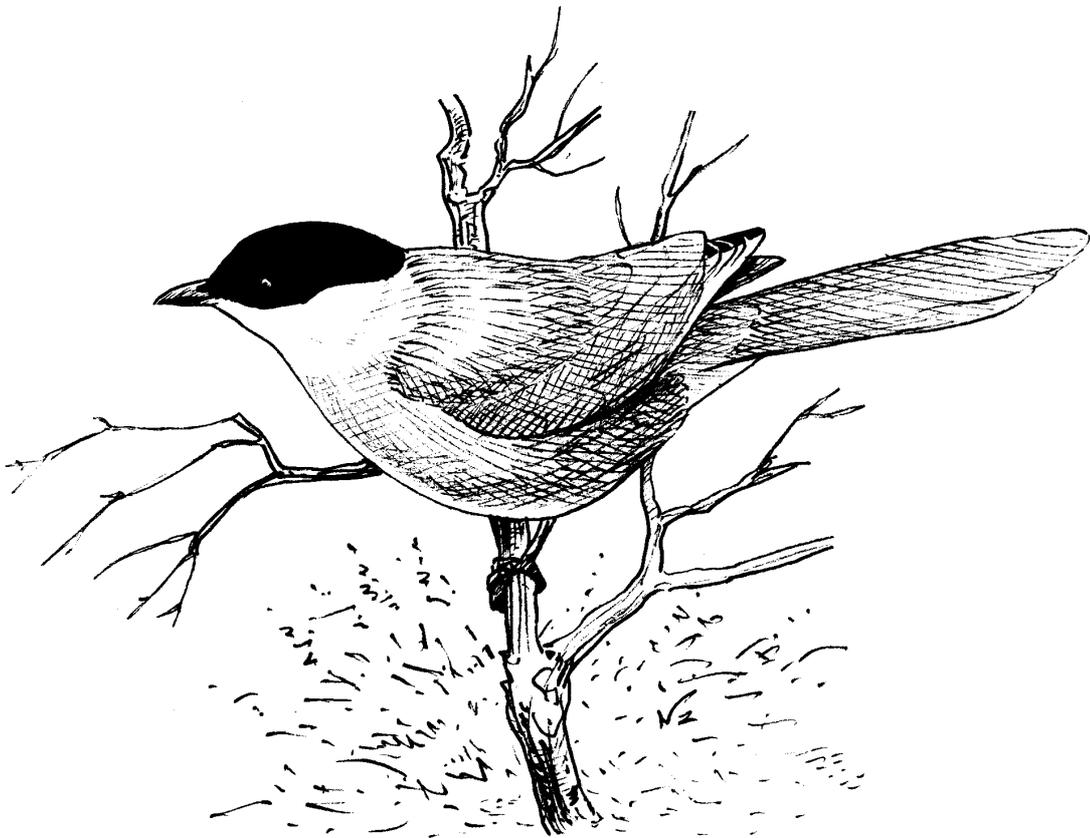


Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Algarve
22 – 29 March 2006

Algarve
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Holiday participants

Peter and Elonwy Crook
Bob and Pam Harris
Sandy and Marie Watt
Jenny Loring
Alison Wilson
Joy Barker
John Durdin

Leaders

Brian and Eileen Anderson
Chris Durdin

Illustrations by Rob Hume. Front cover: azure-winged magpie
Report written by Chris Durdin, with flower report by Brian Anderson.

This holiday, as for every Honeyguide holiday, also puts something into conservation in our host country by way of a contribution to the wildlife that we enjoyed. The conservation contribution this year of £25 per person was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, leading to a total of €470 given to the Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA, BirdLife Portugal). We were very pleased to welcome Filipe Jorge from SPEA to the Hotel Belavista da Luz to receive the cheque.

This is our second donation to SPEA and follows last year's donation of €490, so that's €960 (£688) to date. The total conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays since 1991 was at £38,645 (€54,103) at the end of 2005.

The cheque handover appeared in the local newspaper *barlavento*: see *barlavento* webpage <http://www.barlavento.online.pt/index.php/noticia?id=5645&tmid=3>
SPEA's website shows Honeyguide's support for the protected west coast Important Bird Area (IBA), see <http://www.spea.pt/IBA/ibas/31.html>

Algarve 22 – 29 March 2006

Wednesday 22 March – Stansted to Vila da Luz

It had been one of those winters that had lingered and lingered, and the frost-covered cars at Stansted were typical of that. So the warmth of the Algarve was welcome as the eight of us arrived promptly at Faro after a smooth easyJet flight. House martins collecting mud by a pool just off the taxiway were an illustration of how spring was already here in Portugal. Holiday leaders Brian and Eileen were there to greet us, along with Tony, our bus driver for the week and Miltours rep Fátima.

The landscape was strikingly green as we drove west along the coastal motorway, punctuated by patches of colour from yellow lupins, yellow and white crown daisies and white gum cistus. A few swallows, little egrets and the occasional kestrel were noted along the hour's journey. We checked in at the pink palace of the Hotel Belavista da Luz, greeted warmly by owner Deric, and still had an hour to unpack and go for a wander before lunch. We then met Jenny and Alison, the other group members, who had arrived last night on the flight from Newcastle, and had a super salad lunch, with generous supplies of wine for those who could handle it after a short night.



Next to the hotel is a patch of scrub that Deric bought to stop it getting built over, like so much of the coast in general and the growing town of Vila da Luz in particular. Less than a stone's throw from the hotel door we were delighted to find scores of mirror orchids (*left*) plus a few each of yellow bee orchid and bumblebee orchid. Various peas included the brick red *Lathyrus cicera*. We then wandered slowly down to the sea, pausing to look at various shrubs such as the planted ngaio and lantana bushes and Peruvian pepper trees. The sun had gone in and it was now coolish, though still much warmer than Britain. Birdwise it was quiet, with little more than a turnstone on the fossil-rich foreshore, yellow-legged gulls and goldfinches. But there was scope for lots of gentle pottering among the shore and wayside plants. Among the former were Hottentot fig, both pink and yellow colour forms, golden samphire, *Frankenia laevis* (a sea heath) and *Astericus maritimus*. Wayside plants included mallow-leaved bindweed and mallow-leaved storksbill, both blue and red forms of scarlet pimpernel (with closed flowers in case we hadn't ourselves realised that the sun had gone in) and, inevitable in so much of southern Europe, the invasive but still attractive yellow flowers of Bermuda buttercup.

