

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Spring in the Spanish Pyrenees
29 April – 8 May 1999

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Report by Chris Gibson. Illustrations by Rob Hume. Front cover: lammergeier.

As with all Honeyguide holidays, £25 of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case for La Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO), the Spanish Ornithological Society, and its work in Extremadura. During the holiday, Juan Carlos Cirera of SEO's Zaragoza office came to Berdún to collect the cheque for £200 from this year's holiday in the Spanish Pyrenees (£25 per person).

This brings the total given to SEO since the first Honeyguide holiday in Spain in 1991 to £4,650, and the total from all Honeyguide holidays to £17,425 (at the end of the 1999 season). A thank-you letter from Juan Carlos appears at the end of this report (but not this web version).

SPRING IN THE SPANISH PYRENEES

29 APRIL – 8 MAY 1999

Thursday 29 April: The journey there...

Our departure from a dingy Heathrow was uneventful, apart from a slight air traffic delay and a minor panic when I couldn't locate the eighth group member - the panic was soon allayed when I realised Will was flying from Ireland, and so would remain airside. A check with the desk easily confirmed it.

Much of the flight was over dense cloud, but it started to break up welcomingly as we approached the Spanish coastline. And on descent from the plane at Bilbao, the air was still and warm: just the ticket! Kestrel and white wagtail proved to be the first birds of the trip, as we headed to the arrivals building.

Formalities completed, the minibus was located and the fun and games began - the first of several minor hitches which are sent to try the patience and adaptability of the leader! Yes, it was a nine-seater, but no, it was not designed for nine people and their luggage. Everyone ended up rather uncomfortably squeezed around their luggage for the three-hour drive east to Berdún, and because of the complexity of disembarking, it was felt prudent to omit a coffee stop.

The forest-clad hills just outside Bilbao started off the theme that was to run for the whole trip - large birds of prey. A mere sprinkling of red and black kites turned into a veritable deluge as we neared our destination. Close to Vitoria, a white stork stood sentinel upon its church-top nest, while beyond this lowland belt, the foothills of the Pyrenean ranges started to loom. Straight away on reaching them, griffon vultures started to be spotted sailing over the hillsides, an ever-present motif for the holiday and an unforgettable image.

East of Pamplona, the landscape changed again, and had indeed changed since my previous trip three years ago as a result of the sprouting of hundreds of wind turbines on the more prominent hills. Mixed feelings there - it's good that renewable energy sources are being tapped and the rotation of the sails has a certain stately beauty, but one could make mincemeat out of a vulture. The lower slopes of eroded marl appeared relatively lifeless, apart from the ubiquitous gorse-like *Genista scoparia* in full bloom. And 'lifeless' was a highly appropriate description of the reservoir at Yesa, its waters an incredible milky-blue on account of the suspended marl but broken only by a couple of mallards, just one coot and a small number of yellow-legged gulls as we drove past. Then, perched on a distant hilltop lay Berdún, a welcome, dramatic and distinctive sight from any angle.

After carefully manoeuvring the bus through the narrow streets into the square, everyone gratefully disembarked to stretch cramped limbs, while John and Viv Boucher, our hosts, came to extend their welcome. As we arrived, so did the first swifts for 1999, a hopeful sign as the spring weather thus far at Berdún was described as atrocious - wet, windy and dull, with a series of damaging late frosts.

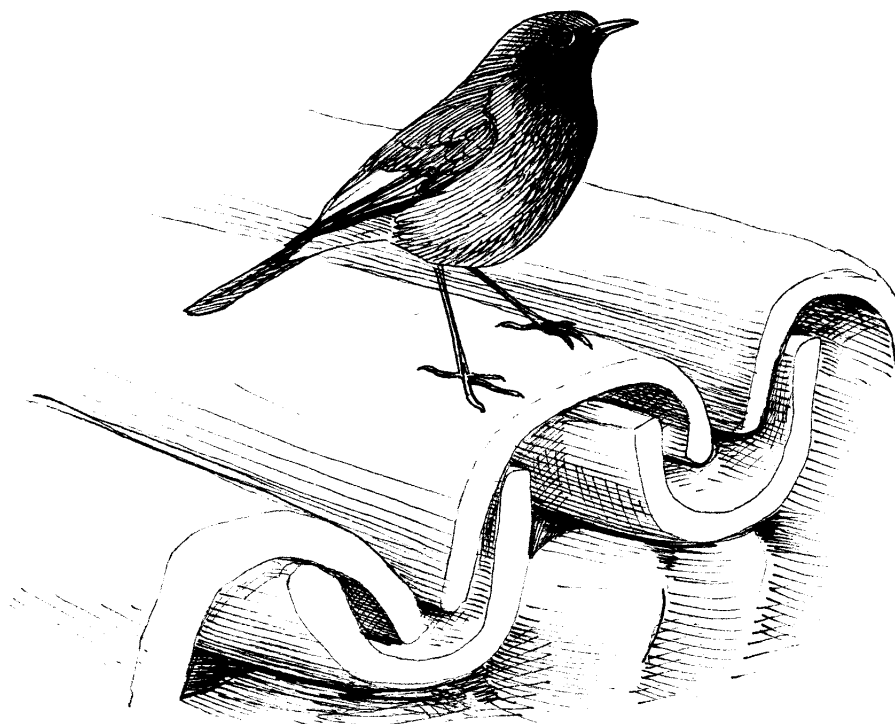
Time to unpack and settle in for a few minutes, before we gathered in the library of the Painting School for the first of our daily meetings. John ran through basic housekeeping matters, then I reviewed the day just gone and planned the next. And then it was across to Emilio's, our regular source of sustenance; a welcome meal with plenty of wine soon turned thoughts to bed, but not before a quick circuit of the town to check up on some old acquaintances - the nightingales, bats and scops owls. All present and correct.

Friday 30 April: local walks around Berdún

A cool start, though breaks in the cloud hinted at better things to come. The morning walk began with an orientation perambulation of Berdún, to get to grips with the village, its surroundings and its common birds. Starlings, so often ignored, proved in the spotlight of a 'scope to be spotless. Resplendent in their oily blue-black plumage, and distinctive in their more restricted range of calls than our starling, spotless starling was the first new species for many of the group. Sparrows, however were not Spanish, just 'ordinary' house, although altogether more smart than many of our grime-encrusted city birds. Or perhaps it was just the light - everything seemed to shine with colour, from greenfinches and goldfinches twittering in the trees to red kites sweeping majestically across the plains.

And then there were the black redstarts, all over the village; the males were particularly handsome as is usual with the more variegated Iberian race, and the distinctive sweet-wrapper rustle followed by a loud chattering

song came from many a rooftop. Not so obvious, at least by sight, were the rock sparrows below the western lookout; had it not been for their buzzing, wheezing calls, they might well have remained incognito. Progressing back along the northern side of the town, above the wooded slope, serins competed with nightingales for our ears' attention, while a few blackcaps and a female pied flycatcher suggested some migration might be under way.



We then headed down onto the marl - the aptly-named Badlands - towards the Río Veral. Corn buntings and crested larks performed admirably, and as the temperature rose, griffons started to drift over from their mountain roosts. A wryneck called from the scrub, but remained frustratingly out of sight, as did a group of bee-eaters, calling somewhere up in the blue. A Dartford warbler performed its dancing song flight before diving into a patch of scrub: it was amazing how birds could hide so effectively in the little scrub available in this skeletal, primeval landscape. *Genista*, box and barberry formed the structure, in turn providing some respite for more palatable species, such as beautiful flax and lady orchid, from the incessant browsing of goats and sheep. Other plants had chemical defences - the poisons of stinking hellebore, for example, and the herby aroma of garden thyme, a dual defence against grazing and heat, and a wonderful addition to the scentscape.

