

SHORT NOTES

A further new record and a review of the Greek island distribution of the Ringed Amphisbaenian (*Blanus strauchi*)

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In the most recently published checklist of the Greek lizards, the Ringed Amphisbaenian, *Blanus strauchi* (Bedriaga, 1884) (REPTILIA, AMPHISBAENIDAE), was listed as occurring in Greece on just two of the Dodecanese islands, i.e. KOS and RHODES (Chondropoulos 1986, *Amphibia-Reptilia* 7: 217-235). *B. strauchi* is predominantly a Middle Eastern species, found in Israel, Lebanon, Syria, northern Iraq, southern and western Turkey, also on Cyprus (Alexander 1966, *Copeia* 2: 205-224).

In recent years this amphisbaenid has been found on a further five Greek islands. These records are summarised below.

- KASTELLORIZO - Single specimen recorded (Valakos & Papapanagiotou 1985, *Brit.Herp. Soc.Bull.* 13: 9-12).
- SYMI - Eight specimens recorded (Buttle 1995, *Brit.Herp.Soc.Bull.* 52: 33-37).
- KALYMNOS - New record. Observation verified by M. Reinhold. During the course of a two-week field trip undertaken by the author, 6th-19th May 1998, found to be relatively abundant on Kalymnos, thirty-three specimens being recorded.
- LEROS - Two specimens recorded (Buttle 1990, *Brit.Herp.Soc.Bull.* 34: 34-38).
- SAMOS - Single specimen recorded by Dimitropoulos (pers. comm. 1990; Buttle 1990, *Brit.Herp.Soc.Bull.* 34: 34-38).

B. strauchi is a specialised, almost entirely fossorial animal, feeding especially on ants, ant larvae, and other small invertebrates. It rarely comes to the surface except as a result of heavy rainfall, cf. *B. cinereus* (Arnold & Burton 1978, *A Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Britain and Europe*. Collins, London, p.182). The latest records from Kalymnos coincided with several days of heavy rain, the thirty-three examples being found beneath rocks and other ground cover, turned during daylight hours. The observations on Symi also resulted from turning rocks following heavy rainfall.

In dry weather conditions this species is not easily found. Future surveys, especially in similar conditions to those experienced by the author on Kalymnos and Symi, are considered likely to result in *B. strauchi* being recorded on further Greek islands in this region.



The fauna of archaeological sites in Athens. I. Ancient Agora, Filopappou & Kerameikos

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Introduction

Large archaeological sites in Athens are areas that support a significant variety of animals as they usually have an important vegetation cover and a variety of different microhabitats such as open stony areas, low annual vegetation, Mediterranean-type shrubs, coniferous stands and in some cases, standing or running water. Although they include some of the few remaining green areas of the city, they have not been studied properly. Scattered references from foreign visitors, mainly in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th but including some recent reviews (Lamberton & Rotroff 1985, *Birds of the Athenian Agora*. Amer. School of Classical Studies, Athens & Princeton, 32 pp.; Dragoumis 1988, *Nea Oikologia* 50: 16-19; Tsounis 1999, *Epta Imeres Kathimerinis* 31.1.99: 20-21), are not sufficient to give the proper picture of the present day situation. The large number of visitors and the unplanned management are the main threats to these particular, semi-natural ecosystems.

Methods

Within the framework of the plans for the unification of the archaeological sites of Athens, a number of surveys were carried out in June 1997, in three of the most important large archaeological sites: Ancient Agora, the area around the Filopappos monument and the adjacent hill of the Nymphs, and the Kerameikos cemetery. The sites were surveyed during morning hours on weekdays in order to avoid the presence of many visitors. All the major habitats were covered. Specimens were collected where necessary and identified in the laboratory. Bats were identified using a bat detector and analysing the sounds obtained in the laboratory. The method was identical to the method used in a previous survey carried out in the same areas (Hellenic Zoological Society 1996, *Study and conservation of bats in urban areas of Greece*. Final report. Fauna and Flora Preservation Society. 32 pp.). The following list is not exhaustive as no traps were set to catch small mammals and invertebrates and the project was not long-term or at least on a year-long basis. Birds were observed only on Kerameikos.