We paused to take in the art on the sea wall and to translate some menus; some popped into the map/bookshop and just about everyone looked in at the local supermarket, many enjoying a cup of coffee there, as we returned up the hill to the hotel.

Thursday 23 March – coastal walk to Lagos

A few of the keener birdwatchers explored the scrub up the road before breakfast. Local birds along the road were the expected greenfinches, goldfinches, blackbirds and Sardinian warblers that chattered away but didn't show well. A blackcap sang from the scrub by the hotel and appeared briefly. Spotless starlings flew through but didn't settle. Over the scrub up the road a fan-tailed warbler did its typical "zip ... zip ... zip" in flight and a corn bunting sat still for good telescope views. A large brown bird of prey shot out of the *Cupressus* hedge but couldn't be identified. Bellardia and the wonderful dangling purple flowers and bracts of honeywort *Cerinthe major* var *purpurascens* were noted.

A civilised 9.30 start but not the brightest of weather: it was cool and breezy most of the day, and we wisely left the butterfly net behind for our first day, on foot to Lagos. Yesterday the sea was notable for the lack of birds: today a quick glance and there were seven, then two then five gannets flying west. We stopped counting as a steady trickle came past, plus the odd cormorant and Sandwich tern from time to time.

Beyond the edge of the growing town we overlooked a field with a cattle egret on a pylon and three stonechats on the slope. Farther on, a southern grey shrike perched on a lentisc bush. There is then quite a steep slope up which the sensible members of the group took an easy windy route. A common pink flower here was *Fedia cornucopiae* – less than obviously a small valerian. There were lots more *Ophrys* orchids of yesterday's three species, pyramidal orchid in bud and a wonderful patch of pink Italian man orchids. Bladder vetch, weasel's snout (lesser snapdragon) and yellow anemone *Anemone palmata* were other notable flowers, and gave Brian a chance to encourage Chris to use scientific names and Chris to

advocate English names in return. There is then a trig point at the hilltop by which *Prasium* (Spanish hedge-nettle) and star clover were growing.

The hill done, the walking was then easy with a colourful array of wild flowers but not a great many birds: raven, crested lark and many fan-tailed warblers were highlights. Among the rich vegetation, especially striking were fields of blue hairy lupins, here and there with patches of the spikes of yellow lupins.

A coffee or beer at the bar at Porto de Mos marked the halfway point and an excuse to use the bar's loos, but it was too windy for a picnic by the beach so we walked through the village and found a sheltered spot under a carob tree. Round the corner from here were some super patches of Barbary nut irises. Next target was the lighthouse and striking rock stacks at Ponta da Piedade, with nesting yellow-legged gulls and a small flock of jackdaws. The straight road from there into Lagos takes you past the stations of the cross, by which the sandy area to the right was a gorgeous sheet of purple and yellow lupins, plus the delicate spotted purple and white snapdragon *Linaria algarviana*.

In Lagos, we wound through the streets to the sea front, pausing by the statue of Henry the Navigator where a Sandwich tern for Alison briefly interrupted Eileen's learned commentary on his Lancastrian background. Next statue is a modern-style Dom Sebastian, one-time boy king of Portugal with his visor by his feet, looking a little like Anakin Skywalker preparing to become Darth Vader. Then, by complete coincidence, we bumped into Deric with his minibus in which eight returned, with the rest by taxi, back to the Hotel Belavista. There is a spacious games room on the hotel's lower ground floor, ideal for our first 6.45 gathering for checklists before dinner at 7.30.

Friday 24 March – Alte ridge and Silves

After overnight rain it was slightly milder than yesterday and distinctly less windy. The intrepid few who rose early for some seawatching were rewarded with not only the usual gannets and Sandwich terns but also a whimbrel, at least 13 turnstones and a common sandpiper on the rocks. We then walked a little way west along the road overlooking the coast, where there were two male blackcaps, one of which was eating a loquat. A serin on an aerial gave excellent views as we returned up the hill.

We headed east along the 'freeway', as Tony calls it, before heading inland near Ferreria. Brian and Eileen on their two week recce before the holiday had found a stretch of roadside that was stuffed full of wonderful wild flowers where we walked downhill for a couple of hundred yards. Hoop petticoat daffodils were in patches on the rocks; there were tulips and gladioli, yellow anemones, grass-leaved buttercups and purple shrubby gromwell. New orchids for us were man, sombre bee and tongue. A quail, possibly two, called loudly from the once cultivated valley below. The weather was warming slowly enough for a fresh Spanish festoon butterfly to be emerging, yet completely docile.

Tony then dropped us in Pico Alto village, from where we walked along a stony track on the Alte ridge to a pick-up point a couple of kilometres away. The scrubby dry country vegetation included both grey-leaved and narrow-leaved cistus, with pink and small white flowers respectively, and rosemary. After a wet winter the orchids were growing well, including scores of man orchids, almost as many Italian man orchids, our first woodcock orchid and a hollow where narrow-leaved helleborines were in perfect white flower. The sun tried occasionally to break through; notable butterflies were green hairstreak and black-eyed blue. A woodlark sang overhead.

Descending to meet Tony and the bus, near a small cork oak plantation, we were then driven to a Portuguese restaurant in Silves called Recanto dos Moures, in view of the Moorish castle. Deric was there to meet us and the feast began. Starters were deep fried battered pieces of eels, broad beans with chorizo, moray eels and horse mackerel. The main course was a selection of wild boar stew, lamb stew, black pig (wild boar – domestic pig cross) and bean stew with whelks, with a selection of sweets to follow. Glasses of *medronho* – a spirit brewed from the fruits of strawberry tree *Arbutus* – were served along with coffee.

Revitalised, a short walk revealed the choice of location – it's an ideal area for the monarch butterfly. They obviously haven't read my butterfly book that says that this abundant species in North America doesn't breed in Europe, as there were not only many adult butterflies but also the food plant, milkweed, and several yellow, black and white caterpillars. The changeable weather meant the butterflies were so docile they could be examined closely and easily photographed.

Finally, we had an hour in the compact city of Silves, time enough to wander up to the cathedral under the castle, through the cobbled streets, many of which were under renovation, and back to the river, on which there was a close little egret and a common sandpiper. Two chimneys in Silves had occupied white stork nests.