Various insects started to respond to the heat. Orange tip and wall butterflies were on the wing, and an oil beetle crawled blobbily across the track, while hordes of grasshopper nymphs gave some indication of the later summer insect abundance and diversity. As we peered groundward, two larks flitted from the trackside and landed on the next bare ridge. Not the expected crested, the very short tails and long creamy eyestripes of a pair of woodlarks were 'scoped to advantage by everyone. Further down by the river, a Cetti's warbler exploded into song, and a couple of common sandpipers trilled their way upstream.

Denser vegetation across the bridge seemed to be the sort of place migrant birds would congregate, and so it proved. Several blackcaps and a northern chiffchaff were in song, and a lovely male redstart flitted from clearing to clearing, its colours rivalled only by a lone bee-eater overhead. A scarce swallowtail performed wonderfully, disporting its tiger stripes for all to see - a seriously splendid insect.

By now it was fast approaching lunchtime, so a quick stroll back up the hill led us to a welcome drink at Emilio's, *via* a large Egyptian locust, showing off its vertically-striped eyes.

Despite a rather unpalatable plate of rubbery squid for lunch, everyone was raring to continue our local explorations, having shed all surplus clothing. A walk southwards, down the hill and across the main road took us towards Martes and the Río Aragón. The views back to Berdún, with a backdrop of the snow-clad high Pyrenees were most memorable. An Iberian wall lizard was basking appropriately on a wall, and a couple of brimstones showed well, making a fine comparison with the male cleopatra a little further on. A nightingale sang in full view, and crested larks displayed all their features around the group of traditional Aragonese barns.

In the warm sunshine, butterfly activity increased, including swallowtail, wall, dingy skipper and clouded yellow. Other insects were noticeable by their song - the shrill chirping of field crickets started up every time the sun appeared. As we passed between agricultural fields, some starting to show the beautiful pink of sainfoin, it was sadly apparent that even in this relatively unintensified system, most arable weeds and many farmland birds were missing. Shepherd's needle was the only plant of note. Still, there were at least a few singing skylarks and a distant lip-wetting quail amongst the ever-present corn buntings. A harrier which drifted across the plain proved not to be the expected Montagu's, but an immature male hen (if that is not a contradiction in terms), and a woodchat shrike gave excellent views on its telephone wire perch.

Descending finally towards the river, the patches of scrub were a hive of late afternoon song and activity. At least two subalpine warblers and a circler bunting were the stars. As we crossed the bridge, Martin commented on the suitability of the cliffs for bee-eaters, when right on cue a chorus of bubbling trills arose and a party of eight flew over. A kingfisher flashed its way upriver, as common sandpipers and little ringed plovers poked around the stony banks.

Past the river, the reedbed which used to hold great reed warblers had unfortunately almost disappeared since my previous visit, part cultivated and part neglected and overgrown by willows. So we turned downstream and walked through the dynamic flood plain woodland. Given that this area floods regularly when the river is in spate, it is perhaps not surprising that it was rather quiet in wildlife terms. But I for one was delighted when Will noted a large earwig underfoot. Large? The largest (in Europe at least)! Almost 3cm long, with elongate pincers, it instantly became a contender for sighting of the holiday for me - but then I'm a bit odd like that!

A prearranged lift from Viv enabled me to drive back in the bus to meet the weary wanderers. All agreed it had been an excellent day, a fine introduction to the area. But it was not over yet. After dinner, a night walk was organised, bat detector, torch and net in hand to explore the nightlife of Berdún. Scops owls performed reasonably well, responding to our whistles and showing themselves briefly, and the bats were excellent, especially from the lookout. At least three species were present, judging from the different sizes and calls coming from the detector. And huge flashes of lightning over the hills simply added a touch of drama to our tranquil scene.

Saturday 1 May: San Juan de la Peña

Heavy overnight rain had cleared by dawn, with just a few puddles left on the roads. But the pre-breakfast walk revealed few of the hoped-for migrant birds - the only new arrival was a golden oriole, which moved almost invisibly through the pine wood.

After breakfast, we headed east, towards thickening, threatening cloud. We stopped first by the Aragón near Puente la Reina, where a woodchat shrike gave unsurpassable views even before we had disembarked. Blue aphyllanthes and grape-hyacinth shone from the trackside, and around the stony dry river bed, we found little-Robin, field southernwood and shrubby plantain.

A woodlark performed an exhilarating series of song flights - surely one of the most beautiful of all bird songs - and small groups of *flava* wagtails fluttered around the river. Most of those seen well were the smart Spanish race (grey head, short white eyestripe, dark ear coverts and white chin), but one at least was the Scandinavian grey-headed (similar, but lacking any eye stripe). Two common sandpipers were displaying by the water, and a dark-phase booted eagle circled a little way downstream.

Moving on, we came next to the historic village of Santa Cruz de la Seros, at the foot of San Juan de la Peña. From the village, griffon vulture nests could be picked out on the towering cliffs, some in occupation, and as the morning progressed and the sun broke through, so the skies filled with them and other raptors, including Egyptian vulture and honey buzzard. Crag martins were wheeling around the churchyard, to and from their mud nests on the tower, where there was also an active bees' nest in one hole.

A short walk up the hill soon produced some new plants. Cowslips, stinking hellebore and hepatica (in blue, pink and white) nestled in the hedge bottoms, with bold blue splashes of *Polygala nicaeensis* higher up. The pines here were very heavily infested with mistletoe. The rootings and snufflings of wild boar were very obvious all over the woodland: a delight to see, as I've long believed our British woodlands are much poorer for the lack of the dynamic effects of boar. A male circler bunting sat in clear view of the party, to be then joined by his less clearly-marked mate - a fine opportunity to get to grips with the latter.

Once more in the bus, we took the long, twisty road uphill, stopping on the way for vultures and photos. By the time we reached the new (top) monastery it was lunchtime, so we settled down on the picnic benches to enjoy our meal to the accompaniment of coal tits, goldcrest, great spotted woodpecker and crossbills.

A circular walk then took us through the dense pine wood to the ruined chapel of St Teresa, along the mountain ridge and back down a steep path to the monastery. Hepatica was again very much in evidence, along with the creamy-coloured subspecies *alpestris* of wild daffodil. In the small clearings by the chapel, a relative, the diminutive but sweetly-scented rock daffodil, was flowering in profusion, along with elder-flowered and early purple orchids.

On the ridge, the views of the peaks of San Juan de la Peña to the west and Oroel to the east were stunning, although it wasn't advisable to admire and walk because of the steep drop and vicious patches of hedgehog broom. Festoons of lichen on the trees around indicated the quality of the air in these parts. All eyes lifted skyward when a griffon drifted over and darkened the skies, but even more so a few minutes later when a lammergeier did likewise. It was an outstanding view of a fully adult bird, showing all its plumage and structural characteristics. Then back by the monastery, a flock of 22 crossbills gave unexpectedly good views when they landed in the bare branches of a dead tree.

The old monastery, a little way downhill, is set dramatically into the conglomerate cliffs, and a short stop here proved equally productive. Most of us headed down the track towards Santa Cruz, and almost immediately stumbled across a glorious, bronzed male firecrest. The song of blackcaps, robins and blackbirds resounded around the mixed woodland, the chorus also incorporating a trilling Bonelli's warbler and the 'chiff-chaff-chiff-warble' of an Iberian chiffchaff. A sparrowhawk flashed past, and a red squirrel moved through the trees, both so quickly they were seen by only a few of the group. However, a pair of crested tits and several speckled wood and wood white butterflies were much more amenable.

We set off back a little early so as to allow time for a couple of extras before dinner. First, we turned down the back track to Berdún, passing a poplar plantation (very quiet) and then a reed marsh and pond. The chorus of marsh frogs from the pond was audible from a considerable distance, and with a careful approach, everyone was able to catch a glimpse.

