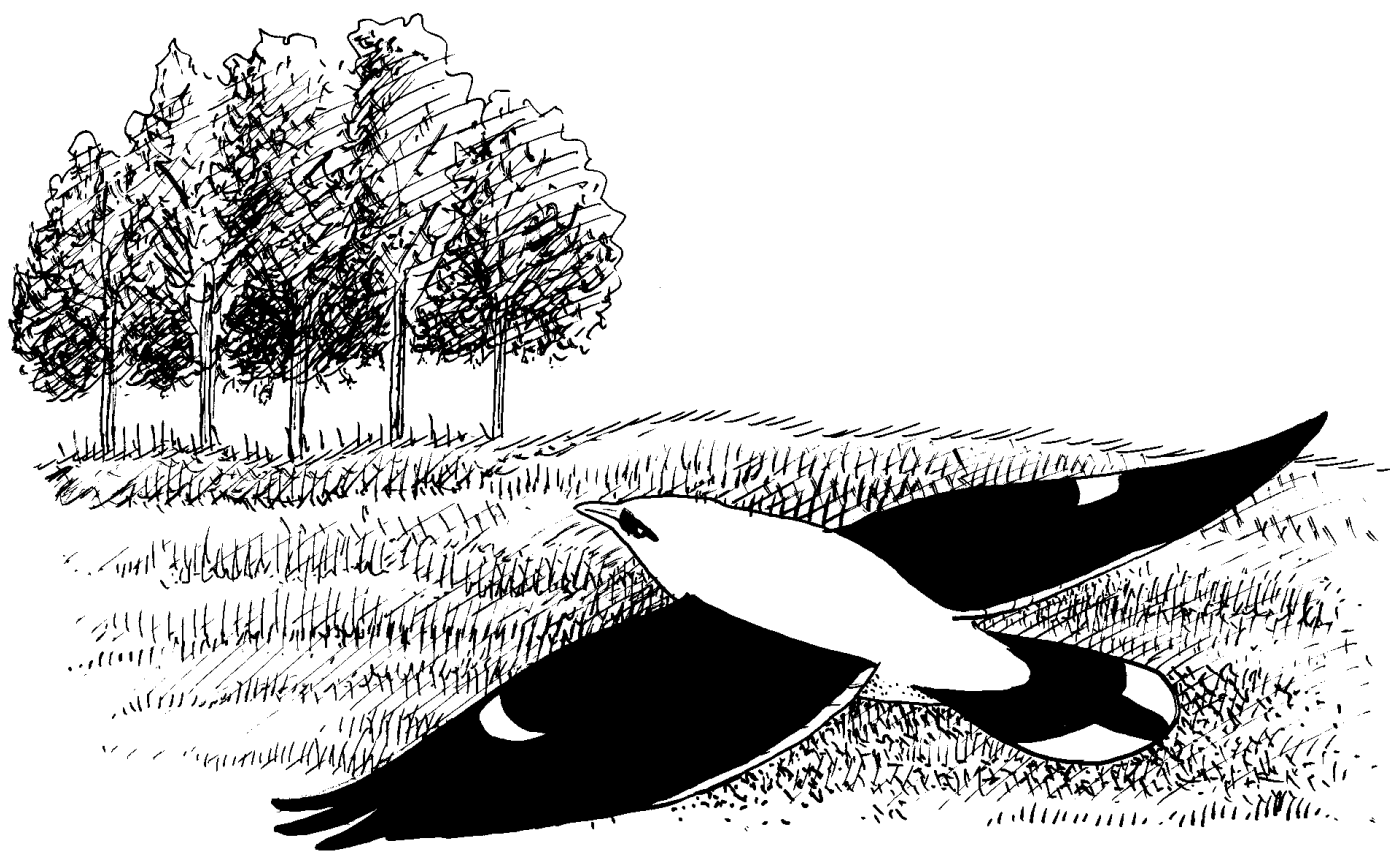


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Flowers and birds in the Dordogne
15 – 22 May 2004

**Flowers and birds in the Dordogne
15 – 22 May 2004**

List of participants

Bill Napthine	Suffolk
Anne Napthine	
Peter Crook	Norfolk
Elonwy Crook	
Bob Harris	Norfolk
Pam Harris	
Harvey Wood	Leicestershire
Anne Shearcroft	Cambridge

Leaders

Robin and Rachel Hamilton	Suffolk
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Illustrations by Rob Hume, except field cricket by Maureen Gibson. Front cover: golden oriole

Report written by Robin & Rachel Hamilton.

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 from two groups in Dordogne for the 'Refuge LPO' campaign was supplemented by a contribution from the group in the French Pyrenees towards lammergeier protection, leading to a total of £675 given to La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, the French Bird Protection League).

This brings the total given to LPO to £7,600 since 1991, and to various conservation projects in Europe to £33,330. A thank-you letter from LPO is at the end of this holiday report.

Note for web version of this report: there is also a plant list available on request from the Honeyguide office.

Flowers and birds in the Dordogne 15 – 22 May 2004

Saturday May 15: The Journey from Bergerac and Arrival at Castang

The new arrivals at Bergerac airport were greeted by black kites against a clear, blue sky and fields of dog daisies in glorious sunshine. Gilles, our driver for the week and a fund of local knowledge, greeted everyone with great warmth and good humour and whisked the luggage off to the coach. The drive to Castang took us eastwards along the valley of the Dordogne, and gave us a taste of some of the landscape and natural history to come. The sky was seldom empty of black kites; the road follows the edge of the flood plain and woodland, important in several places as sites of black kite breeding colonies, rises steeply above it. The river was dramatic in its size and speed but in some of the quieter reaches there were mute swans and mallard, occasional wagtails, yellow-legged gulls and a cormorant, sweeps of flowering water crowfoot and always clouds of swallows and martins feeding over the water.

We had a wonderful, warm welcome from Cathy and Keith, and their daughter Olivia. They swiftly showed everyone round and into our comfortable rooms. Then we gathered for an aperitif on the terrace before being ushered into the dining room for dinner. Cathy is a wonderful cook and regional dishes and local produce are her speciality. For our first evening we had a spicy pumpkin soup followed by melon with port. Then we had pork steaks cooked in a creamy mustard sauce with courgettes, a selection of cheeses, and an almond gâteau to finish. There was a plentiful supply of local wines to accompany the meal and, over coffee and a selection of teas and tisanes, Keith and Cathy gave us a welcoming introduction to Castang and Robin and Rachel outlined the week's programme.

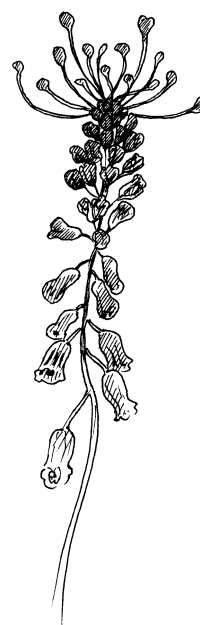
After supper it was a warm, clear night with bright stars and we stood on the terrace and listened to the night chorus of crickets, midwife toads – like distant sheep bells, and mole crickets – like distant nightjars.

