

# *Honeyguide*

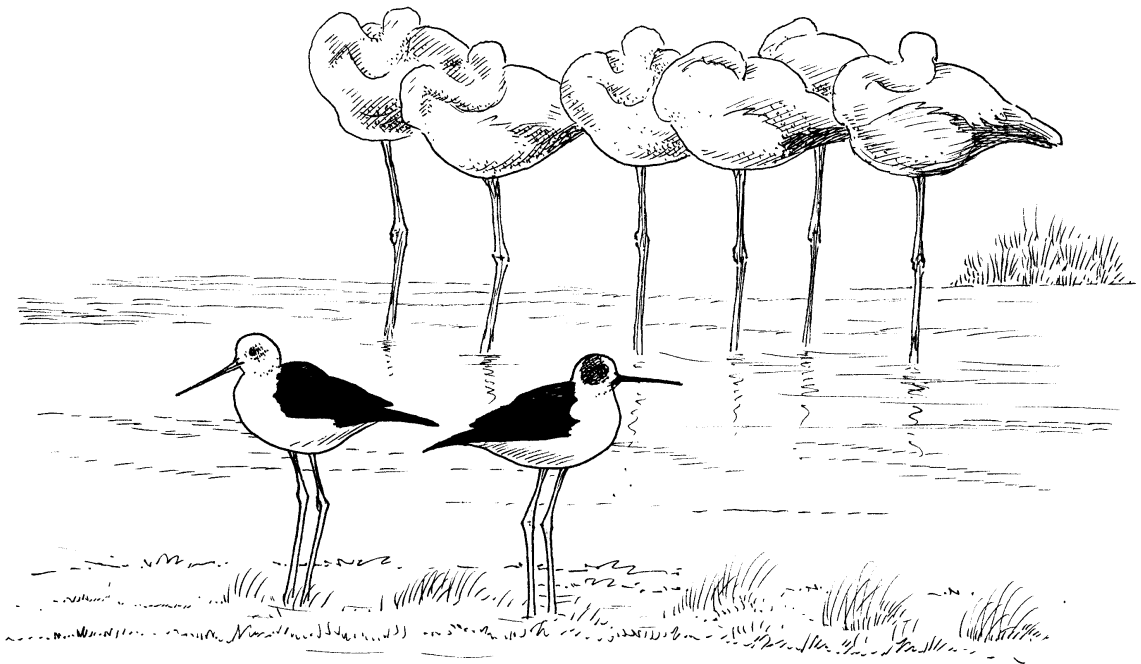
**WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS**

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## **Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays with the Salisbury & District Natural History Society**



**The Camargue  
24 April – 1 May 1999**

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The group

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Diana Forbes  
Joan Tripp  
Margaret Pragnell  
Grace Hickman  
Betty Bell  
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Leaders and report writers

Russell Leavett  
Rob Macklin  
Kathy Archibald

*Illustrations by Rob Hume. Cover: flamingos and black-winged stilts.*

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 in the Camargue was this year supplemented by two groups in the Lot, leading to a total of £875 sent to La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, the French Bird Protection League). This brings the total given to LPO to £4,075 since 1991, and to various conservation projects in Europe to more than £17,000. A thank-you letter covering from LPO is at the end of this report (but not this web version).

**The Camargue**  
**24 April – 1 May 1999**

**Saturday April 24th**

Grey skies at Gatwick were soon left behind as we took off on our scheduled flight to Marseilles where it was sunny, warm and breezy. We picked up our three minibuses and headed off down the motorway to Arles and the Hotel des Granges. From the buses we had our first views of several greater flamingos and a couple of avocets and masses of beautiful blue flowers all along the roadsides which we later identified as meadow clary. We were greeted at the hotel by Simone and Marcel and a superb lunch which we were thrilled to be able to eat outside. While we were eating, a black kite and short-toed eagle glided over the garden, the latter hanging in the air while looking for reptiles. Swifts and swallows were hawking for insects over the hotel while goldfinches and greenfinches sang from the garden trees. The garden was also full of butterflies including southern speckled wood, wall brown and a darting swallowtail. Two small tree frogs were found in the hedge and Wendy took several shots of a lizard on the rocks.

After lunch we decided on a stroll along the farm lanes behind the hotel where nightingales and Cetti's warblers seemed to sing from every possible piece of scrub. The ever-present black kite gave us all good views and a hobby flashed away from the fieldside trees. A solitary buzzard moved north across the fields and a couple of kestrels were also present. Gerald and Rosemary were fortunate enough to watch a hobby catching insects on the wing! The first purple heron flew lazily across the fields and was joined by a more familiar grey heron.

Butterflies here included red admiral, holly blue and a very fresh mallow skipper. There were masses of danewort and hoary-cress all along the lane, as well as the wonderful round-leaved birthwort, cypress spurge, star-of-Bethlehem, grape hyacinth, yellow vetch and some fabulous milk-thistles. Several rather past-it (but still impressive!) giant orchids were found on the banks of the nearby canal and dogwood was in flower with white bryony climbing up amongst it.

The four-course evening meal at the hotel was excellent; well drawn-out in typical French fashion and with plentiful good local wine, setting a most agreeable pattern for the week.