Secondly, Viv wanted to show us a new site she had discovered near where the main road crosses the Río Veral. At each step on the path through the fields, blue-winged grasshoppers leapt for safety, and a dark-phase booted eagle scoured the hillside. At the bottom of the valley, the first of our targets came into view, a troop of bright yellow wild tulips, glowing in the evening light. Then on the hill, where scrub has been cleared under the pylons, a similar congregation, albeit less showy, of Pyrenean snakeshead fritillaries, here growing at a remarkably low altitude. A quick search around produced hummingbird hawk-moth, lots of flower chafers, vivid purple gromwell, early spider orchid, and a single large spike of burnt-tip orchid.

That night at dinner, two of the party started to feel unwell...

Sunday 2 May: Biniés gorge, Anso and Fago valleys

...and in the early hours so did I. After a very unpleasant night, we emerged at breakfast to compare notes. It soon transpired that a gastroenteritis bug had been going round Berdún (and indeed Jaca and Sabiñanigo) - although that was little comfort for those afflicted. Sadly, for me at least, the spectre of the bug was to loom large for the rest of the trip.

But the show must go on. The local gorge, Foz de Biniés, was already the revised destination for today - Riglos, as originally planned, would not have been wise on a Sunday. So we delayed the start, to give me chance to recover, and started out in mid-morning. At this point, my notes and memories become at best sketchy - my thoughts were all on controlling my inner turmoil. So please forgive any omissions.

The walk up the gorge produced many botanical delights and specialities: the large rosettes of Pyrenean saxifrage on the rocks and 'entrance gates'; the delicate pink flowers of *Petrocoptis*; drifts of amethyst Pyrenean hyacinth; furry rosettes of *Ramonda*; the unusual ground-level purple flowers of purple toothwort, parasitic on poplars. The weather was generally cloudy and cool, so the vultures were not performing well - in fact, we seemed to be performing for them as they stared down from their perches on the canyon walls. Grey wagtails

were present, but elusive, all along the river, and a pair of dippers was seen well in the upper reaches. A slow worm allowed a particularly good view on the road - it was dead!

Lunchtime was upon us, so I turned about to fetch the bus. By the time I caught up with the group again, it was raining heavily, so lunch (for those who felt like eating) was taken in the comfort of the minibus. With no sign of much improvement in the weather, we felt the bus was in fact the best bet for the afternoon, and so embarked upon a long, sedate, but visually dramatic drive up the Anso valley, over the high tops to the Fago valley, and down through the equally dramatic Fago gorge to Majones. A couple of stops between showers revealed the conifer forests to be very quiet indeed, with just great tit, robin, goldcrest and serin in song. The best birds were seen from the bus itself - a citril finch which perched briefly by the road (front seat viewing only) and an immature lammergeier drifting around the Fago gorge.

On return to Berdún, the two we had left behind were showing signs of recovery, but the weather wasn't. The temperature had plummeted as the winds had turned to the north. Bed seemed the best idea, for a host of reasons.

Monday 3 May: High Pyrenees, Portalet and Formigal

Overnight the wind and temperature fell, such that by dawn, the Canal de Berdún was filled with dense mist. Berdún itself was out of the top, an island in a sea of nothingness. By breakfast, it had cleared somewhat, and the high tops were, for the first time during our stay, clear of cloud. So, grasping the opportunity, to the tops we went.

Higher and ever higher, towards Formigal, then Portalet, was like going back in time. Early summer in the lowlands, to the first inkling of spring at five thousand feet. Here, patchy snow beds lay around the border crossing, and evidently the complete blanket of snow had only just receded. After a coffee stop, we needed to go no further than the car park to find high-altitude wildlife: urgent, migrant parties of swallows, cutting through the pass; the weird trills and clicks of a flock of a hundred or more alpine choughs; the even more weird sound of territorial marmots. And there they were, big bundles of fur atop rocky hillocks, producing a noise more like an oystercatcher than any mammal. The same rocks were the haunt of wheatear and the ubiquitous black redstart, while the intervening grassy areas, especially the melting edge of snow beds, were much favoured by water pipits.

All around us, spring was getting under way, plants bursting into flower following the retreat of the snow. Purple cushions of purple mountain saxifrage nestled in crevices on the cliffs, while wild daffodil and the first few spring gentians studded the turf. Green hellebore and oxlip were flowering in the lee of big boulders, and wild crocus in a multitude of purple and white forms in the area from which snow had only just retreated.

Nearing lunchtime, the cloud descended and it started to rain: time to head downhill, stopping occasionally to survey the scene. At one stop, another pair of marmots sat next to a splendid male rock thrush, a startling vision in orange, blue and white. Further down, spring was a couple of weeks more advanced, and both spring and trumpet gentians glowed from the turf, amongst elder-flowered orchids in both colour forms. Lunch was taken in a lay-by below Formigal. Again it was raining, and after lunch we decided to forego further high level walks and head down, hopefully to better weather. Unfortunately, it didn't really improve until we were back at the valley floor; here, numerous griffons had gathered, presumably likewise trying to escape the adverse conditions.

With time to spare, another visit to the frog pond was in order, and again the marsh frogs were in fine voice, despite a strong, blustery, westerly wind. A walk around the marsh produced a range of wetland plants, including large tussocks of round-headed club-rush. In one clump, we found the nest of a paper wasp, followed by massive, sculpted, earthen ants' nests on the surrounding stony ground. Back on the bus, in the lee of a scrubby slope, the shelter was enough to reveal bird activity. A pair of subalpine warblers showed extremely well, along with a migrant female pied flycatcher.

In spite of the howling wind, a hobby graced the skies over Berdún as we walked to Emilio's for dinner. Afterwards, Juan Carlos from SEO arrived to give us a knowledgeable, humorous and superbly-presented talk on the wildlife of Aragón, and in particular the campaign to identify and protect Important Bird Areas in the region. We took the opportunity to present him with a cheque for £200 - our contribution to the important conservation efforts in the areas we were visiting.

Tuesday 4 May: Riglos and Agüerro

The few who were up and about before breakfast were treated to stunning views of three griffon vultures skirting the town at an unexpectedly early hour, making full use of the strong updraughts of the deflected wind. Also, a nightingale in full vocal flow at a range of 5 metres gave an equally unsurpassable performance.

The sun was just peeping through low, scudding clouds, but we felt it prudent to head south, hopefully to fine weather. After a fuel stop at Puente la Reina and roadside views of woodchat shrike and Egyptian vulture, we came to the massive conglomerate cliffs of Riglos, the final outpost of the Pre-Pyrenean range. Unfortunately, the climbers had beaten us to it, so there were just a few griffons on nest and noisy parties of choughs, while a pair of Egyptian vultures sky-danced their acrobatic display high overhead. Given the strength of the wind, it is not surprising perhaps that there were few small birds to be seen. Sardinian warblers were there - but keeping almost invisible in the low scrub, a delicious, aromatic mix of box, rosemary and *Genista*. As we strolled back through the village, we came across our second dead reptile - this time a small, badly battered viperine snake, entirely harmless, but the victim no doubt of anti-snake prejudice.

The old railway station at Riglos provided a sheltered, warm location for lunch, and one of the most productive couple of hours of the entire holiday. Which way to look? Bee-eaters kept appearing, perching briefly on the wires, flying around and then disappearing; at least seven birds were involved. Overhead, a northward movement of griffon vultures, presumably returning from feeding ventures in the steppes, eventually totalled more than 160 birds, along with 4 Egyptians, 3 pale-phase booted eagles and a peregrine. And then underfoot, numerous butterflies and moths taking advantage of nectar-rich shelter. Common, green-underside, black-eyed and panoptes blues, brown argus, mallow and grizzled skippers, hummingbird hawk-moth, four-spotted, burnet companion and yellow belle were all seen, netted and examined in the hand.

