



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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**Autumn in the Algarve and Alentejo
8 – 15 November 2013**

Holiday participants

Sue & Peter Burge
Desmond & Deborah Cassidi
John & Jan Croft
Malcolm & Helen Crowder
John Rumpus & Rosemary Macdonald
Julia Maynard
Gill Page
Helen Young
Barbara Priest

Leaders

Domingos Leitão
Rob Macklin

We stayed in the Alte Hotel for 4 nights – www.altehotel.com
and the Hotel Mira Sagres for 3 nights – www.hotelmirasagres.com

Report and lists by Rob Macklin.

All the photos in this report were taken during the holiday week, those edged green by John Rumpus, edged blue by Helen Crowder, edged purple by Sue Burge and edged red by Domingos Leitão.
Front cover compilation: top row – long-tailed blue (HC); Griffon vulture (JR); purple swamp-hen (HC).
Middle row – crimson speckled moth (SB); European chameleon (HC); Richard's pipit (JR).
Bottom row – ocellated lizard; common dolphins; *Colchicum autumnale* (all HC).
Below – the group at São Vicente.



As with all Honeyguide holidays, this holiday supported a conservation project, in this case SPEA's Wintering Bird Atlas. Domingos Leitão, both Honeyguide leader and SPEA officer, accepted the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust cheque for €1000 (£870), made up of each group member's conservation contribution supplemented by Gift Aid and some additional funds in the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust.

This year's donation brings the total given to SPEA since the first Honeyguide holiday in mainland Portugal in 2005 to £3689. The total for conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays up to the end of 2013 is £91,365.

Introduction

This was Honeyguide's first trip to Algarve and Alentejo in autumn and we were blessed with superb weather conditions throughout, temperatures rising to 25°C in mid-week. The trip was based in two excellent hotels at Alte and Vila do Bispo, near Sagres. The first part of the week included visits to Castro Marim, Ria Formosa Natural Park and Castro Verde in Alentejo. All three areas were packed with interesting wildlife, particularly birds, with an amazing array of herons, waders, gulls and terns at the coastal sites. At Castro Verde we were treated to great views of Spanish imperial eagles, cranes and great bustards.

The second half of the week was in the Sagres area during which we had a first for a Honeyguide group, a pelagic trip 10 miles offshore to find mammals and seabirds with Mar Ilimitado www.marilimitado.com. This was an exhilarating experience as we found ourselves among a pod of about 25 common dolphins, followed by a seabird feeding frenzy including 200 gannets and several great and sooty shearwaters and storm petrels. We also had a fantastic day at the raptor viewpoint near Sagres where 230 griffon vultures drifted overhead with many short-toed eagles, buzzards and other raptors. Our final day included a trip to Quinto do Lago where among a host of wildfowl we had great views of purple swamp-hen and a delightful European chameleon. An absolutely amazing week in the Algarve/Alentejo!

Diary

8 November – To Algarve

A lone kestrel hovered over the airfield in the rain at Gatwick as we took off on our Boeing 737 to Faro. It was a trouble-free flight of just under three hours before meeting up with Barbara, who had flown in earlier from Bristol, and Domingos.

We collected the two excellent Volkswagen minibuses, loaded up and were soon on our way to Alte as dusk closed in. No birds were spotted but there were Norfolk Island, stone and maritime pines along the roadside. After an excellent meal at the Alte Hotel, Domingos laid out plans for tomorrow at Rocha da Pena and the Benemola spring – we could hardly wait!

9 November – Rocha da Pena & Benemola Spring

A glorious sunny day with temperatures climbing to almost 20°C and excellent conditions for a day's exploration. Before breakfast Domingos saw some 50 azure-winged magpies leaving their roost behind our hotel while song thrush, black redstart and chiffchaff were all found in the hotel grounds. The hotel was perched on a ridge above Alte and offered amazing views across the Algarve and down to the sea.



Praying mantis (left) and fire salamander.

Our first port of call was to the impressive limestone hill of Rocha da Pena. Birds were a little thin on the ground but we all had good views of a female stonechat before a female blue rock thrush was seen high up on the cliffs. Soon she was joined by a much brighter male, then another male appeared and a bout of squabbling ensued before the birds moved

out of sight. In the scrub, several blackcaps and chiffchaffs flitted in and out of view, two azure-winged magpies showed briefly, a red-legged partridge 'chucked' from the dense scrub and three green woodpeckers were heard calling or yaffling, but not seen.

The warm weather tempted out a few butterflies including several bright yellow clouded yellows, a wall brown and two small coppers, although the highlight was Domingos catching a superb Lang's short-tailed blue – a new species for the entire group! Not content with this, he then turned up a praying mantis for everyone to see and another overturned rock yielded a splendidly dramatic fire salamander. Deborah got into the act by finding the day's only southern speckled wood. A damselfly on the track was yet another new species for everyone, a western willow spreadwing.

At our lunch spot among the sun-bathed scrub, several hornets buzzed purposefully around but ignored the humans. Few plants were actually in flower here so it was quite challenging to put names to leaves. Those in flower included common calamint, a daphne, a mullein *Verbascum creticum*, wild clary and grey-leaved cistus.

We also found some excellent specimens of friar's cowl and a local birthwort *Aristolochia baetica*. The scrub itself was dominated by kermes and holm oaks, mastic trees and a local endemic, the spiny hairy greenweed *Genista hirsuta* ssp. *algarbiensis*.



The leaves of friar's cowl were dense under the trees and a few plants had produced diminutive flowers (left).

The birthwort *Aristolochia baetica* (right) had by no means finished flowering.