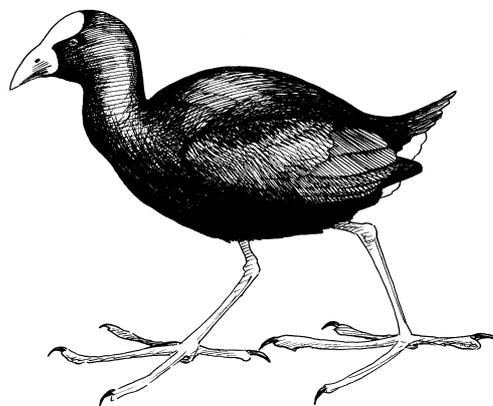
Meals at the hotel are a tasty and generous three-course affair – perhaps too generous today after our special lunch, so some dropped to one or two courses. Towards the end of every Friday evening a man with a keyboard plays music. We were all highly impressed by the 81 year old couple who got up and did a range of highly professional ballroom dances: we learned they live locally and dance here every Friday. A Scottish reel was played and the north of border contingent was easily persuaded to come to the dance floor, with others joining them to make an eight. Jenny was then persuaded by Chris to dust down her Ceroc (modern jive) skills and Bob and Pam then revealed their dancing skills too. A group with hidden talents!

Saturday 25 March – Pêra and Alvor marshes

The early risers were rewarded with a red-rumped swallow and the best views so far of azure-winged magpies.

After breakfast, Deric kindly hosted us at his house a kilometre or so away. Set in fields and low scrub, albeit in sight and hearing of the main road, he regularly sees quails as he walks his dogs. Looking from the roof of his house, three of the group did see up to five small gamebirds flying, though when we met Deric again he'd seen two red-legged partridges, so whether those seen from the roof were distant partridges or quails remains a mystery.

Brian and Eileen had been twice to Pêra marshes on their reccy, the first time finding it overfull of water and the second time draining fast. With the latter exposing mud but leaving little water, it meant it was good for waders but not for ducks. Avocets and black-winged stilts were there in good numbers, with a sprinkling of sanderlings. One grey plover, up to 20 Kentish plovers and 18 or so black-tailed godwits, the last with a few gaining their brick-red summer plumage. The dunes here are rich with wild flowers, the star of which was three-leaved snowflake *Leucojum triphyllum*, and a steady trickle of clouded yellow butterflies came past. From the viewing platform the great local attraction, bird-wise, was easy to see: 10 purple gallinules (and Brian reported another five farther along), plus a single great white egret. Two marsh harriers flew round, putting up the waders and a few ducks, including shovelers and gadwall. Those who walked on beyond found that the drainage had been done by bulldozing a hole through the dunes ... because the adjacent golf course was getting a bit wet! This also meant that the café on the beach couldn't be reached.



Our picnic was back by the minibus, with 20 or so cattle egrets with the nearby sheep flock and a spoonbill on the marsh. We drove west along the old main road over the suspension bridge with a stork's nest on the tower, below which there were about 50 flamingos on the Alvor estuary.

A little way along a bumpy track at Abicada, we were dropped for a pleasant quarter of mile or so walk towards a viewpoint over the estuary, by which are remains of a Roman villa – much in need of better protection and presentation. Along the way were our first swallowtail and dappled white butterflies, woodchat shrike (seen well by all as we returned) and there were 10 spoonbills out on the saltmarsh.

Final stop of the day was elsewhere on the Alvor estuary, where the seawall allows views of sandflats one side a saltmarsh with muddy creeks on the other. On the sandy side there were many cocklers and bait diggers and a man ejecting something from the intertidal flats with a pump. Kentish plovers were in between the people plus the odd white stork and the usual yellow-legged gulls and Sandwich terns. On the muddy side, new waders were greenshank, ringed plover and dunlin: close views of a yellow wagtail confirmed it was the Iberian race with a grey head and white throat.

In the spirit of a warts-and-all report, sadly the music tonight over dinner was as unwelcome as last night's was welcome: the singers started too early, too loud (despite twice turning it down) and making conversation difficult. We finished as quickly as we practically could and adjourned outside the dining room or went to bed.

Sunday 26 March – Sagres, Cape Vincent and the west coast

The clocks were put forward last night so the early walk was at 7.30 summer time, with a fine sunrise over the cliffs. A still day, there were fewer gannets than usual over the sea but three wader species, turnstone, common sandpiper and whimbrel, could be seen in one telescope view.

Today was our day on the 'protected west coast', as SPEA puts it, with a selection of stops and wildlife highlights. We took the old coast road, here and there not made up, past Burgau, stopping in a river valley at Boca do Rio. The last few paperwhite narcissi were still flowering, and our first sawfly and green-winged orchids were noted. A pretty pink valerian was *Centrianthus calcitrapae*.

Just beyond we stopped at a flower-rich hillside. Foraging on the ground was a hoopoe and, rather out of context, a song thrush, and some saw a few bee-eaters come through. A blue rock thrush sang and settled for a while on a fence.

The next, briefish, roadside stop was for a wonderful patch of the very local squill *Scilla vincentina* but not only that as there were more green-winged orchids, *Cistus crispus*, spotted rockrose, Algarve toadflax and sand crocuses.

We had longer at a point on the coast well away from tourists and developers. The scrub is beaten low, just a few inches high, by the fierce conditions, but it was still an extraordinary botanical spectacle. The commonest shrub was a prostrate form of gum cistus, but this protected other flowers including the fritillary *Fritillaria lusitanica* and southern daisy. Big patches of hoop petticoat narcissi added to the splendour of it all.

Turning at Vila do Bispo, we dropped into the sheltered bay of Praia do Castelejo. Putting aside the colourful slopes of native flora and not so native hanging Hottentot fig in both pink and yellow, this was ideal for our picnic, with a café perfect for a drink and loos. The sea was producing wonderful breakers: you could see why this coast is popular with surfers.

Cape St Vincent, jutting out into the Atlantic, is the most south-westerly point on the Iberian peninsula. It's a popular point for fishermen who perch on the cliff top with rod and line reaching far down the high cliffs. For anyone with just a hint of vertigo it's terrifying. Brian says they lose one or two most years. Stalls sell woolly tops, presumably for those who forget it can be windy out here, and a range of other goodies. What looked like a real rock dove and our first black redstart were seen during our brief stop.

Sagres fort is where Henry the Navigator's School of Navigation attracted Magellan and Vasco de Gama as students. There were even more cliff-top fishermen as we did a quick tour inside the fort, painted white (it was grey) and now losing its colour. Lots of black redstarts were singing, winter territories presumably, and our first red admiral and silver-Y moth. A wonderful hedgehog pea here is *Astragalus tragacantha* ssp *vincentinus*.

