape'. This fascinating talk was entitled "Flood, Feast and Famine, adapting to climate change in ancient and historic Crete" and Dr Moody led us through the events that helped to shape Crete as we know it today.

We were most grateful to everyone who contributed raffle prizes to these events. Our fund raising ventures are essential to keep Flowers of Crete running, as we receive no direct sponsorship or funding.

### **Art Exhibition – Precious Heritage**

There was an art exhibition to promote the work of Flowers of Crete. This was held at the Municipal Gallery in Aghios Nikolaos from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> June. The exhibition featured my botanical paintings and photographs and was held in conjunction with the work of Lynn Fiona Ellison and Leanne McCormack.

We made a number of very useful contacts and talked to many holidaymakers and locals about the need for conservation on the island.

### **Bazaars**

We held a number of bazaars at Cindy's Bar in Aghios Nikolaos and these were successful in raising some much needed funds for Flowers of Crete. They are, however, hard work and we are competing with many other charities for a share of the available donations. In view of the current financial crisis and the lack of volunteers, we have decided not to plan any further bazaars for the next few months. For anyone interested, however, we can provide marmalade, chutney, and Flowers of Crete bookmarks, greetings cards and promotional goods directly and through the website.

### **Calendar and other promotional goods**

We produced a calendar of Endemic Species for 2010 and this, once again, proved very popular. We have also produced T-shirts, pens, mugs, greeting cards and Rosemary's highly successful embroidered bookmarks. The sale of these items contributes enormously to the funds for the work we are doing and we are hoping to put these items on the website in 2010 to increase sales.

### **Red Palm Weevil**

Rosemary found one of these in the square at Elounda, and because they pose such a threat to Phoenix theophrasti, the only date palm

native in Europe and which is found only on Crete, we decided to do what we could to inform as many people as possible about them and about possible control methods. We mounted a poster campaign, putting up posters in Elounda and Agios Nikolaos and e-mailing copies to all our contacts on Crete. Rosemary and I also had a meeting with the Deputy Mayor and other members of the Dimos in Aghios Nikolaos to discuss measures to be taken to prevent the spread of the Red Palm Weevil. Although we have been in contact with Dr Vicky Soroker – an Israeli Professor who is an acknowledged expert on the weevil, we found it difficult to convince the dimos that her suggestions for the use of pheremone traps were a good idea. We now have a sample of the chemical pheremones for a trial study but so far have not been in a position to use them.

Rosemary was told earlier in the year that some of the *P. theophrasti* at Preveli were infested. I went with a Croatian botanist Dr Anamarija Partl to take a look and we found no sign of damage in the palms we found on the beach. However, we have since been informed by MAICH that there are infected trees at Preveli and that they are 'monitoring' the situation.

We have established an online petition to the European Parliament asking for help to combat the threat, but this seems to be of little value as the numbers signing have been disappointingly low.

We continue to find weevils in the Elounda area and can only assume that they are continuing their flight across the north coast towards Vai.

### **Botanising trip with Nick Turland – June Psiloritis**

Rosemary and I were fortunate enough to spend a couple of days with Nick Turland and his wife Christine and to go out with them into the high mountains of Psiloritis. We found a number of endemic species, including *Viola fragrans*, which we had never seen before and these images have been added to our database.

### **Collecting *Campanula spatulata***

There is a research programme at the University of Florida into the DNA of the endemic *Campanula spatulata* and we were asked by Nick Turland if we could help the botanists there by sending leaf samples of any plants we came across. This we have done and we hope that this will help with the project.

## **Seeds for Cretan Garden at Sunderland Winter Gardens**

We have continued to send seeds of Cretan endemics to the Winter Gardens in Sunderland and in exchange they have sent us small *P. theophrasti* which were grown from seed collected at Vai a few years ago. The majority of these are thriving and have been placed at a new development, Bayview, on the south coast. This company is intending to plant only native species in their grounds and we hope that the palms we have donated will thrive in this environment. In view of the threat to Vai and Preveli from the weevil, we intend to collect viable seed to send to England for growing on, as a back up in case the worst happens and the palms on Crete disappear.

## **Soirees and Spring Fair at Vrahassi**

Courtesy of Jane and David Sharp we held a number of soirees and a spring fair at Vrahassi. The soirees in particular were very successful and great fun. Sadly, Jane and David no longer have the Revolution Bar so these soirees are abandoned for the time being, but we do hope to start up again in a new location in the autumn.

## **Trip out with photographer Peter Lilja for photography for National Geographic Magazine**

I was contacted by a Swedish photographer who had been commissioned by National Geographic Magazine to photograph endemic species on Crete. Rosemary and I spent two days with him showing him orchids and other endemics in the east of the island, and information on some in other areas of Crete. He then went on to central and western Crete to find more species for an article which appeared in the magazine.

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## **Visit to Cavo Sidero**

Members of the Committee of Flowers of Crete were invited to go over to the Cavo Sidero development to discuss the impact on the environment of the proposed Golf resort. In the end, Rosemary and I went to meet the Director Tim Hill and botanists responsible for the surveys done on the land involved. It was a very interesting day and

we saw a lot of aspects of the development and asked a lot of questions. We came away less than convinced of the viability of such a project and very concerned about the impact on the local environment and some of the very rare plants and animals that live there.

### **Visit to the Orthodox Academy of Crete at Kolymbari**

Together with Sakis Padiaditis from BioAroma, Rosemary and I went to meet with Dr Lucas Andrianos of the Orthodox Academy of Crete to discuss the proposed art and photography exhibitions to be held in conjunction with an International Conference on Biodiversity in June 2010. We took the opportunity to visit the newly established Botanic gardens and Museum of Cretan Flora at the Academy. Sakis has provided some plants from BioAroma for the gardens. We also went into the mountains above the Omalos Plateau to photograph species not seen in the east of the island. The Orthodox Academy and Flowers of Crete proved to have common interests in education and the conservation of threatened species. We have been offered the use of the laboratory at the Academy and are to collaborate with the Director and the well-respected French botanist Prof. Jacques Zafran, sharing information on the location of endemic and threatened species and on their conservation. The Academy has also helped to spread the information on the Red Palm Weevil – our poster is displayed prominently and is seen by delegates to all their conferences.

**Julia Jones, President, Flowers of Crete**