After lunch, we stopped off at Benafim for coffee and a bit of shopping at the local supermarket which opened especially for us. Suitably refreshed, we moved on to Benemola Spring, parked

the buses and walked the kilometre or so down to the stepping stones across the river at Fonte Benemola. Birds were conspicuous by their absence in this area although we did find a nuthatch and a couple of serins, plus there were several more Lang's short-tailed blues on the wing. The strawberry trees were both in flower and bearing lots of fruit – tasted and given the thumbs-up by most of the group. Domingos then went fishing in a water tank with his butterfly net and hauled out two Iberian water frogs, one of these a huge specimen! The grassy area around the tank looked as though it had been bulldozed but was almost certainly the result of foraging wild boar, these animals being able to roam up to 40 kms in a single night.

At the stepping stones, one had collapsed into the river making it very difficult to cross. On the nearby rocks were the remains of a Louisiana crayfish, another American import, which had fallen prey to the local otters, judging by the amount of somewhat dry spraint.

A very good day out in the bush in perfect weather followed by another excellent meal at the hotel where we were served Cataplana, a traditional Algarve seafood dish – and very good it was too!

10 November – Castro Marim & Ria Formosa Natural Park at Tavira

After an early breakfast, we were soon on our way to Castro Marim nature reserve on the Guadiana estuary and the border with Spain. A quick dash along the motorway brought us to the reserve where we parked the buses and walked up the track alongside the salt pans. This splendid reserve covers some 2000 hectares and is a Ramsar wetland of international importance and an SPA (Special Protection Area for Birds).



The front row of birds are mostly Sandwich terns. The two pink-hued birds behind are slender-billed gulls.

The lakes and salt pans were awash with birds including hundreds of coots and gulls. Small numbers of great crested grebes were joined by 14 little grebes and two delightful black-necked grebes. Seven gull species included yellow-legged and lesser black-backed gulls, but the real excitement came in the shape of three stunningly pink slender-billed gulls and a roosting Audouin's gull. More birds began to appear from all directions, particularly 25 spoonbills, which took to the air before landing again in full view, plus up to 100 avocets and 60 redshanks. Several Sandwich terns were fishing in the shallows and we were surprised and delighted to discover two resting little terns in among the gulls. A couple of feeding white storks added to the bird spectacle, a female marsh harrier quartered the saltmarsh and a flock of 40 shovelers took to the air with several teals.

More wading birds arrived on the scene in the shape of 40 dunlins, three black-tailed godwits, three greenshanks and two sanderlings, while several little egrets and grey herons stalked the shallows. The wetland scene was completed by a minimum of 70 very smart looking black-winged stilts and 45 stunningly pink greater flamingos!

The landward side of the track was covered in scrub and small trees, turning up several southern grey shrikes, corn buntings and six delightful fan-tailed warblers (some call them zitting cisticolas), as well as newly-arrived wintering robin and song thrush. A huge concentration of birds in the distance turned out to be a flock of 3,000 spotless starlings being harassed by a hunting kestrel. Several butterflies were on the wing, particularly two very fresh painted ladies and our first Bath white. A rather dowdy looking dragonfly soaking up the sun's rays was quickly identified as a well worn red-veined darter. A most amazing find was of several golden wasp spiders *Argiope trifasciata*, both females and much smaller males, close together on separate webs.



Underside (left) and upperside of the three-banded argiope.

Sue was beavering away amongst the scrub and long grass and came up with a beautiful crimson speckled moth, another birthwort *Aristolochia pistolochia*, perennial glasswort, shrubby seablite and a flowering knapweed *Centaurea pullata*. Returning to the buses Domingos turned over a few more rocks and found a huge yellow and black centipede *Scolopendra cingulata*.

Lunch beckoned, so we headed over to the nature reserve's information centre. It was, bizarrely, closed for the weekend, but still provided outdoor picnic tables. On the way in we spotted five red-legged partridges, 15 azure-winged magpies mobbing a buzzard, a wood sandpiper, two snipe and two hoopoes sitting up on a derelict building.



Photographing a delicate flower is easier with a couple of windbreaks!

After lunch we walked the short distance up to a viewpoint over the estuary, saltpans and saltmarsh. On the way, everybody's attention was caught by a viperine snake crossing the path, and we almost missed out on two Caspian terns passing overhead. Moving on we paused to admire flowering merendera and the delicate *Narcissus serotinus*. As we reached the top of the ridge we were amazed to be confronted by the most spectacular view and almost immediately spotted up to 15 little bustards feeding on the drier areas of the saltmarsh, an extraordinary occurrence as this species is usually encountered on open, dry grassland. An osprey then landed on a post next to a white stork's nest and began eating a fish, giving us all superb views. Scanning the saltpans we located a roost of 100 cormorants, 15 greater flamingos, eight shelducks, 40 black-tailed godwits, 20 little stints plus several avocets, grey plovers, ringed plovers and greenshanks. To cap an amazing hour, a dark-phase booted eagle flew low over the marshes allowing us to look down on the raptor from above!

Time for coffee and ice cream at Tavira as we made our way down to the Ria Formosa Natural Park. The tide was coming in and was driving many birds towards our vantage point on the edge of the saltmarsh. Three gannets were fishing offshore and 15 Sandwich terns were roosting on a sand bar. Waders were now very much in

evidence with 25 knots feeding along the tideline with five whimbrels, 60 dunlins, four bar-tailed godwits and six turnstones. At least 50 greater flamingos were taking advantage of the incoming tide and two smaller waders then appeared, a Kentish plover and a curlew sandpiper. As the light began to fade, an amazing 120 Mediterranean gulls flew up the river to roost.

There was still time to have a last look at the nearby saltpans. Scores of gulls were mainly black-headed but among them and showing really well were 20 slender-billed gulls, surface-feeding on mosquito larvae, plus 10 black-winged stilts and eight avocets. At the far end of the pans we found another 40 redshanks and surprisingly, 50 sanderlings, all feeding along the muddy edges. By now twilight was definitely drawing in and we drove back to Alte under a mesmerising orange-red sunset setting the high clouds aflame with colour – a magical end to an amazing day!

11 November – Castro Verde SPA, Alentejo

An early breakfast before we headed north to the Castro Verde SPA, the most important dry grassland area in Portugal. Today's sites were both privately owned reserves and we had special permission to visit these areas. As we approached the first reserve we saw at least 20 cattle egrets in the surrounding fields and six red kites showing off their bright colours extremely well. The first area of open grassland was a hive of activity with calandra larks showing particularly well and approximately 400 lapwings taking advantage of a freshly ploughed area of land to feed. Several buzzards were hunting across this huge area but our attention was soon caught by two distant Spanish imperial eagles soaring at a great height. A black vulture then drifted into view, a female merlin flashed across the skyline before an immature Bonelli's eagle gave us great views as it drifted along a nearby ridge. As if this was not enough, our excitement was compounded by a first year Spanish imperial eagle which hove into view before perching up in a dead tree giving us all superb views. What a morning for birds!! Aside from these wonderful avian highlights an Iberian hare darted off across the grassland and Domingos uncovered yet another gem from under a rock, a yellow scorpion.



Watching great bustards.

We moved on towards our lunch spot but the minibuses came to a shuddering halt on the roadside as 32 great bustards, all males, were spotted on the hillside giving us all superb views – 500 kgs of great bustard on the hoof! Several more red kites then drifted into view but these were dwarfed by two magnificent black vultures soaring overhead – what a morning! Our lunch spot by the river was a fabulous spot and we relaxed in temperatures climbing to 25°C and unbroken sunshine. Dozens of red-veined darter dragonflies were hawking across the river and looking more closely we found several lesser emperors and two, bright-blue, epaulet skimmers. Bird-wise, two green sandpipers were feeding on the muddy edges, a grey wagtail flew up from the rocky areas and we flushed a snipe plus the trip's only kingfisher.



Our idyllic picnic spot, and two lesser emperor dragonflies engaged in procreating.

After ice cream and coffee at San Marcos we moved on to another private reserve in this region of the Alentejo. As we pulled into the entrance, we spotted more great bustards, a flock of 21 males, giving us a grand total of 53 for the day. Moving on we approached a small wetland which hosted nine cranes, apparently resting at the edge of the water. They quickly walked off and out of view but with a little movement ourselves we were able to get great views. A flock of lapwings took to the air from the surrounding grasslands and two golden plovers flew over, calling as they went. Two ravens cronked loudly as they flew low over the ridge but our attention was soon taken by a peregrine falcon giving us great views as it perched up in a dead tree.

Moving on across the plain we came upon yet another abandoned farmstead and were immediately thrilled to see three hoopoes feeding around a large dead tree, then one sitting up in full sun – probably the best view ever of one of these superb birds. This picture of serenity was rudely interrupted by two merlins dashing through the farm, but the hoopoes soon settled back down.

Domingos then spotted a little owl perched up in a hole in another dead tree – another amazing view especially in the telescopes. Meanwhile, Desmond was studying four birds way out on freshly ploughed land which, on closer inspection, turned out to be feeding black-bellied sandgrouse – a brilliant find! Three of the birds then moved on to the grassland and we were able to see the plumages and colours at relatively close quarters.

After a breathtaking day, it was time to head for home via an area of stone pine forest where we hoped to see black-shouldered kites. Darkness was descending rapidly as we managed brief views of one bird as it flew through the pines then another briefly hovering by the roadside. Not the best of views, so we hoped to see more of this iconic species in the coming days.

12 November – Monchique and on to Vila Do Bispo

Today we moved out to the west and our new hotel at Vila do Bispo, the Hotel Mira Sagres. On the way we stopped off at Serra de Monchique and spent the morning exploring an area of cork oak forest on the slopes of the Serra. As well as cork oak, this area was interspersed with maritime pines, alders and occasional Portuguese oaks. Birds were hard to come by but we did get very good views of two short-toed treecreepers and finally pinned down an elusive firecrest. Two great spotted woodpeckers were found high in the canopy and a nuthatch searched for insects along the cork oak branches. Several bright yellow brimstone butterflies flew quickly through the understorey of tree heathers and other shrubs, and we sampled the ripe fruits of a fig tree on the roadside – very good they were too!



Dartford warbler.

Lunch beckoned, so we drove up to the highest point of the Serra de Monchique and took a short walk down through thick low scrub. We were hardly out of the buses before Julia spotted our first monarch butterfly of the trip as it meandered across the car park and out of view. Meanwhile, the group was admiring 30 crag martins alternately wheeling overhead and perching up on one of the radio masts. Two buzzards and a kestrel soared overhead before the group found three blue rock thrushes on the surrounding rocks and ledges. We decided to have our picnics at the viewpoint with magnificent views across the Algarve and down to the ocean. While we were relaxing, we were astonished to see two Dartford warblers feeding unconcernedly out on open ground giving us all the most wonderful views. Two black redstarts also put in an appearance, but these were continually harassed by a migrating wheatear.

After lunch we explored another scrubby area on the Serra, where up to five buzzards were hunting, joined by a solitary kestrel. A male green woodpecker perched up on a dead tree giving us all great views and the afternoon was rounded off by finding a bright long-tailed blue butterfly. We then drove for an hour to our new hotel at Vila do Bispo where several of the group took full advantage of the splendid indoor swimming pool.