Results

Species	Ancient Agora	Filopappou-Nymfon	Kerameikos
Mammals			
<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	+	+	+
<i>Pipistrellus kuhli</i>	+	+	
<i>Erinaceus concolor</i>		+	+
Birds			+
<i>Apus apus</i>			+
<i>Delichon urbica</i>			+
<i>Hippolais pallida</i>			+
<i>Hirundo rustica</i>			+
<i>Passer domesticus</i>			+
<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>			+
<i>Turdus merula</i>			+
<i>Muscicapa striata</i>			+
<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			+
Reptiles			
<i>Testudo marginata</i>	+	+	
<i>Chalcides ocellatus</i>	+	+	
<i>Lacerta trilineata</i>	+	+	
<i>Elaphe situla</i>		+	
Amphibians			
<i>Bufo viridis</i>			+
Fish			
<i>Gambusia affinis</i>			+
Odonata			
<i>Ischnura elegans</i>			+
<i>Aeshna</i> sp.			+
<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>			+
Lepidoptera			
<i>Arctogeia napi</i> (Pieridae)	+	+	+
<i>Pontia daplidice</i> (Pieridae)	+	+	+
<i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i> (Pieridae)	+	+	
<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i> (Lycaenidae)	+	+	
<i>Carcharodus alceae</i> (Hesperiidae)	+		+
<i>Thymelicus acteon</i> (Hesperiidae)	+		+
<i>Lycaeides idas</i> (Lycaenidae)			+
<i>Agrius</i> sp. (Sphingidae)			+

* The list of birds includes only breeding species that remain in the area during June. The time available was not sufficient for a complete survey as it is expected that several species may use the site during spring or autumn migration or for wintering.

** All the birds that were observed, except for *Apus apus*, nest in the site or in the nearby houses or trees. The swifts may nest further away as they were not seen flying low over Kerameikos.

Discussion

Ancient Agora

In relation to the fauna, the site can be divided into three zones: the archaeological site itself, the densely vegetated area around it and the area around Thiseion. The most important zone for the fauna is the second where the highest populations of reptiles and butterflies were observed. The area around Thiseio, although covered with dense vegetation, is not significant because it is being disturbed both by visitors and by a continuous and intense management such as clearing of under-storey vegetation, use of pesticides etc. The archaeological site which is almost bare of vegetation, does not seem to support significant populations. Nevertheless, the existence of some big trees and shrubs helps the internal migration of the fauna.

Filopappou and Nymfon hills

The most important habitat for the fauna seems to be the slope behind the small theatre of Dora Stratou. In this area, the largest populations of reptiles and butterflies were observed.

Another interesting area is that between the Filopappou theatre and the hill of Nymphs, where good populations exist.

Areas with sparse vegetation, with dense lucerne and with ornamental plants as well as areas with a high number of visitors, do not favour the presence of satisfactory populations.

Kerameikos cemetery

The most important habitats for the fauna are the following:

- The Iridanos river because it supports significant populations of the mosquito fish *Gambusia affinis*, of *Bufo viridis* and of dragonflies and other invertebrates which in turn are important food sources for other animals (birds, bats etc.)
- The olive and pine groves that are found between the museum and the church of Agia Triada. In this area, nest all the bird species that were observed except the sparrows and the swallows.



Observations of some rare bird species in Crete, Greece

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This note presents some new data on the avifauna of Crete, according to several observations made by the author during the last 10 years. These species or subspecies include some of the known accidental vagrants of the Western Palearctic as well as some regular species that have never or only occasionally been found wintering to the island before.

Gavia stellata: An adult individual was recorded at Corfos bay (Elounda) on 12/12/1997. This is the first known record for Crete.

Bubulcus ibis: During the last 15 years various observers (including the author) have seen this species at several sites on the island especially during the spring migration (mostly in May). So, the species is becoming a regular migrant, not merely a vagrant. Moreover, there are also new records during the winter months. Five individuals were observed roosting in Irakleio harbor or foraging at adjacent fields and wet areas, during the winter of 1996-1997 (December to March). In January 1998 five birds were observed on three different sites: an individual at Istron Bay (14/1/98), two on Tiflos river (16/1/98), and (observer: