



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS 2012



Helping you enjoy wildlife



Helping to protect wildlife



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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More information

In this brochure we can give only a flavour of the holidays on offer. You are welcome without commitment to have a pack of information about any holiday, including a previous holiday report and itinerary. Holiday reports are also on www.honeyguide.co.uk

Honeyguide conservation programme for 2012

£40 of the price of your Honeyguide holiday goes to a conservation body, often the bird protection society of the host country, towards its current conservation work. The societies and projects we support are described under each holiday.

36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX
Telephone: 01603 300552

www.honeyguide.co.uk E-mail: chris@honeyguide.co.uk

Holidays for the year 2012

Welcome to the 22nd season of Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays.

The cranes on the brochure's front cover are from Extremadura, Spain, just a few of the 100,000 that overwinter there. Great birds, though I am a little biased having co-written *The Norfolk Cranes' Story* book. Mostly they've left before our usual holiday in March so, for a change, we're going in February, when the cranes are there alongside resident birds and early spring migrants.

Fuerteventura and the Picos de Europa are both destinations with old friends that feature in the coming year's programme. When I say 'old' friends, I mean – well, you know what I mean.

Actually, Fuerteventura isn't completely new: we ran a holiday there in 1996. David Collins led then, as now, on his favourite Canary island. John Muddeman used to lead for us in Extremadura; now he'll be with us in the Picos de Europa mountains in NW Spain, along with local expert and Iberian Wildlife colleague Teresa Farino. Tarifa & Gibraltar is the third holiday new to the brochure, though repeats our first holiday here in September 2011.

We have a fourth new holiday, to the Peloponnese peninsula in Greece. This is almost fully booked as I write, so it's not in the brochure, though details are on www.honeyguide.co.uk. Please keep an eye on the website: as well as additional holidays, it has news, information and photos about holidays and wildlife in general, and sometimes new flights to our destinations from airports near you – often something worth asking about.

The Cévennes returns, having dropped out of 2011's brochure with a group booking. The French Pyrenees will be in September: a popular idea in 2010 but then hit by French air traffic control strikes, much as volcanic ash struck that spring.

Our holidays don't all change: Crete, the Dordogne, Poland and the Danube Delta follow their usual pattern in spring and early summer. South Africa and Madeira are again in our autumn.

The Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust (see below) continues its good work, with your help, to support conservation projects linked to each holiday.

I hope you can join us on a wildlife holiday in 2012.



Chris Durdin

Chris Durdin
August 2011



The air holidays shown are ATOL Protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 3253. ATOL protection extends primarily to customers who book and pay in the United Kingdom.



Our logo is a greater honeyguide (*Indicator indicator*), an African bird that guides people or honey badgers to bees' nests. Those guided and the bird then enjoy the honeycomb. Honeyguide wildlife holidays also have enthusiastic leaders to guide you to nature's best.

HONEYGUIDE CHARITABLE TRUST

A donation to a local conservation project has been part of the holiday price since the start of Honeyguide in 1991. To date (August 2011), we have raised £72,600 for conservation projects, mostly in Europe.

The Honeyguide Wildlife Trust Limited was registered as a charity in June 2004, registered charity number 1104604. The object of the charity, in summary, is "To help conserve... the natural environment and wildlife".

The purpose, quite simply, is to claim tax from HM Customs & Revenue against the contributions from Honeyguiders. This can raise an additional 25p in the pound, and we then make the usual donations with the holidays a bit bigger for LPO, SEO, HOS, SOR and so on. This raises more than an additional £1000 each year for conservation.

Trustees of the charitable trust are Helen Crowder, Malcolm Crowder (secretary) and Chris Durdin (chairman).

We would be very grateful if everyone booking a holiday who is a UK taxpayer could complete the simple gift aid declaration on the booking form.

We also welcome additional donations or legacies through the Honeyguide charity.

We are very grateful to the Wildlife Outreach Network in Essex, which has provided extra support for our projects for several years.

Your leadership team 2012

Chris Durdin (this year leading in **Extremadura, the Peloponnese, the Dordogne and the French Pyrenees**) is the driving force behind Honeyguide, running holidays since 1991. For many years he combined this with his work for the RSPB in Eastern England, often the Society's spokesman, but has been concentrating on Honeyguide full-time since 2009, alongside writing a book about Norfolk's cranes. He's also a qualified soccer coach, for one son's under nine year group. As a naturalist, Chris is an all rounder.

Extremadura

Martin Kelsey OBE is our regular leader in Extremadura where he lives with his family, close to Finca Santa Marta. His background in ecology includes a three-year study on marsh warblers. After three years in the Amazon rainforest with the British Ornithologists' Union, where he met his wife Claudia, he worked for BirdLife International, before joining Save the Children. **Chris Durdin** – see above.

Fuerteventura

David Collins is an independent environmental consultant. He has led various Honeyguide wildlife holidays in the past, but his first love is Fuerteventura. David is co-author of *A Birdwatchers' Guide to the Canary Islands* and is in the process of publishing a book about the wildlife and history of Fuerteventura.

Crete

Chris Gibson is a conservation officer for Natural England based in north Essex, an author of several wildlife books and has led many holidays for Honeyguide. He is an outstanding all rounder, from birds through flowers to moths, recognised as a 'naturalist of distinction' by the British Naturalists' Association.

Tim Strudwick is the RSPB's Site Manager for the Mid Yare nature reserves in Norfolk – Strumpshaw Fen and nearby. Naturally Tim knows his birds, but he's also a keen botanist and runs courses on sedges and rushes. Another expertise is in solitary bees and wasps, for which he is the Norfolk county recorder.

Central Portugal

Domingos Leitão works for SPEA, the Portuguese BirdLife partner, and alongside this is a holiday leader in his home country.

Rob Macklin was until recently the RSPB's area manager on the Suffolk coast, covering Minsmere and North Warren among several nature reserves.

The Cévennes (and Peloponnese)

Robin Hamilton has a wide knowledge of western and central Europe and its wildlife, especially birds. He worked for many years for English Nature. **Rachel Hamilton** spent her working life teaching natural history and conservation with the Field Studies Council and at Otley College in Suffolk. She is an enthusiastic all round naturalist, though her first interest is botany. Robin and Rachel, both of whom are experienced wildlife leaders and keen linguists, are regular leaders in France.

Dordogne

Chris Durdin – see above.

Poland

Artur Wiatr is a wildlife enthusiast involved in nature protection and ecotourism development within the Biebrza River valley. He works both

for the Biebrza National Park and since 1998 as a holiday leader. He's a licensed guide and is co-author of a pocket guidebook on Biebrza National Park.

Ian Barthorpe is the RSPB's Marketing and Publicity Officer on the Suffolk coast, based at Minsmere and covering lesser known reserves such as Snape, Havergate Island and North Warren. He has been an RSPB member for more than 30 years (since age six), and has been lucky enough to work for the RSPB since 1999. He takes a keen interest in all wildlife, and was our co-leader in Poland in 2011.

Danube Delta

The team of local leaders from our friends at Ibis was undecided when going to print.

Picos de Europa

Teresa Farino is a naturalist with a special interest in the wildflowers, butterflies and moths of the Iberian Peninsula. Born in London, she has been living in the Picos de Europa since 1986 and has been leading wildlife holidays to many Spanish and Portuguese destinations for more than twenty years. During this time she has written a number of widely acclaimed books about the wildlife of Spain.

John Muddeman comes from Suffolk but lives in Madrid. After varied conservation and research jobs, he moved to Spain to teach English and lead wildlife holidays. He wrote '*A Birdwatching Guide to Extremadura*', where he used to be a Honeyguide leader, and his wide natural history skills and fluent Spanish make him well equipped to return to the Honeyguide team in the Picos.

Tarifa and Gibraltar

Frank (Francisco) Vargas is the RSPB's Farmland Bird Recovery Officer in Essex, but he comes from near the Strait of Gibraltar and his family's farm is there still. **Tim Strudwick** – see Crete.

French Pyrenees

Ivan Nethercoat is training & interpretation manager in the RSPB's People Engagement department at Sandy. He is a regular and well-travelled Honeyguide leader, most recently to the French Pyrenees. His degree, many moons ago, was in photography, and he is very happy to help any photographers in the group. **Chris Durdin** – see above.

South Africa

Geoff Crane is the man behind Crane's Cape Tours & Travel, both local leaders and ground agents for Honeyguide in South Africa. An experienced guide himself, he co-leads all Honeyguide's holidays in South Africa.

Bruce Terlien is an all rounder when it comes to guiding. Apart from his big passions of southern African fauna and flora, his interests include architecture, anthropology, geology, history, gardens, culture, wine and the culinary arts.

Madeira

Catarina Fagundes and Hugo Romano run Maderia Wind Birds, a small company specialising in observing the endemic and indigenous species of birds and plants on the island, and jointly lead all our groups on the island. The company embraces the principles of sustainable tourism, contributing to the conservation and interpretation of the natural heritage of Madeira's archipelago.



Chris Durdin



Martin Kelsey



David Collins



Chris Gibson



Domingos Leitão



Rob Macklin



Artur Wiatr



Ian Barthorpe



John Muddeman



Teresa Farino



Rachel Hamilton



Robin Hamilton



Ivan Nethercoat



Geoff Crane



Catarina Fagundes



Hugo Romano

Our holidays have been designed with the general naturalist in mind. Beginners are especially welcome but all holidays offer much to the more experienced naturalist. Some holidays are loosely based on 'birdwatching without blinkers'; some are a mix of birds, flowers and other wildlife. Several holidays can be good for butterflies. Local history, culture and food play a part in every holiday.

The holidays lend themselves to anyone wishing to leave the organised programme to sketch, paint, write or just potter.

14 – 21 February 2012

Extremadura

Cranes and much more

Crane season in wild, central Spain runs from November to February. Some 100,000 cranes overwinter in the region, providing one Europe's great wildlife spectacles.

The cranes feed on acorns in the 'dehesa' or wood pasture that is such a distinctive feature of Extremadura. They also feed in rice paddies and maize stubble fields, sometimes in groups, sometimes big flocks. And you can hear their evocative bugling: birds overhead or tucked out of sight in the holm oaks.

The cranes may be reason enough to travel to Extremadura in February, but there is much more. Other wintering birds include waterfowl and, on the steppes, flocks of golden plovers and lapwings, the latter *avefría* – cold bird – in Spanish.

Also on the steppes are impressive great bustards, often in small parties as the breeding season approaches. In the air, the sight of one of the world's heaviest flying birds is quite something. Other steppe birds include little



Price: £1,390 per person in twin room for a full week (Tuesday to Tuesday)

Single room supplement : £200

En suite facilities.

Scheduled easyJet flights Gatwick-Madrid.

Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

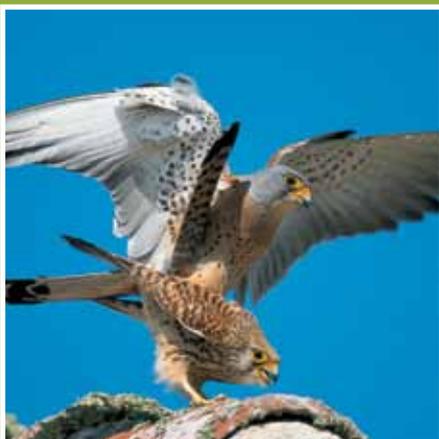
Leaders: Martin Kelsey and Chris Durdin



Cranes



Belén Plain



Lesser kestrels

White storks are bill-clapping on their huge nests. Lesser kestrels will be back along with other migrants such as great spotted cuckoo, martins and swallows.

We stay at the wonderful Finca Santa Marta, a granite-built olive oil mill converted into a country inn, situated in the countryside south of Trujillo. It's a great place to see azure-winged magpies, that amazing, colourful bird of the east with an outpost in Spain. One theory was that they originated from birds escaped during trade with China in earlier times, but proof that it is a relict population has recently come to light with the discovery of sub-fossil bones.



Azure-winged magpie

Birds

As well as those already mentioned, we should see a selection of the following: Bonelli's eagle, red and black-shouldered kites, peregrine, raven, hoopoe, blue rock thrush, little owl, southern grey shrike, woodlark, Dartford and Sardinian warblers, Hawfinch, Cirl and Corn Buntings, Thekla lark, spotless starling and rock sparrow.

Flowers

Ahead of Extremadura's fierce summer, the countryside is green, with wayside flowers such as Iberian milk-vetch and field marigolds. We will look for miniature daffodils: hoop petticoat and angel's tears narcissi.

Itinerary

We will visit the Crane Information Centre, dehesa and rice paddies at Moheda Alta. Other excursions will include visits to the Monfragüe Natural Park, including places such as Peña Falcón and the Tiétar cliffs; and exploration of the plains around Trujillo. We also spend a morning in the wonderful old town of Trujillo with its striking central square and breeding white storks and lesser kestrels.

Conservation project

Traditional low intensity farming, especially unirrigated arable farmland but also seasonal grazing, supports much of the special wildlife of Extremadura and can never be protected just by nature reserves. The conservation of the Spanish steppes and 'dehesa' wood pasture is a priority for the Sociedad Española de Ornitología (Spanish Ornithological Society / BirdLife Spain).



14 – 21 March 2012

Fuerteventura

Special birds on an unusual island

The Canary Islands, with their near perfect climate, are a major holiday destination. However, for those who know where to look, away from the sun-seekers, the islands also offer plenty of interest to wildlife lovers. In particular, there is a range of birds and plants found nowhere else.

The outstanding island from a birdwatcher's point of view is Fuerteventura. Although the range of birds is quite low, the quality is high. It is the only home of the Canary Island chat, which has one of the most restricted ranges of any European bird and a total population of just a few hundred.

Fuerteventura's wide semi-desert landscapes and barren mountains are home to a number of desert birds. Fuerteventura is probably the best place in the world to see houbara bustard. Our leader is an expert on the houbara, and we have an excellent chance of seeing this rare and elusive species. Other desert birds include the delightful and sometimes very tame cream-coloured courser, black-bellied sandgrouse and trumpeter finch.

We will also visit the two small wetlands on the island where we can expect to see noisy flocks of ruddy shelducks. Waders are likely to include black-winged stilts and Kentish plovers, and there is a chance of seeing the endemic plain swift. With luck, we may chance upon a Barbary falcon, several pairs of which now nest on the island.

In the central mountains there are stunted pine forests where the lovely song of the canary is heard, and African blue tits hunt for caterpillars.

There are oases of greenery where hoopoes are often common, and at this time of year such places attract a range of migrant passerines. The endemic Berthelot's pipits are common, and if migration conditions are right almost anything is possible.



Houbara bustard

The wild coastline at Cotillo offers the chance to see shorebirds, and at dusk large numbers of Cory's shearwaters close in shore.

This holiday will be of particular interest to birdwatchers, but the unusual flora and butterflies are bound to distract us from time to time.

We stay at the Oasis Casa Vieja Hotel near La Oliva, inland and away from the coastal holiday resorts.

Birds

Those above plus Egyptian vulture, Barbary partridge, pallid swift, Spanish sparrow, spectacled warbler, lesser short-toed lark and possibly

laughing dove. Migrants could include bee-eater, red-rumped swallow and woodchat shrike.

Flowers

Fuerteventura has a range of desert plants including interesting succulents. Depending on the intensity of winter rains, we will also see a range of Mediterranean and North African annuals.



Some are unique to Fuerteventura or are found only in the eastern Canary Islands and adjacent African coast. These include woody spurges, limoniums and a delicate bugloss. On the Jandía peninsula we may see the very rare cactus-like Jandía spurge or the Medusa's-head bindweed.

Insects

The number of species is quite low, but as with the birds, the quality is high. Greenish black-tip and green-striped white are the commonest butterflies, and we will hope to see tiny African grass blues and the magnificent African tiger and monarch. Dragonflies could include Saharan blue-tailed damselfly, lesser emperor and scarlet darter.

Other wildlife

Barbary ground squirrels are common and sometimes very tame. There are endemic species of lizard and gecko.

Itinerary

Daily excursions will be tailored to suit conditions, but will include visits to Cotillo, Los Molinos Reservoir, the central mountains, fields at La Oliva, Catalina Garcia Lagoon and the Jandía peninsula. We will aim to visit a variety of places each day, so will make good use of the minibus, but there will be some leisurely walking each day too.

Conservation project

Conserving the scarce houbara bustard is a priority for the Spanish Ornithological Society / BirdLife Spain, which runs a nature reserve on Fuerteventura.

Elsewhere, especially through signing, SEO tries to minimise disturbance to breeding birds.



Price: £1,450 per person in twin room for a full week (Wednesday to Wednesday).

Single room supplement: £200

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights, London Stansted or Liverpool to Fuerteventura. Flights from other UK airports may also be possible.

Deposit: £200

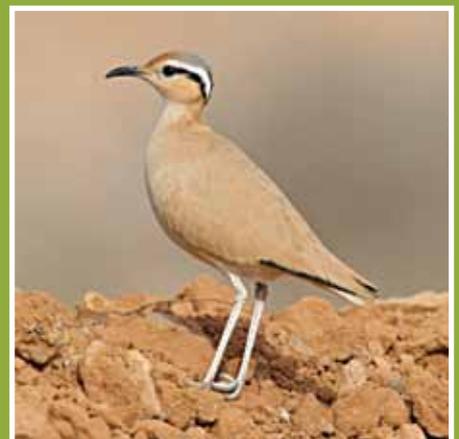
Maximum number (one leader): 7

Leader: David Collins

Euphorbia canariensis



Barbary ground squirrel



Cream-coloured courser

SUPPORTING



More information visit
www.honeyguide.co.uk 5

10 – 17 April 2012

Crete

Island birds and flowers in the cradle of civilisation



Price: £1,320 per person in single or twin room, for a full week (Tuesday to Tuesday)

This includes taverna evening meals, with wine and coffee but excludes lunch, for which please allow £3-4 per day, or a little more for a taverna lunch.