13 November – Pelagic off Sagres and the Costa Vicentina Natural Park

A very different morning lay ahead as we drove over to Sagres harbour for our pelagic trip. We were met by Sara who talked us through the safety procedures before issuing us with our lifejackets. Walking over to the rigid inflatable boat ('rib'), we were greeted by our skipper, Ricardo, who welcomed us all aboard and explained that we would be going out about 10 miles looking for a fishing trawler which would, he hoped, attract the birds. We also carried a whole bucket load of 'chum', which is used to bring birds close to the boat.



The rib, Ricardo, the bucket of chum, and the trawler surrounded by hundreds of feeding birds.



Great shearwater.



Mediterranean gull.

As we headed out, four common scoters flew west across the bow. Almost immediately, we found ourselves among a pod of 25 to 30 common dolphins – an exhilarating experience! We continued our journey out to sea and before long saw a trawler in the distance with a host of birds following the boat. The great majority of the birds were gannets and yellow-legged gulls but there some real goodies here too. Two sooty shearwaters glided past the boat and at least four great shearwaters were present with some of these sitting on the sea, allowing us really good views. Several dainty storm petrels were flicking delicately over the waves, amazing for a bird no bigger than a house martin, up to 40 Mediterranean gulls joined the feeding frenzy while the area was constantly patrolled by at least 10 great skuas looking for an easy meal. As the trawler moved away, it was time to head back to shore and we took the opportunity to have a look along the cliffs beyond Sagres. Here we found five shags and three grey herons on the rocks, a razorbill flew past at great speed and Rob spotted an ordinary herring gull among the yellow-legged gulls in the harbour. Our thanks to Ricardo for expert seamanship and those at the front did enjoy the boat crashing down across the waves – a great experience!

Back on land, we drove up to the fort to collect Jan, back to the hotel for Sue and Peter, then headed back to Sagres for lunch by the raptor viewpoint. A group of Thekla larks was feeding unconcernedly on the grassland around us and a woodlark flew over, calling. There were reports of short-toed eagles here earlier in the day but just buzzards and a kestrel were seen overhead in the company of about 50 crag martins. Scores of autumn crocuses *Crocus serotinus* were in flower beneath the maritime pines and hundreds of red-veined darter dragonflies were migrating through this area – on their way to who knows where!

Domingos began looking under rocks and in the scrub, first coming up with a couple of huge robber flies *Pogonosoma maroccanum* from North Africa, then a young Montpellier snake. He then found the biggest lizard I have ever seen and managed to contain it in his butterfly net. This specimen, an ocellated lizard, was about a foot and a half long – an amazing creature. As we were about to leave this area we noticed a flock of crag martins mobbing a raptor over the pines, which turned out to be a male hen harrier.

Our last stop of the day was an area of freshly ploughed fields and open grassland. Almost immediately we caught sight of 26 golden plovers alternately feeding on the ground and wheeling in the air. A large flock of red-billed choughs was feeding here, giving us all great views. Rob then noticed a large pipit on the ground: a Richard's pipit, a scarce migrant here so a really good find. More birds appeared including several more Thekla larks and corn buntings, three kestrels, two ravens, three lapwings and another wheatear but our eye was caught by a white blob in a distant dead tree. Setting up the scopes we were treated to an excellent view of a black-shouldered kite (to Barbara's great relief as this was her bogey bird) perched up before it flew along the tree line and then hovered right in front of all of us – magic! Time to head for home but there was still time to find a female hen harrier hunting over the fields.

A splendid evening meal at the hotel was followed by celebrating Malcolm's 80th birthday with Portuguese champagne and a large chocolate cake. Sue gave us an entertaining account of Malcolm's Honeyguide trips, now numbering some 27 holidays!



Two candles!

14 November – Sagres, Costa Vicentina Natural Park, Martinhal & Budens Marsh

Our first visit of the morning involved heading right down to the coast at São Vicente to look for any migrants moving through. This area was relatively quiet but proceedings were enlivened by a peregrine falcon causing panic among the yellow-legged gulls. Crocuses *Crocus serotinus* were found all over this dry area, yellow sea aster was in flower and Sardinian warblers were calling from some of the dense juniper scrub. As the morning warmed up, we decided to head back to the raptor viewpoint as most activity is usually mid to late morning. Today we were not going to be disappointed! Many buzzards were moving through with several kestrels, then word came through from local observers that maybe 200 vultures were on the way. We were unsure at first if this was genuine, but were astounded to see a huge flock of mainly griffon vultures come soaring into view, easily 200 birds. The wheeling flock then came right over our heads and we were able to get excellent views. We were also able to start having a much closer look and soon picked out two huge black vultures among the throng, and an immature Egyptian vulture. More raptors then came into the mix involving at least 13 short-toed eagles, two pale-phase booted eagles and another peregrine. What an unbelievable morning and by far the most migrating raptors I have ever seen on the Iberian mainland!



Excitement at the watchpoint as a huge flock of griffon vultures (above) and other raptors soar overhead.

The main group then moved off before two red kites drifted over, a sparrowhawk was mobbed by many of the 200+ crag martins in the area and two ravens flew sedately over. As well as birds, insect migration was well under way with thousands of red-veined darter dragonflies moving through – but moving through to where? Four woodlarks made intermittent appearances throughout the morning and six species of butterflies included clouded yellow and our second Bath white. We had just decided that it was time for lunch when one of the local observers came rushing down from the viewpoint with news of a black stork. This bird was high in the sky but a few of us managed to get on to it before it moved away. During our picnic lunch yet more griffons, short-toed eagles and buzzards drifted over: the final tally of griffons was 230!

After lunch, we stopped off for coffee and ice cream at a local café, where we found flowering snapdragon and autumn squill. Our next stop was a small wetland area at Martinhal just east of Sagres. Three green sandpipers were feeding along the muddy edges and Julia picked up on a grey pipit feeding at the water's edge, which turned out to be a water pipit. Our second Monarch butterfly then flew hard and fast over our heads and a 'British' pied wagtail was found out on the saltmarsh.

