

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

05 - 12 May 2013



Leader: Frank McClintock

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A Personal Diary

Sunday 5th May

Tony and Judith's plane was wonderfully early so they were waiting for me when I arrived at the airport at 09.50, so, as there was an hour to wait before the second plane came in, I beetled off to Hertz to start the van paperwork – only to be told that “The computer says “NO!””. Oh dear! Someone, somewhere, had blundered, but no point crying as there are plenty of other car-hire companies to choose from. A deal was sorted out with Avis for a seven-seater and a taxi for the day and a nine-seater delivered to the door the following day. As can be imagined there were several large sighs of relief, the largest of which came from me!

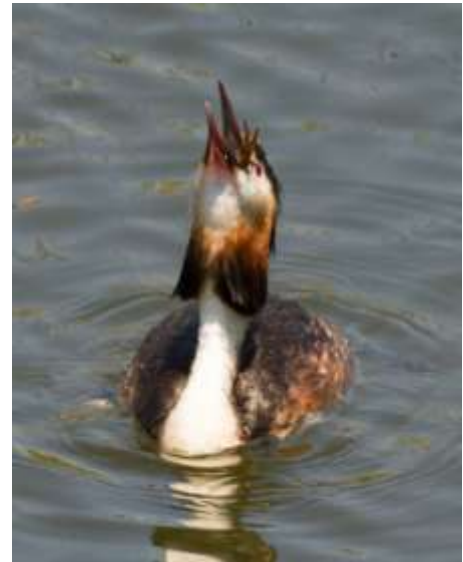
We'd already lost a couple of hours and so it was midday by the time we left the confusion behind us quickly noting the presence of a multitude of Common Swifts hawking over the car parks. We headed off, bewildered taxi driver in tow, for a picnic lunch at S. Lourenço Bird Hide.

On the way we had the normal close views of an Azure-winged Magpie feeding among the flowerbeds of Quinta do Lago's immaculate millionaire's enclave, and, just before heading off for our picnic in the hide,



we walked down between a stand of bamboo, (that yielded a quick view of a small flock of Common Waxbills), to watch a Eurasian Hoopoe bringing food into its chicks hidden away in the base of a stone wall. The Eurasian Hoopoe came in a couple of times and there were also European Goldfinches and European Greenfinches calling above us while more Azure-winged Magpies, a couple of Common Blackbirds and a Short-toed Treecreeper gave us good views before we headed on to the hide to still the rumbling tummies.

Upon arrival we pretty soon saw Black-headed Weaver collecting nesting material and several Little Bittern flew past as Great Crested and Little Grebes, Red Crested and Common Pochards, Mallard, and Northern Shoveler cruised by oblivious of our presence scarcely four metres away. Indeed, one of the Great Crested Grebes found and took great delight in swallowing, before our eyes, an impressively sized Crayfish.



As we were watching a territorial dispute between some Purple Swamphens, an Audouin's Gull flew nicely over our heads and Eurasian Coots and Common Moorhens squabbled all about.

A Little Tern delighted us all by fishing backwards and forwards in front of us and heading off immediately to feed its mate,

nesting in the lagoon scrub behind us, and we were lucky enough to be able to grab some shots of it catching small fish under our noses.



Walking back to the car just before 14.00 a Common Redstart singing in the shade of the small pine trees caught our eyes, and in the lagoon at the end of the trees Alan brought his scope into play and put us all onto some Common Ringed Plovers, Red Knot, Dunlin and a couple of Whimbrel. There were also several Ruddy Turnstone and Grey Plovers dotted every 50 metres or so apart along the shore.

Our taxi driver was waiting for us when we got back to the car – it WAS nice to have our own personal “bodyguard”! - and in the flowers beside the car we found the only Swallowtail of the week

and a beautiful example of a Clouded Yellow.

We checked in at Quinta do Barranco da Estrada, our base for the week, just after 16.00 to be met by Daniela, (my wife and definitely better half), with a refreshing cup of tea and then it was unpack and get ready for a slap-up meal before a plant list from Tony, bed and an equally refreshing sleep.

Following the week, Tony was kind enough to supply a plant list for every single day, which is appended after the main body of this report and in some of the accompanying photos.

Monday 6th May

We had been blessed with a beautifully wet early spring but the forecast told a different story and over breakfast we busily planned our itinerary to make the most of the week. It was agreed early on that today would be a restful one with a leisurely morning’s walk around one of the next door valleys; after the stresses and early starts for all participants of the day before this was welcomed gratefully, and the week’s plan in general was agreed. Thankfully, Avis had sent up a good nine-seater just after we arrived yesterday, so it was in this that we set out to explore the Corte Brique valley.



Arriving there just before 08.00 we ambled slowly along the tarmac road from Joselia’s bar, marvelling more than anything at the profusion of wild flowers; Tony was in his element and several times we thought we’d lost him, as, at every step he stooped to peer at yet another new bloom he’d come across.



A flock of Azure-winged Magpies afforded us renewed good views and were uncommonly confiding for this area, but I suppose not many people were up yet and we pretty much had the valley to ourselves.

A White Stork flew with lazy wing-beats over our heads followed by the equally lazy beat of a Grey Heron, both heading for breakfast on the shore of the lake at the head of the valley.

Common House Martin, Barn and Red-rumped Swallows hawked low over the fields on either side of us while European Serin, European Goldfinch, European Greenfinch and Zitting Cisticola sang from the phone wires, shrubs and Cork and Holme Oaks that bordered the road.



Off stage a European Turtle Dove was churring for a short while and farther on we came across a male and female Stonechat while a Blackcap Warbler competed lustily from a bramble thicket with a Cetti's Warbler calling explosively from the tangled thicket bordering the stream.

After a quick coffee stop at a roadside café we turned east to cross the stream itself and work our way down the eastern side of the valley back towards the van. It was at this point that everyone had a lifer as we came across our first ever Cactus Owl, a species new to science...

Once across we stopped to watch some Common Waxbills and European Bee-eaters who were both nesting in the streambed here and then carried on, coming across

a productive bramble patch which housed, during the five minutes we observed it: House Sparrow, European Greenfinch, Sardinian Warbler, a pair of Zitting Cisticola, a pair of Common Stonechat, Blue Tit, Common Blackbird and Corn Bunting. Entering some Cork Oak woodland it wasn't long before we'd seen a Great Spotted Woodpecker while a Eurasian Hoopoe fluttered away through the trees.

Butterflies were becoming active now and all told we came across Clouded Yellows, several Small Whites, a Common Blue, a Marbled White and this lovely Marsh Fritillary before arriving back at the car for our journey home to a delicious lunch and relaxing afternoon.



Tuesday 7th May

Today was where the understanding of "Portugal at Leisure" parted company as, with the temperature forecast to rise into the 30's, an early start became necessary if we were to beat the heat, and, more importantly, the heat haze, so we were in the car and rolling at 05.00.

Arriving in Castro Verde after an hour, we had a sustaining coffee and toasted sandwich and were birding proper by 06.40, with our first bird of the day being a spectacular European Roller in full mating plumage with scarcely a barbule out of place barely three metres from the car sitting on a track-side post.



At the top of the hill we counted another three European Rollers and had good views as they displayed in front of us, flying up and calling followed by their rolling, wobbling dive. They weren't the only birds there and we were spoilt for choice having to decide whether we should watch them or the Montagu's Harriers that were cruising low over the fields right in front of us. We also saw a few Great Bustards and two Little Bustards as well as some distant views of Calandra Larks.

Following this good start, but ever mindful of the prospect of the coming heat, we moved on a few kms to Corte Pequena where we were met by two Stone Curlew on the

track just as we drove in, followed by a Little Bustard that exploded into the air right beside the car. As we piled out to watch – and hear – the whistling mating flight of this spectacular bird, a flock of Black-bellied Sandgrouse flew overhead giving their bubbling call, and this was followed by close views of Calandra and Short-toed Larks and further views of more Little Bustards displaying on the sloping hillside to our south, first their heads and inflated necks showing above the grass and then their distinctive hop into the air with

white wing patches showing prominently while their small “prrrr” calls filled the air around us. Archie, my son, who had joined us for the day as an extra pair of eyes, found a pair of juvenile Spanish Imperial Eagles in some trees ahead of us waiting patiently for some thermals to mature, and a pair of Common Ravens flew over giving us good views while more Black-bellied Sandgrouse flew overhead and Tony found a Crested Lark on a nearby fence post while Alan came good as normal with a lovely Booted Eagle. Moving on slowly we came across a pair of nesting Little Owls among a pile of rocks and a Black-eared Wheatear flew across in front of us just before we stopped at Joselia’s bar for a cup of coffee.



Leaving Joselia’s behind we went up to a Trig point just north of the main road where we were lucky enough to find a drove of over 25 Great Bustards with some Little Bustards in attendance. It was especially interesting to see the appreciable size difference. While there we also had a lovely Montagu’s Harrier honour us with a very close fly-by and Alan put us on to a distant Black Kite.

Moving on once again towards the lake at Penilhos we had a succession of Iberian Grey Shrikes, unfortunately all up-sun of us, perched on the roadside telephone wires, while a Common Magpie surprised us with its presence here. They are not at all common in this area as the species is expanding gradually. Crossing a small, drying river just before João Serra we found a couple of Little Ringed Plovers picking their way through the pebbles, while downstream there were some Cattle Egrets. Overhead golden flashes and burbling calls meant European Bee-eaters.



Approaching the lake we at last had good views of an Iberian Grey Shrike sitting on a pile of stones, thankfully down-sun from us for once, and once more we heard Black-bellied Sandgrouse calling and saw more Calandra Larks. Arriving at the lake a few minutes later, we were met immediately by a trio of Gull-billed Terns, but what took our breath away were the beautiful views we were granted of Collared Pratincoles.

