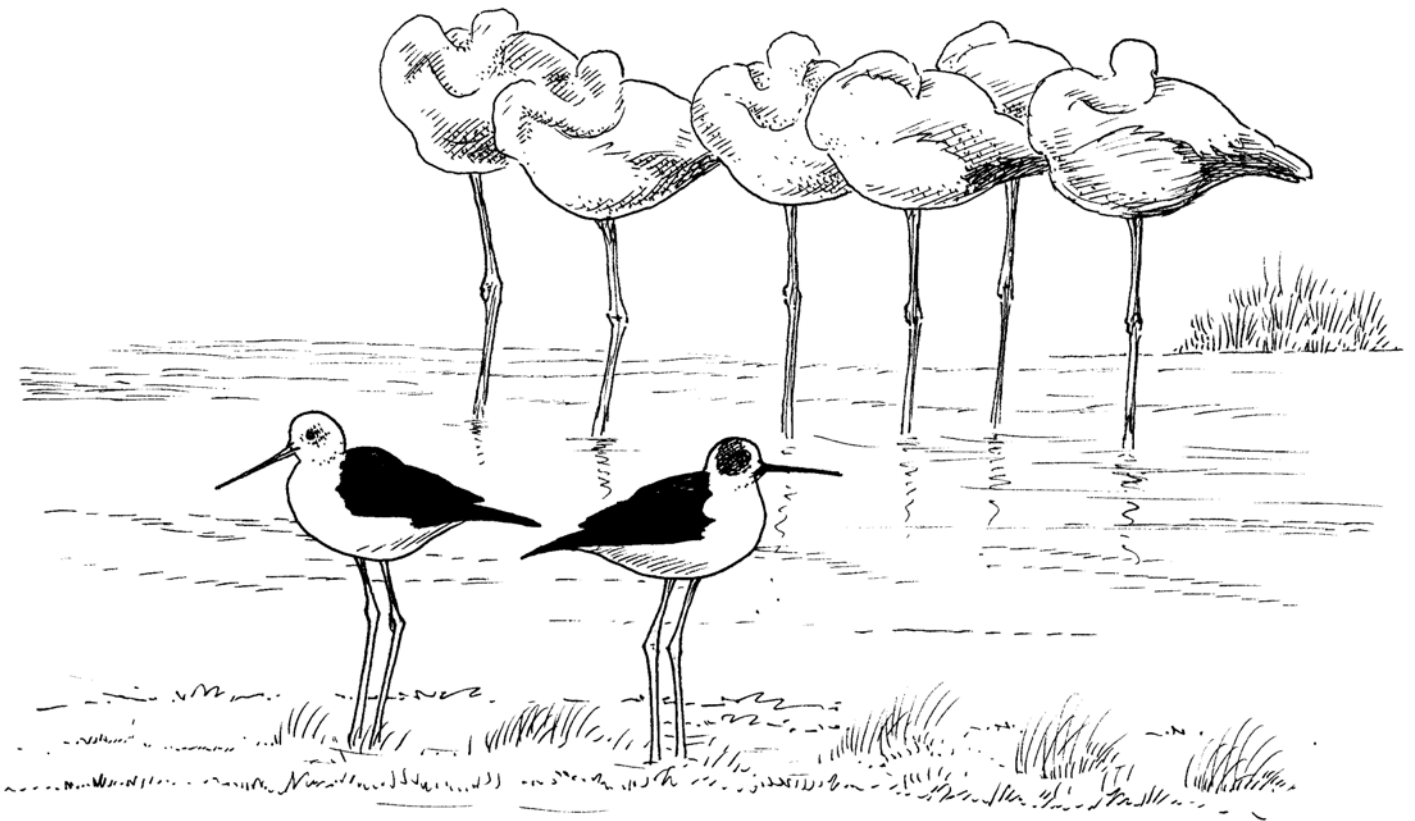


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36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX
Telephone: 01603 300552 evenings & weekends
www.honeyguide.co.uk E-mail: honeyguide@tesco.net



The Camargue
8 – 15 May 2007

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Participants

Jean Connor
Dorothy Iveson

Pam Orr

Rosemary MacDonald
John Rumpus

Jim Waller

Leader

Russell Leavett

Report compiled by Russell Leavett

Illustrations by Rob Hume, except black-winged stilt flock by Gary Wright. Cover: flamingos and black-winged stilts.

Our base for the holiday: Hôtel des Granges, run by Marie-Claire Dumas www.hotel-des-granges.com

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 towards the lesser kestrel conservation project was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, leading to a total of €270 (£186). This was added to contributions through holidays in the Dordogne and French Pyrenees making a total this year of £1228 (€1780) sent to La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, the French Bird Protection League).

This brings the total given to LPO to £10,064 (€14,560) since 1991. The total conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 was at £47,863 (roughly €69,400) at the end of June 2007.

The Camargue 8 – 15 May 2007

Itinerary

Tuesday 8 May: Late morning Ryanair flight from Luton to Nîmes, transfer to Hotel Des Granges, Arles. Late afternoon walk close to hotel.

Wednesday 9 May: Central Camargue – various stops to Étang de Vaccares via Gageron and Villeneuve south to Pont Noir. Lunch at Domaine de Mejanès then south to Carrelet, returning to Arles via the observation point at Pont du Rousty and Mas d'Agon.

Thursday 10 May: Morning at Les Baux, lunch among car park pines at start of afternoon walk to the summit of La Caume.

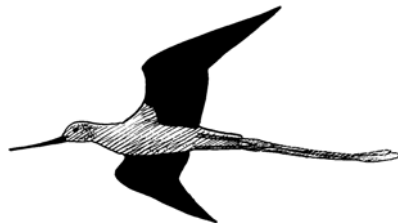
Friday 11 May: Western Camargue – various stops between Gimeaux and Saliers then south to Parc Ornithologique, where lunch taken and to St Maries de la Mer. Return via Étang dit l'Impérial and Étang de Malagroy at Cacharel. Final stop at Pont du Rousty by Étang de Vaccares.