After lunch, Agüerro - the undeveloped equivalent of Riglos across the valley - was selected as the preferred destination. A new site to me, it was very exploratory but proved a great success. We were able to walk in the lee of the cliffs to escape the persistent wind. The ever-present griffons circled above, with a few on the rock ledges, a superb short-toed eagle drifted away low down, and a sub-adult lammergeier hung over the village below us. A pair of kestrels repeatedly visited a cleft in the cliffs, presumably their nest site, and a male blue rock thrush sang and gave brief views as it perched on the cliffs. The dense scrub after a little walk eventually yielded up some of its secrets, in the shape of both Dartford and Sardinian warblers. In the relative calm, butterflies were busy, including several Moroccan orange-tips, a striking yellow with orange wingtips, and equally vivid, if somewhat less conspicuous, a green hairstreak.

The scrub here bore a close resemblance to that at Riglos, but with a few added extras, including two species of juniper - scale-leaved *Juniperus phoenicea* and needle-leaved *J. oxycedrus*. Most unexpected was a group of violet bird's-nest orchids, just coming into flower: this saprophytic plant is more usually associated with dense, shady woodland. As we returned to the bus, a second blue rock thrush appeared, giving cracking views at close range.

Heading homeward, we stopped a couple of times for photos. Firstly, a view back to the village of Agüerro, a lovely sight but somewhat tempered by the sight and sound of a new road being driven up the valley. It seems the tranquillity of Agüerro might be time-limited. The second stop, a broad view of Los Mallos (the Fingers) of Riglos turned out to be the only place we saw shrubby rest-harrow in flower, a typical but very beautiful Badlands plant.

By nightfall, the wind had abated and several new moths were captured around the perimeter lights. Most dramatic was an emperor moth, which I kept until breakfast for everyone to see. A final highlight for me came just half an hour before midnight when a barn owl flew through the churchyard; this was our only sighting of a species which in the past has bred regularly in the church tower.

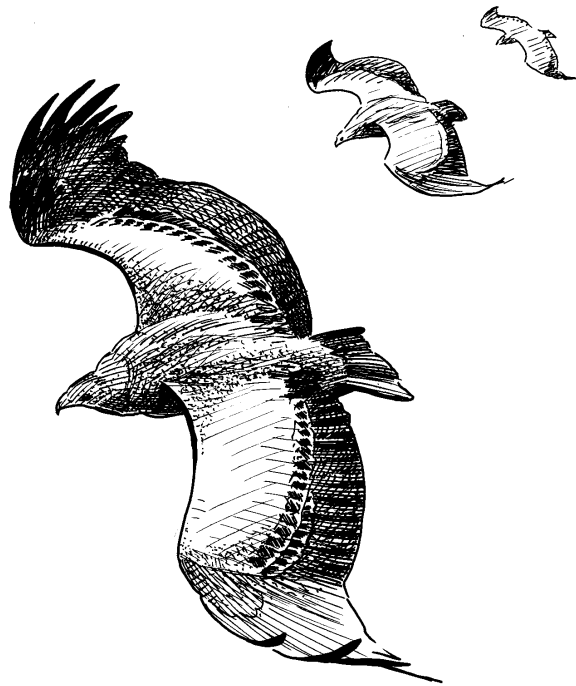
Wednesday 5 May: Arbayún and Lumbier gorges

A calm but cloudy dawn broke with signs that a few migrant birds might have arrived overnight, in the form of three garden warblers feeding in one tree. Then, as we headed off in the bus, a whitethroat flitted across the road. Heading west past Yesa, we passed a poplar plantation, where Will, at the back, noticed a male golden oriole in its typical habitat.

We called in first at the Lumbier vulture restaurant, but nothing doing, and no signs of any recent feeding. Then on and up, through remnant patches of holm oak woodland - possibly the climax woodland type on the marl - to the precipitous gorge of Arbayún. Viewing is easy here: a platform has been erected over the edge of the gorge giving splendid views of the griffon vulture breeding cliffs. Unfortunately, the birds were not especially mobile and only a handful gave the close flight views which are usual here. Woodlarks were singing from the hillside behind, and Dartford warblers skulked in the scrub. A short walk in that scrub produced several bushes of *Spiraea hypericifolia* in full, glorious flower, tuberous meadow-rue, just starting to burst its buds, and single spikes of Pyrenean fritillary and monkey orchid. A Spanish festoon butterfly sped past, but a dramatic yellow and brown speckled moth *Euranthis plumistraria* was temporarily restrained in the net for a good view.

Back to Lumbier, specifically the Foz, for lunch. Early spider-orchids and rue-leaved saxifrage were just two of the distinctive plants in the quarry, and wood white, green hairstreak, comma and panoptes blue were active in the warm sun. Small groups of the last were seen taking moisture from damp patches of earth on the path. As yesterday, griffons were constant lunch-hour companions, together with at least three Egyptian vultures.

Passing through the first tunnel into the gorge, we entered a world of birds. Crag martins were hanging from 'invisible strings' and on the ground collecting mud for their nests, at least one of which was deep in the tunnel itself. Groups of choughs and jackdaws hurtled around, and four kestrels made noisy sorties from cliff to cliff. Two even came to blows, locking talons in mid-air before tumbling almost to the ground. A couple of long-tailed tits, of the dark Iberian race, were feeding in the riverside trees, and of course griffons were everywhere - flying, sitting on nest ledges, and watching us watching them from the highest pinnacles.



Wild jasmine, a Mediterranean plant, was in full, though sadly not fragrant, flower, an indication of the warmth in this sheltered gorge. In contrast, dogwood (with its persistent sclerenchyma) and spindle (its new shoots eaten and covered in the silken trappings of the small ermine moth *Yponomeuta cagnagella*) indicated the limy nature of the soil. And then through the second tunnel, into the suntrap beyond, the temperature went up another few degrees, and more Mediterranean species put in an appearance. Pitch trefoil, its leaves pungent as ever, and the aptly-named sad stock, with unassuming but nonetheless attractive brownish-pink flowers, were flowering in the verges along with a few examples of sombre bee-orchid, amongst the more numerous early spider-orchids. Halfway down to Liédena, I pointed the group in the right direction, and then went back for the bus before picking them up (from the bar of all places!) at the far end.

In spite of its usual barren appearance, we called in briefly by the reservoir at Yesa on the way home. In fact, it was not quite a bird-free-zone: there were at least a few great crested grebes out in the water. The scrubby margins produced yellow bee-orchid in some numbers, and an excellent opportunity to see and hear melodious warbler. Most inappropriately named, its 'melody' was a scratchy warble, interspersed with sparrow-like 'chirrup'.

Before dinner, the clear evening sunlight lit up the cloudless high mountains in glorious pink. Almost too wonderful to go inside and eat - but somehow we made ourselves! In fact the sunset was still marvellous when we'd finished, and a group of six bee-eaters overhead completed the scene very nicely. Then it was back indoors again, this time to hear John give his very interesting talk on the history, architecture and culture of Berdún and its surrounding areas. Given the calm conditions, we then contrived to make the most of our time in Berdún by touring the village with torches, bat detector and a ready whistle. The last was put to good effect in attracting scops owls, seen very well by everyone. The bats too performed superbly - we were able to pick up the difference between 45 and 55KHz pipistrelles, and the almost yodelling call of a greater horseshoe bat. Most of the party had drifted off to bed by the time of a final tour of the lights, and so missed out on two lovely moths, a cream-spot tiger and an incredible giant peacock - both were held for wider dissemination over breakfast.

Thursday 6 May: Hecho valley and local walk

The 'free day' - well, actually the busiest day of the holiday, as I tried to squeeze maximum value out of our stay in Berdún. There were just two takers for a pre-breakfast drive down to the poplar wood, where almost immediately we heard the main object of this jaunt - a calling golden oriole. But see it - no chance! Nightingales too were in fine voice as the sun rose, and a couple of red-legged partridges scurried across a bare field. Both wheatears and woodlarks gave excellent view from the bus.