Sunday May 16: Around Castang and Le Coux

We gathered under the lime tree for a walk before breakfast. There was a young male black redstart faithful, as it turned out, to the high perches around the house, singing this morning from the top of the traditional, decorated pole erected to celebrate Cathy's election to the local council – '*Honneur à notre élue*'. House sparrows, chaffinches and greenfinches were in evidence around the Castang buildings and, as we moved away, great tits and blue tits were busy collecting food and visiting their nest holes in the two oaks along the drive. Swallows perched on the wires and flew in and out of the barn where we admired a dramatic display of accidental art: a collection of bicycles hanging on the barn wall. We could hear a cuckoo and a golden oriole calling from the valley woodland and, over on the hedge singing from high on a dead tree, we had a good view of a melodious warbler. A turtle dove flew up from the path ahead of us and we could hear but frustratingly, not see, a cirl bunting singing from somewhere in the walnut orchard. A nightingale was singing well from deep cover in the wood. As we turned back towards the house for breakfast, we caught a brief glimpse of a red-backed shrike and heard a distant hoopoe, and then one flew over very close to us as we walked back along the track.

As we assembled for the morning walk we watched a blackcap singing in the walnut tree and a whitethroat singing from a high branch on top of the hedge. We admired the tassel hyacinths (*right*) and pyramidal orchids on the edge of the Castang lawn and the unfamiliar orange of the continental speckled wood sunning itself on the *Philadelphus* bush in the garden.

As we passed the vineyard, we saw both green and great spotted woodpeckers and intercepted a bloody-nosed beetle as it crossed the lane. Meadow clary was looking lovely in the verge and cornflowers and alkanet had escaped the haymaking at the edge of the field. Dwarf elder caught our eye; we picked it and crushed it to sample the improbable smell of gravy! A little farther on, we encountered a lizard engrossed in its breakfast – a field cricket. It looked as if it were quite a challenge



for the only slightly larger animal! The village pond was covered in a dense blanket of least duckweed but we noticed that there were trails where the duckweed was disturbed and, at the end of each, we could see a pair of the very still, bulging eyes of a marsh frog. Among the village roofs we watched black redstarts, serins and white wagtails and Peter spotted a girl bunting singing from high in a tree; we all had a good view this time of its characteristic facial pattern.

Below the village we spent some time watching an aggressive exchange between a buzzard and a hobby. The buzzard repeatedly parried the hobby and the resulting aerobatics were magical to watch. Eventually the buzzard retreated to a tree and the hobby went on its way. A few yards further on, we paused in admiration at the lawn wildflowers in one of the village gardens: tongue orchids, quaking grass, chalk and common milkwort as well as a selection of clovers and medicks. A fine specimen of a hornet was exploring an oak tree – possibly a queen reconnoitring for a nest site. There were the red and black striped shield bugs – variously known as Millwall bugs or hogweed bonking bugs – on the hogweed and a nice blue and red striped beetle *Trichodes alvearius* on a telegraph pole.

Farther down the hill there were some lovely butterflies: at least two swallowtails, a clouded yellow, a meadow fritillary, a dingy skipper and a scarce swallowtail (*right*). We had a good look at it, with its improbable streamlined markings, as it fluttered about in the orchard. A male stonechat was singing from a perch in the hedgerow and then, as we reached the bottom of the meadow, we had a few frustrating moments trying unsuccessfully to locate a singing melodious warbler and the inevitable golden orioles whose calls were echoing around the treetops.



Along the lane back towards Castang we passed the ancient *laverie*, a fascinating and beautifully constructed feature consisting of a series of interconnected stone tanks, spring-fed and used for a combination of communal washing and livestock watering. It is somewhat neglected now but is interesting for the wildlife it supports and we were able to watch both marsh frogs and palmate newts respectively resting and creeping about in the clear water. Just beyond the *laverie*, we admired some very fine spikes of lady orchid standing elegantly – if a little past their prime – on the verge.

We diverted into the Castang meadow, almost overwhelming in its richness particularly of wildflowers and butterflies. We quickly found grizzled skipper, meadow fritillary, Glanville fritillary and Adonis blue butterflies, and green-winged, lax-flowered, early purple, tongue and burnt-tip orchids among the grasses and other meadow flowers.

When we arrived back at Castang, Cathy had laid out lunch for us on the terrace, a feast of homemade quiches and pâtés with breads and salads, wine and fruit juices and with fruit, yoghurts and cheese to follow. Another fine hornet flew by, scrutinised the meal that was on offer but flew on, to the relief of some!

In the afternoon we took the lane that leads down the hill along the edge of the wood to the village of Le Coux. We were glad of the shady walk and enjoyed the ferns – black spleenwort and polypody – in the rocky bank beside the track. There was a good show of narrow-leaved helleborine under the trees too and leafy rosettes of what looked as though it was going to be broad-leaved helleborine. Our walk was accompanied by the occasional songs of Bonelli's warblers and short-toed treecreepers from deep in the wood.

This is the direction from which we had been hearing golden orioles and, sure enough, as we came out of the wood and looked down towards the row of false acacia trees, a pair of orioles flew out of the trees and across the valley in front of us; we all had a lovely view. A stonechat family was busy along the hedgerow, the parents alternately calling from hedgerow song posts and feeding their demanding young. Up on the hillside, a buzzard was idly passing backwards and forwards in front of the wood, looking likely to settle on a tree near to the large ragged nest in the pine. A crow had other ideas though and we watched it persistently mobbing the buzzard, which eventually gave up and disappeared out of sight. While we were watching this, we could see that there was activity in the meadow, made pink by a dense sward of ragged robin. A fine violet carpenter bee attracted our attention and we

watched for a long time as a swallowtail flew peacefully over the flowers, pausing every now and then to feed.

The village of Le Coudré looked very pretty in the afternoon sunshine. There were black redstarts on rooftops and chimneys, and swifts, swallows and house martins were all making use of the buildings for nesting. Serins sang from the trees and television aerials and, on our way back up the hill towards Castang, we heard a nightingale in full song from deep in a laurel hedge in someone's front garden. Just outside, on the verge, lizard orchids were beginning to extend their flowering spikes. As we turned off beside the medlar tree, there was a view down the valley towards the row of false acacia trees but there was no sign of the buzzard or of the orioles.

We reviewed the day's observations on the terrace over an aperitif and then went in for supper. This time it was home made leek soup, followed by a dish of amazingly succulent roast beef – Cathy called it *bœuf au naturel* – with carrots, then a selection of cheeses and, finally, a home made vanilla ice cream with raspberry *coulis*, all accompanied, of course by the free-flowing local wines, and rounded off by coffee, tea or a tisane.

Monday May 17: Woodland Walk and Limeuil

We assembled under the lime tree on a fine, clear and warm morning for a walk before breakfast. The young male black redstart greeted us as usual and a melodious warbler was singing from a tree beside the lane so that we were all able to have a lovely view. We set off down the track behind the house and watched as a jay flew across the lawn away from us. A female stonechat was feeding two young while the male basked in the sunshine on a nearby hawthorn bush.

Just before the group of houses at the end there is a beautiful specimen of small-leaved lime and it was just coming into flower. That enabled us to look at it in some detail and compare it with the large-leaved lime back at Castang. A wren bobbed in and out of its nest hole in the barn and we could hear, but again not see, a girl bunting singing not far away.