Saturday 12 May: All day at Pont du Gard, lunch by the River Gardon, then an early dinner followed by evening visit to Mt Valence, near Fontvieille

Sunday 13 May: Eastern Camargue – south to Plage d'Arles via Le Sambuc and Salin de Giraud. Various stops at Grau de Piemanson and overlooking salines. Lunch at Le Sambuc then visit to nearby Marais Verdiers, returning via marshes of Tour du Vallat and Fielouse.

Monday 14 May: La Crau at disused airfield. Lunch taken near Étang Entressen, short visit to Entressen rubbish dump followed by drive across the stony wastes of La Crau at Peau de Meau. An early dinner followed by an evening visit to hills south of Les Baux.

Tuesday 15 May: Morning in Arles, lunch at Nîmes airport and mid-afternoon flight to Luton.



Tuesday May 8th

Ryanair's flight to Nîmes was right on time and after a relatively quick sorting out of the paperwork for the minibus we were soon on our way in warm sunshine to Arles. Forty minutes later saw us being directed to our rooms at the Hotel Des Granges by Marie-Claire Dumas, the new owner.

After freshening up and some tea we had a couple of hours to spare before dinner so we set off down the track close to the hotel to see what we could find. We were soon listening to nightingales and Cetti's warblers, both so much a feature of this area.

Two largish raptors passing over quite high proved to be migrating honey buzzards – what a good start to the week – we don't often see this species. Shortly afterwards a common buzzard showed itself – a useful comparison, along with the odd black kite.

As we approached some flooded rice fields we saw our first little egrets and a heron and later a few cattle egrets. As always mallards were common in the flooded areas and some saw a single shoveler, which proved to be the only one of the trip! Stripeless tree frogs were found among the vegetation in one wet ditch and the canal at the end of our walk held a Coypu. John spotted a viperine snake sunning itself on stonework by the bridge over the canal and a green lizard showed itself well on the trackside.

Both small and dappled white butterflies were seen along with a red admiral and a clouded yellow, and a passenger moth was found on the wall at the hotel. Among the flowers, milk thistle and two species of birthwort were of interest. Quite a productive couple of hours.

We finished the day with a most excellent dinner and we subsequently found all our evening meals to be both imaginative and local to the region, wonderful.

Wednesday May 9th

As we headed south towards the Camargue a sparrowhawk passed over the road in front of us, not a bird we were to see a great deal of. Once over the Rhône at Arles and into the Camargue proper our first stop was overlooking some rice fields, which held a selection of gulls including black-headed, yellow-legged, herring and Mediterranean gulls. The calls of the last are distinctive and far-carrying and so much a feature of the area that by the end of the day everybody had got to grips with them!

Among the gulls a small group of gull-billed terns was hunting noisily over the flooded fields and from time to time fan-tailed warblers rose from ditch edges calling away. High-flying bee-eaters were heard passing over and a cuckoo called nearby. A very distant roller was spotted on some telegraph wires but was hard to make out.

Our second stop got off to a cracking start with a group of around 15 honey buzzards passing right overhead – everyone saw them well with time to take in their markings and jizz. Not long afterwards a short-toed eagle performed for us, hanging on the air over a dried out area of marshland. Once again bee-eaters were heard and this time 15-20 of them flew over low calling so we could see them. Open areas by the roadside produced a few crested larks, two northern wheatears and a blue-headed yellow wagtail. A lone purple heron flew across a reedy area giving all good views.

Next stop was by the shore of the Étang de Vaccares at Pont Noir. Here we found several great crested grebes and a delightful group of a dozen or so black-necked grebes. Most were in summer plumage, the last of the many that had wintered here.

There was great commotion when a group of five red-crested pochards flew in, four males in pursuit of a female! They landed right in front of us and the males' heads simply glowed in the sunshine. More distant were many greater flamingos and in the wet marshes behind us the distinctive white horses of the area – just the things we were here to see. A marshy area alongside the Étang held four splendid spotted redshanks in full summer plumage and shelduck and cormorant were added to our list.

By now it was time to move on to our lunch spot and as we made our way west an immature male Montagu's harrier was located by the roadside. Roadside fences in places held perching bee-eaters and some tree sparrows, a species that is normally fairly common here but seemingly less so this year? The picnic area at Mejanès gave us some shelter in what had become a very warm day and, as in past visits, bats (species unknown) emerged from under the roof tiles from time to time.



After lunch we journeyed south down the west edge of the Étang de Vaccares as far as Carrelet, this providing good views over some muddy areas with avocets, black-winged stilts and Kentish plovers on display along with ringed plovers, some little terns and lots and lots of flamingos. A few more tree sparrows were seen and common terns were found perching on posts out in the water. At our turn round point a male whinchat was found on a fence and a few more crested larks were disturbed.

We next made a brief stop at the observation post at Pont du Rousty. From this elevated viewpoint we were able to see several marsh harriers, yet more stilts, have excellent views of a coypu and marvel at the enormous fish in the ditch below us, probably carp.

Our final stop of the day was at Mas d'Agon. This area normally produces lots of egrets and herons but today proved to be rather poor, probably because it was much drier than usual. However wetter areas held several wood sandpipers, three little stints and a group of a dozen or ringed plovers and a tantalisingly brief view of a distant collared pratincole in flight. A pair

of red-crested pochards pleased us before we moved on to overlook a dried out marshy area to the north of the main marsh. Careful searching here revealed a delightful group of a dozen collared pratincoles, some displaying, others flying round and calling. These are one of the real treats of the Camargue as far as I'm concerned. This is a traditional breeding area but in some years they simply haven't been there: this year we were lucky. A few lapwings were clearly breeding here too but the pratincoles stole the day and ended what had been an enjoyable introduction to the area.

Thursday May 10th

A few of the group ventured out before breakfast with Jean and Dorothy finding a male red-backed shrike close to the hotel whereas I contented myself with nice views of a pair of rollers on wires near the canal.

