

ORNITHOLIDAYS' TOUR TO PORTUGAL AT LEISURE
Hills, Plains & Lagoons in Spring

05 – 12 May 2010



Leaders: Frank McClintock and Paul Rogers

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A Personal Diary

Wednesday 5th May

Continuing problems of volcanic dust clouds causes some apprehension about air travel from Manchester and London Gatwick but our fears are unfounded as both flights land ahead of schedule only 15 minutes apart. Soon we are getting to know our companions for the coming week and meeting Frank our guide for the exploration of his adopted country. Red tape associated with the hiring of vehicles can often be lengthy and today it is no exception and is complicated by empty fuel tanks. We make it to the nearest petrol station, refuel and drive for ten minutes to a wetland area on the edge of Faro Airport. Great Crested and Little Grebes, Common Pochard, Eurasian Coot and Common Moorhens are familiar but wheeling White Storks, flashy European Bee-eaters, flying Eurasian Hoopoe and dashing Azure-winged Magpies in warming sunshine are not. Cetti's Warblers dart along a nearby bed of reeds, confirmation comes from an occasional burst of their loud song. A dull greenish bird feeding in a seeding *Tamarisk* causes some confusion but looking through the telescope it is clearly a weaver bird, surely it should be much further south. The problem is solved when Frank informs us that a number of Black-headed Weavers have escaped from collections and are now breeding in suitable habitats around Faro.

The salt pans in the opposite direction offer us more delights, an adult Kentish Plover has two chicks in attendance, resembling woolly pom-poms on legs and two male Red-crested Pochards mingle with Mallard and Gadwall. The muddy edges of the pans provide food for Dunlin, Sanderling, Common Redshank, Ruddy Turnstones and Pied Avocets. Pairs of Black-winged Stilts draw attention to themselves as they fly from one place to another constantly calling to each other.

We enjoy the warm sun and the birds as we eat our picnic lunch before making our way to the Quinta, near Santa Clara, our base for the week. A stop at a roadside café breaks our journey and Barn Swallows here already have newly fledged young, the first brood of three that most will raise in this southern part of Europe. Wooded hillsides are covered in the white flowers of *Cistus landifer* and the purple of French Lavender, *Lavendula luisieri*. It is a colourful unspoilt landscape. After an hour or so the tarmac road ends and we continue for four kilometres along a dusty track to the Quinta situated on a hillside overlooking a lake, the Barragera de Santa Clara. It is a tranquil and peaceful place well away from the beaten track. A cold drink is most welcome before we relax in these unspoilt surroundings to the sounds of European Turtle Doves, Blackcaps and Common Nightingales. After dinner we retire early to bed, after an early start we need to recharge our batteries and look forward to new horizons in the morning.

Thursday 6th May

With breakfast at the civilised time of 8.30 am, some of the early risers explore our new surroundings. The hotel car park is a popular viewing place offering extensive views over the hillside and the lake. A European Turtle Dove purrs contentedly from the top of a dead tree that it shares, first, with a Great Spotted Woodpecker and then briefly with a juvenile European Green Woodpecker. Common Nightingales sing unseen from the depths of thick bushes but a male European Serin treats us to his cheery song from the top of a nearby bush.

After breakfast we make the short journey to the Corte Brique valley and walk through an open Cork Oak wood, *Quercus suber*, the understory is a patchwork of colour, white, purple and yellow. The oaks here are large and ancient and a tree can live for over 250 years. We pause to admire one of the oldest trees in Portugal. A handsome Woodchat Shrike perches on top of one of its smaller neighbours and both Blue Tits and Eurasian Nuthatches have nests in the gnarled trunks of another old tree. High in the blue sky circle a pair of Griffon Vultures, a species not normally found in this part of the country. First Tongue Orchids, *Serapias lingua*, and then a colourful dragonfly by the narrow path deflect our attention from the birds. However, soon are all focused on a pair of raptors that appear over the hillside, Frank is particularly excited

as they are European Honey Buzzards, a new sighting for him. As they ride the thermals we ponder whether they are late migrants or a breeding pair, only a few pairs breed in Portugal. A pair of European Bee-eaters and a group of Azure-winged Magpies add some avian colour.