Down the road, we stopped where Brian advised we could see a nice range of coastal flora, which included shrubby violet *Viola arborescens*. Having only found jackdaws at Cape St Vincent, we were delighted to see four or five choughs tumbling near the cliffs.

The final stop was in scrub at Martinhal – perhaps the last visit here by naturalists as much building is underway. Highlights included sawfly, woodcock and two-leaved scrub orchids *Gennaria diphylla*, great patches of tulips *Tulipa sylvestris* ssp *australis* and periwinkle *Vinca difformis* and a controversy about the size of yellow butterflies! As we were leaving the area we paused to see four bee-eaters on a wire by the road.

A mention in dispatches for Bob who joined Chris in the pool tonight – and Ali swam too. Deric and his wife Kate kindly ferried and joined us for our meal out tonight at a fish restaurant called A Forja (the

forge) in Lagos. And very good it was too, if a little smoky. We were back soon enough for most of us to pop down the games room (where we did our checklists every night) to enjoy the New Orleans Jazz Band – six old geezers and a young geezer who knew how to entertain. So the musical weekend at the Hotel Belavista gets – in Juke Box Jury style – a Hit, a Miss and another Hit. Two out of three ain't bad.

Monday 27 March – Parque Natural da Ria Formosa

The pre-breakfast birders forgot that with the hour change it would be dark at 7 a.m., but undaunted there was a dawn chorus walk to the old orchard around the corner and a bit of a birdsong tutorial. We had the best views of azure-winged magpies for many so far, a hoopoe, a red-rumped swallow and, as we came back to the hotel, a woodchat shrike opposite the hotel entrance.

After a brief supermarket stop, we were off on the freeway to beyond Faro to Quinto de Marim reserve. A quick look in the visitor centre allowed us to absorb the idea of the once thriving tuna fishery here: then a drink and then outside to look at the lagoons and estuary beyond. The tide was pushing in and waders were clustered on the edge of the mudflats – many bar-tailed godwits, greenshanks and grey plovers especially. These were well seen from the roof of the old tide mill, which also has a small café that sold some excellent apple and cinnamon cake. The tidal lagoon that then supplies the power to drive the millstones was too full for many birds: the odd wader on the edge included our first little stint. But the freshwater pool was excellent: some 40 shovelers, mostly drakes, 30 or so little egrets, three purple gallinules and a few terrapins. All morning there were white storks round us too from the several pairs that nest here. Lunch was on the picnic site here, where we could hear short-toed treecreeper and debate the details of birthwort flowers and seedpod.

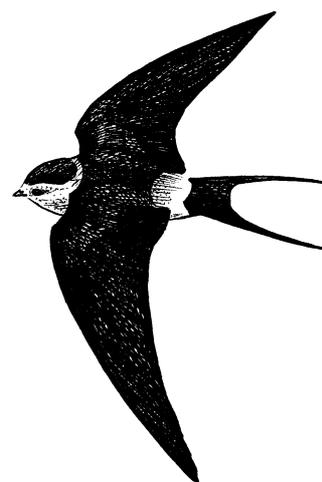
West of Faro, also part of the huge Parque Natural da Ria Formosa, is Quinta do Lago, approached through endless golf courses and upmarket housing. The very high spring tide meant no exposed mud; so waders were those roosting on small saltmarsh islands, mostly grey plovers. The extraordinary yellow broomrape *Cistanche phelypaea* was growing in large numbers and huge spikes along the dune edge. Several medium-sized lizards were seen, with a highly distinctive brick red throat, which were later confirmed as Spanish psammodromus.

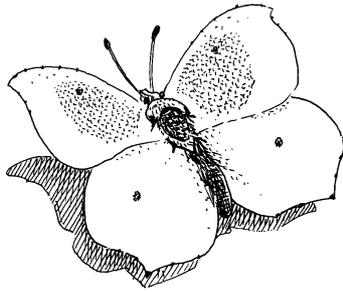
Filipe Jorge is a local volunteer from SPEA, the Portuguese BirdLife partner, and we were very pleased that like last year he was able to come to tell us something of SPEA's work, accept a donation and join us for dinner. Much of the work of SPEA's 17 staff is on three EU LIFE funded projects. The first of these is on the conservation of steppe birds like great and little bustards in nearby Alentejo. The second is a pilot project to identify marine areas valuable for seabirds. The third is a recovery project for the Azores bullfinch, which is overseeing a recovery of this scarce bird. Other work includes monitoring Important Bird Areas – some 60 in mainland Portugal plus those in the Azores and Madeira. A current area of activity with the energy companies is on windfarms and power cables, assessing and preventing birdstrike problems especially when visibility is poor.

Tuesday 28 March – Rocha da Pena

A 7.15 start meant it was light this morning for the early birders, though the sun didn't come up for a further 20 minutes. At least 10 red-rumped swallows were around, a bee-eater flew over and all the usual suspects performed.

Our morning walk was in the limestone *barrocal* at Monte Seco on rural tracks round three sides of triangle, part of one of Brian and Eileen's walks in their Sunflower guide. Short-toed treecreepers and long-tailed tits moved through the rich olive and almond groves. Wild peonies *Paeonia broteroi* were in full flower and a trickle of bee-eaters flew past. Leaning against a most unprepossessing doorway in the village of Monte Seco was a local who turned out to be the proprietor of a combined café, village shop and barber, the last in a corner of the café. The village post arrived as we supped a *café com leite, galao* (very milky coffee) or Sagres beer: evidently the shop acts as a mini postal depot, with our host gleaning what information he can from the envelopes awaiting collection. Before we moved off, he proudly showed us his garage/store next door, with aged truck and car, to the resigned disapproval of his





wife. A wonderful glimpse of old Portugal. Gradually descending, many cleopatras were on the wing (*left*) and we were introduced to the *lusitanica* variety of mirror orchid, taller and thinner than the usual ones, many of the showy *Scilla peruviana* plus a sombre bee type orchid called *Ophrys dyris*.