There were also several pairs of Black-winged Stilts and, running along the edge of the water, more Little Ringed Plovers. Tony found a Meadow Brown and a pair of mating Red-veined Darters while inspecting a Cardoon, and Archie found another juvenile Spanish Imperial Eagle being mobbed by a Booted Eagle. Surprisingly we also had a Black-headed Gull, (very far

inland), and as we were discussing this some Eurasian Griffon Vultures flew overhead followed by a wonderful specimen of a Eurasian Black Vulture.

Moving on from the lake towards Mertola, we stopped at 11.00 for an early lunch as we crossed the River Oeiras. We commented that life couldn’t get much better as we ate our lunch in the shade of a huge Eucalyptus watching the Eurasian Crag Martins, Common House Martins and Barn and Red-rumped Swallows hawking insects off the top of the water beside us.

By midday we were moving again, on to the impressive castle and town of Mertola. This town stands at the head of the navigable portion of the Guadiana and in times past has been occupied by Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Visigoths and Moors before being taken in 1238 by King Sancho II, since when it has been firmly Portuguese, but much Arabic culture and architecture remains – as it does throughout the region.

As the town boasts a colony of Lesser Kestrels, it was here that we were able to note the clear differences between them and the more common variety, and while observing them Vera found a small European Bee-eater colony in the sandbank below the castle walls. From here we continued to the Santo Domingo mines where Alan found a Blue Rock Thrush and Lesley found a Black-eared Wheatear.

On the way home we kept our eyes open of course and stopped various times, notably at a small lake to the west of Mertola to see some Mute Swans, Red-crested Pochard, Great Crested Grebes, Eurasian Coots and a dark phase Booted Eagle.

We finally reached home, having stopped en route to get wonderful views of Spanish Sparrows, at 17.00, exhausted but jubilant after such a thrilling day, filled with really special birds seen in excellent light.

Wednesday 8th May

The forecast was for cooler weather today, which suited us fine as we were planning a walk down a nearby valley, but we started off by waiting quietly at the head of the valley itself beside a small ruin which was the nesting site of a Blue Rock Thrush, and both the male and female duly turned up after a small wait under the constant chatter of the Barn and Red-rumped Swallows and Common House Martins flying around us.



Starting to move down the valley we had a fun time trying to find any of the Golden Orioles that were calling from the line of Poplar trees along the streambed. We counted at least four different individuals from the directions of their fluting calls – but could we see them? No, not a single one – until we finally spied one as it broke cover to fly up the valley towards a stand of Cork Oaks. Of course as soon as we'd got the first one they seemed to be everywhere and a further two were seen in quick succession.

Walking on past a small farmstead we found a Crested Tit high up in another oak while all the while Blackcaps, Winter Wrens and Common Nightingales sang us down the valley, with, every now and again, a far off Common Cuckoo heard in the woods, but unfortunately we dipped on Cirl Buntings, a species that we'd hoped for here. However, walking back towards the car we had one of those rare moments in life which one recognises at the time as being a memory that will last forever.

Scanning the nearby bushes at the shrill piping of a Firecrest we were suddenly engulfed in a flurry of tiny wings as a whole family of Firecrests flew between us. The chicks can have only just left the nest as they flew through our hair and bumped into us, tumbling in amongst the low Medronho bushes around constantly calling for food from the hard-working parents.

What a wonderful way to end a morning's walk! The rest of the day was given over to relaxation and preparation for the morrow.

Thursday 9th May

Another early start was called for if we were going to get the best views where we were headed, the Lagoa St. Andre, so we left home at 05.30 and were having a coffee by 7.00 and out at the lagoon itself by 07.30.



The sun was right behind us which was nice and the lagoon stretched away right and left, fringed with bulrushes, reeds and Tamarisk bushes with the expanse of water in front of us varying from 300 metres to a mile. On the far side were the high dunes protecting the lagoon from the sea, and the crashing of the waves could easily be heard. But through the constant rumble of the sea the monotonous call of several Savi's Warblers could be distinguished and we headed for one that Frank assured us would give the best views – and he wasn't wrong! It was perched right out in the open on top of an old piece of bamboo above some low reeds and we were

able to approach within five metres and even film without disturbing it. For a rare, cryptic and well camouflaged bird, we had excellent views and felt honoured that it was as confiding as it was.

There were Common Reed Warblers, Common Stonechats, European Greenfinches, House Sparrows, Sardinian Warblers and Common Linnets flitting around in and out of the reeds and grass and we had excellent views of these and also Yellow Wagtails and European Serins.



Out on the water there were no other species of ducks than Mallard, but there were a few waders such as Dunlin, Sanderling, Black-winged Stilt and Bar-tailed Godwit. Along the southern shoreline were about 20 Eurasian Spoonbills and several more flew over to join them from our right. It was while looking at these that we spotted a pair of Eurasian Hobby as well as a Peregrine Falcon which flashed through the wood just up-sun of us. Deciding that we'd better do this wood justice we took a short walk through it and were soon lucky enough to come across a Melodious Warbler singing from the top of a small tree while a Common Cuckoo flew frantically around us searching for a female whose burbling call we could hear from the thickest part of the wood.



European Bee-eaters flashed blue, gold and green in and out of the scattered pine trees and cork oaks as we returned to the car and drove to a little café where we found a Black Redstart sitting above us on a TV aerial.



Driving on we came to a spectacular countryside full of wild flowers. A Corn Bunting strangely camouflaged in amongst a swathe of purple Viper's Bugloss, white and yellow Stinking Mayweed and yellow Corn Marigold, caught our eye. Tony was in his element and we stopped to admire it all.

Driving on towards the cliffs beside the lighthouse at Cabo Sardão, we visited a small Bee-eater colony with attendant Spotless Starlings, and had close views of a male Western Marsh Harrier quartering a roadside field. Unfortunately, despite being close, it was flying

too low to avoid the heat haze, so the photographers missed out, but we all watched as it landed scarcely 100 metres away in the middle of the short grass.



To top it all a Mongoose crossed the road right in front of us, and for once we all had the luck to be looking at the right place at the right time as in a flash it was gone into the flower-filled verge.

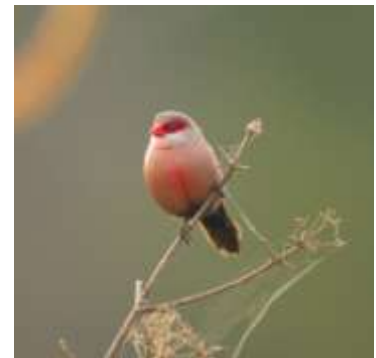
The White Storks were at Cabo Sardão of course, their nests perched precariously on the cliffs and stacks running out to sea and Yellow-legged Gulls floated past an arm's length away, effortlessly riding the updraft at the top of the cliff. The storks that nest here are the only ones in the world that nest at sea like this and it was great to be able to look down into their nests, but it got better when we found a Peregrine Falcon sitting quietly on her own nest, a tiny ledge below us about two metres from one of the storks, and looking carefully we

could even make out the bundle of white below her as she cared for offspring.

It was an uneventful drive back to the Quinta where we arrived at around 16.00 for a welcome cup of tea.

Friday 10th May

Leaving the Quinta at 05.30 again, we could see by the starlight that the mountain top of Foia was covered in cloud, so there was a quick change of plan and we headed down to the little estuary at Odeceixe, arriving there as the sun broke the horizon to burn away the remnants of the overnight mist that still cloaked the valley. As we got out of the car we were met by a Cirl Bunting that perched nicely on a bramble thicket beside the track. We had a pleasant enough walk down to the seaside as a White Stork flew through the wraiths of vapour carrying nesting material towards the pine trees on the hill overlooking the estuary's mouth, but apart from a Sardinian Warbler and a pair of Little Ringed Plovers patrolling the river shore there wasn't much moving.



Returning from the estuary's mouth we encountered a small flock of Common Waxbills, one of which was particularly confiding, allowing a close approach as it perched out in the open.

Driving on towards Sagres and the Cabo S. Vicente, (Europe's most south-westerly point), was uneventful, but as soon as we got off the main road and started out on a dirt track near Vila do Bispo we found a chattering, of Red-billed Choughs as the flew through the low bushes near the lighthouse. We looked for Spectacled Warbler, and had a view of a small brown job flashing away, but it could be positively identified. Driving slowly back across the Beliche Plain, an open area with low grass and Viper's Bugloss, bordered to the west by the high cliffs and to the east by a low, sandy, pine-clad hill, we were looking at a Tawny Pipit when a Little Bustard gave us a lovely fly-past before dropping out of sight into the grass and flowers, while shortly

afterwards a Skylark posed nicely for us on the top of a Spanish Oyster Plant.

Two things were noted; a) Skylarks are relatively uncommon here, this plain being one of the only places in southern Portugal where they can be encountered, so we'd been lucky to see one, and b) there is nothing remotely "oysterish" about the Spanish Oyster Plant, it being one of the most vicious, spiky and downright nasty plants of the region! I think even goats give them a wide berth ...t was getting on for lunchtime so we travelled north to Aljezur, having plans to sit in the river there, but upon arrival we found a large yellow digger working at our preferred spot to the south of the town, so moved on to the east where we parked right in the middle of the stream bed to eat our sandwiches with a good view right and left.



It wasn't long before a Common Linnet came down for a bathe carrying a precious bit of nesting material which he couldn't decide whether to bathe with or not!

We caught our first sight of a Common Nightingale as we waited; we'd heard plenty throughout the week, every day in fact, but they'd always been well hidden, so it was a joy to find one out in the open at last.