And so to breakfast, where I made a grand entrance wearing the fruits of last night's mothing. Several people took some convincing that the 12cm wingspan giant peacock on my shirt was real and alive. That is until it decided to take a spot of exercise, with a flight around Emilio's. Safely recaptured, we made a date for a photocall in the churchyard.

It seemed nobody really wanted a free day - everyone came for a morning drive up the Hecho valley, again unknown ground to me. We duly stopped at the Boca del Infierno (Hell's Mouth), renowned as one of the lowest and easiest sites for nesting wallcreepers. But no luck - we found ourselves staring at lifeless rock faces, though a lammergeier was some compensation.

Pushing on still higher, above Selva, we followed the road and then an unsurfaced track to the very upper reaches of the valley, only a kilometre or so from the French border. The plants were much as we had seen earlier at Portalet, with the addition of a large patch of marsh-marigolds in one boggy hollow. A red squirrel posed on the road, and a fleeting rock bunting was seen and heard on the way back down. The journey was completed by lunchtime, crossing to the Anso valley and back to Berdún through Biniés gorge.

After lunch and a couple of hours' snooze to try and overcome my returning bug, we headed off for a final walk across the Badlands. An unfamiliar thrush-like song from the riverside trees raised thoughts of western Orphean warbler, and indeed I was later able to confirm this from tapes. Martin set off to try and find it, without success, although he did come across a nesting pair of red kites. In the meantime, we continued over the marl outcrops and eventually secured good views of at least two pairs of tawny pipits. However, we were unable to get that final clinching view of a putative thekla lark.

Once again, I took refuge in my bed while the group ate dinner - I must have needed it as apparently I slept right through a ferocious thunderstorm!

Friday 7 May: Aisa

The overnight rain still lingered during the pre-breakfast walk, although we did meet our objective of good 'scope views of the rock sparrows, for those who had not yet got to grips with their remarkably understated plumage features.

Our final trip - leaving the best until last - was to the high valley of Aisa, *via* Jaca and its fiesta celebrations. Aisa is an example of the high Pyrenees as they should be, unspoilt by major roads, mountain passes and ski developments. And for the first hour at least, the threatening clouds held off so that we could appreciate the full grandeur of the place.

A lammergeier quartered the mountainside, while six chamois (the Pyrenean form recently described as a full species, the izard) browsed unconcernedly on the edge of a snow bed. Two dippers fed in the river, and wheatear and mistle thrush lent a familiar touch to the birdlife. Gentians - both spring and trumpet - were

everywhere, although the flowers were not open, and patches of scree were picked out by cushions of yellow rock-jasmine. Unfortunately, though, the swathes of lesser daffodils had almost finished flowering.

Most of the group then marched up to the head of the valley, where they had a close encounter with a couple of chamois. For those who returned early to the mountain refuge, a superb male rock thrush was ample compensation. By now, the cloud was getting ever lower, and rain was starting to fall. The effect on the birds was startling. Parties of swallows which had been migrating north started to head back south, showing what a biological barrier large mountains and low cloud can be. Similarly, a group of 13 honey buzzards attempted to cross, found their pass blocked, and bounced back into Spain to await less inclement conditions.

As we too headed back, we crossed over into the Hecho valley via a spectacular forest drive. Just one day since we had last been there, it was remarkable how the river had changed: swollen by the heavy rains, and brick-red with a huge sediment load.

And so we arrived back at Berdún around four o'clock, to allow time for packing and a final walk around the village. Martin struck lucky - his walk to the lookout between showers coincided with a feeding visit of twenty or more bee-eaters. I, of course, took to my bed, and sadly missed out on the last night celebrations. By all accounts, a good time was had by all - aided and abetted by Emilio's champagne.

Saturday 8 May: the journey home

Another foggy start. Once again squeezed into the minibus around all our luggage, we bade farewell to John and Viv, and headed west. The rivers were still running red, and even Yesa reservoir was showing signs of discoloration. Our last new bird of the trip, taking the total to 110 species, was an osprey hunting over the water. The Lumbier area gave our last good views of griffon vultures and kites, to fill our memory banks with the images of these magnificent raptors. The usual white stork on the church near Vitoria was preceded by a pair on a ruined building, but the motorway afforded no chance to stop and appreciate them more fully.

And so we arrived back at Bilbao for our afternoon departure. We were ready and waiting, but air traffic control imposed a 90 minute departure delay. But not even that could diminish the memories and excitement of the past ten days.

Shortly after arriving home, I received a letter from Sarah. In it she captured very lucidly the magic of Berdún, and to finish off this report I can do no better than let her lyricism speak for itself, and for all of us who had the privilege of being there:

“Berdún is an intensely haunting place - experience, more accurately. When I first caught sight of it, perched on its ribbon of pine trees above the grey marl, like a big untidy bird's nest, I half expected it to be home to some great primeval raptor. Viv's talk of witches and the curious alignment of its ancient streets added to the mystery. If I believed in ley lines, dark forces and powerful tensions - but of course, being pragmatic, down to earth and rational, I don't - then Berdún would be a natural centre. However, in the sunshine it has a different face and in the mist, rain or soft, summer darkness, can alter yet again. I can quite understand how an artist, like John, was drawn to this place - there's an ever-changing interplay of light, colour and sound. You can pick out just one detail or another - the soaring kites, the tinkling of goldfinches, the spectacular views - and gain great pleasure, but it's the experience of the whole which carries an elemental charge.”



KEY TO LOCALITIES

Where a species was found at just a few sites, these are coded as shown below. Apart from the birds, species noted only on the journeys are not generally included. English names are given for species only where one is in common usage.

B - Berdún, including the banks of the Veral and Aragón, the frog pond and the tulip site
Bi - Biniés gorge, plus Anso and Fago valleys
P - Puente la Reina, banks of the Aragón
J - San Juan de la Peña
R - Riglos and Agüerro
A - Arbayún gorge
L - Lumbier gorge
Y - Yesa
H - Hecho valley
F - Formigal and Portalet
Ai - Aisa

BRYOPHYTES (Mosses)

Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus B

PTERIDOPHYTES (Ferns)

Asplenium adiantum-nigrum Black Spleenwort Bi
 A. ruta-muraria Wall-rue B Bi
 A. septentrionale Forked Spleenwort F
 A. trichomanes Maidenhair Spleenwort Bi J F
Ceterach officinarum Rustyback Fern B Bi L
Polypodium interjectum Intermediate Polypody Bi
 P. vulgare Common Polypody Bi J L
Polystichum lonchitis Holly Fern F
Pteridium aquilinum Bracken J

GYMNOSPERMS (Conifers)

Abies alba Silver Fir Bi
Cupressus sempervirens Cypress B R L
Juniperus communis Juniper B Bi P J R H
 J. communis ssp. *nana* F
 J. oxycedrus R A
 J. phoenicia Phoenician Juniper R A L
Pinus halepensis Aleppo Pine R
 P. nigra Black Pine B Bi J R F
 P. pinea Stone Pine R
 P. sylvestris Scots Pine B Bi J R H F
 P. uncinata H
Taxus baccata Yew Bi

DICOTYLEDONS

Aceraceae

Acer campestre Field Maple B Bi A
 A. monspessulanum Montpellier Maple Bi L

Anacardiaceae

Pistachia lentiscus Lentisc Bi R
 P. terebinthus Turpentine Tree Bi R L

Apiaceae

Bupleurum rigidum Bi A
Conopodium majus Pignut J
Daucus carota Wild Carrot B R
Eryngium campestre Field Eryngo B Bi R L
Foeniculum vulgare Fennel B R
Meum athamanticum Spignel F
Sanicula europaea Sanicle J
Scandix pecten-veneris Shepherd's-needle B R