Crossing a small stream and climbing up a slope brings us into open farmland, a change of habitat, favoured by Thekla Larks, many Corn Buntings and a pair of Woodchat Shrikes. The flower rich meadows attract butterflies, active in the sunshine, Meadow Browns, Large Whites and Small Coppers are numerous and familiar but Spanish Fritillary and Spanish Marbled Whites are new to most of us. Our walk takes us past small houses and small holdings each with their own collection of dogs and although their barks seem threatening all are very friendly. A small wooded slope near one such dwelling produces a much wanted species for Barbara, a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, but not everyone is lucky enough to see this difficult species.

The diverse sights and sounds dictate slow progress and with lunch back at the Quinta beckoning we increase our pace but a fine male Golden Oriole in a distant tree and a Black-winged Kite perched on a telegraph pole necessitate further stops. The walk has given us a healthy appetite and Daniela's fine spread is much appreciated. The afternoon is one of leisure and we all do our own thing, some walk, some write diaries but all enjoy the tranquillity of our surroundings.

After dinner we complete the checklist of the day's sightings and Frank outlines the arrangements for tomorrow's full day.

Friday 7th May

Today we head for the plains. It will be a long full day so we make an early start at 6.00 am after some much needed tea or coffee and breakfast. After an hour we stop in the town of Castro Verde for an extra shot of caffeine before we scan the plains for birds. We pull up alongside a small barn, an excellent view point over the wide rolling hills and gentle valleys. Initial impressions that we are in a bird free zone but once we search with binoculars and telescopes it is a very different story.

A lone male Great Bustard struts up a grassy slope and a pair of Black-bellied Sandgrouse pick their way through the furrows of a recently ploughed strip, a practice carried out to encourage bird life. Nearby are several Stone Curlews, a few occasionally taking to the air revealing long narrow wings and black and white wing bars. The hard "rack-ack" calls of a European Roller demand we turn around to admire its splendid colours and initiate gasps of delight. A Thekla Lark poses on a large stone, with a beak full of food for hungry youngsters and Cattle Egrets dodge the feet of a flock of feeding sheep whilst a Little Owl perches on a pile of stones. A Black-eared Wheatear is a little distant for us to appreciate fully as we peer through the scopes, a Collared Pratincole flies tern-like over the dirt track but disappears before everyone can see it. Time passes quickly as we enjoy new species in excellent viewing conditions. The early start reduces the shimmering effect of the heat haze but in truth the cold northerly breeze is a contributing factor.

A deep rutted track takes us over more extensive plains and provides an interesting driving challenge as well as good views of several displaying male Little Bustards. A medieval church perched on top of a high hill offers a wonderful panorama of the vast wide open spaces dotted with small farmsteads. A pair of Griffon Vultures glides effortlessly at eye level but the sight of a quartering male Montagu's Harrier below us is a memorable one. Several Great Bustards share fields with a few cattle all clearly visible from our high vantage point.

At the bottom of the steep descent a Great Bustard flies in front of the mini-buses, now we are able to appreciate the size of the bird, the largest species in Europe. Obliging it lands in a roadside field, so we enjoy more good views through the scopes and for good measure we compare it with its smaller cousin. We experience a taste of rural life with a visit to a local cafe in a small village. The rest of the morning we pick our way along more farm tracks, making frequent stops to view Calandra Larks, Black Kites and more Little Bustards. A cork oak wood, known as "Montados", gives us good views of several Eurasian Hoopoes, much to Soo's delight, they are probably nesting in the holes in the older oaks, and we are pleased with views of a confiding Woodlark that walks just a few yards in front of the vehicles. A male Montagu's Harrier is on the right and a Black-winged Kite on the left, the former flies out of sight but the latter perches on a dead tree for

us to admire. This species has a foothold in mainland Europe and is largely confined to the southern part of the Iberian Peninsula.

Every post along the tarmac road is capped by large untidy nests of White Storks that they share with large numbers of House Sparrows in their basements. The heads of young storks peep above the rims of the nests and many adults search the fields for insects to feed these youngsters. The lines that link these posts provide excellent look out perches for a few Iberian Grey Shrikes.

The beautiful gorge where the Rio Guadiana cuts through the rocks, is known as Pulo do Lobo, “the Wolf’s Leap”, and is a picturesque picnic spot. Lunch is constantly interrupted by birds as Crag Martins mix with Barn and Red-rumped Swallows and a male Blue Rock Thrush serenades us with its fluty song, amplified by the steep slopes of the gorge. An immature Short-toed Eagle hovers against the breeze over the hillside, searching for reptiles which are their major food item. It appears several times unlike two Bonelli’s Eagles that fly high over the river. We pass many more stork nests as we return; one dead tree supports eight nests reminiscent of an Art Nouveau Candalabra. A group, or “drove”, (as we learn later) of Great Bustards close to the road interrupts our journey, so we make an unscheduled stop by a field gate. From the safety of the pull in we watch a flock of 30 birds, some of the males exhibiting their elaborate courtship displays that impress us far more than the females which pass by in haughty fashion heads held high above the tall grasses. These are magic moments, one of the highlights of the tour.

A reed-fringed pond in a field of a large ranch at Carraqueira is viewed under overcast skies and a brisk cool breeze. A Great Reed Warbler blasts out its scratchy song and only perches on top of the swaying reeds for a brief time, nevertheless it is long enough for us all to see well. A male Marsh Harrier puts three Red-crested Pochard to flight, when James draws our attention to a flying Eurasian Spoonbill. Shortly afterwards we have more views of a Black-winged Kite and we are fortunate to see this species so well.

A high bridge over a small river is the last venue of the day, from here we hope to see a Common Kingfisher but today we are out of luck, but a singing Melodious Warbler is some compensation. We are back at the Quinta just before 7.30 pm and delay dinner for an hour. After dinner we complete a long check list before retiring to bed, tired after a very long but most rewarding day.

Saturday 8th May

Most of the group take the advantage of a leisurely breakfast at 8.30 am before leaving for the Viaduct Valley only a short drive away close to Santa Clara. The skies are leaden and the stiff breeze blowing from the north uncomfortable, not the best bird watching conditions. European Bee-eaters fly low over the valley adding some much needed colour to the subdued conditions and a pair of Melodious Warblers is busy nest building in a thick bush. A Woodlark takes a dust bath on the side of the wide track staying long enough for us to pick out the important identification features. Common Nightingales, Cetti’s Warblers and Golden Orioles sing briefly but sightings are at a premium. However, we do add a new species to the list, Common Waxbill, this is another species that has escaped from collections and found the environment suitable and now has established a thriving population.

Late morning coffee at a garage in Santa Clara is brought to an abrupt stop by a sudden shower, so it is a dash for shelter and back for lunch. The weather forecast for later in the day is not too encouraging so most take the opportunity to relax but others take a lift along the track to the now “infamous bridge”. Here a sheltered valley is out of the wind and it is a most delightful walk along a small stream. Birds are in short supply with the exception of Common Nightingales that sing lustily, other aspects of natural history attract our attention. A Small-leaved Helleborine, *Epipactis microphylla*, is in flower not as colourful as many orchid species but still attractive, while a torpid Marsh Fritillary allows itself to be photographed at close range. James does well to find a small nest of a Paper Wasp hanging from the vegetation. The surface of a small pool is rippled by several small frogs seeking safety at our approach and close observation reveals several small heads poking out of the green blanket weed. The two species are present Edible and Iberian Frogs.

We time the walk perfectly as the rain returns just as we reach the minibus. Hot drinks and a warm log fire back at the Quinta are most welcome, I was not expecting to appreciate a roaring log fire so much in Portugal in May!

Sunday 9th May

Roger's "magical iPod" reveals a very gloomy weather forecast for the day so plan B is adopted, instead of going up into the mountains we decide to go north and to the coast. We leave at 7.30 am in heavy rain, this makes the drive along the track a little tricky with a few slips and slides but once on the metalled road we make fast progress for the next hour or so. Heavy showers come and go under black skies, a drink and comfort stop at Carcel allows us to sample rural life early on a Sunday morning. The café is patronised by men smoking, drinking beer and putting the world to right - fortunately they are outside on the terrace.

After another half an hour the Bay of Biscay comes into view edged by power stations and industrial units. A dirt track leads us to a more rural environment. After the heavy rains the holes are full of water but thankfully the track is driveable. Parking at the top of an ancient sand dune there is a superb vista of the Lagoa de Santo Andre. Now the skies are blue and dotted with a few white clouds and no threat of immediate rain, although the waters of the distant Atlantic Ocean are rough the lagoon is calm, it looks full of promise.