En suite facilities

EasyJet flights, Gatwick to Heraklion

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 14, with two leaders

Leaders: Chris Gibson and Tim Strudwick

Crete is a magical and mysterious island. Home of Europe's earliest civilisation, influenced by many nations, yet it retains its own identity and culture of which its people are justifiably proud.

The island's position in the Mediterranean has not only played a crucial role in its history but is an important migration route for birds on their way north in spring. Crete in April is free of crowds, the days can be warm and the hillsides are full of flowers.

This, the largest and most southerly of all the Greek islands, is dominated by a backbone of mountains through which cut many deep gorges. These are as spectacular as they are rich in wildlife, be it migrant birds, nesting vultures or endemic wild flowers.

Wildlife and history are difficult to separate on Crete, with many important archeological sites also rich in both plants and birds. We shall sample Minoan ruins at Phaestos and Ayia Triada and, perhaps, spend some time in the old Venetian port of Rethymnon.

We are based at the small and friendly Sophia Hotel in the fishing village of Plakias on the south coast. It is ideally placed for local walks and excursions and has an impressive backdrop of gorges and mountains.

Flowers

Crete's rich flora of 1600 native species includes 140 endemic to the island, such as Cretan cyclamen and Cretan ebony. In April many orchids are at their peak with Cretan bee, naked man, few-flowered, rainbow, four-spotted and bumblebee orchids among 20 or more species. Shrubs like Jerusalem sage and cistus contribute to colourful and aromatic hillsides.

Birds

The mountains and gorges of Crete are a stronghold for birds of prey, with the largest population of griffon vultures in Greece.

Lammergeier, Bonelli's and golden eagles and buzzard all breed, as do crag martin, blue rock thrush, chough and raven. The hillsides and scrub support both Sardinian and the much rarer Rüppell's warbler. At this time of year a whole range of birds passes through on migration, pausing especially at wetlands, however small; these might include red-footed falcon, alpine swift, bee-eater, squacco heron, little bittern and various waders and warblers.

Other wildlife

Even at this time of the year there are butterflies such as swallowtail, scarce swallowtail, Cleopatra and eastern festoon. We often see freshwater crabs; reptiles can include Balkan (stripe-necked) terrapin and Balkan green lizard.

Excursions

As well as local walks, our minibus trips this week include visits to Moni Préveli, Kourtaliótiko and Kotsiphos Gorges, Frangokastello, Spili, Ayia reservoir and, probably, the mountain plateau at Omalos.

Conservation project

The lammergeier conservation project is run by the Hellenic Ornithological Society, BirdLife Greece. In the Balkans it occurs only in Greece, with the bulk of the population on Crete. Alongside survey and monitoring, the long-term survival of Europe's rarest vulture is being tackled by site protection, food provision and the encouragement of traditional grazing systems.



Little bittern



Orchis boryi - Spili



Freshwater crab



Plakias Bay

15 – 22 April 2012

Central Portugal

Cork oak country and much more

From limestone hillsides to granite outcrops, cork oak woodlands to estuaries and dry grasslands, central Portugal offers a varied landscape with a rich range of wildlife.

This two centre holiday, starting close to Lisbon, offers contrasting habitats both between and within the holiday's two bases, one in the west of Portugal, the other in the east close to Spain.

Around Santarém

Here wildlife thrives in a mosaic of abandoned olive groves and farmland. Black-shouldered kite, bee-eaters and southern grey shrikes compete for attention with orchids, including yellow bee and giant orchids and violet limodor.

Spoonbills join nesting night herons, little egrets and thousands of cattle egrets on an island in the Tejo Estuary. The estuary's mudflats supports a good mix of waders – wintering, passage and breeding – and there or on nearby lagoons and fields there may be glossy ibis, Caspian tern and large numbers of white storks.

Much of the estuary is adjacent to wood pastures – *montados* – of cork oak, where nature and man have combined to create a sustainable harvest of cork on which a valuable ecosystem is based. Birds include Bonelli's and booted eagles, hoopoes (a few now overwinter here as the climate has warmed), cirl buntings and woodchat shrikes.

The limestone pavements and hills of the Serra de Aires and Candeeiros Natural Park provide a complete contrast. Flowers include Iberian fritillary and orchids such as woodcock, sawfly and naked man. As well as birds seen in previous days, we should find Dartford warbler, Thekla lark and choughs.

Northern Alentejo

After three days near Santarém, two hours' driving takes us east to near Marvão. This fortress village remains intact from the Islamic occupation in the Middle Ages and has applied to be a World Heritage site. Marvão offers stunning views from the massive quartzite outcrop on which it is set.

In this part of the Alentejo countryside, granite outcrops and the drier climate favour mixed forest cover with holm oak (rather than cork oak) and Pyrenean oak. Around and over the Mediterranean scrub and rocky outcrops special birds can include griffon & black vultures, alpine swift, crag martin, black-eared wheatear, Orphean and subalpine warblers and rock bunting.

In steppe grassland, groups of great bustards display among a carpet of wild flowers. A range of raptors includes Montagu's harriers and lesser kestrels. Other steppe birds include little bustard, stone-curlew, roller and great spotted cuckoo.



Birds

As well as those already mentioned, other likely birds may include black stork, red-crested pochard, golden oriole, spotless starling, blue rock thrush, short-toed lark, red-rumped swallow, Spanish sparrow, Iberian chiffchaff and Bonelli's warbler.



Flowers

Other local specialities include Iberian fritillary, one-leaved squill and Spanish bluebell. Iberian orchids include *Ophrys dyris*, conical orchid and *Orchis olbiensis*, plus many species found farther afield including narrow-leaved helleborine, small-flowered serapias and champagne orchid.

Other wildlife

Spanish festoon is, perhaps, the most sought after early butterfly; others should include Cleopatra and swallowtail. Large psammotromus and Iberian wall lizard are the likeliest lizards; Iberian ribbed salamander and various snakes are possible.

Itinerary

Visits include natural parks in the hills of Aires and Candeeiros in the west and São Mamede in the east. Important Bird Areas include the Tejo Estuary, the plains and grasslands of Elvas and Caia Dam IBA. Much of the interest is in the farmland, scrub, cork and holm oak wood pastures in both the east and west parts of the holiday.

Conservation project

The Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA, BirdLife in Portugal) has a network of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) with volunteers monitoring these and acting as 'caretakers'. The Albufeira do Caia IBA has a large population of waterbirds, including collared pratincoles (100 pairs), little terns (50 pairs, the only inland colony in Portugal), gull-billed terns (an astonishing 500 pairs), red-crested pochards and other duck and egret species. SPEA is helping to manage the IBA by clearing and creating islands for terns and grebes, and runs a ringing station.

Price: £1,390 per person in twin room for a full week (Sunday to Sunday)

Single room supplement: £150

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights
Bristol, Gatwick, Liverpool or Luton
to Lisbon

Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Domingos Leitão and Rob Macklin

Cork oak



Black-shouldered kite



Spanish festoon



More information visit
www.honeyguide.co.uk 7

10 – 17 May 2012

Dordogne

A taste of the good life

The department of the Dordogne in south-west France is justly famous for its pretty villages, cave paintings, elegant towns and landscapes of river valleys and quiet countryside. Less discovered is the wildlife: a charming mix of flowers, birds and butterflies.



Price: £1,390 per person in a twin room for a full week (Thursday to Thursday)

Single room supplement (two only): £150. En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights Stansted or Flybe Exeter to Bergerac. Flights from other UK airports may also be possible

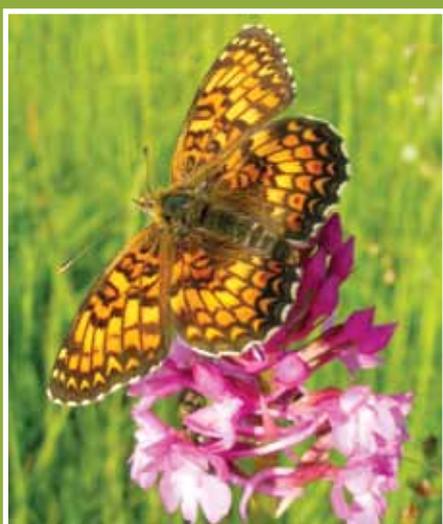
Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 12

Leader: Chris Durdin



View near Castang



Knapweed fritillary on pyramidal orchid



Woodcock orchid

Orchids are the most striking natural asset: up to 25 species can be found. Half of these are around our base at Castang. Birds on the doorstep include cirl bunting, melodious warbler, wryneck, honey buzzard, firecrest and black redstart.