We turned right up the hill. There are many hedgerow trees, particularly oak and walnut, around Castang with dead limbs and some heart rot. Most of them seem to offer nest sites for either blue or great tits. Here, we watched blue tits feeding young in their nest hole in a walnut tree and the sound of the clamouring young resonated inside the branch. A party of 8-10 turtle doves flew over high overhead, heading north, probably on migration.

Inside the little hilltop wood we stopped in the hope that we might see a red squirrel. There was a drey in full view, up in the fork of a sweet chestnut tree, but no sign of the animal except possibly an otherwise unidentified noise from out of sight in the cover of the wood. As we turned back down the hill for breakfast we watched a family group of five kestrels, and one of the young birds broke away bravely to mob a passing buzzard.

After breakfast Gilles drove us southwards, through the little riverside hamlet of Bigaroque and up into the hills behind. Almost as soon as we got out of the coach a southern white admiral flew past, just lingering for long enough for us to catch its characteristic colouring. There were more butterflies – wall brown and orange tip – flying over the lank grass beside the road, chiffchaff, blackcap and wren were all singing in the alder plantation beyond and a cuckoo was calling from the hill above.

We set off up the lane shaded by hornbeam and downy oak. In a meadow on our right we soon saw a southern white admiral again, this time with excellent views both in flight and at rest when it moved its wings slowly up and down for us, to show off both the top and underside.

The roadside becomes steep and rocky, with the sunshine reflected off the pale limestone, producing a display of lime-loving flowers worthy of a rock-garden: chalk and common milkworts, Irish and cypress spurges, common rockrose, crosswort and a single, fine woodcock orchid (the first *Ophrys* species of the week). The blue globularia was over but the pale pink Pyrenean flax was just coming out. Among the flowers and rocks the butterflies were plentiful and very active in the sunshine. There were swallowtail, small and pearly heath, Adonis blue and another – our third – southern white

admiral. The fierce and fascinating ascalaphids were very active, flying over the bank, which must have been providing a plentiful supply of prey items for them.

A little farther on the lane passes through woodland again and the road verge is damp from a spring-line running along the bank. We found a beautiful, iridescent green rose chafer on some cow parsley and then not one but two map butterflies, with leisure for us to see both the top and the curious underside pattern (which gives the butterfly its name) as one settled on a little pile of unidentified poo and the other on some more cow parsley. There were red admirals, grizzled and dingy skipper butterflies and a speckled yellow moth as well as a hornet and a violet carpenter bee.

We heard first, and then watched for some time, a family of long-tailed tits flitting about in the trees around us and then we were able to watch a Bonelli's warbler singing and in good view from the branch of an oak overhanging the road. From the patch of alders and willows that straddles the stream on our right we heard a few explosive snatches of song from what turned out to be the only Cetti's warbler of the week and just above and beyond the alders, and out of sight, a golden oriole sang.

A long meadow separates the lane from the stream and ascalaphids were flying energetically about, along with the much more peaceful butterflies: green-veined white, holly blue and pale clouded yellow. Opposite, leading up into the wood, we found a roe deer track running up the bank, showing the 'slots' made by its tiny hooves. Just before we turned up the track towards our lunch rendezvous with Gilles, we found an excellent group of violet bird's-nest orchids (violet limodore), in full flower and perfect condition.

We had our lunch in the shade of the trees, with a Bonelli's warbler singing just above us, in front of us swallowtails fluttering over a sea of blue tassel hyacinths, yellow hop trefoil and red poppies, with a hoopoe, a cuckoo and golden orioles calling around us and with a woodlark singing from across the valley; mmmmm!

After lunch, we made our way through the field back to the coach. A turtle dove began to churr behind us and the corner of the field was so densely packed with tongue and burnt-tip orchids that it was almost impossible to avoid treading on them. A damper meadow across the lane was almost as densely packed with adder's tongue fern, twayblades and lax-flowered orchids.

Gilles drove us down into the Dordogne valley after lunch and along to the confluence of the Dordogne with its sister river, the Vézère. Here, placed strategically, high on the cliff overlooking both valleys, is the medieval village of Limeuil. We approached from along the ridge behind the village – startling some turtle doves on the drive up to the top. Gilles then left us at the village gatehouse to retrace his route down to the bottom and meet us again after we had explored the village.

The picturesque Romanesque church, its surprising list of services in English a testament to the current invasion of the area, offered some cool shade and then we meandered on, down to the main square with its viewpoint looking out over the Vézère valley. Below the wall is a steep tree-covered hillside so we were more or less level with the treetops and could watch spotted flycatchers and firecrests moving about in the canopy and singing. The village's buildings are fascinating in their variety and detail and testify to a long history of military and commercial importance because of the village's position. Today, it is quiet, unspoilt and very pretty and we could enjoy the flowers and birds, and the lizards basking in the sun, at our leisure. The lanes are very narrow and barely allow the residents access for vehicles. This clearly presents logistical problems and Bob, our 'in house' health and safety specialist, was horrified at the hazardous ingenuity of a roofing contractor's scaffolding in one of the lanes.

Down at the bottom, near the river, there are some shops and restaurants and a public loo. The open stonework structure of the buildings offers attractive opportunities for various bird residents; the loo buildings are home to a colony of tree sparrows and the wall of the main 'street', to a colony of sand martins. Below the archway the wall is engraved with markings indicating historical flood levels: food for thought!

We had a beer in a café beside the river, with tree sparrows mixed in with the house sparrows, twittering in the trees overhead. Bill and Anne resisted the temptation of refreshment and walked down by the river, where they were rewarded with a view of a kingfisher. Then we returned to the bus to

learn that Gilles had seen a grey wagtail. There were more turtle doves on the drive back to Castang, their numbers increasing so abruptly that we concluded that migration had just brought them in.

The evening review and aperitif on the terrace were followed by another delicious dinner: homemade vegetable soup, smoked salmon accompanied by crudités, roast guinea fowl with flageolet beans, the usual mouth-watering selection of cheeses and then a wonderful traditional French apple flan with greengage jelly (and second helpings!).

It was a warm, clear and settled night and we went to bed to the soothing accompaniment of crickets, mole crickets and midwife toads, and the sleepless amongst us enjoyed the distant song of the nightingales away in the wood.

Tuesday May 18: Le Bugue and the Cave Walk

Before breakfast, we met under the lime tree and set off up the lane towards the vineyard. The reliable young black redstart was singing as usual and a blackcap and a whitethroat both sang from song-posts in the hedge. When we got to the vineyard, one of the vine poles had a buzzard perched splendidly on it and some of the group had a lovely view before it dropped down off the post and flew silently away. A green woodpecker screamed loudly from the edge of the wood, perhaps upset by the intrusion of the buzzard and a robin and some goldfinches were singing from the hedgerow trees farther up the hill. In the field on our right we had a brief glimpse of a pair of red-backed shrikes. As it was clear that they were about we watched for them for a while and eventually were rewarded by some excellent views of both birds.

Tuesday is market day in Le Bugue, the local market town, and true to the Honeyguide tradition, a visit to the market was scheduled. We decided to ask Gilles to drop us at Bara Bahau, a cave system above the town so that, before the day warmed up fully, we could walk down the lane that overlooks the town. The short walk was full of natural history. We could hear Bonelli's warblers singing in the woods and saw a nuthatch on an oak tree. Under the trees at the edge of the wood there were several flowers that were new for the week: lungwort, wood spurge, wild madder, columbine, spotted cat's-ear, man orchids, wild thyme, lesser yellow trefoil and bur medick. There was a lovely group of fly orchids up some very unstable scree, which was frustrating, but we could see it well through binoculars. We also saw a scarce swallowtail, a red admiral and several dingy skippers and a damselfly – a beautiful demoiselle.