The sound of a Great Spotted Cuckoo causes instant excitement with the bird perched on top of a Wild Olive, but only for a short time. We track it as it flies over a marsh towards a line of Poplars. Soon it is relocated in the telescopes and we all have good but distant views of the bird, along with a Short-toed Eagle in the same tree. It is a good start to the day. The tide is out, exposing extensive mud banks, large numbers of waders dot the mud but the light is behind us and the telescopes provide excellent viewing. Many of the species are familiar but not always in familiar plumage, the most abundant species is knot, now we know why they are called Red Knot, as lots of them sport brick red plumage. Dunlin have their black bellies, Sanderling have russet head markings and Grey Plovers are anything but grey, with jet black waistcoats they are particularly smart, Ruddy Turnstones resemble colourful tortoiseshell cats. Other species include Common Ringed Plover, Bar-tailed Godwits, Little Stints and Little Egrets. Eurasian Spoonbills are busy feeding at the water's edge. Unfortunately we are unable to read the rings of two colour ringed birds. Where were these two birds ringed as chicks? We will never know!

A track through some Stone Pines leads to a reed-fringed arm of the lagoon. Here a pair of Western Marsh Harriers appears to have a nest as they constantly quarter the reeds and drop down into the same spot at regular intervals. Yellow Wagtails flit over the wet margins of the marsh, not surprisingly their head pattern reveals them as *iberiae* race. Several Red-crested Pochard are with the more numerous Mallards and Eurasian Coot in the shallow waters of the lagoon. A Purple Heron flies directly overhead to be greeted with an explosion of shutters from a battery of cameras, it sounds like machine gun fire but fortunately the bird seems unaffected by its unusual welcome. It is certainly a lot closer than a pair of Peregrine Falcons that circle high against the blue sky. Both Great Reed and Savi's Warblers sing from the depths of the reed bed but do not put in an appearance. The breeze has stiffened keeping the birds low in the vegetation but it is the same breeze that has blown away the rain clouds and we are lucky to be in warm sunshine.

Our picnic is eaten on the high bank overlooking the lagoon and now the tide is in and the waders are much closer, we enjoy both the lunch and the birds. After refuelling the vehicles we head on down the coast to Porto Covo, encountering more heavy rain showers on the journey. The breeze has strengthened to a wind crashing the Atlantic waves onto the low cliffs, ideal for kite surfers but not birdwatchers. In the difficult conditions we catch a glimpse of a male Black Redstart before another squall sends us scurrying for shelter.

More showers greet us as we cross the Trés Marias Plain but luckily the clouds clear as we stroll through an enchanting Cork Oak Wood, our timing is perfect. It is a wonderful green landscape coloured by a carpet of flowers beneath arching boughs only Common Chaffinches are obvious but other species are much more elusive. Crested Tit, Eurasian Nuthatch and Short-toed Treecreeper are seen by some of the group, but the pleasure is just spending time in this threatened habitat. The neighbouring tall barren stands of introduced Eucalyptus trees are in stark contrast both in appearance and bird life. These fast growing trees are plentiful and no doubt offer a more lucrative and easier harvest than cork.

The ponds of the Milfontes fish farm offer good feeding for Grey Herons and White Storks but it is a Eurasian Hobby that is the focus of our attention. Along with two Common Kestrels it holds itself against the

breeze at the top of a steep slope before swooping to catch insects and return to a favoured perch. We watch through binoculars as it catches and eats, what we surmise are dragonflies, sometimes on the wing and sometimes on the perch. It is exciting watching as we marvel at its aerial skills.

Returning home across open farmland, Frank and Barbara see a Hawfinch fly in front of their minibus. Despite much searching along the edge of a wooded pasture we cannot relocate the bird and have to be content with Woodchat Shrikes, Great Tits, Sardinian Warblers and Azure-winged Magpies, so it is not all bad news.

We return back in time to freshen up before the check list at 7.30 pm and add Purple Heron to Frank's garden list, finding one on the small island in the lake. Over dinner we chat about the day and realise how lucky we have been considering the dreadful weather forecast, for once plan B worked.