It was also here that we witnessed a cat trying to wade across the stream. It was barely two metres from the car but oblivious to our presence and stepped very gingerly and warily into the water, obviously very on edge and unsure of itself. Looking constantly right and left it lifted its paws clear of the water at each step, shaking away any excess before stepping forward – and then it stopped with its ears pricked up ... something was wrong but it couldn't work out what it was and it held its tail

vertically as it scanned for danger ... At this point a Lesser Emperor dragonfly accidentally flew into the tip of its tail. Immediately the cat exploded! It rose vertically in the air, twisted away from the middle of the stream and was off the way it had come. In the blink of an eye it was gone, up the bank and away through the flowers – followed by our hoots of laughter.

Driving on now to the top of Foia, southern Portugal's highest point at 900 metres, we congratulated ourselves on our early morning decision as it was clear as a bell up there with bright sunlight, though a fairly stiff wind was keeping most birds down and under cover. Looking towards the north we could just pick out the lake in front of the Quinta, twinkling invitingly among the range's foothills, and as we scanned around it didn't take us long before we'd found not only Whitethroat – this being the only place in southern Portugal where this species can be regularly found – but also Dartford, Melodious and Sardinian Warblers as well as a number of Winter Wrens, Common Linnets, European Serins, a Rock Bunting and a beautiful example of a male Broad-bodied Chaser.



The drive home was uneventful apart from a good view of a Golden Oriole as it flew alongside us down a valley, and we reached the Quinta to be met by the smell of Daniela's wonderful cooking and a very welcome cup of tea.

Saturday 11th May

It was a short gentle walk this morning along the Santa Clara Valley but driving up the track from the Quinta a pair of Short-toed Eagles cruised by us on an early thermal.



Arriving in Santa Clara itself, there were an abundance of European Serins feeding in the Yellow Crucifer beside the track and we marvelled at their camouflage in amongst these bright yellow flowers.



A Cetti's Warbler was heard in the thick undergrowth beside the river and Golden

Orioles seemed to be everywhere, but the bird of the day was definitely a Water Rail which we had splendid views of as a pair walked about in the open searching for food in among the reeds and water lilies fringing the slow-moving river.

It was a real thrill for everyone present to see this normally secretive and cryptic bird so brazenly display itself before us and it was a fitting end to what was a stunning week of bird, flower, insect and nature-watching.

We returned for lunch and to pack for our departure which took place uneventfully the next morning.

As a reflection on the week in general I can do no better than to include a beautiful poem by the group's Poet Laureate, which I hope you enjoy as much as we did!



Acknowledgements

As the Group Leader and host for the week I would like to give my thanks on behalf of us all to Daniela, Archie, Jake, Fatima, Dulce and Susana, our staff, who beavered away behind the scenes so efficiently. The food was to an excellent standard throughout and our early starts were always happily handled.

I'd also like to thank Tony for supplying his in-depth plant list and other contributions, and last but not least, Nigel and his team for organising the week in the first place! Without their back up and hard work it would never have happened.

I hope that you will take away with you happy memories of this week, the countryside, bird species and wildflowers of the area and a heightened understanding of the Montados and the threat to their continued existence - remember, always check for the cork!

Weather

The weather throughout the week was a very balmy mid-20's with a high of 31° out on the plains.

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August 2013

Birding in Portugal by Tony Boniface

Diving and twisting
The Roller falls through the air.
A female watches.

Golden Oriole
Flautist in the foliage,
Hidden in that tree.

Savi's Warbler sings
A long continuous buzz
Calling for a mate.

Watching for the dead
A Black Vulture floats above.
Hurriedly I rise.

Peregrine Falcon
On a ledge beneath the storks
Watching for its prey.

A ruined cottage
Cool before the rising sun.
Blue Rock Thrush appears.

Firecrests feed their young.
We watch in fascination.
Can they all survive?

Blue, green and yellow
Bee-eaters flash their colours
On the roadside wires.

How can this Hoopoe
Squeeze into that tiny hole?
My eyes deceive me.

A Little Bittern
With white panels on its wings,
Glides over the marsh.

Birding memories
Flying back from Portugal
Making life worthwhile.

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING TOUR

No of days recorded	Abundance Scale (max. seen on 1 day)
1 2h means seen on 1 day and heard on 2 other days	1 = 1 – 4 individuals
	2 = 5 - 9
	3 = 10 - 99
	4 = 100 - 999
	5 = >1000