We moved on to Rocha da Pena where Tony kindly checked that the café-bar was happy that we ate our picnic on their premises, which certainly boosted their takings. It's a glorious, though uphill, walk on this south-facing slope to the top of the ridge. A pair of rock buntings flitted through the trees and we located, albeit briefly, the green woodpecker that called almost incessantly. The latter is the Iberian race *sharppei* that lacks a black mask and sounds a little softer. Cleopatras and green hairstreaks were common and Spanish festoon appeared on some yellow woundwort. A blue rock thrush moved from tree to rock to tree and the rock bunting re-appeared. At the top there was a chance for a group photo.

Wednesday 29 March – Faro and home

Breakfast was at 7.15 and we were away at 08.00 for a smooth trip back to Faro airport. Those lucky enough to be on the aircraft steps with Jenny were able to use her eclipse glasses to view a partial solar eclipse.

* * * * *

Highlights (wildlife and otherwise) of the week, as nominated by group members

Jenny: monarch butterflies, lupins and Algarve toadflax in the 'Algarve carpet' of colour, coves on the first day's walk, yellow broomrape.

Pam: monarchs, Cape St Vincent, storks.

Bob: purple gallinule, Portuguese lunch, the hotel.

Elonwy: purple gallinule, early bulbs like tulips and narcissi, the group.

Peter: blue rock thrush in song flight, miniature daffodils, beating Marie at table tennis, jazz night.

Joy: the group and the hotel, yellow broomrape.

Sandy: 'Formula One' kestrels above the cliffs in the wind, organisation of the holiday.

Marie: the range and colour of the flowers, especially the orchids, and the problem of where to put your feet; azure-winged magpies.

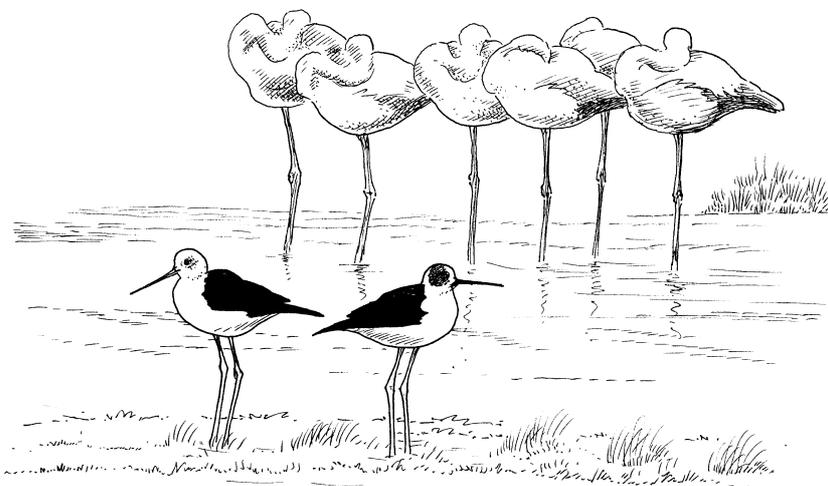
Alison: the welcome for her by the group, purple gallinule, monarchs especially the two on Jenny's hand, Cape St Vincent.

John: Spanish festoon emerging, tiny daffodils and *Leucojum*, *Scilla peruviana*, choughs.

Chris: azure-winged magpies, lupins, dancing on Friday night.

Eileen: the group and the flowers.

Brian: display of spring flowers; delight of the group when we find a café.



Birds

Little grebe: 30 on the freshwater pool at Quinta de Marim reserve on 27th
Gannet: most days at sea there were a few, a reminder that this is the Atlantic and not the Mediterranean.
Cormorant: seen five days at sea
Cattle egret: seen almost daily as we travelled, especially where there were livestock; 20 at Pêra marshes on 25th
Little egret: seen almost daily
Great white egret: 1 at Pêra marshes on 25th
Grey heron: seen on three days
White stork: seen on three days including two nests in Silves, one nest on the bridge across the Alvor estuary and lots at Quinta de Marim reserve.
Spoonbill: 1 at Pêra marshes and 10 on the saltmarsh at Abicada on 25th
Greater flamingo: none at Pêra marshes as the water level was too low but about 50 seen instead as we crossed the Alvor estuary on 25th and again on 27th
Gadwall: just 1 at Pêra marshes on 25th
Mallard: recorded on four days
Shoveler: about 12 on 25th at Pêra marshes and 40 at Quinta de Marim reserve on 27th
[Black-shouldered kite: none seen but a birdwatcher at Boca do Rio on 26th described a mystery bird of prey seen here and later came to the hotel to show us pictures on his laptop that were clearly this species]
Buzzard: seen of four days, especially round the main roads close to Vila da Luz and Deric's house
Short-toed eagle: a bird of prey described by Jenny at Alte on 24th was almost certainly this species – it was here in 2005
Marsh harrier: 2 at least at Pêra marshes on 25st
Kestrel: seen daily
Red-legged partridge: pairs seen on 24th, 25th and 26th
Quail: calling loudly on 24th. Brief views of game birds seen from Deric's roof on 25th were inconclusive: he saw red-legged partridges as he walked his fields while we watched.
Moorhen: seen on four days
Purple gallinule: 15 at Pêra marshes on 25th, 3 from the hide on the freshwater pool at Quinta de Marim reserve on 27th
Coot: lots at Pêra marshes on 25th and seen at Quinta de Marim reserve on 27th
Black-winged stilt: lots but not counted at Pêra marshes on 25th
Avocet: lots but not counted at Pêra marshes on 25th
Ringed plover: on the Alvor estuary on 25th and at Quinta de Marim reserve on 27th
Kentish plover: at Pêra marshes on the Alvor estuary on 25th and one at Quinta de Marim reserve on 27th
Grey plover: 1 at Pêra marshes on 25th; at Quinta de Marim and scores at Quinta do Lago on 27th
Turnstone: recorded on four days, especially on the foreshore at Luz where a peak count of 13 on 24th
Sanderling: a rather out of context flock of 50 on the mud at Pêra marshes on 25th
Little stint: only 1 at Quinta de Marim reserve on 27th
Dunlin: 5 or 6 on the Alvor estuary on 25th
Ruff: 2 at Pêra marshes on 25th
Black-tailed godwit: 18 at Pêra marshes and 2 on the Alvor estuary on 21st
Bar-tailed godwit: dozens at Quinta de Marim on 27th
Whimbrel: 1 on the foreshore at Luz on 24th, 3 on the foreshore at Luz on 26th and recorded at both Quinta de Marim reserve and Quinta do Lago on 27th
Redshank: recorded at Pêra and Alvor estuary on 25th and at Quinta de Marim reserve on 27th
Greenshank: 1 on the Alvor estuary on 25th and recorded at Quinta de Marim reserve and at Quinta do Lago on 27th
Common sandpiper: singles on Luz foreshore and at Quinta do Lago
Black-headed gull: at Pêra and at Quinta de Marim
Yellow-legged gull: common and seen daily
Sandwich tern: 10 offshore at Luz on the first day's walk to Lagos and small numbers offshore several times
Rock dove/feral pigeon: birds that looked like real rock doves were in the Cape St Vincent area but, unlike last year, those at the offshore rock stacks behind the lighthouse at Ponta da Piedade were all feral pigeons
Collared dove: seen daily
Swift: they arrived on 25th and there were about 20 in Lagos when we went for our evening meal.