Monday 10th May

Heavy rain in the night interrupted some sleepers but it has stopped by the time we take breakfast. More rain later in the day is forecast so we decide to make the most of the morning. Now Roger's iPod turns from weather forecaster to bird caller, trying to attract Dartford Warblers on the track, but they are not playing ball. A wide open valley on the outskirts of Santa Clara is our venue for the morning and by popular demand we seek good views of Golden Orioles. A colourful male European Serin greets us with a cheery song along with tinkling European Goldfinches. It is only short distance along the path before we hear the fluty notes of an Golden Oriole, quickly followed by another, as they are calling from the hillside on the opposite side of the valley. Soo is the first to spot a bird but it does not stay long enough for all too see, frustrating! Brian comes to the rescue finding a second bird high in a Eucalyptus tree. This one perches in view long enough for all to see through the telescopes. Anthea and Margaret are particularly thrilled to see this colourful bird so well, despite its striking colouring it can be a difficult species to find. Now the walk takes on a more relaxed air as we enjoy the sight and sound of a Melodious Warbler perched on the top of a tall bramble bush.

The sides of the valley are covered in wild flower meadows and banks of flowering *Cistus landifer*. Soo keeps up here good work pointing out a Short-toed Eagle hovering above the colourful slopes looking for its favoured prey of snakes and lizards. As Roger's iPod had failed to produce any response from the playback for several species, it is suggested he may have more luck by lying prostrate in the hope of bringing down the eagle. Soo, his wife exclaims "It would be one heck of a lizard!" After the hilarity has subsided normal service is resumed, as an immaculate male Subalpine Warbler flits amongst the catkins of a Cork Oak.

Our circular route continues for a short distance along a rural road. Golden Orioles are very close above us in the tall trees, as we search Pat is looking much closer and points out a Eurasian Nuthatch's nest in a telegraph pole. Once more a posse of long lenses point at the hole and the returning bird is greeted with an explosion of shutters, but it remains unperturbed. A stop in the village gives us a chance to explore the village, buy post cards, have a drink or do a little shopping. Before another excellent lunch Soo completes her hat-trick pointing out a perched Common Cuckoo at the back of the Quinta.

The clouds are building so a few quickly opt for a walk down "The Secret Valley" whilst others just relax. Spots of rain drop from the dark skies late in the afternoon but they do not develop into the heavy rain expected but the temperature drops and once again we appreciate the warmth of the log fire.

Tuesday 11th May

It is the last full day of the holiday today and we make the delayed trip to the mountains with an early start at 7.15 am. The drive to Foia, the highest point in southern Portugal takes over an hour along twisty turning roads. The summit is a tourist hot spot, but not today it is cold and misty with no tourists in sight. The extra layers of clothing are much appreciated. Most birds keep low down in the bushes away from the chilling wind but a brave Winter Wren sings from the top of a stunted shrub and several Common Stonechats flit amongst the wind pruned vegetation. Walking along the road we find several Melodious Warblers, Common Whitethroat, which is rare here, and our target bird Rock Bunting. A Common Cuckoo calls greets us through the shifting low clouds and we wonder what they use as a host species at this altitude, perhaps Woodlarks which appear to be the most numerous species.

Weather conditions improve as we descend to the foothills where a hot drink in a roadside cafe is most welcome. A substantial terrace overlooks a much-neglected lemon grove, not very productive for fruit but ideal for wildlife. Blackcaps and Sardinian Warblers skulk amongst the branches, and a Common Redstart appears briefly, but fortunately a stunning male is much more obliging on the other side of the road. A pair of Grey Wagtails pay a brief visit to a water tank on the edge of the orchard, however, the most exciting sighting is a Monarch on the edge of the trees but only a few see this butterfly.

Just north of Cape St Vincent the dramatic coastal cliffs provide a splendid lunch spot, the hot sunshine, blue skies and rolling waves are a splendid sight. As usual, eating is interrupted by bird sightings, European Shags share rocks with Yellow-legged Gulls, immature Gannets fish out at sea, a male Black Redstart's song echoes around the coves only to be outdone by a neighbouring Blue Rock Thrush. It is strange to see Black Redstarts on rocky coasts when we associate them with derelict sites or alpine villages. It is a pleasant and rewarding interlude.

The flat fields of the headland close to the Cape are cropped short by grazing cows and sheep, classic habitat for Red-billed Chough and it is not long before we see a few fly out of sight over a gentle slope. They will have to wait as a wheatear in a farmyard needs careful inspection. This time of year only Black-eared Wheatears are common, but it is clearly not that species - could it be a vagrant Isabelline? We check all the diagnostic features and conclude that is a dull female Northern Wheatear very late migrating north. Now we can find the chough. As usual these charismatic crows treat us to superb aerial acrobatics as they move from one feeding area to another, calling as they fly. Several Greater Short-toed Larks are well camouflaged on the edge of the stony tracks and are difficult to locate. Cattle Egrets in breeding dress have forsaken the cattle lying in the yard to feed on insects in the lush meadows, while only Spotless Starlings and Feral Pigeons search for food amongst the cows.