Castang

Castang is a hamlet close to the Dordogne river above the village of Le Coux et Bigaroque, not far from St Cyprien. Cathy and Keith Parker are our hosts; Cathy is from Montcaret, a little farther west along the Dordogne valley, and Keith is from England. The house was once a Pergordian tobacco farm of great character and charm, parts of which are thought to be more than 400 years old. The farmhouse, together with its complex of converted barns, provides comfortable accommodation around a sunny terraced courtyard. Dinner, after a leisurely aperitif, is one of Castang's great features. Five courses of the best of the region's cuisine, from soup to dessert, accompanied by local wines, are prepared and cooked by Cathy.

Castang's large meadow has many hundreds of green-winged orchids along with tongue and pyramidal orchids. Loose-flowered orchids grow where the meadow gets damper down the hill, close to where golden orioles and nightingales can be heard and, with a little luck, seen. Beyond the orchid field, the area is a mix of meadows, cropped land and woods, cut by the wide river valleys of the Vézère and Dordogne.

Flowers

Lady, man, burnt-tip, fly, woodcock, narrow-leaved helleborine and greater butterfly are among the orchids, and two great surprises this far north are the sombre bee orchid and long-lipped serapias.

Meadows thick with yellow rattle, banks with meadow clary, tassel hyacinth, milkwort and a range of cranesbills, flaxes and rockroses are just a few of some 250 plant species. Shrubs include dogwood, fly honeysuckle and Montpellier maple.

Birds

Serins, Bonelli's warblers, short-toed treecreepers and hoopoes are all found around Castang or close to home. Black kites and buzzards are the most frequently seen birds of prey; hobbies and peregrines are also likely.

Other wildlife

Butterflies on the wing in mid-May include scarce and common swallowtails, black-veined and wood whites, Cleopatra, Glanville fritillary, green hairstreak, large copper and small blue. Elegant yellow and black ascalaphids – something between a lacewing and an ant-lion – hunt over meadows. Other invertebrates include violet carpenter bee and hummingbird hawkmoth. After dark, a short walk away, midwife toads are carrying their eggs.



Midwife toad

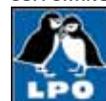
Itinerary

Two days will be on walks around Castang. Three days will be gentle walks a little farther afield, combined with visits to the village of Limeuil, at the confluence of the Vézère and Dordogne rivers, and a morning on market day in the town of Le Bugue. Our cave walk includes an optional visit to the crystal cathedral cavern of the Gouffre de Proumeyssac. The sixth day includes a visit to the caves of Font de Gaume at Les Eyzies to see prehistoric paintings of bison, horse and reindeer; and to Roque St Christophe for crag martins, peregrines, woodland and meadow flowers at a site known for its cave dwellers since the days of Cro Magnon man.

Conservation project

La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (French Bird Protection League) has set up a network of no-hunting sanctuaries throughout France. LPO is also battling French hunters to prevent an extension of the shooting season into the spring.

SUPPORTING



12 – 20 May 2012

Poland

Biebrza Marshes and Białowieża Forest

Biebrza Marshes forms a formidable but beautiful barrier between solid land in north east Poland and Belarus. The primeval Białowieża Forest also lies along that same international border, and together they form one of Europe's greatest natural experiences.

The River Biebrza consists of some 100 miles of meanders and ox-bows within its basin of about 3,000 square miles. Winter is long lasting, while summers are short and rich. Floods of unpredictable length can last into early summer.

These produce habitats ranging from swampy, impenetrable forest, much beloved by breeding cranes and black storks, to huge grasslands, covered with millions of marsh marigolds in spring with nearby water hosting many breeding marsh terns. The area supports many of the 50,000 pairs of white storks that breed in Poland. The evening murmuring of fire-bellied toads is one of the more memorable sounds, especially if accompanied by the bugling of cranes and the rasping of corncrakes.

Białowieża too has its wetlands but is most admired for the majesty of its forest. Here, famously, several hundred European bison roam. Beavers abound – Bobra in Polish, which was the original name of the Biebrza – and are sometimes even seen from the bridge in the village of Białowieża.

One piece of the forest that once covered much of central Europe, Białowieża was originally preserved for private hunting by Polish kings and Russian Tsars. Modern protection is a National Park and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Mixed oak, lime and hornbeam is the commonest of the six main forest types in the Polish part of Białowieża; in Belarus there is more coniferous forest. Never felled, with giant trees and large amounts dead wood, both standing and fallen, this unruly wilderness seems to invite architectural similes. Cathedral-like in the more spacious parts, it is dense in others. For many the highlight of any visit is to enjoy a walk with a local expert guide in this ancient forest.

Birds

Spring brings strutting hordes of ruffs to the marshes together with dancing brigades of white-winged and black terns. Thrush nightingale, great reed warbler and white-spotted bluethroat arrive early and sing delightfully often from exposed positions. Soon they are joined by scarlet rosefinch, red-breasted flycatcher, aquatic, river and barred warblers together with the fluting golden oriole. Raptors such as white-tailed eagle and Montagu's harrier show frequently, while penduline tits bring extra delight by building much-admired nests. Eight species of woodpecker are present in Białowieża forest, including black and white-backed. Their holes provide homes to flycatchers, starlings and pygmy owls. Other woodland birds include lesser spotted eagle, nutcracker and

hazel hen; red-backed shrikes can be common in surrounding fields and meadows.

Mammals

As everywhere, mammals can be difficult to see, though in Biebrza and Białowieża the chance of sightings are quite good. Elks can usually be seen grazing or loping in the marsh. Wild boars may be surprisingly obvious; there are many hares, but no rabbits. Pine marten is possible, as are red squirrels. Tarpan or Konik horses, now frequent inhabitants of British nature reserves, are being bred to revive a species close to the original wild horse of Europe.

Other wildlife

Marsh, edible and green tree frogs join the fire-bellied and grey toads in suitable wetlands. Dragonflies are not numerous in May but include Siberian winter and white-legged damselflies. Among early butterflies, Camberwell beauty and large tortoiseshell are popular with British visitors.

Plants

Biebrza holds a multitude of water-loving plants such as water soldier, sundew, yellow marsh saxifrage and a range of marsh orchids. Trees are much admired in Białowieża with certain individuals famous for their size. On the woodland floor there are hepatica, anemones, lungwort, sweet woodruff and carpets of ransoms. A curious mix of northern, alpine and eastern species can include long-leaved speedwell, bastard balm, spiked rampion and, we hope, lady's slipper orchid.

Itinerary

Three days at Białowieża, followed by moving to Biebrza marshes for the remaining four days of the holiday. In Białowieża we will stay in the village, close to the Tsar's Palace Park. In Biebrza we stay close to Goniadz, surrounded by meadows and woods.



Price: £1,450 per person in twin room for nine days (Saturday to Sunday)

Single room supplement: £120

En suite facilities

Scheduled Wizz Air flights
London Luton – Warsaw

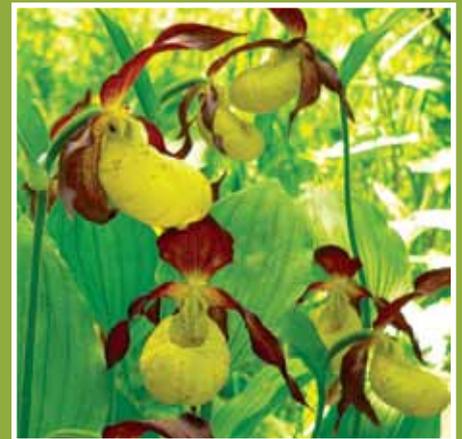
Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Artur Wiatr and Ian Barthorpe



White-winged black tern



Lady's slipper orchids



Białowieża forest

Conservation Project

The Workshop of Living Architecture runs environmental projects in and near Biebrza Marshes. This includes building new nesting platforms for white storks, often in response to storm damage or roof renovation, or simply to replace old nests.



More information visit
www.honeyguide.co.uk 9

25 May – 3 June 2012

The Cévennes

Causses and Gorges in a little-known corner of France



Price: £1,520 per person in twin room for ten days (Friday to Sunday)

Single room supplement: £200 (two only)

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights London Stansted to Rodez

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 14

Leaders: Robin and Rachel Hamilton

The southernmost outpost of the Massif Central, before it plunges down into the Mediterranean heat of the Languedoc plain, is the vast limestone plateau of the Grands Causses. Monstrous movements of the earth's surface cracked this slab into sections, and water poured into the cracks, forming deep, dramatic gorges.

The largest of these carries the Tarn, one of France's most famous and spectacular rivers.



Cantobre village



Black-veined white butterfly



Griffon vulture

Birds

If there is an iconic bird of the region, it is the griffon vulture, thanks to a highly successful reintroduction programme. Craggy cliffs of the gorges also provide nesting sites for choughs and golden eagles. The open, rocky cause landscape offers productive feeding for short-toed eagles, harriers, shrikes and wheatears. Woodlands and scrub echo to the song of nightingales, joined at nightfall by churring nightjars. Around villages, the song of serins and black redstarts may be heard, and the air is alive with swifts and crag martins.