The market has something for everybody, limited only by Ryanair's weight allowance, so we all stocked up with presents and mementoes, and with more immediately useful items such as local cheeses and fresh strawberries.

A walk along the riverside, beside a rather holey stone wall, perfect for sand martins, took us to a large car park and picnic area and a rendezvous with Gilles. He had laid lunch out for us and we sat by the river watching serins and sand martins, and just caught a glimpse of a grey wagtail as we drove away.

After lunch, Gilles drove us across the river, south through the hamlet of Perdigat to drop us off in a long-disused roadside quarry, ready for us to walk up to the Gouffre de Proumeyssac. As we stepped off the coach we had to avoid treading on fly, pyramidal and early spider orchids (*right*) and twayblade and there were man and lizard orchids nearby.

Firecrests and Bonelli's warblers were singing as we walked up the road and soon we had our best view of a short-toed treecreeper, at first heard, then seen flying across the track and running up and along the branches of a hornbeam. There was a fine green tiger beetle on the bank where the Pyrenean flax was just coming out. Large numbers of ascalaphids were patrolling the roadside scree slope and a few were at rest among the grass stalks so that we were able to have some good views.

The scree-covered roadside was warm and sunny and aromatic with wild thyme and lavender. A group of greater butterfly orchids caught our attention near the



top of the bank and we found a few spikes of man orchid nearby. Then, when we had our 'eyes in', they turned out to be everywhere along the roadside. From time to time we could hear the gentle song of turtle doves and we had a good view of one singing overhead. There were some interesting and attractive insects: a female (not *so* beautiful) beautiful demoiselle, brown silver-line and lace border moths – both very pretty. Then we came upon a spring beside the lane where several Adonis and holly blues were sipping the wet mud; they were soon joined by a red-underwing skipper. As we turned left up the last stretch of hill we could hear a mistle thrush singing in the distance and paused to admire a Duke of Burgundy fritillary as it flew by.

At the top of the hill the walk comes out into open grassland at the tiny settlement called Colombet. There was a spectacular display of tongue orchids here: both small and long-lipped serapias, several greater butterfly orchids and a sea of yellow rattle among the grasses. Among the butterflies we found both Glanville fritillary and sooty copper. Farther on there were violet bird's nest orchids under the hedgerow trees and, where the ground is more parched and the track more used, the grass is shorter. In this short grass, which is studded with tassel hyacinth and scattered woodcock orchids there was an astonishing display of sombre bee orchids – a charming little yellowish orchid that is very much in the heart of its stronghold here in the Dordogne.

A short walk along the lane brought us to the Gouffre de Proumeyssac, a spectacular underground crystal cavern. We contemplated, with some awe, the traditional method of reaching the inside of the cave: being let down through the original swallow hole in the top in a hanging basket. The mechanism is still there and the option is available for those with very strong nerves. It did not appeal to the group though and they opted for the 'tame' route, to take the guided tour entering the bottom of the cave through a man-made tunnel. There was time for an ice cream and a cup of tea for the cavers and the rest enjoyed the afternoon sunshine and a rest, a more leisurely cup of tea or a beer, and the redstart and short-toed treecreepers that frequent the area around the café buildings.

Another magnificent dinner awaited us after our restoring aperitif on the terrace in the evening sun. This time it was a creamy tomato and basil soup, *feuilletée* of ham and cheese in sorrel sauce (earlier, we had seen Olivia coming in with a bag of freshly picked sorrel), then succulent lamb steaks with cauliflower, a selection of cheeses, and strawberries and cream ('Garriguettes', the local early strawberries that we had sampled earlier in the market).

Wednesday May 19: Berbiguières, the Two Views Walk, Montalier Haut and Beynac

For our early walk we decided to go swiftly down the drive and then continue across the road and down the hill. Our faithful black redstart was singing from the top of the cypress tree by the house and we watched a white wagtail foraging for food on the ploughed furrows in the field beside the drive. A buzzard rose, seemingly reluctantly, from the hay meadow and the regular melodious warbler was singing as usual perched high on a dead tree in the hedge and, with the sun on its breast, it looked like a big yellow apple! There was a great commotion as a large flock of starlings arrived in the hedge. They seemed to be mostly young birds demanding food, but everything around them was either drowned out or driven away by their clamour. We heard golden oriole, hoopoe and cuckoo all singing in the trees in the distance and at the bottom of the drive had a good view of a great spotted woodpecker both flying and drumming above our heads in the big old oak tree. The spindle was in flower in the hedge at the bottom of the drive and made a very pretty spectacle mixed in with the dogwood. On the wild rose, several speckled woods had spread their wings, sunning themselves in the early sunshine and we came across two Glanville fritillaries at rest in the meadow as we went back for breakfast.

After breakfast, we set off in the coach via St Cyprien, for Bob to try and change some old francs! It was our opportunity to see something of the little town and to admire some extremely old but very elegant buildings; the main purpose of the expedition was a failure though, francs now apparently being a distant memory. We drove on, crossed the Dordogne and headed southwards up onto the plateau. We came close to some black kites (*right*) flying low over freshly-cut hay and had some excellent views.



Gilles dropped us in the village square and we were greeted by a short-toed eagle soaring directly overhead, giving us some excellent views of its wonderful silvery underside. There were swifts, swallows and house martins around the chateau roof and Anne S made friends with an American now living in Berbiguières who took her off, and they disappeared into his garden in search of the 'perfect' photograph of the village.

The path from the village is a steep and ancient sunken pathway, flanked by hornbeams and deeply eroded by long usage and by the rains of the region. It is an attractive and different environment for us though and we enjoyed the woodland plants: soft shield fern and black spleenwort, dog's mercury and herb robert, as we climbed the rough path onto the ridge. As we approached the top we could hear a cuckoo calling and there were small copper and sooty copper butterflies in the meadow beside us.

We arrived at the top of the path to find a tractor mowing the verges beside the track that runs the length of the ridge. We watched helpless as bee, pyramidal, man, woodcock, lizard and violet bird's-nest orchids were mashed to a pulp! Remonstrating with the driver proved fruitless; he had his orders! So we picked a bunch of orchids from in front of the mower blades and they decorated the dining table back at Castang for the rest of our stay. Away from the trackside, of course, many flowers survived, including a meadow full of pyramidal orchids and several fine clumps of woodcock orchids.

We looked across from the track that runs along the ridge at the magnificent views, facing in two directions, into the two arms of a great loop in the Dordogne. The 'Two Views' are visible now but the amount of grazing up on the limestone plateau is very limited and much of what was once grassland is now gradually scrubbing over. Nevertheless, the hedgerows, the woodland edge and the developing scrub are all attractive in their own way, and rich and varied; on our short walk we found wayfaring tree, dogwood, spindle, wild privet, St Lucie's cherry, juniper, ash, downy oak and sessile oak.