Time to move on to Budens marsh on the road to Lagos. On the way we picked out 14 cattle egrets and 60 jackdaws feeding together in a field before we pulled up at Budens. We walked up the edge of this large reedbed and our first find was a male emperor dragonfly hunting over open water. Two Cetti's warblers burst into song from dense cover within the reeds and four common waxbills flitted through the scrub giving only fleeting views. Domingos then netted a migrant hawk dragonfly for the group to see really close up. Most of the group then walked further up the track looking for autumn lady's tresses but were only able to find a single plant and that had finished flowering. Two water rails called loudly from the dense reeds, three buzzards drifted low over the wetland before a female marsh harrier came into view and quickly dived into the reeds to roost. A grey heron surveyed this activity from a high perch on the reed edge! To complete the afternoon, Gill and Barbara were the only ones to see up to 15 azure-winged magpies on the edge of the track.

15 November – Ria Formosa Natural Park at Quinto do Lago & Faro

Our last day on the sun-drenched Algarve, and as our flight back to Gatwick was not until late afternoon we were able to visit the west side of the Ria Formosa Natural Park at Quinto do Lago. On arrival the tide was coming in and this allowed us to get great views of many wading birds. New species for the trip were common sandpiper and curlew, and these were joined by 30 bar-tailed godwits, 17 grey plovers, two whimbrels, 10 sanderlings plus several ringed plovers and turnstones – all seen at close quarters.



Bar-tailed godwit, fan-tailed warbler (zitting cisticola), and common sandpiper.

One of the many golf courses in this area runs alongside the tidal lagoon and the manicured short turf proved attractive to several azure-winged magpies and crested larks. Two fan-tailed warblers perched obligingly out in the open, giving everyone excellent close-up views. On the edge of the golf course was a large lake fringed with common reed, lesser reedmace and tamarisk. This proved a magnet for wildfowl including good numbers of gadwall and shoveler plus smatterings of wigeon, teal, pochard and tufted ducks. A harsh croaking from the reeds announced the presence of purple swamp-hens but these were difficult to see from the lake edge. Luckily for us, a high hide had recently been built overlooking the whole lake and the group was able to get great views of these magnificent, gaudy birds.

Closer inspection of the lake revealed the presence of at least one red-crested pochard, a snipe feeding on the mud in front of the hide and a brief view of a little bittern as it flew into cover. Gill then located five glossy ibises feeding unconcernedly on the banks of the lake, totally ignoring passing golfers. More excitement came in the shape of 16 white storks overhead with two more on a nest atop a mobile phone mast. All this time, Domingos had been searching for interesting specimens in the undergrowth but even he was surprised when a praying mantis landed on his hat! We had more great views of azure-winged magpies before Domingos came up with another find, a European chameleon lifted off a mastic shrub for all to admire. Time to head back to the buses before the tide cut us off, but still time to find the first common redstart of the trip plus another firecrest.

After lunch in a delightful spot overlooking the lagoon it was time for a tour of Faro as we dropped Barbara off at her hotel before heading for the airport and home. A splendid week in the Algarve and Alentejo in superb weather with a really great group and a plethora of interesting wildlife!

HIGHLIGHTS

As is customary on a Honeyguide holiday, each member of the group was asked for their favourite bits. This was on Thursday evening, before the visit to Quinto do Lago, so it is probable that the purple swamp-hen and the chameleon would also have featured.

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| Barbara | Black-shouldered kites. |
| Deborah | All the vultures. The marsh harrier at Budens marsh after all that waiting! |
| Desmond | The soaring vultures. The kindness of the group. |
| Gill | Red kites. Richard's pipit, a new bird for me. |
| Julia | Iberian imperial eagles. |
| Sue | The little owl in its hole. Merenderas growing out of solid earth. The ocellated lizard. |
| Peter | The ocellations of the lizard. The little owl. |
| Rosemary | Dartford warblers. |
| John R | Great shearwaters. |
| Jan | Choughs. The circle of griffons. |
| John C | The pelagic trip against a background of perfect weather. |
| Helen Y | The little owl in the hole. Dolphins. |
| Helen C | The pelagic trip. Watching raptors at the viewpoint. |
| Malcolm | The pelagic trip. The ocellated lizard. Birthday cake! |
| Rob | Great shearwaters, and the vultures weren't bad! |
| Domingos | Griffon vultures. The most unusual observation was the group of black-bellied sandgrouse. |