Flowers

Nothing can outdo limestone for the richness of its flora. Grassland is white and yellow with rockroses and fragrant underfoot with wild thymes. Roadside screes are pink and blue with rock soapwort, fairy foxglove, flax and aphyllanthes. On granites and schists we find saxifrages and cinquefoils; in the rich meadows, wild tulips and narcissi.

There are orchids too, a wide range of species, some in great profusion: carpets of lesser butterfly orchids among feather grass, banks of early purple and elder-flowered orchids on damp streambanks. Lady, monkey, man and military orchids are abundant (and hybridising!). There are two endemic *Ophrys* species.

Other wildlife

European beavers have been successfully reintroduced into the river Dourbie, close to our base. A herd of the rare Przewalski's horses has been established on the Causse Méjean, in a habitat akin to their native steppes. Reptiles are abundant: green and wall lizards and harmless viperine and grass snakes. We may hear the bell-like call of midwife toads at night. The open scrub and grassland of the cause is rich in butterflies and other insects.

Itinerary

We have limestone and granite to explore, three rivers with their magnificent gorges and several causses, each with its own individuality. There are flower-rich grasslands, pine, oak and sweet chestnut woods, rocky cliffs and scree and tumbling rivers. We shall drive to the top of Mont Aigoual, visit the Templar village of la Couvertorade, the Roquefort Caves and the famous Aven Armand – a beautiful cavern big enough to accommodate Notre Dame Cathedral. A good look at the Millau Viaduct is a must and lunch one day at the best local *ferme auberge* is on the schedule.

Conservation Project

Conservation contributions from this holiday support work to protect the vultures and other wildlife of the Grands Causses. La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, the French Bird Protection League) runs a programme of habitat management in partnership with landowners, combined with research, survey and education.

SUPPORTING



Smaller rivers, the Jonte and the Dourbie, flow into the Tarn and the ancient town of Millau, near their confluence, is now famous for its magnificent bridge, the Millau Viaduct. Enchanting villages of honey-coloured stone are scattered in strategic positions on hillsides and beside rivers, each with its Romanesque church; the Knights Templar had strongholds in the area.

To the east of the Grands Causses, limestone gives way to schist and granite hills, culminating in the peaks of Mont Aigoual (1567 m) and Mont Lozère (1702 m). This is the true Cévennes, made famous some 130 years ago when the youthful Robert Louis Stevenson narrated his 'Travels with a Donkey'. The whole area is now recognised for its landscape and natural history as the Parc Regional Naturel des Grands Causses and the Parc National des Cévennes.

Ancient landscapes are entwined with cultural history. On the steppe-like plateaux of the Grands Causses, the characteristic small brown sheep, the brebis, have been fundamental to agriculture for many centuries. The sheep are milked for what many consider to be the finest cheese in the world – Roquefort. The cuisine is rich and inventive. The sweet, flavourful meat of the brebis and Roquefort cheese often play a part: you can have Roquefort in every course! Aligot, a dish of soft cheese and potato, devised by shepherds to prepare far from home, is not to be missed.

For many years, a railway transported people and produce across the Causse. The line itself is long defunct but several railway buildings remain along the old track. Above Nant, up on the Causse du Larzac, the *Gare aux Ânes*, the 'donkey station', renowned for many years as a restaurant, is a perfect base for Honeyguide.

2 – 9 June 2012

Danube Delta

A week in Europe's largest wetland

There is nowhere in Europe quite like the Danube Delta. Covering 2,200 square miles, the lion's share in Romania, the rest in the Ukraine, no naturalist's lifetime should be without the experience of visiting the delta.

Immense, important, breathtaking, threatened, beautiful; almost any superlative seems to fit some aspect of the Danube Delta.

For wetland birds, it is birdwatching made easy. Most famous are the pelicans, white and the globally threatened Dalmatian. Enjoy them as your boat drifts close to a flock on a lake; another day a flight of them catches you by surprise as they glide easily overhead.

The delta is as varied as it is spectacular. One hour you may be along riverine forest, with glossy ibises, egrets and sparkling blue kingfishers either side of you. Moving into an open area there may be lily-nesting whiskered terns alongside family parties of ferruginous ducks and red-necked grebes with youngsters clambering onto their backs. Then there are little bitterns disappearing into high reeds to the deep-throated sounds of great reed warblers or the distant buzz of a Savi's warbler.



Whiskered tern

The visit is timed for a combination of good weather and wetland birds at their most abundant and obvious. As well as true wetland birds, the land and wooded areas within the wetlands are rich with rollers, bee-eaters, golden orioles and woodpeckers, the last including black and grey-headed. Dragonflies bring hobbies and red-footed falcons in pursuit, and occasionally the vast form of a white-tailed eagle drifts through.

Much of this needs to be done by boat, or rather boats. This holiday is run in collaboration with Ibis Tours who are based in Tulcea, gateway to the delta. A delightful 'pontoon' – floating hotel – is our holiday base, usually combined with a hotel in Tulcea. The food is very good. We will start in Tulcea and then be towed into the delta's core.

Some of the best areas for birds are in Dobrogea – the area round the edge of the delta. Lagoons with wildfowl and migrant waders and are best visited from here. Dry

country birds include calandra and short-toed larks; raptors include long-legged buzzard. Scrub areas hold barred warbler and ortolan bunting; the villages have white storks and Syrian woodpeckers.

Our local guides know the area and its wildlife well. But equally important is their hospitality. As the Romanian Ministry of Tourism brochure rightly says, 'Come as a tourist, leave as a friend'.



Price: £1,450 per person in twin cabin for full week (Saturday to Saturday)

En suite facilities

Single cabin supplement: £140

Scheduled Wizz Air flights, London Luton to Bucharest.

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 14

Optional three-day extension to the Carpathian Mountains, 9 – 13 June, including brown bear watching: £500 per person, single supplement £60.

Leaders: Ibis team, with a local guide from Ibis in the Carpathians



Birds

Those above plus purple, squacco and night herons, great white and little egrets, spoonbill, pygmy cormorant, Syrian woodpecker, red-crested pochard, red-backed and lesser grey shrikes, penduline and sombre tits, icterine warbler and, with luck and perseverance, paddyfield warbler.

Other wildlife

This is, primarily, a birdwatching holiday, but the flowers in Dobrogea are a fascinating mix of eastern and northern European and Mediterranean species. Trees include Caucasian and manna ashes, Cornelian cherry, oriental hornbeam and silver lime. Terrapins, frogs and butterflies add interest, and muskrat is a possibility in the delta.

Itinerary

We'll spend three days in Dobrogea exploring a mix of wet and dry land. The following three days will be in the heart of the delta, much of it by boat but with walks onto dry land.

Conservation project

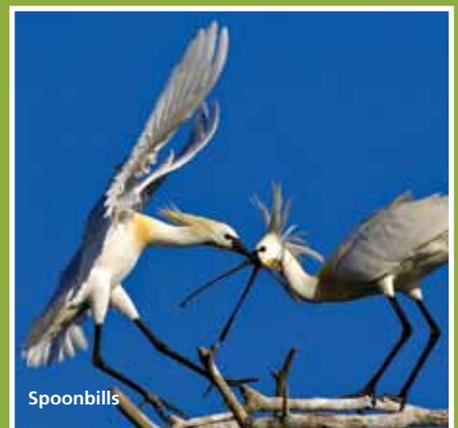
The Romanian Ornithological Society is a small but active bird conservation society. Our contribution goes towards a group of young naturalists called Falco cherrug (the saker), which is run by Eugen Petrescu, who is both one of the Ibis team – quite often a leader for Honeyguide groups – and the SOR SUPPORTING representative in the delta.



White pelicans



Brown bear, a highlight of the Carpathians



Spoonbills

6 – 13 June 2012

Picos de Europa

Flowers, butterflies and mountain wildlife amid stunning scenery



The Picos de Europa is a small but spectacular range of jagged limestone mountains in northern Spain. Here traditional methods of livestock farming allow wildlife to flourish alongside mankind, resulting in an incredibly diverse range of flora and fauna.

A pincushion of knife-edged ridges and

Provence orange-tip, Duke of Burgundy, sooty copper, Spanish purple and blue-spot hairstreaks, blues such as turquoise, green-underside and mazarine, many early fritillaries, including pearl-bordered, Glanville and marsh, and red-underwing, Oberthür's grizzled and chequered skippers. Day-flying moths might include fiery clearwing and several species of burnet moth, and there will also be the opportunity to put out a moth trap on Teresa's terrace in the evenings, which usually attracts several eye-catching species of hawkmoths, cream-spot and Spanish tigers, and many more.

Birds

The Picos de Europa supports healthy raptor populations, some 500 griffon vultures as well as a score or more pairs of Egyptian vultures. The eagles are represented mainly by golden, short-toed and booted, the last two in fair numbers throughout, with honey buzzard and goshawk in forested areas. Black kites are particularly abundant, hobbies occur in drier habitats and peregrines are regularly seen preying on choughs around higher crags. Middle spotted and black woodpeckers and citril finches are also possible in the forest habitats, with red-backed shrikes, citril finches and rock buntings in the meadow-scrub mosaic. Above the tree-line, birds include snowfinch, alpine accentor, rock thrush and both red-billed and alpine choughs, not to mention wallcreeper, on which front we are rarely disappointed.