Blackcaps were singing around us as we went back into an extensive meadow, ready to be cut for hay. There were ascalaphids flying about everywhere. We thought some of them seemed to be a slightly smaller species than that previously recorded, but were not able to confirm that impression. Some of them were mating: they clasped together in flight and then crashed to the ground in a close embrace! Field crickets were abundant too and we found another delicately marked lace border moth. Both swallowtails and scarce swallowtails flew strongly among the flowers and we saw several small heaths, Glanville fritillaries and grizzled skippers, a single black-veined white and a fine specimen of the big blue dragonfly *Brachytron pratense*.

We walked through the wood on our way back to the coach for lunch and passed fine clumps of spotted cat's-ear and of butcher's broom decorated with startlingly red berries. There was an unusually vocal and visible firecrest singing from the branches of a plane tree beside the lane. Male firecrests are known to respond if challenged by a recording of their song in their territory, so we decided to see if he could be enticed into display for us. He performed beautifully, angrily fluffing up his crest and scowling at us, and singing vigorously and aggressively at the recorder. We retreated for lunch and he withdrew, satisfied that he had successfully seen off the challenge!

After lunch, we got back into the coach and Gilles drove us further south, through some beautiful countryside (buzzards and black kites, meadows full of wild flowers, lovely glimpses of distant views) into the valley of a southern tributary of the Dordogne, the Céou. Our destination was Montalier Haut, a site which is being developed as a nature reserve and study centre, largely because of its orchids. Gilles left us there, high on the plateau, and drove down to be ready to meet us after we had followed the track down the hill. At first, the path took us past a field full of rough grass with a population of the most enormous lady orchids. Then we were able to make our way into a dry meadow rich in other species as well: more lady orchids of course but also pyramidal, burnt-tip, bee, early spider and woodcock as well many other flowers such as bird's-foot trefoils, medicks, stemless thistles and lavender. The path led us into the shade of scrubby woodland with polypody, bastard balm, Nottingham catchfly and long-leaved lungwort. We climbed up the hill to the side of the track into an area of thin, arid grassland rather like the *cause* grassland formerly so widespread. Here we found lavender abundant, with rosemary, spurges, candytuft, *Helichrysum* and both horseshoe and kidney vetches. Farther up this hillside, in great profusion, there were more man, lady and bee orchids.

Returning to the path we came upon some beautiful fly orchids and as we paused to look at them we found a black and red bug *Alydus calcaratus* and a banded snail *Cepaea hortensis*. We walked on

down through rowan, downy oak and wayfaring tree, Montpellier maple, juniper and fly honeysuckle and, beneath them in the damper shade, stinking hellebore, lungwort, narrow-leaved helleborine, bastard balm (in even greater abundance and in a wide range of shades of pink), blue columbine and yellow foxglove. Bonelli's warblers and chiffchaffs were singing all the way down.

Gilles had been exploring while he waited and he took us to a pool at the bottom beside the stream, and an astonishing sight. We counted over two hundred Adonis blues, a small blue, a wood white, a red-underwing skipper and two Glanville fritillaries that had congregated and were all sipping at the wet mud around the edge of a temporary pool created by recent heavy rain – truly a spectacle. As we watched, Peter called our attention to a broad-bodied chaser dragonfly *Libellula depressa* and then a hornet flew by. We tore ourselves away and passed a fine plant of the less well-known subspecies of hogweed, *Heracleum sphondylium* ssp *sibiricum*, which has greenish flowers. The final flourish of the afternoon was from a spectacular stand of bright purplish-blue purple gromwell beside the track.

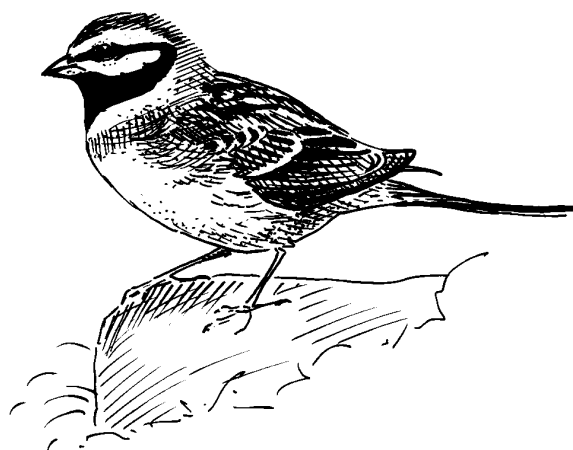
Our last stop of the day was the famous riverside town of Beynac, built spectacularly up the steep hillside above the river and surmounted by a monastery. The perfect bird-watching vantage point in Beynac is the terrace of one of the riverside bars and while some of the group energetically scaled the steep lanes to explore the village, others turned their attention to some serious birdwatching, and a beer! A white wagtail was picking flies from the surface of the river and swallows and house martins dipping out over the water were joined by crag martins, their stocky brown relatives. We saw the first jackdaws of the week wheeling above the monastery but searched in vain for alpine swifts among the flocks of common swifts.

Drinks awaited us on the terrace and dinner was as wonderful as ever: carrot soup followed by deep-fried camembert with cranberry sauce, then chicken breast in cream sauce, cheeses and lastly, *îles flottantes*, all with wine of course, and teas, coffee and tisanes to round it all off.

Discussion at dinner revealed that a number of the group had encountered a charming little jumping spider in their rooms. It was consistently described as very dark with pale markings on the abdomen and legs but its most striking feature, again consistently reported, was that its third pair of legs was unlike the others: they were fatter and perhaps slightly flattened, and white, giving the impression that it was wearing long white boots. Its jumping skills were also widely observed, in that it was able to jump vertically upwards on the smooth tiled bathroom walls. Though it is probably a jumping spider of the genus *Salticus*, or a close ally, no entirely satisfactory identification has yet been made.

Thursday May 20: Keith's Walk

Before breakfast we headed south towards the wood, and soon enjoyed the antics of a great spotted woodpecker which flew into a walnut tree and then, instead of climbing the trunk, scrambled among the outer branches, sometimes hanging upside down like a blue tit. A whitethroat was singing in the orchard above the house and we could hear a song thrush; though we frequently heard them, song thrushes, and robins too, seemed to be harder to see than at home. There were still dozens of starlings in the hedgerow, making it hard for anything else to be seen or heard. Beyond the bungalow, in the walnut grove, we watched a green woodpecker hopping about and feeding on the ground and we could hear a distant nightingale and golden orioles calling from the far side of the wood. We moved farther on, into the wood and the nightingale came and sang close by, but it was still teasingly out of sight. We carried on, through the wood and watched a whitethroat in the hedge above us as it did a nice little aerial display and song-flight. There were serins singing in the treetops just up the hill and we had a good view of a female ciril bunting (*male pictured right*). All the time, the tantalising golden oriole song was echoing up the valley below us.



After breakfast, we put ourselves in Keith's hands for our morning walk. His local knowledge and interest in local history is enormous so his insights into the area are a tremendous bonus.

We set off down the drive, paying our respects to a newly opening bee orchid on the edge of the meadow, the flowering spindle beside the drive and a curl bunting feeding on the track ahead of us and then we crossed the road and went down through the private meadow to the *pigeonnier* – dovecote. We straggled out along the narrow path among the grasses and meadow flowers: meadow clary, hedge and lady's bedstraws, dog daisies, red and sulphur clover. We stopped to look at a lace border moth and listened to the song of a blackcap echoing in the valley. The dovecote is a beautiful building with some fine architectural detail captured by Anne S's camera, though the roof and stonework are very much in need of repair. Inside we found owl pellets – probably barn owl – and later on we were able to examine some which we had been soaking out, having collected them earlier. We were able to identify several more or less entire shrew and vole skeletons and we gave them to Olivia to take to school for her biology class.