Today we were joined by John Walmsley, an old friend and ex colleague from my Camargue times, with the limestone hills of Les Baux and La Caume as our venue, in complete contrast to the flat open areas of the Camargue yesterday.

The short drive to Les Baux took us through vineyards, the nice little town of Fontvieille and some interesting hill country to our parking place below the town. We started the day by walking down the road overlooking village gardens where blackcaps were singing from many places and great patches of red and white valerian grew from walls and banks. Overhead a few alpine swifts were found among the many common swifts and a few crag martins were spotted. Search as we might, we could not find a blue rock thrush on the cliffs around us. With an increasing wind getting up we decided to drop down to the lower road in the hope of finding some shelter. Here we heard serins and saw both scarce and common swallowtail butterflies. A formal garden area turned up a black redstart and both blue and great tits were seen here. A fine male cirl bunting was located by John Rumpus.

The opportunity was taken for a visit to the interesting old town of Les Baux. Pam was especially keen to see it as she was last there in the 1950s and had a set of photographs with her to compare with present day Les Baux – she was pleasantly surprised how little it had changed!

Lunch was taken among pines around the car park at our starting place for the afternoon walk to the summit of La Caume. By early afternoon it was very hot with a strongish wind blowing so we slapped on sunscreen and armed ourselves with water for the hour and a half walk up hill. Chaffinches and the odd great tit were among the lower pines but in the heat of the day most birds were keeping their heads down. However nice plants included grey-leaved and sage-leaved cistus, both spotted and hoary rockrose and great clumps of aphyllanthes, always a delight to see here. Southern white admiral butterflies showed well, Moroccan orange-tip and large tortoiseshell pleased us and marbled whites were common.

It has to be said that finding birds among the pines was difficult and even when we were out in the more open areas a struggle. However there were a few alpine swifts high overhead and four ravens appeared at one point. With increasing heat some of the group decided to give walking right to the summit a miss but those of us that did were treated to fine views across the Rhône delta, the open areas of La Crau and the Chaîne des Alpilles running east.

With time pushing on we headed down again adding small copper to our butterfly list. Perhaps not the most productive day for birds but excellent for the botanists and those interested in butterflies

Friday May 11th

Several of us were out early, having splendid views of the rollers and a couple of black kites. Several cream-spot tiger moths were found on the hotel walls near the lights – very handsome insects.

Today we headed towards the western sector of the Camargue, firstly taking the road from Gimeaux towards Saliers. A stop by an area of open marsh produced fine views of a squacco heron and a distant bittern boomed briefly, later to be seen flying in the distance. A great reed warbler sung from the reedy margins of the marsh and was seen by some of the group.

Our next spot turned up good views of a marsh harrier and a night heron flew by close to us. Bee-eaters seemed to be everywhere with groups flying over, others perched on trees and fences or hawking for insects high above us. Two nightingales sung in full view – not something they do a lot of!

Further along the road we found a very nice colony of black-winged stilts close to the road and yet another squacco heron. A great white egret was among the more familiar little and cattle egrets, the first we had seen. A mixed group of feeding 'marsh' terns consisted of mainly whiskered terns (about 30) but also held two black terns.

A final stop along this road at a dried out marshy area with grazing cattle proved to be well worthwhile with at least ten collared pratincoles on display, a number of blue-headed wagtails and two white storks. Add to this 'dozens' of bee-eaters – no wonder we didn't want to leave.

With lunchtime rapidly approaching we headed south to the Parc Ornithologique, seeing another white stork and many Mediterranean gulls en route. Although the visitor centre was closed today we found a good place to overlook the wet areas for lunch. Avocets were breeding on an island and many flamingos were on display and a night heron flew over. We had been aware of calling hoopoes right from the moment we arrived and eventually one appeared in full view, giving us a prolonged sighting. As if that wasn't enough a fine male woodchat shrike perched out for us. Marsh harriers and black kites were frequent and noisy Iberian pond frogs were in the ditches. A nice place for lunch.



After lunch we headed south to St Maries de la Mer where most of the group had a brief walk around town, some doing a spot of shopping, Jim looking for prunes especially!

We next headed north up the west side of the Étang dit l'Impérial, where we were able to overlook some nice muddy areas and although not terribly rich for waders we found around 30 dunlins, several oystercatchers and some Kentish plovers. Further on we found more avocets, four little stints and a lone curlew sandpiper. We had left the main road at Cacherel, working our way on a rough track around part of the Étang de Malagroy. Roadside bushes held a few small birds including a female redstart, a willow warbler and best of all two handsome great spotted cuckoos. These showed themselves well so everyone was well pleased by them – not a bird we see on every visit. Just before we turned round to head back to the main road a male red-backed shrike sat out on top of a roadside bush. John had brief views of two bearded tits.

Our final stop for the day was at the Pont du Rousty observation platform. Here we had wonderful views of a purple heron that was very agitated by a fox that was wandering around in the marsh. And all around us black-winged stilts, hunting marsh harriers and flamingos – great stuff!

Saturday May 12th

Once again the early risers were treated to rollers and nightingale and Cetti's warbler song, not a bad way to start the day. Some saw a purple heron flying over.

Another day for the hills today, this time at the amazing Roman aqueduct at Pont du Gard. Our route took us through the town of Tarascon, across the Rhone and through Beaucaire, both with fine chateaux. A jay was glimpsed briefly on the way plus a few black kites and a common buzzard.

Soon after parking the vehicle golden orioles were heard calling from poplars across the river so we wandered over, sat down and saw soon them very well indeed. Both males and a female were seen including perching in full view on some dead branches. Longish flight views were had too – Pont du Gard has always proved to be a reliable site for this species.

The river shingles were also of interest with probably three pairs of little ringed plovers showing signs of breeding there, we saw much display and all the birds were very noisy. A single grey wagtail flew off on our approach but several white wagtails stayed put, entertaining us for a while.