SPECIES	No of days recorded	Abundance Scale	Scientific Name
Mute Swan	1	1	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Gadwall	2	2	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Mallard	4	4	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Northern Shoveler	1	1	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Red-crested Pochard	2	2	<i>Netta rufina</i>
Common Pochard	1	1	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Red-legged Partridge	2	2	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>
Common Quail	- 1h	1	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>
Little Grebe	2	2	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Great Crested Grebe	2	1	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Northern Gannet	1	1	<i>Morus bassanus</i>
Great Cormorant	1	1	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Little Bittern	1	1	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>
Great Egret	1	1	<i>Egretta alba</i>
Cattle Egret	3	3	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Little Egret	1	2	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Grey Heron	4	3	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
White Stork	7	4	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	1	3	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
Eurasian Griffon Vulture	1	3	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>
Eurasian Black Vulture	1	1	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>
Short-toed Eagle	3	1	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
Booted Eagle	1	1	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>
Black Kite	1	2	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
Western Marsh Harrier	1	1	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Spanish Imperial Eagle	1	1	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>
Montagu's Harrier	1	2	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
Common Buzzard	3	2	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Common Kestrel	3	2	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Lesser Kestrel	1	3	<i>Falco naumanni</i>
Eurasian Hobby	1	1	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>
Peregrine Falcon	1	1	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Water Rail	1	1	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>
Common Moorhen	1	1	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Eurasian Coot	3	4	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Purple Swamphen	1	1	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Little Bustard	2	2	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>
Great Bustard	1	3	<i>Otis tarda</i>
Black-winged Stilt	2	3	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Stone Curlew	1	1	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>
Collared Pratincole	1	3	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
Little Ringed Plover	2	1	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Common Ringed Plover	1	1	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Grey Plover	2	1	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Ruddy Turnstone	1	1	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Red Knot	1	2	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
Sanderling	1	2	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Dunlin	2	3	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Bar-tailed Godwit	1	2	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Whimbrel	1	1	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Black-headed Gull	1	1	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>

Yellow-legged Gull	3		4	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1		2	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
Audouin's Gull	1		1	<i>Larus audouinii</i>
Little Tern	2		2	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
Gull-billed Tern	1		1	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	1		3	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>
Feral Pigeon (Rock Dove)	6		3	<i>Columba livia</i>
Common Wood Pigeon	2		2	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove	7		3	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
European Turtle Dove	1	1h	1	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
Common Cuckoo	3	3h	1	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
Little Owl	3		1	<i>Athene noctua</i>
Common Swift	4		3	<i>Apus apus</i>
Pallid Swift	2		2	<i>Apus pallidus</i>
Alpine Swift	2		2	<i>Apus melba</i>
Eurasian Hoopoe	4		2	<i>Upupa epops</i>
European Bee-eater	5		3	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
European Roller	1		2	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>
European Green Woodpecker	2	1h	1	<i>Picus viridis</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	3		1	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
Crested Lark	3		3	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
Greater Short-toed Lark	1		1	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
Calandra Lark	1		3	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>
Skylark	1		1	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Eurasian Crag Martin	1		2	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>
Barn Swallow	7		4	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Red-rumped Swallow	7		3	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>
Common House Martin	7		4	<i>Delichon urbica</i>
Tawny Pipit	1		1	<i>Anthus campestris</i>
Yellow Wagtail	1		1	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
White Wagtail	6		1	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
European Robin	-	1h	1	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Common Nightingale	2	5h	3	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
Common Redstart	1		1	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Black Redstart	1		1	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Black-eared Wheatear	1		1	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>
Common Stonechat	6		3	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>
Blue Rock Thrush	2		1	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>
Common Blackbird	7		3	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Blackcap	4	2h	2	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Common Whitethroat	1		1	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
Sardinian Warbler	5		1	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
Dartford Warbler	1		1	<i>Sylvia undata</i>
Cetti's Warbler	-	3h	2	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
Savi's Warbler	1		1	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>
European Reed Warbler	1		2	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Melodious Warbler	2		1	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>
Zitting Cisticola	6		2	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Iberian Chiffchaff	-	1h	1	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>
Firecrest	1		2	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>
Winter Wren	5		2	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Great Tit	-	1h	1	<i>Parus major</i>
European Blue Tit	6		2	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Crested Tit	1		1	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>
Short-toed Treecreeper	1		1	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
Iberian Grey Shrike	3		3	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>
Woodchat Shrike	1		1	<i>Lanius senator</i>
Azure-winged Magpie	7		4	<i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>
Common Magpie	2		1	<i>Pica pica</i>
Eurasian Jay	6		2	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Western Jackdaw	1		1	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Red-billed Chough	2		2	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
Carrion Crow	2		2	<i>Corvus corone</i>

Common Raven	1	1	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Spotless Starling	4	3	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>
Eurasian Golden Oriole	3	3	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
House Sparrow	7	3	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Spanish Sparrow	1	2	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
Common Chaffinch	2	2	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Common Linnet	2	3	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
European Goldfinch	7	3	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
European Greenfinch	6	2	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
European Serin	6	2	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
Corn Bunting	6	3	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>
Cirl Bunting	1	1	<i>Emberiza cirrus</i>
Rock Bunting	1	1	<i>Emberiza cia</i>
Common Waxbill	3	2	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
Black-headed Weaver	1	2	<i>Ploceus melanocephalus</i>
MAMMALS			
European Rabbit	1	1	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>
Egyptian Mongoose	1	1	<i>Herpestes ichneumon</i>
BUTTERFLIES			
Meadow Brown	1	3	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>
Clouded Yellow	6	3	<i>Colias croceus</i>
Swallowtail	1	1	<i>Papilio machaon</i>
Small White	5	2	<i>Pieris rapae</i>
Marsh Fritillary	2	1	<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>
Common Blue	1	1	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>
Marbled White	1	2	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>
Bath White	1	1	<i>Pontia daplidice</i>
Spanish Gatekeeper	3	3	<i>Pyronia bathseba</i>
Large White	1	1	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>
Speckled Wood	1	1	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>
Two-tailed Pasha	1	1	<i>Charaxes jasius</i>
REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS			
European Pond Terrapin	3	2	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>
Ocellated Lizard	1	1	<i>Timon lepidus</i>
Ladder Snake	1	1	<i>Rhinechis scalaris</i>
Large Psammomdromous Lizard	1	1	<i>Psammodromus algirus</i>
Moorish Gecko	6	1	<i>Tarentola mauritanica</i>
Pond Frog	1	1	<i>Rana perezi</i>
DRAGONFLIES			
Lesser Emperor	2	1	<i>Anax parthenope</i>
Broad-bodied Chaser	1	1	<i>Libellula depressa</i>
CRUSTACEANS			
Signal Crayfish	1	1	<i>Pacifastacus leniusculus</i>