The path from the dovecote joined a woodland track flanked by an ancient dry stone wall and bank. We followed this, under the coppiced hazel, with wood meadow-grass, wood soft brome and cow parsley, down to the ancient *abrevoir*. This complicated stone structure, once essential for the irrigation of the fertile meadows, has recently been restored by the *commune* of Le Coux. We headed off, through the meadow above the *abrevoir* where, as part of the restoration, a stream has been recently dug. There, Bob spotted a roe deer crossing the damp meadow beside the path and there was a buzzard, watching us coldly from a tree at the edge of the wood.

Keith led us on into the wood where we stopped to enjoy some fine plants of Bath asparagus beside the path. We visited a small disused quarry, a local source of stone for some of the ancient structures we had been admiring, and some of the piles of spoil were strewn with fossils. The fossil collectors bemoaned Ryanair's excess baggage charges! A Bonelli's warbler was singing in the wood by the quarry and several dingy skippers and holly blues were drinking from the damp sand around the rock faces.

Back in the wood we followed a path that runs along the bottom of the vineyard terraces, long abandoned because of phylloxera. The few remaining vines were twining up the hazel trees and long-leaved lungwort flowered in the undergrowth. A minute maize field, in what amounted to a woodland clearing, was being tended and we found several Glanville fritillaries and the tiny moth *Adela reaumurella* with antennae more than twice its own length.

We rejoined the road up to Les Vallades and there we met a man working on an old tractor who told us it was 31 degrees in the shade! A cuckoo flew across the field ahead of us – the first one we had actually seen. Farther along the road we passed a kiwi-fruit vineyard, the strange contorted vines loaded with young fruit, but the shapes all over the place compared with the 'perfectly formed' supermarket sort. (Later, Cathy gave us some of the local fruit and they were sweet and succulent beyond recognition, whatever their shape!)

We turned off the road along a footpath covered with flowering periwinkle, through tall stands of cock's foot and Yorkshire fog, mullein and fennel. This led downhill onto an area of much lighter, sandy soil with gorse, ragwort, wood sage and honeysuckle and a field with horses grazing among clumps of tongue orchids. On some bramble there were speckled wood butterflies and nearby, a speckled yellow moth. The path led back into a coppiced hornbeam wood with lords and ladies, oxlip, flixweed and tutsan along the ride. We could hear nuthatch, blackcap and chaffinch singing, we came upon a little pile of droppings on the path that looked very like those of polecat and there were damp ruts on the woodland track with several sizes of deer slots.

Keith had yet more in store for us. We carried on down hill, deeper into the wood and were surprised to arrive at a sizeable pond. There was a good deal of activity over the water, with several species of dragonfly and damselfly flying about, settling occasionally on iris leaves or overhanging branches or dipping into the water. Some of the species were familiar: we saw broad-bodied chasers, a female common darter and several blue damselflies. There was a pair of bright yellowish-brown damselflies (both sexes were a similar colour), possibly *Sympecnema fusca*, flying in 'tandem' and laying eggs into the water. In the still water under the shelter of reeds and among roots, we could see several frogs of varying sizes, many of them vocalising. We could identify marsh frogs and at least one other species.

This had an obvious fold on its back, repeatedly called 'eewek eewek' and also made a noise like the flight call of a brent goose!

Just beyond the pond the path ran along the edge of a steep valley. We could hear the sounds of pigs grunting and, to our excitement, caught a glimpse of wild boar with young, moving about among the trees on the other side of the valley. However we very soon realised, to our great disappointment, that they were actually inside a fenced enclosure!

The path back to Castang took us up along the edge of some light, chalky scrub, with dogwood, wayfaring tree and wild privet, then down into the wooded valley again, past a substantial badgers' sett, with evidence of fresh excavation. Finally came the last climb, through a bank of winter heliotrope, past some marvellous stone farm buildings and we found ourselves at the bottom of the Castang drive. A wonderful lunch was awaiting us, on the terrace under the shade of the horse chestnut trees. Cathy had made quiches and pâtés and a selection of salads for us, to be washed down with wine or beer, or a selection of soft drinks and rounded off with fruit and cheese.

Nothing was scheduled for the afternoon so that everyone could follow their own inclination: to explore further, to rest and write postcards, to revisit places of interest or to capture photographs. Under the terrace, below some of our bedrooms, there is a colony of lesser horseshoe bats and we used the time to make sure that everyone had had the chance to see them, hanging from the ceiling and peering blearily at us with their little screwed-up faces.

We met again for drinks on the terrace, to compare notes and to plan the evening. Dinner tonight, as spectacular as ever, started with a fresh vegetable soup followed by a layered shellfish pâté, then *confit* of duck, cheeses and ice-cream bombes, all with wine of course and teas and coffees to finish. There was more talk of Boots the jumping spider and Anne S was hopeful of a photograph of him. We had arranged that after dinner we should go along to the house down the lane to try to see some midwife toads. Keith and Olivia joined us – more expert in these matters than we, and we could hear the bell-like calls as we approached. Eventually, we tracked them down, some under logs, some in cracks in the wall and two tucked under the water tank. The charming little creatures allowed us to examine them briefly and then return them safely to their hiding places.

The chorus of midwife toads continued as we returned and they were accompanied by a range of cricket calls. We could also hear the continuous steady churring of several mole crickets, very nightjar-like, though much less powerful. We tracked the sound of one down to the foot of a cherry tree, where the ground was honeycombed with little tunnels. The creature itself eluded us though.

Overnight we had a heavy thunderstorm, the only rain during the entire week.

Friday May 21: Gorge d'Enfer, Font de Gaume and Roque St Christophe

In spite of the night's rain we woke to a fine and dry morning. The sky was clear and bright with just a little cloud in the east. There was mist in the valley and the early sunlight caught the buildings in a distant village making us wish that we had our cameras with us.

We walked up the lane towards Lagrave, listening to a hoopoe over to the north. We disturbed a buzzard from its perch in the vineyard and it flew off low beneath the walnut trees. We had excellent views of both the male and female red-backed shrikes, in the field with the cattle. The male posed for us on a branch with the female feeding on the ground around him, perhaps searching for insect casualties from last night's storm. We cut across the track past the wood where a nightingale, blackcaps, chaffinches, a mistle thrush and a blackbird were all singing. In a tree below the wood we caught sight of a woodpigeon and wondered whether it was in fact the first sighting of the week. We arrived back for breakfast to find Bob with a field cricket and a mole cricket that he had found drowned in the swimming pool, perhaps disorientated by the storm. It was a sad but interesting opportunity to see a mole cricket at close quarters and examine its enormous digging front feet.

For the late morning, we had booked a visit to the famous Font de Gaume caves near Les Eyzies on the Vézère. Access is very strictly limited because changes to the atmosphere caused by the presence of visitors in the caves gradually causes irreversible damage to the amazing prehistoric paintings. Font de

Gaume is now the only place in France where access is permitted at all so the visits are especially precious.