Aquifoliaceae

Ilex aquifolium Holly J

Araliaceae

Hedera helix Ivy B J R L H
H. hibernica Irish Ivy Bi

Aristolochiaceae

Aristolochia pistilochia L

Asclepiadaceae

Vincetoxicum hirundinaria Swallow-wort Bi

Asteraceae

Achillea millefolium Yarrow F
Arctium minus Lesser Burdock Bi J
Artemisia absinthium Wormwood B R
A. campestris Field Southernwood P
Bellis perennis Daisy B J F
B. sylvestris L
Calendula arvensis Field Marigold B R
C. officinalis Marigold B
Carduus acanthoides Watted Thistle B
C. tenuiflorus Slender Thistle B
Carlina acaulis Stemless Carline-thistle F
Centaurea calcitrapa Red Star-thistle B R
Cichorium intybus Chicory L
Cirsium arvense Creeping Thistle B
Crepis vesicaria Beaked Hawk's-beard B
Helichrysum stoechas B P R L
Rhagadiolus stellatus R L
Santolina chamaecyparissus Lavender Cotton B L
Senecio vulgaris Groundsel P
Silybum marianum Milk Thistle B R
Taraxacum sp. Dandelion B R H F
Tussilago farfara Colt's-foot J H F

Berberidaceae

Berberis vulgaris Barberry B J P R

Betulaceae

Betula pendula Silver Birch B J H F

Boraginaceae

Borago officinalis Borage B
Buglossoides purpureocaerulea Purple Gromwell B L
Cynoglossum cheirifolium R
Echium vulgare Viper's Bugloss R
Lithodora fruticosum Shrubby Gromwell B R L Y
Lithospermum arvense Corn Gromwell B
Symphytum officinale Comfrey B

Brassicaceae

Aethionema saxatile Burnt Candytuft Bi J
Alliaria petiolata Garlic Mustard Bi J
Alyssum alyssoides Small Alison B L
Arabis alpina Alpine Rock-cress Bi J
 A. hirsuta Hairy Rock-cress Bi
 A. turrata Towercress Bi J
Barbarea vulgaris Winter Cress B
Brassica napus Rape B
Capsella bursa-pastoris Shepherd's-purse B
Cardaria draba Hoary Cress B R
Draba aizoides Yellow Whitlow-grass F
Erysimum cheiranthoides Treacle Mustard B
Lepidium heterophyllum Smith's Pepperwort B P
Lunaria annua Honesty B
Matthiola fruticulosa Sad Stock L Y
Sinapis arvensis Charlock B R
Sisymbrium austriacum Austrian Rocket F
 S. macroloma R
 S. officinale Hedge Mustard B
Thlaspi alpestre Alpine Pennycress F
 T. stenopterum F

Buxaceae

Buxus sempervirens Box B Bi J R A L Y H

Cactaceae

Opuntia ficus-indica Prickly-pear B

Caprifoliaceae

Lonicera etrusca L
 L. periclymenum Honeysuckle B
 L. pyrenaicum Bi
 L. xylosteum Fly Honeysuckle B Bi
Sambucus ebulus Dwarf Elder B J L
Viburnum lantana Wayfaring Tree B J L
 V. opulus Guelder-rose J

Caryophyllaceae

Arenaria leptoclados Lesser Thyme-leaved Sandwort L
Cerastium fontanum Common Mouse-ear B J
Paronychia argentea L R
Petrocoptis pyrenaica Bi
Silene alba White Champion Bi
 S. viridiflora Bi
 S. vulgaris Bladder Champion R
Stellaria media Common Chickweed B

Celastraceae

Euonymus europaeus Spindle-tree L

Chenopodiaceae

Chenopodium polyspermum Many-seeded Goosefoot B

Cistaceae

Helianthemum apenninum White Rock-rose B Bi J R
 H. canum Hoary Rock-rose P R
 H. nummularium Common Rock-rose B Bi
 H. nummularium ssp. *pyrenaicum* L
 H. oelandicum R L

Convolvulaceae

Convolvulus arvensis Field Bindweed B Y

Cornaceae

Cornus sanguinea Dogwood B Bi J L

Corylaceae

Corylus avellana Hazel Bi J

Crassulaceae

Sedum dasyphyllum Thick-leaved Stonecrop B Bi R

S. reflexum Rock Stonecrop Bi J L

Sempervivum arachnoideum F

S. montanum F

Umbilicus rupestris Navelwort Bi R L

Cucurbitaceae

Bryonia dioica White Bryony B Bi R L

Dipsacaceae

Dipsacus fullonum Teasel B

Ericaceae

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi Bearberry J

Vaccinium myrtillus Bilberry J

Euphorbiaceae

Euphorbia amygdaloides Wood Spurge B Bi J

E. chamaebuxus Pyrenean Spurge B

E. characias Large Mediterranean Spurge B Bi P R L

E. helioscopia Sun Spurge B

E. hyberna Irish Spurge F

E. serrata B Bi P R L

Fabaceae

Anthyllis vulneraria ssp. *forondae* Kidney Vetch F

A. vulneraria ssp. *pyrenaica* L F

Astragalus monspessulanus Montpellier Milk-vetch B Bi R L Y

Cercis siliquastrum Judas Tree B

Colutea arborescens Bladder Senna B Bi P

Coronilla emerus Scorpion Vetch B Bi L

C. scorpioides R

Dorycnium pentaphyllum B L P R

Echinopartum horridum J

Genista hispanica Spanish Broom B

G. scorpius B P J R L Y

Hippocrepis comosa Horseshoe Vetch B Bi

Laburnum anagyroides Laburnum B

Lathyrus aphaca Yellow Vetchling B

L. bauhini Bi

L. montanus Bitter Vetch J

L. setifolius B R L

Lotus corniculatus Bird's-foot-trefoil B

Medicago arabica Spotted Medick B

M. lupulina Black Medick B

M. sativa Lucerne B

Onobrychis viciifolia Sainfoin B R

Ononis fruticosa Shrubby Rest-harrow B R

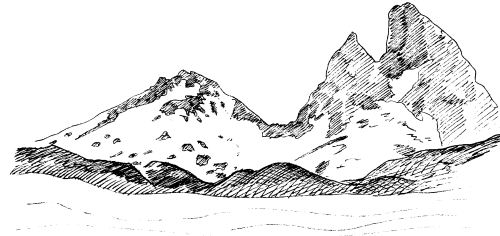
Oxytropis campestris Meadow Milk-vetch B

Psoralea bituminosa Pitch Trefoil BR L

Robinia pseudoacacia R
Vicia cracca Tufted Vetch B R L
 V. pyrenaica Pyrenean Vetch F
 V. sativa Common Vetch B R
 V. sepium Bush Vetch J

Fagaceae

Fagus sylvatica Beech J H
Quercus coccifera Kermes Oak J R L
 Q. ilex Holm Oak Bi P J A
 Q. mas Bi
 Q. petraea Sessile Oak J H
 Q. pubescens Downy Oak Bi



Fumariaceae

Fumaria officinalis Fumitory B R L

Gentianaceae

Gentiana acaulis Trumpet Gentian H F Ai
 G. lutea Large Yellow Gentian F
 G. verna Spring Gentian H F Ai



Geraniaceae

Erodium cicutarium Common Stork's-bill B
 E. malacoides B
Geranium molle Dove's-foot Crane's-bill B I
 G. purpureum Little-Robin P
 G. pusillum Small-flowered Crane's-bill B
 G. robertianum Herb-Robert B Bi J L
 G. rotundifolium Round-leaved Crane's-bill B Bi J R

Gesneriaceae

Ramonda myconi Bi

Globulariaceae (some doubts over identification of this difficult group)

Globularia cordifolia B
 G. punctata R
 G. repens J
 G. valentina B Bi Y

Hypericaceae

Hypericum nummularium Bi

Juglandaceae

Juglans regia Walnut B

Lamiaceae

Lamium amplexicaule Henbit Dead-nettle B R
 L. purpureum Red Dead-nettle J
Lavandula angustifolia B R
Marrubium vulgare White Horehound B R L
Mentha aquatica Water Mint B
Phlomis lychnitis B R L
Rosmarinus officinalis Rosemary R
Salvia verbenaca Wild Clary B R L
Stachys recta Yellow Woundwort Bi L
Thymus vulgaris Garden Thyme B Bi P R