Bee-eater: seeing bee-eaters on three days (26th, 27th and 28th) was a bonus of being a week later than last year

Hoopoe: seen on six days

Green woodpecker: calling and very active, though tricky to see well, at Rocha da Pena on 28th. The Iberian subspecies is *sharpai*, which lacks a black mask.

Short-toed lark: heard (flight call) and seen briefly but only by Chris over the dunes at Pêra on 25th

Crested lark: seen daily

Woodlark: in full song above the Alte ridge on 24th

Sand martin: recorded in ones and two on three days 25-27th

Swallow: seen daily

Red-rumped swallow: 1 was at Luz early on 25th, recorded on 26th and 27th and about 10 on the pre-breakfast bird walk at Luz on 28th

House martin: seen daily

Meadow pipit: this winter visitor was recorded at Pêra on 25th and on the west coast on 26th

Yellow wagtail: seen well enough at both Pêra marshes on 25st and Quinta do Lago on 27th to see that the males were Spanish wagtail *Motacilla flava iberiae*, as might be expected.

Wren: heard or seen on two days

Black redstart: about 10 birds and much singing at Sagres fort on 26th

Stonechat: 6 birds just east of Luz on 23rd and seen on three other days

Blue rock thrush: 3 on the west coast day on 26th and at Rocha da Pena on 28th

Blackbird: recorded every day

Song thrush: 1 heard on 23rd and 2 seen on 26th for this winter visitor to the Algarve

Cetti's warbler: heard on three days

Fan-tailed warbler: an estimate of 20 on the walk to Lagos on 23rd and seen five other days

Sardinian warbler: seen daily, especially outside the hotel in Luz

Blackcap: seen or heard daily, including around Luz

Goldcrest: 1 in Estoi Gardens on 18th

Blue tit: heard or seen on two days, namely Pico Alto on 24th and at Rocha da Pena on 28th

Great tit: heard or seen every day

Long-tailed tit: Monte Seco on 28th

Short-toed treecreeper: heard on 25th and 27th and seen at Monte Seco on 28th

Southern grey shrike: seen on two days, notably just outside Luz on 23rd

Woodchat shrike: first were on 25th then daily, including 1 outside the hotel on 27th

Jay: heard, Monte Seco, 28th

Azure-winged magpie: seen daily, including in the scrub, gardens and old orchards by the hotel.

Chough: 5 at Sagres on the west coast on 26th

Jackdaw: recorded on the Lagos walk on 23rd and at Cape St Vincent on 26th

Raven: 1 on the Lagos walk on 23rd

Spotless starling: recorded on five days, including in Luz.

House sparrow: seen daily, especially at the hotel

Chaffinch: recorded on 26th and at Rocha da Pena on 28th

Serin: seen daily

Greenfinch: seen daily

Goldfinch: seen daily

Linnet: recorded on four days

Corn bunting: seen or heard on six days

Rock bunting: seen well at Rocha da Pena on 28th

Reptiles and amphibians

Moorish gecko

Turkish gecko

Large psammodromus

European pond terrapin

Clouded yellow

Cleopatra

Red admiral

Painted lady

Monarch

Common blue

Black-eyed blue

Small copper

Green hairstreak

Small heath

Speckled wood

Butterflies

Swallowtail

Spanish festoon

Large white

Small white

Dappled white

Other notable invertebrates

Fiddler crab
 Egyptian locust
 Violet carpenter bee

Rose chafer
 7-spot ladybird

Pine processionary moth (nests)
 Hummingbird hawk-moth
 Silver-Y moth

Mammals

Hare
 Rat sp.

Flower report, March 2006

After several years of dry weather, the winter of 2005/6 produced ideal growing conditions, plenty of showery rain mixed with days of sunshine. A brilliant display of spring flowers awaited us, one of the finest we have seen for many a year. All the stars were there in bigger numbers than ever, *Narcissus bulbocodium*, the *N. gaditanus* and perhaps more surprisingly, the *Tulipa australis*. Unlike 2005, there was a full supporting cast with so many different species in flower, more than we have ever encountered there in March. The orchid flora, and the monocots in general, were well represented and in good form. Temperatures over winter had been a little lower than average, especially at night time. This seems to have delayed the bulbous plants but not the annuals, which led to such an interesting and unusual display.