Around Les Eyzies the river has carved majestic cliffs and dramatic overhangs. During the morning we decided to explore one of the gorges that drops off the plateau down to the river, a little upstream of Les Eyzies. It is called the Gorge d'Enfer – the Mouth of Hell! 'For the record', there was a dead badger on the road as we approached the gorge but no evidence of badger activity around. The coach dropped us at the bottom of a well-used hikers' track which had clearly taken quite a torrent of water during last night's storms. A stream has been dammed a little way up and the resulting lake supports an enormous shoal of goldfish and beside it, a large bamboo plantation. Otherwise, the hillside is covered in ancient hornbeam woodland, some of it coppiced, with coppiced hazel beside the track. There is a rich ground flora: leopards' bane, dogs mercury, angelica, cow parsley, wood soft brome, yellow archangel, hart's-tongue fern, soft shield fern, polypody, wild strawberry, Bath asparagus, marsh woundwort, greater stitchwort, herb robert, wood melick, celandine...

We turned off the track and into the woods themselves and enjoyed a good look at a nuthatch making its way up and down some of the hornbeam trunks. Both great spotted and green woodpeckers were in evidence and chiffchaffs and robins sang from time to time. The understorey is more open here – mainly box, occasional holly and hawthorn and rather leggy juniper – and the ground flora more sparse, fighting its way through thick leaf litter and mosses. Scrambling over the ground we found bush vetch, wild madder and ivy. There was a large clump of butcher's broom covered in bright red berries and with soft young shoots like asparagus spears, an extensive patch of wild daffodil in fruit and a fine group of Solomon's seal. There were a few plants of the large-flowered Spanish broom, wood meadow-grass, wood melick, wood sanicle, great woodrush, stinking iris and narrow-leaved helleborine and Anne S found a fine clump of bird's-nest orchids.

Exploring deeper into the wood we found ourselves drenched every time the wind gusted, as the rain of last night was shed from the canopy. An area that was wetter underfoot showed very clear signs of disturbance and after searching carefully we were excited to find some well-formed wild boar hoof-prints. Close by there was a more geological feature, the depression surrounding a small swallow hole!

The cliffs on either side of the Gorge d'Enfer are deeply undercut, forming magnificent overhangs known as *abris* which were, in prehistoric times, used as dwellings. There are three main *abris* in the gorge, the most important of which, the *abri des Poissons* is closed off at the moment for the sake of a unique prehistoric carving in its roof – of a fish. The other two are easily accessible and very impressive and provide a cool, shady habitat that is clearly ideal for maidenhair fern, and a tiny toad.

We drove back through Les Eyzies where the swifts, swallows, house and crag martins are the main current residents of the *abri* above the town and we watched from the coach as a raven flew up to the cliff carrying a twig. A short distance up a side road brought us to Font de Gaume.

We were in good time for our visit so we set off early to take the track up to the cave entrance at a leisurely pace. The rocky slope beside us was in full sun and the wildflowers and insects were characteristic of the *cause* grassland of the limestone plateau. The damper grassland at the bottom was showing a fine display of meadow saxifrage and field eryngo. Farther up, we found woodcock orchids and eyebright. Both yellow and white rockroses were there, together with their smaller relative, *fumana*. The blue globularia was more or less over but we found white and pink forms of Nottingham catchfly. A stonecrop, *Sedum reflexum* was just coming into flower and the pink convolvulus, *Convolvulus cantabrica* actually opened while we were inside the cave! Little tufts of wall rue sprang out of tiny crevices in the rock face.

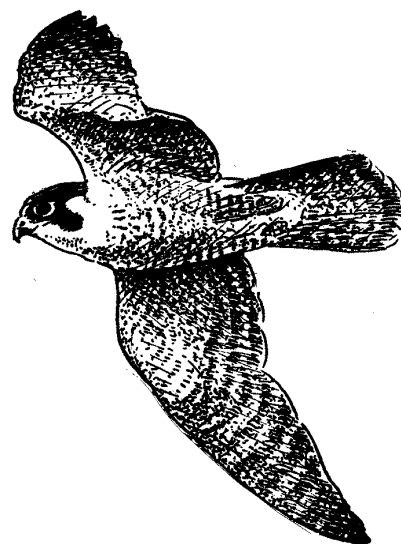
The visit to the cave was a memorable experience for everyone. We had a very well informed and sympathetic guide who was able to explain the nature of the polychrome paintings and engravings. Her deft use of torches and shaded lights enabled us to appreciate the contours and colours and the amazing sensitivity of some of the paintings. We came out into the warm sunshine aware that we had had an experience that we were not likely to forget.

A Bonelli's warbler was singing as we made our way down and hornets were buzzing round an oak tree. We came across the grotesque glossy dark green larva of a bloody-nosed beetle feeding on a goosegrass stem beside the path.

We stopped for lunch at a riverside picnic area, under the shadow of Le Grand Roc. A turtle dove and a nightingale were singing and a pair of mallard dabbled in the water at the edge of the river. The brilliant yellow of a male grey wagtail flew by and, alerted by its sharp call, a few of us had a brief glimpse of a kingfisher dashing upstream. The bramble bush beside us was decorated with a comma butterfly and we enjoyed a brief fly-past by a scare swallowtail.

After lunch Gilles drove us north-eastwards up the valley of the Vézère to La Roque St Christophe. This is much visited by tourists because of its famous honeycomb of troglodyte dwellings, high up on the cliff face. We were more interested in the house and crag martins at their nests on the cliff face though, their characteristic mud structures, built here of red clay, contrasting sharply with the grey limestone rock.

High on a ledge immediately above us we caught a movement. A young peregrine, apparently almost fledged, was visible on its nest ledge, with the adult female perched on a tree above it. While we watched a black redstart carrying food to its nest-hole lower down on the cliff, a second young peregrine appeared and then, to our delight, a third. They were all well-grown, frequently flexing their wings and almost becoming airborne as they flapped from one end of the ledge to the other. As the mother bird flew round calling, the male also appeared and perched on a tree, enabling us to enjoy excellent and unforgettable views of the whole family both with the naked eye and through our binoculars and telescopes.



We drove the short distance to the car park, where most of the group enjoyed a cool drink, but Harvey, Bill and Anne walked up into a meadow and returned with news of a suspected military orchid. We all hurried to see it, and sure enough, there it was, together with a few common spotted orchids. What a splendid way to complete our tally of twenty-one orchid species for the week. We lingered for a while in the meadow, found a great green bush-cricket and masses of adder's-tongue ferns. Walking back through the woods, we found more maidenhair fern and a large patch of lily-of-the-valley.

It was our last evening, with another memorable supper. Home made home grown spinach soup was followed by a delicate homemade pâté with tomato salad, then fresh salmon in hollandaise sauce with tiny roast potatoes. The usual wonderful selection of cheeses appeared and the meal was rounded off with a delicious cheesecake.

As it was our last night, as usual we were keen to hear everyone's views as to which had been their most special moments so, over coffee and tea, and the last glasses of wine, we discussed the week's highlights.