Linaceae

Linum narbonense Beautiful Flax B R L Y
 L. suffruticosum Pyrenean Flax L

Loranthaceae

Viscum album ssp. *album* Mistletoe Bi
V. album ssp. *austriacum* B Bi J R H

Malvaceae

Malva sylvestris Common Mallow B
M. neglecta Dwarf Mallow B R

Moraceae

Ficus carica Fig R

Oleaceae

Fraxinus excelsior Ash Bi
Jasminum fruticans Wild Jasmine L
Olea europaea Olive R

Onagraceae

Epilobium parviflorum Small-flowered Willowherb B

Orobanchaceae

Lathraea clandestina Purple Toothwort Bi
Orobanche alba Thyme Broomrape R
O. caryophyllacea Bedstraw Broomrape R
O. hederæ Ivy Broomrape Bi
O. latisquama R

Papaveraceae

Chelidonium majus Greater Celandine Bi
Papaver argemone Prickly Poppy L
P. rhoeas Common Poppy B

Plantaginaceae

Plantago lanceolata Ribwort Plantain B
P. media Hoary Plantain B Bi J
P. major Greater Plantain Bi
P. sempervirens Shrubby Plantain P

Polygalaceae

Polygala calcarea Chalk Milkwort R
P. nicaeensis Bi J
P. vulgaris Common Milkwort B

Polygonaceae

Oxyria digyna Mountain Sorrel Bi H

Primulaceae

Primula elatior Oxlip F Ai
P. farinosa Bird's-eye Primrose Ai
P. hirsuta F
P. veris Cowslip Bi J L H F
Vitaliana primuliflora Yellow Rock-jasmine F Ai

Ranunculaceae

Aquilegia vulgaris Columbine J
Caltha palustris Marsh-marigold H F
Clematis vitalba Traveller's-joy B Bi P J
Helleborus foetidus Stinking Hellebore B Bi P J R L H
H. viridis Green Hellebore H F Ai
Hepatica nobilis J
Ranunculus arvensis Corn Buttercup B

R. gouanii HF
R. gramineus J A L
R. pyrenaeus F
Thalictrum tuberosum A

Resedaceae

Reseda lutea Mignonette B Bi
R. phyteuma Corn Mignonette R Y L

Rhamnaceae

Rhamnus alaternus Mediterranean Buckthorn Bi R A L
R. pumilus F

Rosaceae

Alchemilla splendens Intermediate Lady's-mantle F
Amelanchier ovalis Snowy Mespilus B Bi J R A L
Crataegus monogyna Hawthorn B Bi J L
Fragaria vesca Wild Strawberry Bi
Geum montanum Alpine Avens J
Malus sylvestris Crab Apple Bi J
Potentilla repens Creeping Cinquefoil B L
P. tabernaemontani Spring Cinquefoil B Bi J F
Prunus avium Wild Cherry J
Rosa canina Dog Rose B Bi F
Rubus fruticosus Bramble B Bi J R
Sanguisorba minor Salad Burnet Bi P J R L
Sorbus aria Whitebeam J
S. domestica R
S. torminalis Wild Service-tree Bi
Spiraea hypericifolia A L

Rubiaceae

Asperula taurina B
Cruciata laevipes Crosswort J
Galium aparine Cleavers B L
G. mollugo Hedge Bedstraw L
G. verum Lady's Bedstraw Bi L
Rubia peregrina Wild Madder J L
Sherardia arvensis Field Madder B Bi R L

Salicaceae

Populus nigra Black Poplar B Bi
P. tremula Aspen B
Salix alba White Willow B Bi
S. eleagnos B
S. purpurea Purple Willow B
S. pyrenaica F

Santalaceae

Osyris alba R

Saxifragaceae

Saxifraga granulata Meadow Saxifrage H
S. longifolia Pyrenean Saxifrage Bi H
S. oppositifolia Purple Mountain Saxifrage F
S. tridactylites Rue-leaved Saxifrage Bi L

Scrophulariaceae

Antirrhinum majus Snapdragon B Bi L
Cymbalaria muralis Ivy-leaved Toadflax B R
Linaria purpurea Purple Toadflax B

L. supina Prostrate Toadflax L
Rhinanthus alectorolophus B
R. minor Yellow Rattle F
Verbascum sinuatum R
Veronica persica Common Field Speedwell B
V. prostrata F

Solanaceae

Hyoscyamus niger Henbane R
Solanum dulcamara Bittersweet Bi

Thymelaeaceae

Daphne laureola Spurge-laurel J F

Tiliaceae

Tilia cordata Small-leaved Lime Bi J
T. platyphyllos Large-leaved Lime Bi

Ulmaceae

Ulmus minor Elm B Bi

Urticaceae

Parietaria judaica Pellitory-of-the-wall R
Urtica dioica Stinging Nettle B
U. urens Annual Nettle B

Valerianaceae

Centranthus ruber Red Valerian B
Valeriana dioica Marsh Valerian L
V. globularifolia J

Violaceae

Viola odorata Sweet Violet J
V. pyrenaica F
V. reichenbachiana Pale Dog-violet J
V. riviniana Common Dog-violet J

MONOCOTYLEDONS

Alismataceae

Alisma plantago-aquatica Water-plantain B

Amaryllidaceae

Narcissus minor Lesser Daffodil Ai
N. pseudonarcissus ssp. *alpestris* J
N. pseudonarcissus ssp. *pseudonarcissus* Wild Daffodil F
N. rupicola Rock Daffodil J Ai

Cyperaceae

Carex acutiformis Lesser Pond-sedge B
C. divulsa Grey Sedge L
C. flacca Carnation Sedge B Y
Scirpus holoschoenus Round-headed Club-rush B L

Dioscoreaceae

Tamus communis Black Bryony Bi

Iridaceae

Crocus albiflorus F
Iris germanica Purple Iris R
I. pseudacorus Yellow Flag B

Juncaceae

- Juncus inflexus* Hard Rush B
Luzula campestris Field Woodrush J H F
L. sylvatica Greater Woodrush B

Liliaceae

- Allium moly* Bi
Aphyllanthes monspeliensis B Bi P A
Asparagus acutifolius Bi
Asphodelus albus White Asphodel Bi J A
Fritillaria pyrenaica B A
Hyacinthus amethystinus Bi A L
Muscari comosum Tassel Hyacinth R
M. neglectum Grape-hyacinth B P J L
Ruscus aculeatus Butcher's-broom J L
Tulipa sylvestris Wild Tulip B
Veratrum album White False-helleborine F

Orchidaceae

- Dactylorhiza sambucina* Elder-flowered Orchid J
Limodorum abortivum Violet Bird's-nest Orchid R
Ophrys fusca Sombre Bee-orchid L Y
O. lutea Yellow Bee-orchid Y
O. sphegodes Early Spider-orchid B R L Y
Orchis mascula Early Purple-orchid J A F
O. morio var. *picta* Green-winged Orchid J
O. purpurea Lady Orchid B Bi A L
O. simia Monkey Orchid A
O. ustulata Burnt-tip Orchid B

Poaceae (very incomplete)

- Anthoxanthum odoratum* Sweet Vernal-grass B
Arundo donax Giant Reed B R
Bromus sterilis Barren Brome B
Catapodium rigidum Fern-grass B
Dactylis glomerata Cock's-foot B
Deschampsia cespitosa Tufted hair-grass B
Hordeum murinum Wall Barley B
Melica uniflora Wood Melick Bi
Phragmites australis Common Reed B P
Poa annua Annual Meadow-grass B
P. compressa Flattened meadow-grass B
P. pratensis Smooth Meadow-grass B