WILDLIFE LISTS

BIRDS

Little Grebe	Noted at 3 sites. Peaks of 14 at Castro Marim & 10 at Quinto do Lago.
Great Crested Grebe	Six at Castro Marim & two at Quinto do Lago.
Black-necked Grebe	Two at Castro Marim.
Great Shearwater	Four on pelagic off Sagres.
Sooty Shearwater	Two on pelagic off Sagres.
Storm Petrel	At least six on the pelagic off Sagres.
Gannet	Three at Tavira and c.200 on pelagic off Sagres.
Cormorant	Peak of 140 at Castro Marim.
Shag	Five on rocks at Sagres.
Little Bittern	One at Quinto do Lago.
Cattle Egret	Peak of 40 at Castro Verde.
Little Egret	Peak of 10 at Castro Marim.
Grey Heron	Peak of five at Castro Marim.
Black Stork	One at Costa Vicentina.
White Stork	Peaks of 10 at Castro Marim & 18 at Quinto do Lago.
Spoonbill	30 at Castro Marim.
Glossy Ibis	Five at Quinto do Lago.
Greater Flamingo	Minimum of 120 at Castro Marim & Tavira.
Shelduck	Eight at Castro Marim.
Wigeon	Six at Quinto do Lago.
Gadwall	At least 30 at Quinto do Lago.
Teal	25 at Castro Marim and several at Quinto do Lago.
Mallard	Widespread & relatively common.
Shoveler	40 at Castro Marim & 30 at Quinto do Lago.
Red-crested Pochard	One at Quinto do Lago.
Pochard	At least 10 at Quinto do Lago.
Tufted Duck	One at Quinto do Lago.
Common Scoter	Four on pelagic off Sagres.
Red Kite	19 at Castro Verde & two at Costa Vicentina.
Black-shouldered Kite	Two at Castro Verde & one at Costa Vicentina.
Egyptian Vulture	Immature at Costa Vicentina.
Griffon Vulture	Approx.230 at Costa Vicentina.
Black Vulture	Three at Castro Verde & two at Costa Vicentina.
Osprey	One at Castro Marim.
Common Buzzard	Peak of 22 at Costa Vicentina.
Short-toed Eagle	13 at Costa Vicentina.
Marsh Harrier	Three at Castro Marim and one at Budens Marsh.
Hen Harrier	Two at Costa Vicentina.
Sparrowhawk	One at Costa Vicentina.
Booted Eagle	One at Castro Marim & two at Costa Vicentina.
Bonelli's Eagle	Immature at Castro Verde.
Spanish Imperial Eagle	Three at Castro Verde.
Kestrel	Peak of seven at Costa Vicentina.
Merlin	Three at Castro Verde.
Red-legged Partridge	Peak of eight at Castro Verde.
Water Rail	One heard at Castro Marim & two heard at Budens Marsh.
Moorhen	Five at Quinto do Lago.
Purple Swamp-hen	At least six at Quinto do Lago.
Coot	Widespread & common particularly at Castro Marim.
Common Crane	Nine at Castro Verde.
Little Bustard	20 at Castro Marim & eight at Castro Verde.
Great Bustard	53 in two flocks at Castro Verde – all males.
Oystercatcher	Four at Castro Marim.
Black-winged Stilt	Minimum 100 at Castro Marim.
Pied Avocet	130 at Castro Marim.
Ringed Plover	16 at Castro Marim and six at Quinto do Lago.
Kentish Plover	One at Castro Marim.
Golden Plover	Two at Castro Verde & 26 at Costa Vicentina.
Grey Plover	Two at Castro Marim & 17 at Quinto do Lago.
Lapwing	Peak of 1000 at Castro Verde.
Knot	Minimum of 20 at Tavira.
Sanderling	60 at Castro Marim/Tavira & 10 at Quinto do Lago.

Little Stint	Minimum of 20 at Castro Marim.
Curlew Sandpiper	One at Tavira.
Dunlin	A flock of 40 at Castro Marim & 60 at Tavira.
Snipe	Two at Castro Marim & singles at Castro Verde & Quinto do Lago.
Black-tailed Godwit	6 at Castro Marim.
Bar-tailed Godwit	Four at Castro Marim & 30 at Quinto do Lago.
Whimbrel	Five at Castro Marim & two at Quinto do Lago.
Curlew	Three at Quinto do Lago.
Redshank	Approx. 100 at Castro Marim.
Greenshank	Three at Castro Marim.
Green Sandpiper	Two at Castro Verde & three at Martinhal.
Wood Sandpiper	One at Castro Marim
Common Sandpiper	One at Castro Marim & one at Quinto do Lago.
Turnstone	Six at Castro Marim.
Great Skua	Minimum of 10 on the pelagic off Sagres.
Mediterranean Gull	120 at Tavira & 40 on the pelagic off Sagres.
Black-headed Gull	Widespread & common.
Slender-billed Gull	Three at Castro Marim & 20 at Tavira.
Audouin's Gull	One at Castro Marim.
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Relatively widespread & common.
Yellow-legged Gull	Widespread & common.
Herring Gull	One in the harbour at Sagres.
Great Black-backed Gull	Only noted at Castro Marim.
Caspian Tern	Two at Castro Marim.
Sandwich Tern	Ten at Castro Marim & 15 at Tavira.
Little Tern	Two at Castro Marim.
Razorbill	One on the pelagic off Sagres.
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	Nine at Castro Verde.
Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	Widespread & common.
Stock Dove	One at Costa Vicentina.
Woodpigeon	Seven at Castro Verde.
Collared Dove	Common in towns & villages.
Little Owl	One at Castro Verde.
Kingfisher	One at Castro Verde by the river.
Hoopoe	Peaks of three at Castro Marim & three at Castro Verde.
Green Woodpecker	Peak of three at Rocha da Pena & one seen well at Monchique.
Great Spotted Woodpecker	One at Alte & two at Monchique
Calandra Lark	100+ at Castro Verde.
Crested Lark	Peak of six at Castro Marim.
Thekla Lark	Relatively common in rocky areas.
Woodlark	Peak of four at Costa Vicentina.
Skylark	Noted at several sites.
Crag Martin	Peak of 200 at Costa Vicentina.
Swallow	Two at Castro Marim & three at Costa Vicentina.
Richard's Pipit	One at Costa Vicentina.
Meadow Pipit	Widespread & common.
Water Pipit	One at Martinhal.
Grey Wagtail	One by the river at Castro Verde.
White Wagtail	Widespread but uncommon.
Pied Wagtail	One at Martinhal.
Wren	One at Monchique.
Robin	Widespread & relatively common in hilly areas.
Black Redstart	Peak of three at Monchique.
Common Redstart	One at Quinto do Lago.
Stonechat	Widespread & fairly common.
Wheatear	Peak of two at Castro Verde.
Blue Rock Thrush	Three at Rocha da Pena & three at Monchique.
Blackbird	Widespread & common.
Song Thrush	Widespread but uncommon.
Cetti's Warbler	Four heard at Butens Marsh & Quinto do Lago.
Fan-tailed Warbler	Peak of six at Castro Verde but seen well at Quinto do Lago.
Dartford Warbler	Three at Monchique.
Sardinian Warbler	Widespread & common.
Blackcap	Widespread & fairly common.
Willow Warbler	Two at Castro Verde.