We walked to the Pont but found it almost devoid of birds, true there were a few alpine swifts overhead but no crag martins and few sparrows in the stonework, only starlings. We carefully searched for rock sparrows but with no luck. Rosemary found a group of broomrapes growing on a bank which we decided must be slender broomrape as this species is parasitic on legumes, some of which (leaves only) were growing nearby - a nice find. We did see several serins well during the course of the morning and had good views of black redstarts.

A slightly earlier than usual lunch was taken by the river – during the course of this a kingfisher flew briefly by and a sparrowhawk passed overhead. Other raptors during the day included several black kites and two short-toed eagles. Several bee-eaters were clearly nesting in the bank of the river on the other side.

It was very hot after lunch but a few of us returned to the Pont in search of rock sparrows and eventually at least John and myself saw one but it was hard work.

New butterflies for the trip included Cleopatra, meadow brown, brown argus and Bath white.

With an early dinner planned we set off back to the hotel mid-afternoon, to allow people to relax before our evening visit to Mt Valence. A quicker than usual dinner saw us winding our way towards the hills soon after 8 p.m., our quarry the elusive eagle owl.

Much to the amusement of the locals we spent an hour and a half peering at crags above us in the hope that an owl would appear – for most of us it didn't but Jim wandered off, coming back to report what sounded like an eagle owl had passed over his head and disappeared over the tree tops. The rest of us had to make do with a blue rock thrush, a few crag martins and at dusk a churring nightjar.

Sunday May 13th

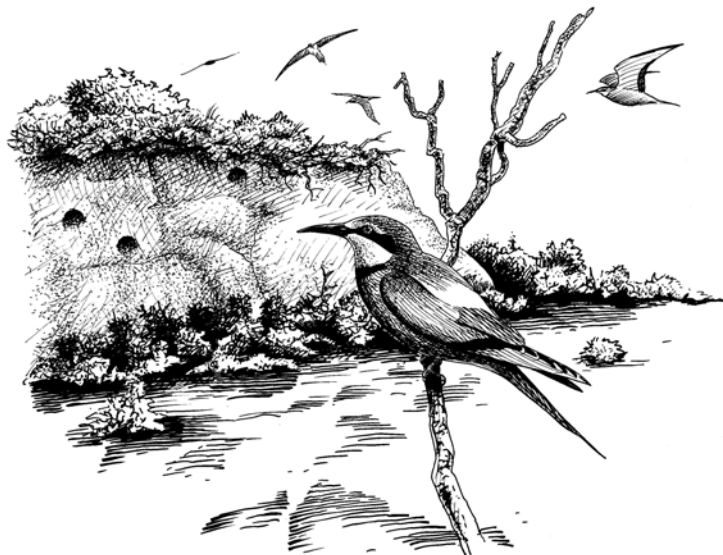
We awoke to find very windy conditions, not ideal for our planned visit to the eastern sector of the Camargue and the salines (salt-pans) to the south.

We picked up John Walmsley at Le Sambuc on our way to the salines. John has been interested in the salines for many years so was able to tell us much about how they are worked, uses made of the industrial salt produced and their importance to wildlife. We also learnt much about John's favourite bird of the salines, the shelduck!

Our first stops in the coastal pans south of Salin de Giraud (Salt Lake City as John calls it) produced plenty (probably thousands) of flamingos, a few Kentish plovers, several common and little terns and some shelducks. Generally though the pans seemed devoid of waders with only a few oystercatchers and some distant avocets. The gale force SE winds could not be helping, doubtless forcing waders to seek shelter on the west side of the area which was inaccessible to us.

Next we moved to the sea at Plage d'Arles, here we found a steady passage of east Mediterranean (commonly known as Yelkouan) shearwaters passing east quite close in. Thanks to the shelter of a building we were able to get reasonable views of these and some Sandwich terns that were also passing offshore. Some of us saw a single adult gannet as well.

After being blown to bits here the decision was made to retreat to a beach café, use their loos etc. By now our mouths were full of sand so this was very welcome and we stayed longer than we might normally have done! With continuing strong winds John suggested that we have lunch at his house in Le Sambuc – this seemed a good option so we took him up on his kind offer.



After lunch, with it seemed slightly less strong winds, we set off for the nearby Marais Verdier. This is a community owned marsh developed from defunct fish pools complete with a bird hide. A longish walk overlooking the marsh and wet areas produced ten curlews and a couple of dabchicks, not a species we had seen much of. Great crested grebes were out on the water in one area along with mallards and some little egrets.

Continuing around the circular walk brought us to an area of very wet marsh where we flushed five great white egrets, saw a white stork and several gull-billed terns. A great reed warbler was seen briefly by some; this species hardly seemed to have arrived this spring, so far.

Next we moved on to the marshes of Tour du Vallat. At the entrance to the Mas (farm) a white stork's nest complete with an adult and at least one juvenile was pointed out by John W. We continued along to the wooden platform overlooking the marshes. From here, despite the strong winds, we managed to see a dozen or so black terns plus a fair selection of wetland birds including a great white egret and a flying purple heron.

Our final stop for the day was at the marshes of Fielouse. These proved to be very productive with a single spoonbill, several black-tailed godwits and greenshank, two gadwalls and a good mix of avocets and stilts. A few more black terns were seen and Mediterranean gulls called loudly – a fitting way to end our last day in the Camargue proper.

Our route back took us close to the shore of the Étang de Vaccares where nine black-necked grebes were right inshore affording fabulous views – a great end to the day.

Monday May 14th

Heavy overnight rain and strong winds had subsided to drizzle by breakfast but the forecast for the day didn't look promising. After a more leisurely breakfast than usual we walked down the track close to the hotel, primarily to seek out rollers for those who hadn't managed them on our pre-breakfast walks. A couple of black kites were seen, despite the weather and as always Cetti's and nightingales were heard but the walk soon found us sheltering under bushes against the heavy rain. And we failed to find the rollers.