Typhaceae

- Typha latifolia* Greater Reedmace B

LICHENS

- Cladonia foliacea* J
Peltigera aphthosa F
Ramalina sp. Bi
Rhizocarpon geographicum F
Usnea sp. J

BUTTERFLIES

Grizzled skipper R A L
Dingy skipper B L
Mallow skipper R
Swallowtail B
Scarce swallowtail B J R L
Spanish festoon A L
Large white B J L
Small white B J
Wood white B J L
Dappled white B J
Orange-tip B Bi J L
Moroccan orange-tip R L
Clouded yellow B R L
Pale clouded yellow L
Brimstone B J R L H
Cleopatra B J R L
Small tortoiseshell B
Painted lady B
Comma B L Y H
Violet fritillary B Bi
Wall B Bi R L
Speckled wood Bi J L
Common blue B R L
Small copper B R
Brown argus R
Black-eyed blue B R
Green-underside blue R L
Panoptes blue B L R
Green hairstreak R L



MOTHS

Adela reaumurella A
Rush veneer B
Yponomeuta cagnagella L (caterpillars)
Alucita hexadactyla B
Emmelina monodactyla B
Emperor moth B
Giant peacock moth B
Pine processionary moth - caterpillars everywhere where there were pine trees
Hummingbird hawk-moth B R
Cream-spot tiger B
Water ermine L
Euranthis plumistraria A
Tawny prominent B
Lunar marbled brown B
Chinese character B
Maiden's blush B
Broom-tip B
Mullein wave B
Blair's mocha B
Lime-speck pug B
Cypress pug B
Brimstone moth B
Lunar thorn B
Waved umber B
Common heath B
Latticed heath R
Yellow belle R
Shuttle-shaped dart B

Knot-grass B
Delicate B
White point B
Pale mottled willow B
Four-spotted R
Burnet companion R
Silver-Y B R

OTHER INVERTEBRATES

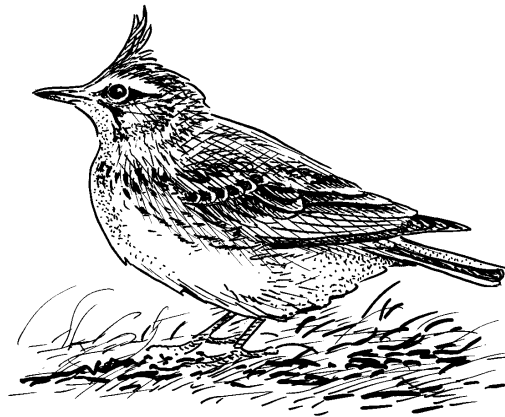
Arion ater a large black slug F
Cepaea hortensis Banded snail B
Rumina decollata a sawn-off snail B
Gryllus campestris Field cricket B Bi J R
Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa Mole-cricket B
Oedipoda coerulescens Blue-winged grasshopper B
Anacridium aegyptium Egyptian locust B
Praying mantis sp. R(nymph)
Forficula auricula Earwig B
Labidura riparia Giant earwig B
Coccus ilicis a gall insect on kermes oak R L
Aquarius najas a large pond skater B Bi
Pyrrhocoris apterus Fire bug J R
Coreus marginatus Squash bug B
Phytomyza ilicis Holly leaf-miner J
Meloe proscarabaeus Oil beetle B
Timarcha tenebricosa Bloody-nosed beetle L
Cicindela campestris Tiger beetle B L
Carabus nemoralis a ground beetle B
Blaps mucronatus B
Geotrupes stercorarius Dor beetle B
Oxythyrea funesta a pollen chafer B R L
Amphimallon solstitialis Summer chafer B
Dorcadion scopoli a longhorn beetle L
Ammophila sp. a sand wasp R
Xylocopa violacea a carpenter bee B J R L
Diplolepis rosae Robin's pin-cushion gall Bi
Messor barbara a large ant B
Formica rufa Wood ant J
Polistes sp. a paper wasp B
Bombus terrestris a bumble-bee B
Apis mellifera Honeybee J

MAMMALS

Northern Mole J F Ai (molehills only)
European Free-tailed Bat B
Serotine B
Greater Horseshoe Bat B
Pipistrelle B (45 and 55KHz)
Rabbit R
Brown Hare Ai
Red Squirrel J H
Alpine Marmot F
Snow Vole F Ai (runs)
Pine Marten J (droppings)
Wild Boar J Ai (rootings only)
Chamois F Ai (only droppings at the former site)

BIRDS

Great crested grebe - on Yesa and the other reservoirs we passed
Grey heron - singles on both rivers at B, and at P
White stork - three on two nest near Vitoria
Mallard - Y and other reservoirs; P
Honey buzzard - one at J; migrating group at Ai
Black kite - everywhere, except the very highest areas
Red kite - everywhere, even high up, though perhaps slightly less numerous than black kites
Lammergeier - Bi J R H Ai
Egyptian vulture - Bi J R A L
Griffon vulture - everywhere, even very high up; some large concentrations
Short-toed eagle - R
Hen harrier - B
Sparrowhawk - J H
Buzzard - at most sites, in small numbers, except high up
Booted eagle - B P J R L
Osprey - Y
Kestrel - small numbers at each locality
Hobby - B
Peregrine - R
Coot - Y
Little ringed plover - B P
Green sandpiper - one at B on the Veral
Black-headed gull - Bilbao
Yellow-legged gull - on the reservoirs and rivers; all large gulls specifically identified were this species
Rock dove/feral pigeon - everywhere; some genuine-looking rock doves at R and L
Woodpigeon - J R Y H
Collared dove - in all built-up areas
Cuckoo
Scops owl - B, abundant and noisy at night
Barn owl - B
Swift
Alpine swift - R
Kingfisher - B
Bee-eater - B R L Jaca
Hoopoe - B
Wryneck - B
Great spotted woodpecker - B P J
Crested lark - in all cultivated areas
(Thekla lark - possible at B)
Woodlark - B P A
Skylark - B F H
Sand martin - Bilbao
Crag martin
Swallow
House martin
Tawny pipit - B
Tree pipit - B H
Meadow pipit - F Ai
Water pipit - F Ai
Yellow wagtail - B P (including Iberian and Grey-headed races)
Grey wagtail - J L H
White wagtail
Dipper - Bi Ai
Wren - especially in the higher wooded and rocky areas
Dunnock - Bi Ai
Robin
Nightingale
Black redstart - in every built-up area, and rocky semi-natural habitats at all altitudes
Redstart - B



Stonechat
Whinchat - Bi
Wheatear - B Bi H F Ai
Rock thrush - F Ai
Blue rock thrush - R L
Blackbird
Song thrush - B Bi F
Mistle thrush - Ai
Cetti's warbler - around every river site
Fan-tailed warbler - near J
Melodious warbler - Y
Dartford warbler - B R A L
Sardinian warbler - R A
Subalpine warbler - B A L Y
Whitethroat - B H
Orphean warbler - B
Garden warbler - B L H
Blackcap
Bonelli's warbler - Bi J
Northern chiffchaff
Iberian chiffchaff - J
Goldcrest - B J H Ai
Firecrest - Bi J L
Pied flycatcher - B
Long-tailed tit - B L
Crested tit - J
Coal tit - J H
Blue tit
Great tit
Short-toed treecreeper - J
Golden oriole - B Y
Woodchat shrike - B P R Y
Jay - B Bi J Y Ai
Magpie
Alpine chough - F Ai
Chough - Bi R A L H F Ai
Jackdaw - L
Carrion crow
Raven
Spotless starling
House sparrow
Chaffinch
Serin
Citril finch - Bi
Greenfinch
Goldfinch
Crossbill - J
Linnet
Yellowhammer - H F Ai
Cirl bunting
Rock bunting - H Ai
Corn bunting

AMPHIBIANS

Marsh Frog B Bi
Common Frog H F

REPTILES

Iberian Wall Lizard B R L H
Slow Worm Bi
Viperine Snake R