The Alvor Estuary is an important staging post for migrating birds, particularly waders and terns. Today there are good numbers of birds but most are distant and constantly disturbed by kite surfers, who also land on the sand banks putting the resting birds to flight. Black-winged Stilts, Little Ringed Plovers and a European Bee-eater are a little closer and some of the group catch upon a Sardinian Warbler that is busy feeding young.

Our last location of the day is Salgados Lagoon, one that is bordered by one of the very many golf courses that attract so many visitors to the Algarve. The close proximity of people and birds cause conservation issues but the Euros brought in by the tourists no doubt will win the battle. At the moment the lagoon is a haven for birds, as here there are 50 or more Greater Flamingos, most are immature birds but news of the first nesting birds in Portugal is excellent, but we are unable to find the historic nest. Dunlin, Sanderling and Black-winged Stilts are only a few yards away from us whilst six Black Terns dip into the water picking insects off the surface. Bar-tailed Godwits sport brick red plumage and Pied Avocets aggressively chase intruders off their nesting territories. Shelagh does well to find a Purple Swamphen amongst the thick reeds, but unfortunately this large striking bird remains hidden from view. A Whimbrel flies overhead and six more rest in the long grass. It is a wonderful end with extremely close views of birds we normally see at a distant.

We are back at base by 7.00 pm after a full long day covering many kilometres. We celebrate a great week with complimentary wine at our farewell dinner. News of the volcanic dust cloud closing Portuguese, Spanish and Moroccan air space is a little worrying but we can only wait to see what tomorrow brings.

Wednesday 12th May

Good news is that flights out of Faro are leaving on time, so we enjoy a leisurely breakfast with time to finish packing and leave at 10.00 am. Helen has heard the Common Nightingale every morning and at last she sees one just outside her room. We travel one last time along track before going cross-country to the airport. A sand quarry holds a large colony of European Bee-eaters; it may be a long time before we see these gorgeous birds again.

We have another taste of the Algarve and its "attractions" as we head for the Saõ Lourenço Golf Course, hemmed in by huge private villas and apartments. Ponds and pools are hazards for wayward drives but a refuge for birds. One large pond is overlooked by a tall impressive hide but the birds are so used to people we can view from the banks. A male Black-headed Weaver in full breeding plumage is a striking bird and

the loud raucous song of a Great Reed Warbler is competing for our attention. A Great-crested Grebe tends its lone stripy youngster whilst its partner swims just a few yards away from us. Red-crested and Common Pochard laze on the calm waters in the warm sun. Yesterday we searched hard for Purple Swamphens today there are lots in full view, some with chicks. It is wonderful to see these normally retiring birds so well. The finale to our week is provided by a male Little Bittern that flies in front of us, to land on a mud bank just below us. They are views that could not be bettered and a fitting end to our week.

We eat our picnic hurriedly before making the short journey to the airport; fortunately flights are operating on schedule today. We say fond farewells and thanks to Frank and our fellow travellers, the Gatwick flight leaves some two hours before the Manchester bound flight.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Frank for all his hard work and enthusiasm and escorting us around his very large adopted patch. Many thanks also go to Daniela and her hard working team for providing us with some fine fare. Roger deserves special mention for sharing election news, weather forecasts and bird calls on his "magic iPod". James put much work in identifying the butterflies we saw on many of our walks, at least when the weather was warm enough. Most of all I would like to thank you for your company, your good humour and punctuality as well as sharing your birds and sightings. Like me you will have many special memories of the tour from the peace and tranquillity of the Quinta, to golf courses on the Algarve with their excellent birds. Many thanks to James for some of the photographs used in the report. Thank you for travelling with us, hopefully will meet up again in the not too distant future.