Acanthaceae

Acanthus mollis

Aizoaceae

Carpobrotus edulis

Anacardiaceae

Pistacia lentiscus

Schinus molle

Apiaceae

Cachrys trifida

Crithmum maritimum

Daucus halophilus

Eryngium maritimum

Ferula communis

Oenanthe sp

Scandix pecten-veneris

Smyrniolum olusatrum

Apocynaceae

Nerium oleander

Vinca difformis

Araliaceae

Hedera helix

Aristolochiaceae

Aristolochia baetica

Asclepiadaceae

Gomphocarpus fruticosus

Asteraceae

Anthemis tormentosa

Arctotheca calendula

Asteriscus maritimus

Bellis annua

Bellis sylvestris

Calendula arvensis

Calendula suffruticosa

Centaurea pullata

Chrysanthemum coronarium var. *discolor* crown daisy

Conyza canadensis Canadian fleabane

Cotula coronopifolia

Dittrichia viscosa ssp. *revoluta* stinking inula

Acanthus family

bears breeches

Aizoon family

Hottentot fig

Pistacio family

mastic tree

Peruvian pepper tree

Carrot family

rock samfire

sea holly

giant fennel

shepherd's needles

alexanders

Oleander family

oleander

periwinkle

Ivy family

ivy

Birthwort family

Dutchman's pipe

Milkweed family

bristle-fruited silkweed

Daisy family

woolly mayweed

Cape daisy

yellow sea aster

annual daisy

southern daisy

field marigold

<i>Erigeron karvinskianus</i>	
<i>Galactites tomentosa</i>	wild artichoke
<i>Pallensis spinosa</i>	spiny golden star
<i>Silybum marianum</i>	milk thistle
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	common sow thistle
<i>Tragapogon hybridum</i>	
Boraginaceae	Borage family
<i>Anchusa azurea</i>	large blue alkanet
<i>Anchusa undulata</i>	undulate alkanet
<i>Borago officinalis</i>	borage
<i>Cerithe gymnandra</i>	
<i>Cerithe major</i> var <i>purpurascens</i>	honeywort
<i>Cynoglossum creticum</i>	blue hound's tongue
<i>Echium plantagineum</i>	purple viper's bugloss
<i>Lithodora diffusum</i>	
<i>Lithodora prostrata</i>	
<i>Neatostema apulum</i>	yellow gromwell
Brassicaceae	Cabbage family
<i>Cakile maritima</i> ssp. <i>aegyptiaca</i>	sea rocket
<i>Lobularia maritima</i>	sweet alison
<i>Malcolmia littorea</i>	sand stock
<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i>	wild radish
<i>Sinapis arvensis</i>	charlock
Cactaceae	Cactus family
<i>Opuntia ficus-indica</i>	prickly pear
Caprifoliaceae	Honeysuckle family
<i>Lonicera etrusca</i>	Etruscan honeysuckle
<i>Viburnum tinus</i>	laurustinus
Caryophyllaceae	Pink family
<i>Paronychia argentea</i>	
<i>Silene colorata</i>	Mediterranean catchfly
<i>Silene latifolia</i>	
<i>Silene vulgaris</i>	bladder campion
<i>Spergularia marina</i>	lesser sand spurrey
<i>Spergularia media</i>	greater sea-spurrey
Chenopodiaceae	
<i>Beta vulgaris</i> ssp. <i>maritima</i>	sea beet
<i>Halimus halimus</i>	shrubby orache
Cistaceae	Rockrose family
<i>Cistus albidus</i>	grey-leaved cistus
<i>Cistus crispus</i>	
<i>Cistus ladanifer</i>	gum cistus
<i>Cistus ladanifer</i> ssp. <i>sulcatus</i>	
<i>Cistus monspeliensis</i>	narrow-leaved cistus
<i>Cistus salvifolius</i>	sage-leaved cistus
<i>Fumana thymifolia</i>	
<i>Tuberaria guttata</i>	spotted rockrose
Convolvulaceae	
<i>Convolvulus althaeoides</i>	mallow-leaved bindweed
Crassulaceae	
<i>Sedum sediforme</i>	
<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	
<i>Bryony cretica</i>	white bryony
<i>Ecballium elaterium</i>	squirting cucumber
Dipsacaceae	
<i>Scabiosa crenata</i>	
Ericaceae	Heath family
<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	strawberry tree
<i>Erica umbellata</i>	
Euphorbiaceae	Spurge family

<i>Euphorbia helioscopia</i>		sun spurge
<i>Mercurialis annua</i>		annual mercury
<i>Ricinus communis</i>		castor oil plant
Fabiaceae	Pea family	
<i>Acacia retinodes</i>		
<i>Anthyllis tetraphylla</i>		bladder vetch
<i>Anthyllis vulnararia</i> ssp <i>praepropera</i>		Mediterranean kidney vetch
<i>Astragalus boeticus</i>		
<i>Astragalus lusitanicus</i>		
<i>Astragalus echinatus</i>		
<i>Astragalus tragacantha</i> ssp <i>vincentinus</i>		
<i>Biserrula pelecinus</i>		bisserula
<i>Ceratonia siliqua</i>		carob
<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i>		Judas tree
<i>Coronilla juncea</i>		rush-like scorpion vetch
<i>Coronilla valentina</i> ssp. <i>glauca</i>		
<i>Lathyrus clymenum</i>		crimson pea
<i>Lathyrus cicera</i>		red vetchling
<i>Lathyrus ochrus</i>		winged vetchling
<i>Lotus creticus</i>		southern birdsfoot trefoil
<i>Lupinus angustifolius</i>		narrow-leaved lupin
<i>Lupinus luteus</i>		yellow lupin
<i>Lupinus micranthus</i>		hairy lupin
<i>Lygos (Retama) monosperma</i>		
<i>Medicago minima</i>		bur medick
<i>Medicago polymorpha</i>		toothed medick
<i>Melilotus indicus</i>		small melilot
<i>Onobrychis humilis</i>		
<i>Ononis natrix</i>		large yellow restharrow
<i>Psoralea bituminosa</i>		pitch trefoil
<i>Scorpiurus muricatus</i>		
<i>Spartium junceum</i>		Spanish broom
<i>Stauracanthus genistoides</i>		
<i>Trifolium angustifolium</i>		narrow-leaved clover
<i>Trifolium resupinatum</i>		reversed clover
<i>Trifolium stellatum</i>		star clover
<i>Vicia villosa</i>		fodder vetch
Fagaceae	Oak family	
<i>Quercus ilex</i>		holm oak
<i>Quercus coccifera</i>		prickly/Kermes/holly oak
<i>Quercus suber</i>		cork oak
Frankeniaceae	Sea Heath family	
<i>Frankenia laevis</i>		sea heath
Gentianaceae	Gentian family	
<i>Centaurium erythraea</i> ssp <i>grandiflora</i>		common centaury
Geraniaceae	Geranium family	
<i>Erodium aethiopicum</i>		
<i>Erodium ciconium</i>		
<i>Erodium malacoides</i>		soft or mallow-leaved stork's-bill
<i>Erodium moschatum</i>		musk storksbill
<i>Geranium dissectum</i>		cut-leaved cranesbill
<i>Geranium molle</i>		dovesfoot cranesbill
<i>Geranium purpureum</i>		little robin
<i>Geranium rotundifolium</i>		round-leaved cranesbill
Lamiaceae	Mint family	
<i>Lavandula stoechas</i>		French lavender
<i>Phlomis purpurea</i>		
<i>Prasium majus</i>		Spanish hedge nettle
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>		rosemary
<i>Salvia verbenaca</i>		wild clary