Other wildlife

Although mammals are difficult to spot during the day, we should encounter southern chamois (isard) at altitude, with roe deer, red squirrel and wildcat possible at lower levels. A good range of reptiles and amphibians can be observed in June, including large psammotromus, Schreiber's green, western green and ocellated lizards, alpine and marbled newts and midwife toad; Seoane's viper can be found in upland heaths.

Itinerary

We will explore all the main habitats of the Picos de Europa, walking a maximum of 5km per day, allowing plenty of time for plant and animal observation, identification and photography. Most of our destinations lie within half an hour of the hotel, although if the weather is poor we might head south over the Cordillera Cantábrica to visit the high limestone plateaux of northern Castile, for an entirely different flora and fauna.

Our hotel is the Posada El Hoyal in Pesaguero, just a few yards from holiday leader Teresa's house.

Conservation project

Our hotel lies within a designated brown bear protection area, and we might even see signs of their passage – footprints or scat – during our stay. Field agents of the Fundación Oso Pardo work hard studying and protecting the Cantabrian brown bear populations and their habitat, and their efforts have been rewarded in recent years by the presence of at least three females with cubs in our beleaguered eastern nucleus.



Price: £1,390 per person in twin room for a full week (Wednesday to Wednesday).

Single room supplement: £130

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights Stansted to Santander

Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Teresa Farino & John Muddeman



Fuenfría



Pasque flower *Pulsatilla rubra* ssp *hispanica*



Marbled newt

pinnacles – the heritage of localised glacial activity and ongoing karstification – peaks at 2,648m (Torre Cerredo) and is split into three distinct massifs by precipitous gorges, carved out by the southernmost salmon rivers in Europe. In part a national park of 64,660 hectares, the Picos de Europa houses more than 1,500 species of plants, 70 or so mammals and 154 butterflies, such that even a brief visit in early summer will make a lasting impression.

In June, the hay meadows of the Picos de Europa are simply glorious. Acknowledged as being among the most species-rich Atlantic grasslands in the world, they teem with orchids and butterflies. Add to this the delights of alpine rock-gardens and high-level acid peat bogs, plus the diversity of woodland types in surrounding valleys – Mediterranean evergreen forests, cool humid swathes of beech and sessile oak, mixed deciduous canopies of ash, wych elm and small-leaved lime and extensive tracts of Pyrenean oak – and you have the recipe for an ideal natural history holiday.

Flowers

Deep-azure gentians and almost-black pasque flowers are just some of the delights in store during the week. There are many wildflowers once common in the British Isles but rarely seen today, such as spotted rock-rose, rock cinquefoil, ground-pine, greater yellow-rattle, round-headed leek and whorled Solomon's-seal. Here too grow some 50 species of orchids, of which we can expect to see at least half during our stay, including early spider and woodcock ophrys, and lizard, pink butterfly and elder-flowered orchids. We should also encounter several plants that are unique to the Picos de Europa, notably the stunning yellow-flowered saxifrage *Saxifraga felineri*.

Butterflies and moths

Among the 70-odd species that we might see at this time of year are both swallowtail and scarce swallowtail, black-veined white and

Tarifa and Gibraltar

Migration hotspot in Andalusia

The Strait of Gibraltar is one of the busiest migration points in western Europe, situated at the extreme south western tip of Europe between the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. This pivotal point of Europe provides a narrow crossing point for millions of migrating birds into and out of Africa.

It was here that in Greek mythology, Hercules used his strength to separate Europe from Africa by leaning on two pillars, Gibraltar being the European pillar. The Arabs call the Strait Bahr-z-zohak, meaning narrow sea.

This holiday will enable you to experience the very best of visible bird migration, sea mammals, landscape and culture. Tarifa and Gibraltar is a magical area, migrants bursting out of bushes, the sky busy with migrating eagles or storks or the excitement of boat-side dolphins and whales.

Millions of birds gather every year in the southern part of Spain to rest and forage before continuing their journey southwards to their African wintering grounds. Among them are raptors such as short-toed and booted eagles, Egyptian and griffon vultures along with good numbers of honey buzzards making their post nuptial migration through the straits every autumn. The spectacle provides delight to many visiting birders and naturalists observing this biannual migration. Spending our time at well-placed raptor watchpoints, we can experience some of the best visible bird migration in western Europe.

Other migrants can include large numbers of black and white storks and there are many typical Mediterranean bird species all waiting to be encountered within the cork oak woodlands or wetland habitats which we will visit in the region.

Migration observations on this holiday will also include a sample of some of the passerine migrants that cross here into Africa. We will observe bird ringing at a designated site to observe this important ornithological study in the region, along with close up views of some familiar birds that are returning to their wintering grounds from northern European breeding grounds.

Watching whales and seabirds

Sailing the waters between the two continents provides a great opportunity to observe the area's unique marine ecosystem. This area is not only notable for migrating birds but also important feeding grounds for many marine mammals. Long-finned pilot whales, common, bottlenose and striped dolphins are all regularly encountered and orca can be seen in early September. We will take a boat trip into the strait to witness these animals at close quarters while ensuring we do not disturb their normal behaviour. Offshore we will also be

able to catch sight of several seabird species including Scopoli's shearwater (regarded as some as a separate species from Cory's shearwater), Manx and Balearic shearwaters.



Long-finned pilot whales

Gibraltar

We will also visit the British territory of Gibraltar. It's famous for its Barbary macaques, the last wild population in Europe, easy to see at designated feeding stations. Additionally, on this spectacular rock monolith, there's the possibility of encountering the often elusive Barbary partridge, along with blue rock thrush.

We stay at Huerta Grande, situated in a relatively cool wooded gorge inland from Tarifa, within a Natural Park – the southern tip of the Parque Natural de Los Alcornocales.

Conservation project

The Ornithological Group of Estrecho (GOES), formed in 1982, studies and protects wild birds and their habitats. It operates a ringing station and here and elsewhere more than 90,000 birds have been ringed since 1983, both resident species such as white storks and the many migrants that rely on this route to and from Africa. Other work includes publications and school visits.



Price: £1,390 per person in twin room for a full week (Wednesday to Wednesday).

Single room supplement: £100

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flight Gatwick – Gibraltar, or Monarch flight Manchester – Gibraltar.

Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Frank Vargas and Tim Strudwick



Egyptian vulture



Short-toed eagle, below Gibraltar



11 – 18 September 2012

French Pyrenees

Stunning scenery and mountain wildlife



Price: £1,390 per person in twin room for a full week (Tuesday to Tuesday)

Single room supplement: £150

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flight, Stansted to Lourdes

Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Main leader: Chris Durdin



Apollo butterfly



Lammergeier



Cirque de Gavarnie

For a combination of mountain views, flowers, butterflies and birds, the Pyrenees take some beating. Spectacular cirques, flower-filled meadows and soaring vultures; it lends itself to our mixed natural history style.

Many Honeyguiders know the Spanish Pyrenees: the French side is lusher, greener and the emphasis of this holiday is much more on the high Pyrenees. Access is easy to gentle walks or pottering in mountain pastures, up there with the isard – Pyrenean chamois – and marmots.

Snowfinch, both red-billed and alpine choughs, rock bunting and rock thrush are highly likely. That most thrilling of birds, the lammergeier, is as easy to see here as anywhere; other birds of prey include griffon and Egyptian vultures, golden eagles and red kites. There are wallcreepers, though typically they are elusive.

September also brings a steady flow of migrants. Countless numbers of birds are moving south and many rest and feed in Pyrenean valleys before crossing the high peaks. Weather conditions and luck will play their part in what we see: raptors, storks and cranes pass through and we hope to see



Moulting marmot

warblers, chats, flycatchers and more.

Butterflies include Apollo, Camberwell beauty and swallowtail, plus a selection of graylings, ringlets, blues, fritillaries and others. It's our first September visit so the fun will be discovering which species are on the wing.

High mountain pastures should still have colour with later flowers such as Pyrenean thistle, giant yellow gentian and white false helleborine. We'll search for flowers on rocks, screes and streambanks and seek out patches of late snowmelt for alpins like gentians, primroses and butterworts.

Watercourses can hold Pyrenean brook newts and Pyrenean rock lizards scuttle around on rocks in the higher pastures.

Our base is the Hotel La Brèche de Roland, of Gèdre, just north of Gavarnie. It's an attractive former 17th century family house in the village, looking out onto Brèche de Roland. The 'brèche' or breach is like a bite out of the top of the cirque, measuring 100m by 60m. Roland, nephew of Charlemagne, carved it, according to 11th century legend. He was leading the fight against the Moors and was trying to smash his magical sword Durandel to save it from enemy hands.