However there were signs of brightness in the sky so we drove east for our first stop on La Crau, namely a disused grassy airfield. In the past this had proved to be a reliable site for little bustards and we were not to be disappointed today. Eventually we located 6-8 birds; all were seen in flight as the grass was higher this year than I've seen it in the past. As birds dropped into the grass they simply disappeared – we could often hear their distinctive rasping calls but never managed to see any on the ground. Nevertheless all had good views of both sexes in flight. The botanists had a field day with lots of nice plants to look at, especially a range of thistles and herbs.

Lunchtime was fast approaching so we moved on to the Étang Entressen but by the time we got there it was wet and windy so instead of sitting on the lake shore we took lunch in the vehicle.

After lunch the delights of the Entressen rubbish dump awaited us – a very brief visit was all we could bear thanks to the foul smell but we did see masses of yellow-legged herring gulls and up to 20 black kites scavenging in the area. The 'active' part of the dump is now too far from the road to see much of the birds there unfortunately – traditionally both Egyptian vulture and Bonelli's eagle have scavenged here.

Our next stops were on the stony wastes of La Crau at Peau de Meau. At the very start of the drive we had most excellent views of two rollers which pleased those who had missed out on them earlier and it wasn't long before we saw a hoopoe really well. Two stonechats were spotted on top of some bushes nearby - only the second time we had seen the species and two turtle doves were found, equally scarce.

Bumping slowly along a rough track, which was in fact was the old bed of the Gardon River, took its time but it wasn't long before a stone-curlew turned up and, later, another. As we got closer to a group of hunting kestrels it became clear that these were lesser kestrels, one of the special birds of the area – I suppose we saw in the region of twenty birds in all scattered across the area. The conservation

contribution from this holiday goes to the Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO) to assist in the protection of this species in particular. Artificial nest sites have been established on goat sheds and an education programme developed to enlighten the graziers on the importance of La Crau for this species and other wildlife.

Soon afterwards an adult Bonelli's eagle was spotted flying low over the area and away to the north. Easier to see was the fine tawny pipit right by the track, this is not a species we see much of on these trips so a nice find – a very dapper little bird.

At last we reached the main road back to Arles but what is that new barrier doing across the track, does this mean that we have to turn round and go all the way back again? We needn't have worried, it was liftable: it was simply there to stop cars driving straight out on to the busy highway! And so, back to the hotel.

After an early dinner we set off for a short evening visit to an area of hills just south of Les Baux that John Walmsley had told us about, once again in the hope that we might find an eagle owl but despite much searching we failed once again. Just not our year for this species. We had to content ourselves with a couple of crag martins.



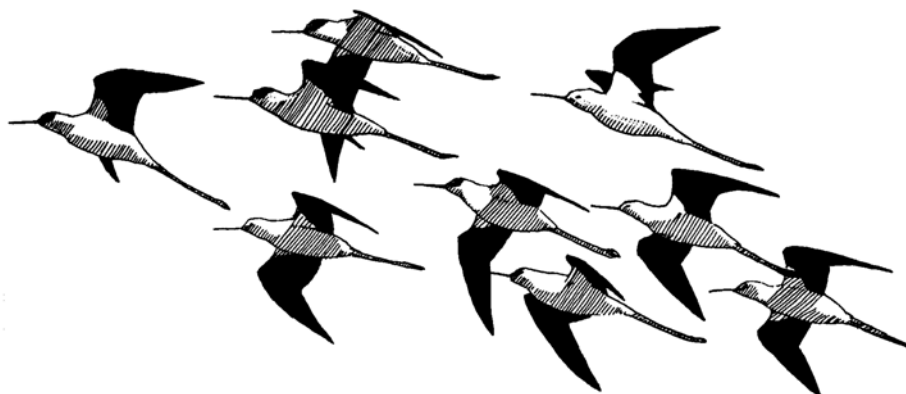
Tuesday May 15th

All too soon our trip to the Camargue had come to an end so it just remained for us to thank Marie-Claire for looking after us so well, to square up our bills and pack the vehicle. With a few hours to spare before our afternoon flight, a couple of hours were spent in Arles, giving everyone the chance to have a look around this very attractive town on the banks of the Rhône. We arrived back at Luton half an hour early, which is always nice way to end a trip.

Finally, thank you all for your good company and I hope you enjoyed the holiday.

Russell

P.S. For those who would like a very attractive reminder of the Camargue can I recommend '*La Camargue*' by Bruce Pearson, a collection of delightful water colours and sketches that for me captures the real atmosphere of the place. It is published (in French but you buy it for the pictures!) by Gallimard, Conservatoire Du Littoral, 1997. ISBN 2-07-050973-7



Systematic Lists

Birds - The combined list for all members of the group:

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| East Mediterranean Shearwater | Up to 30 offshore at Plage d'Arles during south-easterly gales. |
| Gannet | A single bird offshore at Plage d'Arles. |
| Little Grebe | Only seen at Marais Verdier, Le Sambuc, where two birds. Heard elsewhere. |
| Black-necked Grebe | A group of 12 on the Étang de Vaccares at Pont Noir on May 9 th and 9 there on May 13 th . |
| Great Crested Grebe | Small numbers on the Étang de Vaccares and at Marais Verdier, Le Sambuc only. |
| Cormorant | Up to five, on larger water bodies only. |
| Bittern | Much scarcer than on previous visits with only a single sighting near Gimeaux and a distant 'boomer' heard. |
| Night Heron | Singles at two sites only. Again much scarcer than on recent visits. |
| Squacco Heron | Two seen well in marshes between Gimeaux and Saliers. Again less common than in previous years. |
| Cattle Egret | Common where animals occurred but also in some rice fields and even on La Crau. |
| Little Egret | Seen on every day – good numbers in rice fields and marshes. |
| Great White Egret | Singles near Gimeaux and at Fielouse plus up to five at Marais Verdier, Le Sambuc. A recent colonist in the Camargue, this species now breeds. |
| Grey Heron | Common in many marshes, some rice fields and by the coast, maximum in excess of ten in any one day. |
| Purple Heron | This handsome heron was recorded in small numbers from several marshes, especially Mas d'Agon and Cacharel. |
| White Stork | An occupied nest was seen at Tour du Vallat and 1-2 birds at the Parc Ornithologique and elsewhere. |
| Spoonbill | A single bird at Fielouse was the only sighting. |
| Greater Flamingo | Abundant as always in all coastal localities, for many THE bird of the Camargue. |
| Mute Swan | Scattered in small numbers, never common. |
| Shelduck | A characteristic bird of the saline pans and in other coastal localities. It is extraordinary to think that these birds move all the way to the German Bight to join their northern cousins on their moulting grounds. |
| Gadwall | Two in marshes at Fielouse were the only sightings. |
| Mallard | The abundant duck of marshes, rice fields and the coastal lagoons. |