E. Paul Rogers
Ornitholidays
29 Straight Mile
Romsey
Hampshire
SO51 9BB
Tel: 01794 519445
E-mail: info@ornitholidays.co.uk

June 2010

Itinerary and Weather

- 05 May International Flights from Gatwick and Manchester to Faro, Portugal.
Ludo Farm, Faro Salt Pans, Quinta do Barranco da Estrada
Fine and sunny maximum temperature 21°C
- 06 May Corte Brique Valley am.”At leisure” pm.
Sunny periods overcast in afternoon, max temp 20°C
- 07 May Castro Verde, “The Plains”, lunch at Pulo do Lobo, Carraqueira.
Overcast with sunny periods and a cool northerly wind, max temp 18°C
- 08 May Viaduct Valley, Santa Clara am “At leisure” pm.
Overcast morning, rain and wind in afternoon, max temp 16°C
- 09 May Cercal, Lagoa de Santo Andre, Porto Covo, Três Marias Plains, Milfontes Fish Farm.
Sunny periods and heavy showers, max temp 21°C
- 10 May Santa Clara Valley am “At Leisure” pm
Sunny morning 22°C. Cloudy and cold in afternoon 15°C
- 11 May Foia, Carrapateria, Beliche Plain, Cape St Vincent, Alvor Estuary, Salgados Lagoon.
Mainly fine and sunny but breezy, max temp 22°C
- 12 May Saõ Lourenço Golf Course – International Flights Faro to London Gatwick & Manchester.
Fine and sunny 23°C.

CHECKLIST OF SPECIES SEEN DURING THE TOUR

No of days recorded	Abundance Scale
1 2h means seen on 1 day And heard on 2 other days	Maximum seen on any one day 1 = 1 – 4 2 = 5 – 9 3 = 10 – 99 4 = 100 +

The sequence and nomenclature of this list follow Collins Bird Guide 2nd Edition 2010.

Species	Number of days recorded	Abundance Scale	Scientific name
Gadwall	4	3	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Mallard	6	3	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Northern Shoveler	1	2	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Red-crested Pochard	4	2	<i>Netta rufina</i>
Common Pochard	3	3	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Red-legged Partridge	5	1	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>
Common Quail	- 2h	1	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
Little Grebe	4	2	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Great Crested Grebe	2	2	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Northern Gannet	1	2	<i>Morus bassanus</i>
European Shag	1	1	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>
Little Bittern	1	1	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>
Cattle Egret	3	3	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Little Egret	4	2	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Grey Heron	6	2	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple Heron	1	1	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
White Stork	7	4	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	2	2	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
Greater Flamingo	1	3	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>
Eurasian Griffon Vulture	2	1	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>
Short-toed Eagle	5	1	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
Booted Eagle	3	1	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>
Bonelli's Eagle	2	1	<i>Hieraaetus fasciatus</i>
Red Kite	1	1	<i>Milvus milvus</i>
Black Kite	1	2	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
Western Marsh Harrier	2	1	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Montagu's Harrier	1	2	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
Common Buzzard	4	1	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
European Honey Buzzard	1	1	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	2	1	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Black-winged Kite	2	1	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
Common Kestrel	3	2	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Eurasian Hobby	1	1	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
Peregrine Falcon	1	1	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Common Moorhen	5	2	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Eurasian Coot	5	3	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Purple Swampphen	2	3	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Little Bustard	1	2	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>
Great Bustard	1	3	<i>Otis tarda</i>
Eurasian Oystercatcher	1	1	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
Pied Avocet	2	3	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
Black-winged Stilt	3	3	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Stone Curlew	1	1	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>
Collared Pratincole	1	1	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
Little Ringed Plover	1	2	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Common Ringed Plover	3	3	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Kentish Plover	3	2	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Grey Plover	2	3	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Red Knot	3	3	<i>Calidris canutus</i>