- Anne N – Keith's walk, especially the pond; the map butterfly; the orchids, especially the fly, the military and the lady orchids
- Anne S – the peregrines; Boots the spider; the ascalaphids
- Bill – the orchids; the walk down from Montalier Haut; the midwife toads
- Bob – Friday, especially the wood, the cave and the peregrines
- Elonwy – the ambience and hospitality at Castang; the peregrines; the scarce swallowtail butterflies; the cave paintings
- Harvey – the peregrines; the firecrests; the southern white admiral
- Pam – the early morning walks; Keith's walk; the midwife toads
- Peter – the range, variety and balance of the week; the caves; the peregrines; the ascalaphids
- R and R – the caves; the peregrines

Saturday May 22: Around Castang and Home

Before breakfast on our last morning we set off at a brisk pace down through the wood, hoping for a glimpse of the golden orioles that we seemed to have been hearing from there on previous days. We were disappointed in the orioles, only hearing one singing in the distance. The valley was full of strands of mist as we left the wood but we had a good view of the buzzards flying around their nest in the pine tree. We had a good view of a hoopoe, too, flying across the valley and then a juvenile hobby appeared and flew to and fro quite close by, catching insects. Bonelli's warblers, blackcaps and chiffchaffs were all singing in the wood as we dashed back for breakfast.

For our final walk, we decided to take the circuit anticlockwise to the west and south of the house and meadow. We were drawn to a nightingale that we could hear singing from the back of the midwife toads' garden. The cherries beside the Castang drive were ripe at last and we picked some and ate them on the way.

Just below the hamlet we caught sight of a red squirrel in a tall poplar tree, scrambling along a branch. Eventually, it came out into the open and gave everybody a distant but excellent view through the telescope. A red-backed shrike flew across the road but quickly disappeared into the wood. We could hear golden orioles as usual and the first heron of the week flew over.

The meadowsweet was in flower in the ditch beside the lane and there was teasel coming up and field bindweed coming into flower on the bank. An emperor moth caterpillar crept into view among some grass stalks, looking as though it was ready to pupate. There were speckled wood butterflies flying about the bushes and a yellow shell moth in the road. In one of the gardens we watched a black redstart and then, in the next couple of minutes, we found five species of orchids (pyramidal, violet bird's-nest, fly, lady and narrow-leaved helleborine). We reflected on how many of us could find such a feast within a stone's throw of our garden. Then, as if to 'rub it in' we caught a brief glimpse of a peregrine, dashing over the wood.

In the magnificent oak arching over the road we heard a Bonelli's warbler and, after a little patience, we had our best view of it so far.

As we walked down the lane, we realised that we were getting closer and closer to the squirrel and eventually found ourselves near enough to follow its activities with the naked eye, though, even with the telescope we were never quite sure what it was doing with the poplar leaves it seemed to be picking and dropping.

We walked back to Castang through the lower part of the meadow where we found deep furrows ploughed up in the turf. They were fairly fresh and had been made by a wild boar rootling and 'unzipping' the turf with its powerful snout. It was warm and sunny and humming with insects and Peter and Elonwy called us to their window where a spectacular willow beauty moth was resting from the sun.

We had lunch again under the chestnut trees on the terrace with more of Cathy's wonderful salads and cold meats, pâtés and quiches. We were joined by a bloody-nosed beetle and a young green bush cricket.

Gilles arrived with his coach in good time to drive us to Bergerac for our flight and, with a palpable lack of enthusiasm, we all lugged our cases up to the coach. We sadly bade farewell to Cathy and Olivia – Keith had had to leave earlier for meetings in England – after a week of wonderful hospitality and incredible weather. Gilles' efforts on our behalf had been unstinting and unfailingly good-humoured throughout the week and the group's appreciation was demonstrated by a gift of some wine for him. The journey to the airport passed all too quickly and, after saying our affectionate 'goodbyes' to Gilles, we finally left the warm French sunshine behind us and headed for home.

Birds

Cormorant
Grey heron
Mute swan
Mallard
Black kite
Red kite
Short-toed eagle
Buzzard
Kestrel
Hobby
Peregrine
Rock dove/feral pigeon
Woodpigeon
Collared dove
Turtle dove
Cuckoo
Barn owl
Tawny owl
Swift
Hoopoe
Kingfisher
Green woodpecker
Great spotted woodpecker
Woodlark
Skylark
Sand martin
Crag martin
Swallow
House martin
Grey wagtail
White wagtail
Wren
Dunnock
Robin
Nightingale
Black redstart
Stonechat
Blackbird
Song thrush
Mistle thrush
Spotted flycatcher
Cetti's warbler
Melodious warbler
Whitethroat
Blackcap
Bonelli's warbler
Chiffchaff
Firecrest
Long-tailed tit
Blue tit
Great tit
Nuthatch
Short-toed treecreeper
Golden oriole
Red-backed shrike
Jay
Magpie
Jackdaw

Carrion crow
Raven
Starling
House sparrow
Tree sparrow
Chaffinch
Serin
Greenfinch
Goldfinch
Cirl bunting

**Mammals**

Shrew sp
Mole
Lesser horseshoe bat
Hare
Red squirrel
Vole sp – common vole?
Polecat
Badger
Wild boar (rootings)
Roe deer

Amphibians

Palmate newt
Midwife toad
Common toad
Common frog
Marsh frog

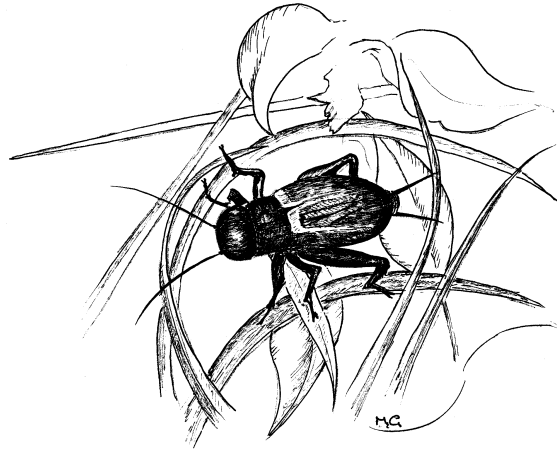
Reptiles

Viviparous lizard
Wall lizard

BUTTERFLIES

Grizzled Skipper
Red-underwing Skipper
Dingy Skipper
Swallowtail
Scarce Swallowtail
Green-veined White
Black-veined White
Orange-tip
Clouded Yellow
Cleopatra
Brimstone
Wood White
Southern White Admiral
Comma
Map butterfly
Painted Lady
Red Admiral
Pearl-bordered Fritillary
Glanville Fritillary
Meadow Fritillary
Marsh Fritillary
Small Heath
Pearly Heath
Speckled Wood
Small Copper
Sooty Copper
Small Blue
Holly Blue
Adonis Blue

Graphosoma italicum – a black and red shield bug, the ‘Millwall bug’ (our name) or Hogweed bonking bug (official)
Field cricket (*below*)
Green bush cricket
Campanotus vagus a wandering ant
Alydus calcaratus – a bug
Paper wasp *Polistes gallicus*
Demoiselle *Agrion virgo*
Broad-bodied chaser
Common darter
Black-tailed skimmer



MOTHS – mostly day-flying

6-spot burnet
Speckled yellow
Latticed heath
Fox
Pine processionary (nest)
Adela reaumurilla – micro-moth with very long antennae
Hummingbird hawkmoth
Lace border
Brown silver-line
Small yellow underwing

Other insects

Ascalaphid *Libelloides longicornis*
Violet carpenter bee
Hornet
Bee-fly sp
Ichneumon fly sp
Trichodes alvearius -a red & black soldier beetle
Green Tiger Beetle
Bloody-nosed beetle
Rose chafer
Firebug