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Shoveler | A single in ricefields near the hotel at Arles was the only sighting. |
| Red-crested Pochard | Five seen well on the Étang de Vaccares and two at Mas d'Agon |
| Honey Buzzard | Two migrating birds were seen high above our heads near to the hotel at Arles on May 8 th and an excellent group of 15 between Gimeaux and Saliers on 9 th . |
| Black Kite | The common raptor of drier areas, in particular the farmland and in the hills. Numerous around the rubbish tip at Entressen! |
| Short-toed Eagle | A single bird overhead near Gimeaux and two at Pont du Gard. |
| Marsh Harrier | The common raptor of the marshes and rice fields. |
| Montagu's Harrier | A single immature male near Gimeaux. |
| Sparrowhawk | Singles on three days only. |
| Common Buzzard | Occasional in farmland and in the hills, never more than two or three birds in a single day. |
| Bonelli's Eagle | A single adult bird was viewed briefly on La Crau. |
| Lesser Kestrel | Possibly as many as twenty birds were seen on La Crau where artificial nest sites have been set up on disused goat sheds by LPO, a project supported by Honeyguide. |
| Common Kestrel | Daily, recorded from most localities. |
| Pheasant | Scarce, occasionally heard only. |
| Moorhen | Probably present in all marshes but never thought common. |
| Coot | Very common on all larger water bodies, hundreds recorded some days. |
| Little Bustard | Reasonable views obtained of up to 8 birds on the old airfield at La Crau. |
| Oystercatcher | A few in saline lagoons in the western sector of the Camargue. |
| Black-winged Stilt | Often numerous in shallow wet marshes or rice fields throughout the Camargue. Upwards of up to 60 birds on the best days. |
| Avocet | Small numbers in saline lagoons in both the eastern and western sectors of the Camargue and some freshwater marshes. |
| Stone-curlew | Only recorded from La Crau where two birds. |
| Collared Pratincole | Up to 12 birds recorded from dried out marshes to the north of Mas d'Agon and around 10 between Gimeaux and Saliers. |
| Little Ringed Plover | Up to six birds on river shingles at Pont du Gard |
| Ringed Plover | Up to 35 in coastal lagoons in the western sector of the Camargue, less common in eastern parts. |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Kentish Plover | Frequent in saline lagoons on the coast and occasional in dried out marshes elsewhere. |
| Lapwing | A few breeding pairs north of Mas d'Agon and between Gimeaux and Saliers. |
| Little Stint | A few at Mas d'Agon and similar numbers at Cacharel only. |
| Curlew Sandpiper | A single bird near Cacharel was the only sighting. |
| Dunlin | Up to 30 in coastal lagoons in the western sector of the Camargue. |
| Ruff | 8 overhead briefly at Cacharel. |
| Curlew | 10 at Marais Verdier, Le Sambuc. |
| Spotted Redshank | Four fine summer plumage adults by Étang de Vaccares at Pont Noir |
| Greenshank | Occasional in coastal lagoons and marshes, especially at Fielouse. |
| Black-tailed Godwit | Three in marshes at Fielouse. |
| Wood Sandpiper | 10-15 in small groups in flooded rice fields and shallow marshes in a few locations. |
| Common sandpiper | A single bird at Mas d'Agon. |
| Mediterranean Gull | The calls of this bird are a characteristic sound of the Camargue these days; not always so. Numerous on occasions, especially in the rice fields. |
| Black-headed Gull | Widespread and common. |
| Yellow-legged Herring Gull | Widespread and abundant. |
| Gull-billed Tern | The delightful tern of the rice fields, marshes and coastal lagoons. Seemingly much less common than on previous visits with a maximum of only six in any one day. |
| Sandwich Tern | Small numbers at sea at St Maries de la Mer. |
| Common Tern | Frequent in coastal lagoons and over the larger marshes, such as at Tour du Vallat. |
| Little Tern | Several in saline lagoons close to the sea, widespread. |
| Black Tern | Occasional between Gimeaux and Saliers and at Fielouse with a maximum of 12 birds. |
| Whiskered Tern | The commonest 'marsh tern' with up to 30 between Gimeaux and Saliers. |
| Rock dove/feral pigeon | Widespread and abundant. |
| Woodpigeon | Occasional in small numbers only. |
| Collared Dove | Widespread and common, especially around habitation. |
| Turtle Dove | Two on one day and one on another the only sightings. |