Chiffchaff	Relatively widespread & common.
Firecrest	One at Alte, two at Monchique & one at Quinto do Lago.
Blue Tit	Noted at Alte & Monchique.
Great Tit	Two at Monchique.
Long-tailed Tit	Three at Rocha da Pena.
Nuthatch	One at Benemola Spring & two at Monchique.
Short-toed Treecreeper	Two at Monchique.
Southern Grey Shrike	Peak of six at Castro Verde.
Jay	Singles from three locations.
Azure-winged Magpie	Peak of 50 at Alte & 15 at Castro Marim.
Magpie	Only noted at Castro Verde.
Red-billed Chough	Flock of 56 at Costa Vicentina.
Jackdaw	Peak of 60 on way to Budens Marsh.
Carrion Crow	One at Castro Verde & two at Costa Vicentina.
Raven	Peak of eight at Castro Verde.
Spotless Starling	Peak of 3000 at Castro Marim.
House Sparrow	Widespread & very common.
Spanish Sparrow	50 at Castro Marim.
Common Waxbill	Five at Budens Marsh.
Chaffinch	Uncommon in woodland areas.
Serin	Two at Rocha da Pena & one at Quinto do Lago.
Greenfinch	Widespread yet uncommon.
Goldfinch	Widespread & common.
Rock Bunting	One at Rocha da Pena.
Corn Bunting	Widespread & common.

Mammals

Otter – spraint only Common Dolphin Rabbit Iberian Hare Wild Boar – rootings only

Reptiles and Amphibians

Stripe-necked Terrapin Large Psammmodromus Ocellated Lizard
Iberian Wall Lizard Viperine Snake Montpellier Snake
Fire Salamander Iberian Water Frog European Chameleon



Left
Viperine snake

Right
Iberian water frog

Below left
Ocellated lizard

Below right
European chameleon



Butterflies

Swallowtail	Large White	Small White	Clouded Yellow	Brimstone
Red Admiral	Painted Lady	Monarch	Small Copper	Long-tailed Blue
Lang's Short-tailed Blue	Meadow Brown	Wall Brown	Southern Speckled Wood	

Odonata

Western Willow Spreadwing	Epaulet Skimmer	Iberian bluetail	Red-veined Darter
Migrant Hawker	Blue Emperor (Emperor)	Lesser Emperor	

Other notable invertebrates

Hummingbird Hawk-moth	Crimson Speckled moth
Death's-head Hawk-moth caterpillar, brown form <i>Acherontia atropos</i>	Yellow Scorpion
Egyptian Locust	Mediterranean Banded Centipede <i>Scolopendra cingulata</i>
Praying Mantis	Hornet
7-spot Ladybird	Ground Beetle <i>Carabus rugosus</i>
Dung Beetle	Robber Fly <i>Pogonosoma maroccanum</i>
Fire Bug <i>Pyrrhocis apertus</i>	Banded wasp spider <i>Argiope trifasciata</i>



L to r: death's-head hawk-moth caterpillar, brown form *Acherontia atropos*; ground beetle *Carabus rugosus*; western willow spreadwing.



Merenderas

Pycnocomon rutifolium



Yellow sea aster

Mountain sandwort



Centauria pullata

Large yellow restharrow



Plants

Numbers on the right refer to Blamey & Grey-Wilson, *Mediterranean Wild Flowers*.
Where there is no number, usually these are plants in floras from northern Europe,
e.g. *Wild Flowers of Britain & Europe* by Fitter, Fitter & Blamey.

P = planted, noted when of special interest.