Birds

Highlights, in addition to those mentioned above, could include short-toed eagle, peregrine, alpine swift, black woodpecker, woodlark, crag martin, water pipit, black-bellied dipper, crested tit, red-backed shrike and citril finch.

Itinerary

The cirque of Gavarnie is rightly famous; it can be busy but that takes little away from its magnificence and wildlife interest. Other sites to be visited include the Barrage des Gloriettes, Saugué valley, Ossoue valley, Col de Tentes, Col du Tourmalet and Cirque de Troumouse.

Conservation project

The lammergeier, or bearded vulture, is Europe's scarcest bird of prey. Though never common, their decline prompted a partnership to tackle their protection and, as a result, numbers are now on the up. La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, the French Bird Protection League) is active here, with careful monitoring of the local population of the *casseur d'os* (bonebreaker), including tracking birds with radio transmitters; site protection in collaboration with other mountain users, such as climbers; and food provision in the breeding season.

SUPPORTING



7 – 14 November 2012

Madeira

Pearl of the Atlantic

Madeira's scenic contrast between sea and mountains, tropical gardens and equable year-round temperatures – around 17°C in winter – make it a tempting holiday destination, especially in the British winter. For naturalists, the isolation of this Portuguese archipelago, some 500 kilometres west of the African coast, brings special wildlife including many species found only here.

The scenery is immediately striking, with cliffs and mountains rising to more than 1800 metres squeezed into an island of only 741 km². Old irrigation channels, known as levadas, with their side paths are excellent – and fairly flat – ways to get to know Madeira and its cultural and natural heritage, like the laurel forest. The green forest contrasts with the blue ocean – where there is a chance to observe some cetaceans.

The rural hotel where we stay, Quinta do Furão, is in Santana in the north of the island, a peaceful and traditional setting away from the main tourist areas around Funchal. From here one can admire the rocky cliffs rising from the sea and the top of the mountains touching the clouds.

Flora

The main focus of this trip for flora will be the laurel forest, a UNESCO World Heritage site, with its endemic trees, shrubs, ferns, mosses and lichens. This forest is so named due to the dominance of trees from the laurel family, such as bay laurel, fetid laurel, Madeira mahogany and the Canary laurel. A few native flowers should be flowering in November, including Madeira and anemone-leaved storksbills. Away from the laurel forest, the range of flowers from around the world is very striking, such as bird-of-paradise, agapanthus and king protea – these all from South Africa – among many exotic trees and shrubs.

Birds

Two birds occur only on Madeira, trocax pigeon and Madeira firecrest, and we aim to find these. Local subspecies around at the time we are in Madeira include Berthelot's pipit *Anthus bertelotti madeirensis*, Madeira chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs madeirensis*, grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea schmitzi* and rock sparrow *Petronia petronia madeirensis*. Other birds include plain swift, canary, spectacled warbler, waxbills and migrants such as waders. Bird density is low in Madeira and local knowledge to find these specialities is essential.

Other wildlife

A morning sea trip offers the chance to see bottle-nosed and spotted dolphins, the possibility of seeing sperm and short-finned pilot whales and, with luck, Fea's petrels coming close to the coast.



Butterflies are also interesting and easy to see with endemic species as Madeira grayling *Hipparchia madeirensis* and Madeiran speckled wood *Pararge xiphia*, plus sub-species like Madeira small copper *Lycaena phlaeas phlaeoides*. Indian red admiral, long-tailed blue and the beautiful monarch butterfly also breed on the island.

Itinerary

Our days out, all starting on the north coast of the island, visit a range of landscapes and protected areas throughout Madeira. Some days combine gentle walking with bird and flora watching; others will be mainly by minibus stopping at hot spots. A sea trip on the eastern side of the island shows us Madeira from the sea and its maritime species. There will also be a free day with an opportunity to visit the celebrated tropical gardens in Funchal.

Conservation Project

Europe's rarest breeding seabird and once thought to be extinct, the Zino's Petrel or freira is endemic to Madeira. The Freira Conservation Project (FCP), founded in 1986, is a group of people and institutions working on the conservation of Zino's petrels, especially by controlling its main predator, the rat. The FCP has overseen a steady increase in numbers nesting in the central massif of Madeira. We will not see them as they can only be seen between April and August. Frank Zino, the son of Alec Zino who rediscovered the bird and named it as a separate species, is the FCP's president and will meet us for a brief talk about Zino's petrels.

SUPPORTING



Monarch on pride-of-Madeira



Madiera firecrest



Laurel forest

Price: £1,440 per person in twin room for a full week (Wednesday to Wednesday)

Single room supplement: £160

En suite facilities.

Scheduled easyJet flights, Stansted, Gatwick or Bristol to Funchal

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 7, minimum 4

Leaders: Catarina Fagundes and Hugo Romano

17 October - 1 November 2012

Kruger National Park

Two weeks of unparalleled bird and wildlife watching in South Africa



Price: £3,900 per person in twin room for 14 days in South Africa, plus two overnight travel days (Wednesday to Thursday)

Single room supplement: £400

En suite facilities

Scheduled flights, London to Johannesburg

Deposit: £400

Number: minimum of 4, maximum 14

Leaders: Geoff Crane and Bruce Terlien

Dramatic yet accessible, wild Africa yet people-friendly, the Kruger is one of the world's great National Parks.

The Kruger has the enviable reputation of having the highest recorded species diversity of wildlife in a game reserve in the whole of Africa. The park is a fantastic destination for birdwatchers, with 517 bird species having been recorded in the park to date. Of these, 253 are residents and 117 are non-breeding migrants.

Kori and black-bellied bustards, secretary bird and ostriches are some of the biggest and most obvious birds. The park is particularly rich in cuckoos (nine species), rollers (five species), hornbills (six species) and kingfishers (nine species). Large raptors encountered throughout the year include African harrier-hawk, bateleur, dark chanting goshawk and five vulture species: eagles include martial, Verreaux's and tawny plus African fish eagle, African hawk eagle, brown and black-chested snake eagles.

Everyone wishes to see the so-called 'big five' - lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo and leopard - but these are just the best known of the park's 147 species of mammals. African wild dog, cheetah, giraffe and spotted hyaena are just a few of the others. Yet the 'little five' - lion ant, elephant shrew, rhino beetle, buffalo weaver and leopard tortoise - are equally fascinating in their own way.

We will be visiting the park towards the end of the dry season. This will make viewing wildlife more rewarding as the vegetation is sparser and animals and birds are drawn to waterholes to drink. Hippopotamus, Nile crocodile and marsh terrapin are residents of dams, rivers and waterholes.

Waterbirds include goliath heron, saddle-billed stork, African openbill and yellow-billed stork.

rhino beetles, roosting bats, sun-basking reptiles and well camouflaged insects. All the camps have ponds or bird baths, which are worth spending time at during the heat of the day. On one occasion we were shown 117 different bird species by the camp gardener - before breakfast! There is also a large variety of mammals that can be seen within the camps: tree squirrel, banded and dwarf mongooses, bushbuck, baboons and vervet monkey, the last quick and cunning when food is in question.

Linked to game and birdwatching, we will be looking at the Kruger's six eco-systems: baobab sandveld, mopane scrub, lebombo knobthorn-marula bushveld, mixed acacia thicket, combretum-silver clusterleaf woodland on granite and riverine forest. Altogether the park has a recorded 1,982 species of plants. The trees and shrubs within the camps where we stay are labelled as are some of the more impressive trees in the park, making for easy identification.

In the park we are able to drive our own vehicles and some of the smaller roads take us off the beaten track. This gives us the chance to stop at any point to study wildlife at close quarters and makes for excellent photographic opportunities.

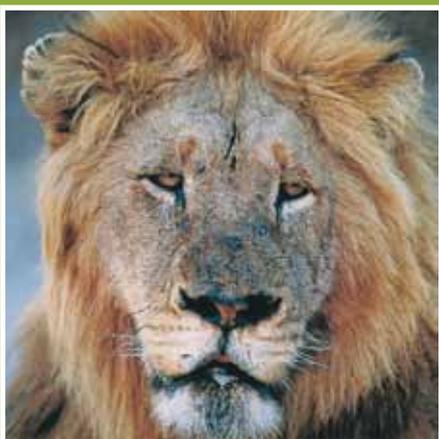
In addition, night drives afford the chance to see birds and mammals not normally found during the daylight hours. Careful observation with a spotting light can reveal owls and nocturnal ground birds such as coursers and thick-knees. We will also be on the look out for the nocturnal mammals, predators like lions, leopards, African wild cat, serval and caracal, as well as large-spotted genet, civet, porcupine, lesser bushbaby and pangolin.

The Kruger National Park, the Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe and the Limpopo National Park in Mozambique have now been incorporated into the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park. The long term goal of this Park is to eventually open up a huge international park system, with no internal fences so that the wildlife can reinstate their ancient migration routes.

Over our two weeks in South Africa we stay in four rest camps within the Kruger National Park, plus a final night before departure, via the Paul Kruger gate and Mpumalanga, at the Misty Mountain Private Nature Reserve.