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| Cuckoo | Seen, or more likely heard, on most days in small numbers. |
| Great-spotted Cuckoo | Excellent views of two at Cacherel. |
| Eagle Owl | A single bird, likely to have been of this species, was seen by Jim only at Mt Valence. |
| Nightjar | A single bird was heard ‘churring’ at Mt Valence. |
| Swift | Widespread and abundant, doubtless involving many passage birds, thousands recorded some days. |
| Alpine Swift | Not uncommon above Les Baux and Pont du Gard. |
| Kingfisher | Sightings of singles at Pont du Gard and near Étang de Vaccares. |
| Bee-eater | Always a popular species to see, 2007 didn’t let us down with frequent noisy flocks overhead or perched on fences etc. Well over a hundred on day four, especially between Gimeaux and Saliers. Nesting birds in a riverside bank at Pont du Gard. |
| Roller | Two regularly by the hotel and occasional ones and twos elsewhere, especially on La Crau. |
| Hoopoe | More often heard than seen but seen well at the Parc Ornithologique and on La Crau. |
| Green Woodpecker | A single bird heard on one day only. |
| Crested Lark | Not uncommon in coastal habitats, dried out marshes and by roadsides. |
| Skylark | Scattered and uncommon. |
| Sand Martin | Occasional in small numbers over coastal marshes. |
| Crag Martin | Recorded from Les Baux, Mt Valence and Pont du Gard in small numbers. |
| Swallow | Widespread and often abundant. |
| House Martin | Frequent over marshes and around habitation. |
| Tawny Pipit | A single bird on La Crau |
| Blue-headed Yellow Wagtail | Not uncommon in coastal <i>Salicornia</i> scrub and dried out marshes. |
| Grey Wagtail | A single bird at Pont du Gard. |
| White Wagtail | Up to ten on river shingles at Pont du Gard. |
| Wren | Heard at Pont du Gard only. |
| Nightingale | Amazingly widespread and noisy, a characteristic bird of roadside verges etc. |
| Black Redstart | Occasional at Les Baux and Pont du Gard. |
| Common Redstart | A single female near Cacherel. |

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| Whinchat | Up to three in the eastern sector of the Camargue. |
| Stonechat | A single male on one day and a pair on another. |
| Northern Wheatear | Two in dried out marshes north of Mas d' Agon. |
| Blue Rock Thrush | A single male briefly at Mt Valence. |
| Blackbird | Occasionally heard, rarely seen, especially Les Baux and La Caume. |
| Cetti's Warbler | A characteristic bird of roadside ditches throughout the Camargue. Common elsewhere too. |
| Fan-tailed Warbler | Yet another common roadside bird but especially in rice fields and wetter marshes. |
| Reed Warbler | Occasionally heard from roadside marshes. |
| Great Reed Warbler | Seen and heard briefly on two days involving two birds. This bird only just arriving from its winter quarters at this time? |
| Melodious Warbler | A single bird heard and seen briefly by the roadside close to Petit Badon. |
| Sardinian Warbler | Occasionally heard in scrub, especially Mt Valence and La Crau. |
| Blackcap | The beautiful song of this bird was often heard, especially at Les Baux and Pont du Gard. |
| Chiffchaff | Occasional singletons. |
| Willow Warbler | Ditto. |
| Bearded Tit | Two in reedbeds at Cacharel. |
| Blue Tit | Occasional at Les Baux and Pont du Gard |
| Great Tit | Occasional in small numbers, especially wooded places such as Les Baux. |
| Golden Oriole | Three seen well at Pont du Gard. |
| Red-backed Shrike | Three males seen in widely scattered places. |
| Woodchat Shrike | A single bird seen at the Parc Ornithologique. |
| Jay | Single sightings in the Les Baux and Pont du Gard areas only. |
| Magpie | Widespread and abundant. |
| Jackdaw | Ditto |
| Carrion Crow | Widespread and frequent. |
| Raven | Only recorded from the La Caume, where up to four birds. |
| Starling | Widespread and common. |

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| House Sparrow | Ditto |
| Tree Sparrow | Occasional, seemingly less frequent than on previous visits. |
| Rock Sparrow | A single bird at Pont du Gard. |
| Chaffinch | Common at Les Baux and Pont du Gard, rarely recorded elsewhere. |
| Serin Greenfinch | A few at Les Baux and Pont du Gard, scarce elsewhere. Occasional birds only. |
| Goldfinch | Common and widespread, the only common finch of the area. |
| Cirl Bunting | A single male at Les Baux. |
| Corn Bunting | Very scarce this year, with only a single sighting. |

129 species



Butterflies

The following species were recorded:

| | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Swallowtail | Scarce Swallowtail | Bath White |
| Small white | Green-veined White | Large White |
| Morocco Orange-tip | Clouded Yellow | Southern white admiral |
| Small Tortoiseshell | Red Admiral | Painted Lady |
| Large tortoiseshell | Dappled White | Small Copper |
| Marbled White | Small Heath | Wall Brown |
| Small/Essex skipper | Common Blue | Brown Argus |
| Cleopatra | | |

Other invertebrates

Moths

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Passenger | White ermine | Common heath |
| Square spot rustic | Reed leopard | Willow beauty |
| Five-spot burnet | Hummingbird hawkmoth | Pine processionary moth |
| Cream spot tiger | Feathered footman | |

Dragon/damselflies

| | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Banded demoiselle | <i>Platychemis acutipennis</i> | Ruddy darter type |
| Hawker spp | Black-tailed skimmer type | |

Amphibians/reptiles

| | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Green lizard | Wall lizard | Viperine snake |
| Stripeless tree frog | Iberian pond frog | gecko spp |

Mammals

| | | |
|-------|--------|-----|
| Coypu | Rabbit | Fox |
|-------|--------|-----|