<i>Stachys germanica</i>	downy woundwort
<i>Thymus camphoratus</i>	
<i>Thymus (Coridothymus) capitatus</i>	Mediterranean thyme
Linaceae	Flax family
<i>Linum bienne</i>	pale flax
Malvaceae	Mallow family
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	common mallow
Meliaceae	Persian Lilac family
<i>Melia azedarach</i>	Persian bead tree
Moraceae	Mulberry family
<i>Ficus carica</i>	fig
Myoporaceae	Myoporium family
<i>Myoporium tenuifolium</i>	
Myrtaceae	Myrtle family
<i>Eucalyptus globulus</i>	blue gum
Oleaceae	Olive family
<i>Jasminum fruticans</i>	wild jasmine
<i>Olea europaea</i>	olive
Orobanchaceae	Broomrape family
<i>Cistanche phelypaea</i>	
<i>Orobanche ramosa</i>	
Oxalidaceae	Sorrel family
<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i>	Bermuda buttercup
Paeoniaceae	Peony family
<i>Paeonia broteroi</i>	peony
Papaveraceae	Poppy family
<i>Fumaria capreolata</i>	ramping fumitory
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	common poppy
<i>Papaver somniferum</i>	opium poppy
Plantaginaceae	Plantain family
<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	buck's horn plantain
Platanaceae	Plane tree family
<i>Platanus orientalis</i>	oriental plane
Plumbaginaceae	Thrift family
<i>Armeria pungens</i>	
<i>Limoniastrum monopetalum</i>	limoniastrum
Polygonaceae	Dock family
<i>Emex spinosa</i>	emex
<i>Rumex bucephalophorus</i>	horned dock
Primulaceae	Primula family
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	scarlet pimpernel
<i>Anagallis monelli</i>	shrubby pimpernel
Ranunculaceae	Buttercup family
<i>Anemone palmata</i>	yellow anemone
<i>Ranunculus graminifolius</i>	grass-leaved buttercup
<i>Ranunculus sp</i>	water crowfoot
Resedaceae	Mignonette family
<i>Reseda luteola</i>	dyer's rocket
Rosaceae	Rose family
<i>Prunus dulcis</i>	almond
<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>	fodder burnet
Rubiaceae	Bedstraw family
<i>Galium aparine</i>	goosegrass
<i>Rubia peregrina</i>	wild madder
<i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	field madder
<i>Valantia hispida</i>	
Rutaceae	Rue family
<i>Ruta chalepensis</i>	fringed rue
Scrophulariaceae	Figwort family
<i>Antirrhinum majus ssp cirrhigerum</i>	snapdragon

<i>Bellardia trixago</i>	bellardia
<i>Linaria algarviana</i>	
<i>Linaria ficalhoana</i>	
<i>Linaria lamarckii</i>	
<i>Misopates orontium</i>	lesser snapdragon or weasel's snout
<i>Scrophularia sambucifolia</i>	
Solanaceae	Potato family
<i>Lycium barbarum</i>	Duke of Argyll's teapant
Tamaricaceae	Tamarix
<i>Tamarix africana</i>	tamarix
Thymelaeaceae	Daphne family
<i>Daphne gnidium</i>	
Urticaceae	Nettle family
<i>Parietaria judaica</i>	pellitory of the wall
<i>Urtica membranacea</i>	membranous nettle
Valerianaceae	Valerian family
<i>Centranthus calcitrapae</i>	pink valerian
<i>Fedia cornucopiae</i>	fedia
Verbenaceae	Verbena family
<i>Lantana camara</i>	lantana
Violacea	Violet family
<i>Viola aborescens</i>	shrubby violet

MONOCOTYLEDONS

Agavaceae	Agave family
<i>Agave americana</i>	American agave
Amaryllidaceae	Daffodil family
<i>Leucojum trichophyllum</i>	three-leaved snowflake
<i>Narcissus bulbocodium</i>	hooped petticoat daffodil
<i>N. bulbocodium</i> var <i>obesus</i>	
<i>Narcissus papyraceus</i> ssp. <i>panizzianus</i>	paperwhite
<i>Narcissus gaditanus</i>	
<i>Pancratium maritimum</i>	sea daffodil (leaves)
Dioscoreaceae	Yam family
<i>Tamis communis</i>	black bryony
Iridaceae	Iris family
<i>Gladiolus italicus</i>	cornflag
<i>Gynandriris sisyrnchium</i>	barbary nut
<i>Iris albicans</i>	
<i>Romulea bulbocodium</i>	sand crocus
Liliaceae	Lily family
<i>Allium ampeloprasum</i>	wild leek
<i>Allium subvillosum</i>	
<i>Asparagus albus</i>	
<i>Asphodelus fistulosus</i>	
<i>Asphodelus ramosus.</i>	
<i>Bellevalia hackelii</i>	bellevalia
<i>Dipcadi serotinum</i>	dipcapi, brown bells
<i>Fritillaria lusitanica</i>	
<i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i>	
<i>Muscari comosum</i>	tassel hyacinth
<i>Ornithogalum umbellatum</i>	star of Bethlehem
<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i>	butcher's broom
<i>Scilla vincentina</i> (=italica?)	
<i>Scilla odorata</i>	
<i>Scilla peruviana</i>	
<i>Smilax asPera</i>	rough bindweed, common smilax or sarsaparilla
<i>Tulipa sylvestris</i> ssp. <i>australis</i>	
<i>Urginea maritima</i> (=Drimia maritima)	sea squill

Orchidaceae*Anacamptis pyramidalis**Cephalanthera longifolia**Epipactus helleborine**Gennaria diphylla**Neotinea maculata**Orchis* (formerly *Aceras*) *anthropophorum**Ophrys bombyliflora**Ophrys dyris**Ophrys speculum* (*O. ciliata*)*Ophrys tenthredinifera**Ophrys speculum* ssp *lusitanicus* (*O. vernixia*)*Ophrys scolopax**Ophrys fusca**Ophrys lutea**Orchis (mascula) olbiensis**Orchis mascula**Orchis morio**Orchis italica**Serapias lingua***Poaceae Grass family***Arundo donax**Briza maxima**Briza minor***Palmae Palm family***Chamaerops humilis***Orchid family**

pyramidal orchid

sword-leaved helleborine

broad-leaved helleborine

gennaria or two-leaved scrub orchid

dense-flowered orchid

man orchid

bumble bee orchid

mirror orchid

sawfly orchid

woodcock orchid

sombre bee orchid

yellow bee orchid

early purple orchid

green-winged orchid

naked man orchid

tongue orchid

giant reed

quaking grass

small quaking grass

dwarf fan palm