SPERMATOPHYTA – Conifers

Araucariaceae

Araucaria heterophylla Norfolk island pine P

Pinaceae Pine family

Pinus pinea stone / umbrella pine 3

Pinus pinaster maritime pine 5

Cupressaceae Cypress family

Juniperus phoenicea Phoenician juniper 17

ANGIOSPERMS

Moraceae Mulberry family

Ficus carica fig 42

Aizoaceae Aizoon family

Carpobrotus edulis Hottentot fig 115

Fagaceae Oaks

Quercus coccifera holly / prickly / kermes oak 24

Quercus rotundifolia Holm oak 26

Quercus suber Cork oak 27

Quercus faginea Portuguese oak 30

Betulaceae Birch family

Alnus glutinosa alder

Aristolochiaceae Birthwort family

Aristolochia baetica 58

Aristolochia pistilochia 62

Chenopodiaceae Goosefoot family

Beta vulgaris ssp. *maritima* sea beet 80

Arthrocnemum macrostachya a perennial glasswort 84

Chenopodium rubrum red goosefoot

Suaeda vera shrubby seablite 94

Halimione vulgaris sea purslane 100

Caryophyllaceae Pink family

Arenaria montana mountain sandwort

Paronychia capita paronychia 134

Spergularia media greater sea-spurrey 144

Silene latifolia white campion 158

Dianthus hispanicus

Ranunculaceae Buttercup family

Ranunculus bullatus 256

Brassicaceae (Cruciferae) Cabbage family

Sisymbrium altissimum tall rocket

Sinapsis arvensis charlock

Nasturtium officinale watercress

Lobularia maritima sweet Alison 336

Crassulaceae

Umbilicus rupestris navelwort 396

Rosaceae Rose family

Eriobotrya japonica Japanese loquat 429

Fabiaceae was Leguminosae Pea family

Ceratonia siliqua carob 431

Chronanthus biflorus chronanthus 458

Psoralea bituminosa pitch trefoil 508

Genista hirsute ssp. *algarbrensis* 466

Ulex parviflorus small-flowered gorse 473

Spartium junceum Spanish broom 481

Ononis natrix large yellow restharrow 556

Trifolium pratense red clover 645

Dorycnium hirsutum dorycnium 676

Hippocrepis glauca horseshoe vetch 704

	Oxalidaceae	
<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i>	Bermuda buttercup	735
	Geraniaceae Cranesbills	
<i>Geranium rotundifolium</i>	round-leaved cranesbill	743
	Euphorbiaceae Spurge family	
<i>Euphorbia characias</i>	large Mediterranean spurge	818
<i>Mercurialis annua</i>	annual mercury	820
	Rutaceae Rue family	
<i>Ruta chalapensis</i>	fringed rue	827
	Anacardiaceae Pistacio family	
<i>Pistacia lentiscus</i>	mastic tree or lentisc	865
	Malvaceae Mallow family	
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	common mallow	898
	Thymelaeaceae Daphne family	
<i>Daphne gnidium</i>	daphne	936
	Cistaceae Rockrose family	
<i>Cistus albidus</i>	grey-leaved cistus	961
<i>Cistus salviifolius</i>	sage-leaved cistus	965
<i>Cistus ladanifer</i>	gum cistus	971
<i>Cistus palhinhae</i>		972
	Tamaricaceae Tamarix	
<i>Tamarix africana</i>	tamarix	1016
	Cactaceae Cactus family	
<i>Opuntia maxima (=ficus-indica)</i>	prickly pear	1040
	Myrtaceae Myrtle family	
<i>Myrtus communis</i>	common myrtle	1052
	Punicaceae Pomegranate family	
<i>Punica granatum</i>	pomegranate	1064
	Umbelliferae/ Apiaceae Carrot family	
<i>Ferula communis</i>	giant fennel	1141
<i>Daucus carota</i>	wild carrot	1168
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	fennel	1108
	Ericaceae Heath family	
<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	strawberry tree	1176
<i>Erica arborea</i>	tree heather	1178
	Araliaceae Ivy family	
<i>Hedera helix</i>	ivy	
	Plumbaginaceae Thrift family	
<i>Armeria pungens</i>		1218
<i>Limoniastrum monopetalum</i>	Limoniastrum	1234
	Oleaceae	
<i>Olea europaea</i>	olive	1248
<i>Olea europaea ssp. oleaster</i>	wild olive	1248a
	Gentianaceae Gentian family	
<i>Centaurium erythraea</i>	common centaury	1251
	Apocynaceae Oleander family	
<i>Nerium oleander</i>	oleander	1256
	Boraginaceae Borage family	
<i>Echium vulgare</i>	viper's bugloss	1384
	Lamiaceae (Labiatae) Mint family	
<i>Teucrium scorodonia</i>	wood sage	1433
<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>	thyme	1508
<i>Thymus capitatus</i>		1514
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	rosemary	1526
<i>Lavandula stoechas</i>	French lavender	1528
<i>Salvia verbenaca</i>	wild clary	1545
<i>Clinopodium ascendens</i>	common calamint	
	Scrophulariaceae	
<i>Verbascum creticum</i>		1607
<i>Misopates orontium</i>	lesser snapdragon / weasel's snout	1611
<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	foxglove	
	Acanthaceae Acanthus family	
<i>Acanthus mollis</i>	bear's breech	1690

	Plantaginaceae Plantain family	
<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	buck's-horn plantain	1696
	Caprifoliaceae Honeysuckle family	
<i>Viburnum tinus</i>	Laurustinus	1711
	Dipsacaceae Teasel family	
<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	wild teasel	1732
<i>Knautia purpurea</i>	purple knautia	1734
<i>Pycnocomon rutifolium</i>	pycnocomon	1752
	Asteraceae (was Compositae) Daisy family	
<i>Anthemis sp. arvensis?</i>	a mayweed	
<i>Bellis annua</i>	annual daisy	1791
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	perennial daisy	1792
<i>Helichrysum stoechas</i>	curry plant	1824
<i>Dittrichia viscosa</i>	stink aster	1842
<i>Asteriscus maritimus</i>	yellow sea aster	1848
<i>Calendula arvensis</i>	field marigold	1908
<i>Carlina corymbosa</i>	flat-topped carline thistle	1920
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	groundsel	
<i>Silybum marianum</i>	milk thistle	1982
<i>Centaurea pullata</i>		2006
	MONOCOTYLEDONS	
	Liliaceae	
<i>Crocus serotinus</i>		
<i>Merendera filifolia</i>	merendera	2132
<i>Urginea maritima</i>	sea squill	2163
<i>Scilla autumnalis</i>	autumn squill	2189
<i>Asparagus albus</i>	asparagus	2214
<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i>	butcher's broom	2219
<i>Smilax aspera</i>	common smilax, sarsaparilla	2222
	Agavaceae	
<i>Agave americana</i>	agave, century plant P	2253
	Amaryllidaceae	
<i>Panocratium maritimum</i>	sea daffodil	2270
<i>Narcissus serotinus</i>		2272
	Palmae Palm family	
<i>Chamaerops humilis</i>	dwarf fan palm	2357
	Araceae Arum family	
<i>Arum italicum</i>	Italian arum	2361
<i>Arisarum simorrhinum</i>	a friar's cowl	2378
	Orchidaceae	
<i>Spiranthes spiralis</i>	autumn lady's tresses	2389
	Gramineae	
<i>Typha angustifolia</i>	lesser reedmace	
<i>Arundo donax</i>	giant reed	2494
<i>Phragmites australis</i>	common reed	
	FERNS (PTERIDOPHYTA)	
<i>Ceterach officinarum</i>	rustyback fern	2532
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	bracken	