Plants

| Scientific name | Common Name | Number (Med Wild Flowers) |
|---|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Ficus carica</i> | Fig | 42 |
| <i>Aristolochia rotunda</i> | Birthwort | 63 |
| <i>Aristolochia clematitis</i> | Birthwort | 67 |
| <i>Arthrocnemum perenne</i> | Perennial Glasswort | 82 |
| <i>Salicornia europaea</i> | Glasswort, Sea Samphire | 85 |
| <i>Suaeda vera</i> | Shrubby Seablite | 94 |
| <i>Halimione portulacoides</i> | Sea Purslane | 100 |
| <i>Salsola kali</i> | Prickly saltwort | 102 |
| <i>Silene vulgaris</i> | Bladder campion | 157 |
| <i>Silene alba</i> | White campion | 158 |
| <i>Silene italica</i> | Italian Catchfly | 161 |
| <i>Kohlruschia velutina</i> | Kohlruschia | 187 |
| <i>Papaver rhoeas</i> | Common Poppy | 283 |
| <i>Glaucium flavum</i> | Yellow Horned-Poppy | 293 |
| <i>Fumaria capreolata</i> | Ramping Fumitory | 303 |
| <i>Reseda alba</i> | White mignonette | 375 |
| <i>Pyracantha coccinea</i> | Fire thorn | 417 |
| <i>Rubus sanctus</i> | Bramble | 428 |
| <i>Eriobotrya japonica</i> | Japanese Loquat | 429 |
| <i>Spartium junceum</i> | Spanish Broom | 481 |
| <i>Astragalus hamosus</i> | Milk vetch | 492 |
| <i>Vicia sativa</i> | Common Vetch | 531 |
| <i>Lathyrus aphaca</i> | Yellow Vetchling | 553 |
| <i>Trigonella corniculata</i> | Sickle-fruited fenugreek | 581 |
| <i>Medicago lupulina</i> | Black Medick | 594 |
| <i>Medicago arabica</i> | Spotted Medick | 623 |
| <i>Ornithopus compressus</i> | Compressed birdsfoot | 639 |
| <i>Trifolium campestre</i> | Hop Trefoil | 656 |
| <i>Trifolium stellatum</i> | Star Clover | 662 |
| <i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i> subsp.praepropera | Mediterranean Kidney Vetch | 690 |
| <i>Geranium molle</i> | Dovesfoot CranesBill | 741 |
| <i>Geranium rotundifolium</i> | Round-leaved cranesbill | 743 |
| <i>Geranium pusillum</i> | Small-leaved cranesbill | 744 |
| <i>Geranium robertianum</i> | Herb Robert | 747 |
| <i>Geranium lucidum</i> | Shiny cranes-bill | 749 |
| <i>Erodium malacoides</i> | Soft or Mallow-Leaved Stork's Bill | 752 |
| <i>Erodium ciconium</i> | | 760 |
| <i>Erodium cicutarium</i> | Common Stork's-Bill | 761 |
| <i>Linum</i> spp | Yellow flax | 773/774? |
| <i>Linum narbonense</i> | Beautiful Flax | 775 |
| <i>Euphorbia nicaeensis</i> | A spurge | 811 |
| <i>Euphorbia paralias</i> | Sea spurge | 813 |
| <i>Euphorbia pithyusa</i> | | 814 |
| <i>Euphorbia cyparissias</i> | Cypress Spurge | 816 |
| <i>Euphorbia characias</i> | Large Mediterranean spurge | 818 |
| <i>Ruta chalepensis</i> | Fringed rue | 827 |
| <i>Pistacia terebinthus</i> ? | Turpentine Tree | 861 |
| <i>Eleagnus augustifolia</i> | Oleaster | 890 |
| <i>Malva sylvestris</i> | Common Mallow | 898 |
| <i>Cistus albidus</i> | Grey-Leaved Cistus | 961 |
| <i>Cistus salvifolius</i> | Sage-Leaved Cistus | 965 |
| <i>Cistus monspeliensis</i> | Narrow-Leaved Cistus | 966 |
| <i>Tuberaria guttata</i> | Annual Rockrose, Spotted Rockrose | 985 |

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| Helianthemum nummularium | Common Rockrose | 996 |
| Helianthemum canum | Hoary Rockrose | 1005 |
| Tamarix gallica? | | 1017 |
| Tamarix tetragyna | | 1024 |
| Ecballium elaterium | Squirting Cucumber | 1032 |
| Bryonia cretica | White Bryony | 1033 |
| Foeniculum vulgare | Fennel | 1108 |
| Anagallis arvensis | Scarlet Pimpernel | 1198 |
| Vincetoxicum hirundinaria | Swallow-Wort | 1269 |
| Galium verum | Lady's bedstraw | 1289 |
| Convolvulus cantabrica | Pink Convolvulus | 1329 |
| Echium vulgare | Viper's Bugloss | 1384 |
| Cynoglossum creticum | Blue Hound's Tongue | 1402 |
| Anchusa arvensis | Bugloss | 1413 |
| Phlomis lychnitis | Sage | 1460 |
| Thymus vulgaris | Thyme | 1508 |
| Rosmarinus officinalis | Rosemary | 1526 |
| Salvia verbeneca | Wild Clary | 1545 |
| Hyoscyamus alba | White Mandrake | 1555 |
| Verbascum sinuatum | Mullein | 1601 |
| Orobanche gracilis | Slender Broomrape | 1672 |
| Sambucus ebulus | Dwarf Elder, Danewort | 1710 |
| Centranthus ruber | Red Valerian (white and red forms) | 1723 |
| Dipsacus fullonum | Wild Teasel (not in flower) | 1732 |
| Knautia arvensis ? | Field Scabious | 1735 |
| Evax pygmaea | | 1805 |
| Filago minima ? | Small Cudweed | 1819 |
| Pallenis spinosa | A Fleabane | 1847 |
| Xanthium spinosum | Spiny cocklebur | 1853 |
| Galactites tomentosa | Galactites | 1971 |
| Silybum marianum | Milk Thistle | 1982 |
| Leuzia conifera | Leuzia | 1986 |
| Volutaria lippi | Volutaria | 1987 |
| Centaurea solstitialis | Yellow star thistle | 1994 |
| Hyoseris radiata | | 2032 |
| Urospermum dalechampii | Urospermum | 2039 |
| Tragopogon hybridum | | 2056 |
| Aphyllanthes monspeliensis | Aphyllanthes | 2096 |
| Iris pseudoacorus | Flag Iris | 2290 |
| Arum italicum | Large Cuckoo Pint | 2361 |
| Himantoglossum hircinum | Lizard Orchid | 2445 |
| Conium maculatum | Hemlock | p.170 "Wild Flowers of Britain and N.Europe" |

With thanks to Rosemary for checking the list and additions. I hope I haven't missed too much!