Plant List by Tony Boniface

5th May

Lavandula stoechas French Lavender

Familiar plant grown in UK.

Cistus ladanifer Gum Cistus

Large flowers with a purple spot at the base of each petal.

Echium plantagineum Purple Viper's Bugloss

Abundant in many locations.

Gladiolus segetum (*G. italicus*) Field Gladiolus

Anthers as long or longer than the filaments of the stamens. Most likely species.

Anagallis arvensis Blue form of the Scarlet Pimpernel

Petals with glandular hairs along their margins.

Anagallis foemina Blue Pimpernel

Petals without these glandular hairs.

(Some of these larger blue forms could have been the Shrubby Pimpernel *Anagallis linifolia* (*Anagallis monelli*) with stems woody at the base, linear leaves and flowers 1-2cm across unlike the smaller previous two species 2-7mm across. Oval leaves.)

Chrysanthemum segetum Corn Marigold

Large yellow daisy-like flowers with entire upper leaves.

Chrysanthemum coronarium Crown Daisy

Large yellow daisy-like flowers with doubly-pinnate upper leaves.

Vicia benghalensis (*V. atropurpurea*) Reddish Tufted Vetch

Member of the pea family with pinnate leaves terminating in tendrils. Has quite large flowers (1-1.5cm) in lax clusters of 4-12 flowers which are reddish with blackish-purple tips.

Thapsia villosa Thapsia

A fairly tall conspicuous plant, which is a yellow member of the carrot family with 3-4-pinnately lobed leaves and broadly winged fruits.

Trifolium stellatum Star Clover

Unmistakable, globular fruiting heads.

Psoralea bituminosa Pitch Trefoil

Squashed leaves, which have three leaflets have a strong smell of tar.

Andryala integrifolia Andryala

Pale yellow dandelion-type flower heads in a dense flat-topped cluster.

Bellardia trixago Bellardia

A semi-parasite with spikes of pinkish-white flowers.

Carpobrotus edulis Hottentot Fig

A conspicuous succulent plant with large yellowish flowers.

Reseda lutea Wild Mignonette

Tall spikes of small, yellowish flowers with pinnately-divided leaves.

(This could have been *Reseda luteola* Dyer's Rocket if the leaves were entire and linear.)

Trifolium angustifolium Narrow-leaved Crimson Clover

Long narrowly-ovoid flower heads with bristle-points to the calyx teeth.

Linum bienne Pale Flax

Pale blue flowers with five petals.

Daucus carota Wild Carrot

White umbellifer with conspicuous thread-like branched bracts around the base of the flower heads (umbels)

Parentucellia viscosa Yellow Bartsia

A semi-parasite with spikes of yellow flowers.

6th May

Onopordum illyricum Illyrian Scotch Thistle

Tall thistle with recurved bracts around the purple flower heads. Florets have conspicuous glands on the corolla (fused petals).

Galactites tomentosa Galactites

Very common, white, downy thistle with leaves with white veins and rosy-purple flower heads.

Trifolium campestre Hop Trefoil

A small member of the pea family, which grows in the UK. This plant has relatively large flower heads for a trefoil.

Opuntia ficus-indica Prickly Pear

A cactus with flat, oblong stem sections.

Orobanche minor Lesser Broomrape

A parasitic plant with flower spikes which lack green chlorophyll.

Odontites verna Red Bartsia

A semi-parasite with one-sided leafy spikes of purplish-pink flowers.

Eruca sativa Eruca

A salad plant in the cabbage family resembling a wild radish but the petals have violet veins. It has an elongated fruit unlike the jointed and beaded fruits of the radish.

7th May

Tolpis barbata Tolpis

A member of the dandelion family with yellow flower heads with dark reddish-purple centres and long, thread-like bracts surrounding each head.

Jasione corymbosa Corymbose Sheep's Bit

Quite small flattened, compact dome-like heads of flowers with stems leafy almost to the flower head.

Cynara cardunculus Cardoon

Very large, conspicuous, globular, blue flower heads with bracts tipped with a yellow spine.