Ruddy Turnstone	2		3	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Sanderling	4		3	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Dunlin	4		3	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Little Stint	1		1	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Common Sandpiper	2		1	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Common Redshank	2	1h	2	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Common Greenshank	1		1	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Bar-tailed Godwit	3		3	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Whimbrel	1		2	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Black-headed Gull	1		1	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Yellow-legged Gull	4		3	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull	2		3	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
Little Tern	4		2	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
Sandwich Tern	1		2	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
Gull-billed Tern	1		1	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
Black Tern	1		2	<i>Chidonias niger</i>
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	1		1	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>
Feral Pigeon (Rock Dove)	8		3	<i>Columba livia</i>
Common Wood Pigeon	4		1	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove	8		3	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
European Turtle Dove	7	1h	1	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
Common Cuckoo	5	2h	1	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
Great Spotted Cuckoo	1		1	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>
Tawny Owl	-	2h	1	<i>Strix aluco</i>
Little Owl	4		1	<i>Athene noctua</i>
Common Swift	7		3	<i>Apus apus</i>
Alpine Swift	1		1	<i>Apus melba</i>
Eurasian Hoopoe	7	1h	2	<i>Upupa epops</i>
European Bee-eater	7		3	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
European Roller	1		1	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>
European Green Woodpecker	2	2h	1	<i>Picus viridis</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	5		1	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1		1	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>
Eurasian Wryneck	-	2h	1	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
Crested Lark	5		2	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
Thekla Lark	5		2	<i>Galerida theklae</i>
Woodlark	7		2	<i>Lullula arborea</i>
Greater Short-toed Lark	1		1	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
Calandra Lark	1		1	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>
Eurasian Crag Martin	1		2	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>
Barn Swallow	8		3	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Red-rumped Swallow	8		2	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>
Common House Martin	7		3	<i>Delichon urbica</i>
Yellow Wagtail	1		1	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Grey Wagtail	2		1	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
White Wagtail	8		1	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Common Nightingale	7	1h	2	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
Common Redstart	1		1	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Black Redstart	2		1	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Northern Wheatear	1		1	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Black-eared Wheatear	1		1	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>
Common Stonechat	8		3	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>
Blue Rock Thrush	2		1	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>
Common Blackbird	8		3	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Blackcap	3	3h	1	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Common Whitethroat	1		1	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
Sardinian Warbler	7		2	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
Subalpine Warbler	1	2h	1	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>
Dartford Warbler	1		1	<i>Sylvia undata</i>
Cetti's Warbler	2	3h	1	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
Savi's Warbler	-	1h	1	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>
Great Reed Warbler	2	1h	1	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
Melodious Warbler	5		1	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>

Zitting Cisticola	6	2	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Firecrest	- 1h	1	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>
Winter Wren	4 2h	1	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Great Tit	1	1	<i>Parus major</i>
European Blue Tit	7	2	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Crested Tit	2	1	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>
Long-tailed Tit	3	1	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
Eurasian Nuthatch	3	1	<i>Sitta europaea</i>
Short-toed Treecreeper	2	1	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
Iberian Grey Shrike	2	1	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>
Woodchat Shrike	5	2	<i>Lanius senator</i>
Azure-winged Magpie	8	3	<i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>
Eurasian Jay	8	2	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Western Jackdaw	2	2	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Red-billed Chough	1	2	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
Carrion Crow	4	2	<i>Corvus corone</i>
Common Raven	1	1	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Spotless Starling	7	2	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>
Eurasian Golden Oriole	4	2	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
House Sparrow	8	3	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Spanish Sparrow	1	1	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
Common Chaffinch	5	2	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Common Linnet	6	2	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
European Goldfinch	8	3	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
European Greenfinch	2 1h	2	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
European Serin	7	2	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
Hawfinch	1	1	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>
Corn Bunting	7	3	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>
Rock Bunting	1	2	<i>Emberiza cia</i>
Common Waxbill	1	2	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
Black-headed Weaver	2	1	<i>Ploceus melanocephalus</i>

Mammals

Iberian Hare	2	1	<i>Lepus granatensis</i>
European Rabbit	1	1	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>
Red Fox	1	1	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>

Reptiles and Amphibians

Gecko			<i>Tarentola mauritanica</i>
Spanish Terrapin			<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>
Striped Lizard			<i>Psammmodromus algirus</i>
Iberian Frog			<i>Rana iberica</i>
Edible Frog			<i>Pelophylax kl esculentus</i>

Insects

Egyptian Locust	Western Clubtail	Goblet-marked Demoiselle
Willow Emerald	Speckled Wood	Lorquin's Blue
Spanish Purple Hairstreak	Spanish Marbled White	Bath White
Large White	Meadow Brown	Small Copper
Spanish Fritillary	Green-veined White	Marsh Fritillary
Spanish Gatekeeper	Clouded Yellow	Wall Brown
Monarch	Cinnabar Moth	Paper Wasp

This list represents those birds and other animals seen by party members of this tour.



Black-winged Kite



Eurasian Honey Buzzard



Purple Heron



Purple Swamphen



Cork Oak woodland



Lagoa de Santo Andre



White Stork on nest



Cape St Vincent

Front Cover: Little Bittern

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