

CROCONUTS!



Crocus baytopiorum



Cyclamen alpinum

A glorious week of sunny weather has encouraged the early geophytes into flower, and it now becomes a job of getting to them all in time before their all too brief moment of glory has passed. weekend lockdowns don't help! Fortunately, it's possible to visit two of three good sites in a day and these just happen to have some of the best spring species, especially crocuses. So, for all you croconuts out there here is my day out in the Taurus.

The major downside of crocuses is they don't open until its warm enough so there is little point in leaving too early. I still did as I wanted to pinpoint good locations for my afternoon return. I quickly found a population of *Crocus fleischeri*, still shut tight of course. The same scene greeted me on the light screes that the gorgeous ice-blue *C. baytopiorum* calls home. The ground was still frozen hard in places, but the sun was about to top the ridge and any of them in the sun already had swiftly popped open. While I waited for the rest to open, I drove onto a third site where there was a good number of pretty *C. biflorus* subsp. *isauricus* in flower among the cedar forest. The population here was mainly white with a flush of lilac. *Cyclamen alpinum* was also common here, but they are even more numerous where





Crocus biflorus subsp. *isauricus* in various colour forms



Crocus fleischeri



C. baytopiorum was growing, forming beautiful spreading patches among the scree. The crocus is only known from a couple of locations but is numerous where it occurs. Here they grew with more of their widespread cousin *C. biflorus* subsp. *isauricus* and bright yellow *Gagea granatellii* with its densely hairy pedicels and little bulbils in the leaf axils. The combination of the two crocuses and the pink of the cyclamen was wonderful, but I had to keep moving if I was to catch my third crocus in good form.

Driving back up to the pass, the many *Crocus fleischeri* had opened and they shone beautifully in the lower afternoon sun, illuminating the bristling orange-red styles. Here and there were decent clusters of flowers that allowed me to capture their rather bleak habitat. Indeed, unless one knew they were there, one would be unlikely to stop in the scattered juniper woods and pseudo-steppe they call home. Yet again *C. biflorus* subsp. *isauricus* was here in good numbers, but this time showing a far greater variation in colour form, some even have entirely violet outer tepals akin to *Crocus sieberi* from Crete. Enough perhaps to get croconut splitters hard at work! The subtler pallid pink of *Colchicum burtii* was also common, distinguished from other similar species by its





Crocus antalyensis



Crocus flavus subsp. *sarichinarensis* in various colour forms



Crocus danfordiae yellow form



Crocus antalyensis dark form

ciliate leaves and filaments. In the autumn the same areas are peppered with *C. pallasii*. What is interesting is just how numerous many of these species are and it is a case of never having had the time to go out looking for them in the past. No excuses now except for those annoying lockdowns.

A few days later and I was on my way north to a wonderful area of old growth black pines, climbing to 1600 metres on a cold, but sunny day. I soon found a good area with both *Crocus biflorus* subsp. *isauricus* and the egg-yolk yellow of *C. danfordiae*, though all were sulking in the cold. I managed to find a ridge out of the wind and despite the low temperatures the crocuses were opening. An odd looking one with fine-cut styles caught my eye - it was *C. antalyensis* and I had three species in a ten square metre space!

Next day I was off again, picking up more lovely forms of *C. antalyensis* first, along with some wonderful displays of *Cyclamen alpinum*. Higher still and I found what I was really after with the first of two good populations of *C. flavus* subsp. *sarichinarensis*, with some lovely forms on show. The I was lucky to get them even half open as the weather was on the turn, with flakes of snow in the air and the crocuses would soon be shutting up shop again. Driving home I was already plotting which mountain to tackle next. I am becoming a croconut!