Blackstonia perfoliata Yellow-wort

A yellow member of the gentian family with stem leaves joined in opposite pairs. It grows in the UK.

Lavatera cretica Cretan Mallow

Fruits surrounded by three lobes, which are triangular-oval in shape.

8th May

Cistus salvifolius Sage-leaved Cistus

White flowered shrub with sage-like leaves.

Silene gallica Small-flowered Catchfly

Small, white or pink flowered member of the pink family. Flowers have three styles and a hairy calyx (sepals) closely arranged along one side of an erect flowering shoot, which lacks sterile shoots without flowers at base of plant. One of 166 species in Europe.

Anthyllis vulneraria Kidney Vetch

Member of the pea family with flowers in rounded, usually paired heads.

Astragalus lusitanicus Iberian Milk-vetch

A conspicuous, scrambling member of the pea family with pinnate leaves with oval leaflets and large, inflated pods.

Umbilicus rupestris Wall Pennywort

An unmistakable plant of walls and roofs.

Phlomis purpurea Phlomis

Similar to Jerusalem Sage. It is a member of the mint family with whorls of purple flowers and elongated oblong leaves.

Lupinus micranthus Hairy Lupin

A blue-flowered lupin with wide leaflets covered in hairs.

Cistus crispus Wavy-leaved Crispus

Shrub with pinkish-purple flowers and leaves with wavy margins.

Genista hispanica Spanish Gorse

Probably one of the 56 species of *Genista* in Europe, as it had dense, terminal, globular heads of flowers with spineless, young branches and very spiny older branches.

Tuberaria guttata Annual or Spotted Rockrose

A small member of the *Cistus* family with yellow flowers with the lower half of each petal blotched purple-brown.

Campanula lusitanica Bellflower

Stalked flowers, leaves without stalks. Sepals linear. Ovary partly beneath sepals (inferior).

9th May

Centaurea sphaerocephala Knapweed

One of over 200 species in Europe!! This is the best fit from those described in Flowers of South-west Europe. Very large pinkish flower heads with long, spreading outer florets surrounded by bracts with 5-7 yellowish spines in one plane only and a somewhat longer median spine.

Anthemis cotula Stinking Mayweed

An unmistakable white daisy-like flower with a yellow central disc as the flower heads when squashed smell very unpleasant. Found in abundance in a fallow field as was the Purple Viper's Bugloss.

Armeria macrophylla Thrift

Possibly this species out of about thirty species in Iberia as it had long thread-like leaves?

Cistus monspeliensis Narrow-leaved Cistus

Shrub with white flowers and narrow leaves with inrolled margins.

Cotula coronopifolia Brass Buttons

Yellow heads of daisy-like flowers but with no ligules ('petals').

10th May

Scolymus hispanicus Spanish Oyster plant

An extremely spiny thistle with large yellow flower heads close to the stems.

Thapsia garganica Thapsia

A very tall yellow umbellifer with 2-3-pinnate leaves with narrow oblong segments. The terminal segment is entire or with 1-2 teeth.

Cerintho major Honeywort

A distinctive plant with yellowish petals often with a purple base.

Genista hirsuta Greenweed

A gorse-like shrub in dome-like mounds in the area we visited.

Convolvulus althaeoides Mallow-leaved Bindweed

A bindweed with pink flowers that have pink centres, which scrambles and climbs over other plants.

Scilla monophyllos One-leaved Squill

Blue flowers with a single leaf.

Cichorium intybus Chicory

Blue member of the daisy family whose dried roots when powdered can be added to coffee.

11th May

Asphodelus aestivus (*A. microcarpus*) Common Asphodel

The leaves are V-shaped in section with small, ovoid fruits.

Centaurea pullata Knapweed

Another Knapweed with large bluish-purple flower heads, whose bracts have conspicuous, black margins around the edges.

Brassica barraelieri Cabbage

A member of the cabbage genus with many stem leaves, erect flowers and the beak of the fruit much shorter than the basal part. The flowers have conspicuous yellow petals and the fruit is somewhat beaded.

Note Daniella's plant that she showed me might have been *Helichrysum stoechas*, which is an everlasting flower with globular flower heads with papery, shining yellow scales. I only had a fleeting glimpse so I could be wrong.

These lists represent those birds and other species seen by party members of this tour.



Belardia trixago



Cardoon



Centaurea pullata



Corn Marigold



Greater Celandine



Greenweed



Hop Trefoil



Viper's Bugloss, Stinking Mayweed & Corn Marigold



Viper's Bugloss, Stinking Mayweed & Corn Marigold



White Campion



Yellow Composite



**Common Stonechat
on *Thapsia garganica***



Yellow Crucifer



Mallow-leaved Bindweed



Pitch Trefoil



**Corn Marigold with
*Cardiophorus gramineus***



Lesser Honeywort



Red Bartsia



Spiny Blue Chicory



Tolpis barbata



Wild Carrot



Allium



Cachrys libanotis



Common Asphodel

Front cover: Collared Pratincole

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