Conservation project

The second South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP II) is one of the most intensive monitoring programmes ever undertaken in South Africa. Many areas are difficult to access but critically need atlas work and ongoing monitoring work for BirdLife South Africa to understand the bird conservation challenges in these remote sites.



Lion



Above: crested barbet, below: cheetahs



More holidays in South Africa: see www.honeyguide.co.uk

The established indigenous gardens in the rest camps play host to a multitude of smaller creatures. There are beautiful butterflies, huge

More wildlife of the Kruger National Park, South Africa



White rhino



Ground hornbill



Wahlberg's eagle



Lilac-breasted roller



Impala



Leopard

Our holidays

- are all round natural history holidays, tailored to get the best out of the wildlife of each area
- go at a relaxed pace
- usually stay at one place
- include good, local food
- use the best of leaders, with extensive conservation knowledge, natural history skills, good experience of the local area and the right personal skills
- are designed to benefit you, wildlife and the local people whose services we use
- include a £40 contribution from each participant to wildlife conservation

Holidays for natural history societies, RSPB local groups or other groups can be arranged.

Visit: www.honeyguide.co.uk for holiday reports, photos and more.



Honeyguide booking form



Please use BLOCK CAPITALS and make cheques payable to Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays.

Please reserve _____ place(s) on your holiday to _____

I enclose _____ deposit(s) at £200 (£400 for South Africa) totalling: £ _____

Single room supplement(s): please book _____ single room(s) at _____ extra each

I understand that the balance will become payable eight weeks (12 weeks for South Africa) before departure.

Holiday insurance company and policy number (details can be sent later, if you prefer): _____

Passport number(s), issue dates and expiry dates: _____

Title	Forenames*	Surnames	Date of birth
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

*As written on your passport. Please note or underline what you like to be known as, if different from the first name

Address: _____

Telephone _____ Mobile _____ E-mail _____

Next of kin/home contact point in case of emergency (name & tel. no.) _____

Any special requirements (eg dietary) _____ Non-smoker Smoker

_____ Signed _____

_____ Date _____

For couples, do you prefer twin beds a double bed or don't mind

The price of all Honeyguide holidays includes £40 earmarked for a local conservation project. We would be very grateful if everyone booking could complete the following conservation contribution consent and gift aid declaration.

Please complete sections 1 and 2

1. CONSENT FOR CONSERVATION CONTRIBUTION

We agree that Honeyguide Wildlife Trust Ltd (registered charity no. 1104606) may apply £40 from the cost of this holiday on behalf of each person named on the booking form, to be donated to a wildlife conservation project in the country to be visited.

PLEASE TICK BOX

Complete (a) or (b)

(a) Please print the name of each person on the booking form who qualifies to gift aid their contribution.

.....

.....

.....

Date

2. GIFT AID DECLARATION

If you pay UK income tax or capital gains tax, Honeyguide Wildlife Trust Ltd can reclaim from HM Revenue & Customs an extra 25p on every £1 donated, helping your conservation contribution go further. To qualify you must pay at least as much UK tax for the year in which you donate as the amount we are able to reclaim on your donation – currently £10 on each £40 contribution.

If you are a UK taxpayer, please give us the opportunity of increasing your donation in this way.

(b) If **nobody** on the booking form qualifies to gift aid their contribution, please tick this box.

giftaid it

Thank you

Please return to: Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays, 36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX

Honeyguide booking details



How to book: a booking is made when the completed booking form (a photocopy or emailed scan is fine) plus deposit have been received and accepted by us. We are very happy to take telephone or email bookings, to be confirmed with the form plus deposit during the week following your call / email.

Deposit and payment: £200 per person (£400 for South Africa) deposit is payable by cheque or bank transfer with the booking, with the remainder due eight weeks before departure (12 weeks for South Africa). Payments by credit, debit or charge cards cannot be taken.

Cancellation by you: if you have to cancel, please telephone as soon as possible and confirm in writing. The cancellation will take effect from when it is received in writing. The scale of cancellation charges below is calculated by the time period before departure.

More than eight weeks	deposit only
5-8 weeks	30% of total price
2-5 weeks	60% of total price
1-14 days; on or after departure date	100% of total price

Travel insurance should cover you (less any excess) for cancellation charges if circumstances are beyond your control, such as ill health, and more than simply a change of mind. Insurance premiums are not refundable.

Cancellation by us: in the unlikely event of this happening your money will be refunded in full. A decision to cancel would normally be made at the time of reminders for the remainder of payment, i.e. eight weeks before departure.

Single rooms and supplements: we don't like single room supplements but sometimes they can't be avoided, and we pass on only the extra the single room costs us. If you are willing to share but we don't find someone to share with you, you pay only half of any single supplement. Because we have often chosen small, community-based accommodation, single rooms may not always be available. It often helps to talk it through with us at an early stage.



Honeyguide enamel badges free from the Honeyguide office.

Information: including detailed itinerary, information on books, maps, shopping, weather etc will be supplied as part of the package for enquirers or will be sent after booking. Previous holiday reports are available for most holidays.

Flights: flights noted in the holiday details were the likeliest when the brochure went to print. However many summer schedules were not then out. Which airlines fly to where, and on what days, are increasingly prone to change; this may affect the flights and occasionally the dates for some holidays. Flights from other UK airports are sometimes possible: please contact the Honeyguide office. Tickets or booking references will be sent 1-2 weeks before departure.

We use scheduled services and cannot be held responsible for any departure delays. We are not in a position to state the aircraft type to be used.

Changes to the programme: should circumstances beyond our control make significant changes to the programme necessary we will consult you to see if these are acceptable to you.

Holiday leaders: we do our best to keep the leader named for the holiday, but we reserve the right to replace him or her in the event of illness or some other reason. When two leaders are listed, one may not accompany the holiday if there are not enough participants.

Group size: very occasionally if there is one place available on a holiday and a couple wishes to book we may go over the group size stated. The minimum is usually four.

Overnight accommodation and parking near the airport: we often cannot avoid flights that mean an overnight stay for many participants. We may be able to advise on a hotel and/or parking. If staying overnight, please consider if you wish to have an extra day on your travel insurance.

Extending your holiday: for some holidays it is possible to arrive early or stay on. Please contact the Honeyguide office for details.

Passport: a valid full passport is essential.

Brochure: a spare brochure (more if you wish) will be sent with every booking.

Our price commitment: the prices of our holidays are fixed – there are no surcharges.

What the price includes: flights, airport taxes, carbon offsets, all travel and excursions, services of your holiday leader(s) and your conservation contribution are included in the holiday price. Also included are accommodation and meals - breakfast, packed lunch and evening meal, normally inclusive of wine - except for picnic lunches in Crete.

What the price excludes: insurance and personal spending.

Smokers etiquette: heavy smokers are discouraged from booking with Honeyguide. Light smokers are requested not to smoke when this may affect non-smokers, for example at meals or in transport.

Tips and gratuities: all services in the itinerary are covered. You may wish to leave a 'thank-you' for room or restaurant staff at the end of your stay. We may organise a collection if service has been particularly good.

Carbon offsets

Realistically, most of our travellers will fly. Air travel makes up only a small fraction of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions at present, but that fraction is growing. We're serious about our responsibility to tackle global climate change so we have chosen Carbon Clear to offset our carbon emissions from holiday flights. Carbon Clear invests in projects that remove carbon dioxide from the air by replacing polluting technologies with clean ones, and planting native trees.

Honeyguide has been including carbon offsets in the price of our holidays since 2007 and was one of the first travel companies to do so. Some Honeyguiders travel to our holiday destinations by public transport, and their holiday price is reduced by the cost of flights plus carbon offsets. For more information see www.honeyguide.co.uk



TRAVEL INSURANCE

Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays acts as an Introducer Appointed Representative for the purposes of your travel insurance, appointed by Global Travel Insurance Services Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority and whose status can be checked on the FSA Register by visiting www.fsa.gov.uk/register or by contacting the FSA on 0845 606 1234.

Contact details:

Global Travel Insurance Services Ltd,
A1 Yeoman Gate,
Yeoman Way,
WORTHING,
West Sussex,
BN13 3QZ
Telephone: 01903 267432
Fax: 01903 268946
Email: enquiries@globaltravelinsurance.co.uk
Web: www.globaltravelinsurance.co.uk

You can go to our website where you can obtain a quotation and arrange the insurance online, or download an application form. If preferred, we can send you an application form on booking enabling you to arrange this insurance.

Beyond providing this information, we are not allowed to assist you in any way in the arrangement of your travel insurance or give any advice.

Honeyguide wildlife holidays



Cover picture: cranes in Extremadura by Steve Fletcher
Back cover: Apollo butterfly (French Pyrenees) by Chris Durdin

Other photos by:

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Geoff Crane
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Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays, 36 Thunder Lane,
Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX
Telephone: 01603 300552
e-mail: chris@honeyguide.co.uk www.honeyguide.co.uk