**Sunday April 25th**

The day dawned sunny and warm with no wind and was heralded by a singing nightingale at 05.45hrs right outside the hotel. Another five were located along the lane in a pre-breakfast amble together with several Cetti's warblers and two fan-tailed warblers. After a breakfast of croissants, rolls, honey and coffee we boarded the buses for the short journey into the wetlands of the Camargue.

As it was Sunday we decided to drive through the ancient town of Arles where 400 swifts were on the wing. We then drove on towards the village of Gageron where we saw our first marsh harriers and cattle egrets. Three turtle doves flew across the road here and a greenshank was feeding on the flooded rice fields. We then drove on towards the Étang du Vaccares where we encountered several more cattle egrets and our first little egret and purple heron.

Our next stop was at the rice fields and reedbeds at Mas d'Agon. One of the flooded fields was full of birds and we were fortunate enough to get close-up views of six gull-billed terns and at least ten Mediterranean gulls. A sparrowhawk then flew over putting all the birds to flight apart from a skulking squacco heron at the back of the field. Yellow flag irises were in full flower along the dykes making a superb sight and Gerald located the only wood white butterfly here. The reedbeds at Mas d'Agon were an amazing sight stretching back into the distance and full of egrets and herons. Among the cattle and little egrets a somewhat larger bird turned out to be a great white egret which soon disappeared into the reedbeds. More purple and squacco herons were located here and a pair of red-crested pochards flew over.

A high trilling announced the arrival of several bee-eaters overhead and one of the birds was actually seen carrying a bee! Reed warblers and chiffchaffs were in song here and ripples on the waters of the lake turned out to be swimming coypus.

We then moved on to the Mejanes viewing platform where we obtained excellent views of many black-winged stilts, five wood sandpipers and a spotted redshank. A great reed warbler was singing from the dense reedbed here but was not willing to show itself.

Our lunch spot was by the bull-ring at Domaine de Mejanes which also boasts a miniature railway. We were supplied with picnic lunches by Simone together with several French sticks and soft drinks which set the pattern for the week. A small colony of tree sparrows seemed to be breeding in the thatched roof of the train station.

After lunch we worked our way south along the eastern edge of the Étang du Vaccares where we had good views of greater flamingos, several little egrets and a few avocets. Eight greenshanks were roosting on a lagoon and several marsh and tree frogs were found along a small dyke, before they were scared off by a swimming snake. The vegetation here was mainly shrubby seablite with glasswort, annual daisy, spotted medick, Italian arum (!) and the ubiquitous tamarisk. We then stopped at a roadside pull-in to get close up pictures of the local black bulls and discovered several blue-headed wagtails amongst them. Several of these gave us really good views in the telescopes as they sat on top of the vegetation. Several wood sandpipers were feeding in these shallow-flooded fields and a pair of gadwall was feeding here. The characteristic “zit” of fan-tailed warblers was heard from the *Phragmites* beds and two birds then flew up into their classic song flight giving us all good views. New butterflies at this point included common blue and small heath while Jim managed to get good video shots of a coypu in the roadside dyke.

As time seemed to be slipping away from us we decided not to try and reach Fangassier and turned back towards Le Sambuc. We then stopped at another lagoon where several Kentish, ringed and little ringed plovers were busily feeding in the shallows. A lot of giant orchids had just gone over here but we did manage to find several fresh early-spider orchids and the pretty star clover growing in the lea of sea buckthorn. To complete a memorable day, those in the last bus in the convoy were fortunate enough to see a roller on the way back to the hotel.

### **Monday April 26th**

A northerly breeze and early morning rain was not particularly welcome so we decided not to head into the hills but instead to explore the barren area known as La Crau. A female sparrowhawk was our first bird as we disembarked from the buses and the rain had already stopped. A female Montagu's harrier gave us all good views as it hunted across the stony plain and a pair of red-legged partridges crossed the path some way in front of us. Scanning the plain brought its own rewards with several stone-curlews located amongst the sparse vegetation. One of these birds began to utter alarm calls so we moved away and left the birds alone. Another Montagu's harrier then flew past the group, this one an immature male, before an adult male appeared over the tree line and proceeded to hunt the edge of the plain.

We then walked out across the stony ground towards a wooden enclosure out in the middle where a male whinchat perched up and gave us all good views. What was arguably the bird of the day then appeared as a male little bustard flew in and landed by the main road. We were able to get the bird in the telescope and see the black and white markings on its head. Further scanning of the area then revealed a gloriously coloured roller on the ground which soon flew off and the only red kite of the trip was seen here on the way back to the buses. The local tip across the road had attracted thousands of yellow-legged gulls and dozens of black kites were also using the place as a foraging area. Three “little brown jobs” turned out to be short-toed larks but these were hard to see against the stony ground. As the sun broke through butterflies were tempted onto the wing including clouded yellow, brown argus and small copper. The area had some super plants including narrow-leaved bugloss, masses of thyme, sweet Alison, blue and scarlet pimpernel, wild clary, yellow-horned poppy, star and strawberry clover, Cypress and dwarf spurge, blue woodruff, fennel, alexanders, cistus, pale flax, hollow-leaved asphodel and the tiny *Evax pigmaea*.

After a short comfort stop in the village of Entressen we had lunch overlooking a large lake, the Étang de Entressen. Four pairs of great crested grebes were found on the lake and four common sandpipers searched for insects on the lake shore. Literally hundreds of swallows hawked for insects over the waters and yet another short-toed eagle drifted by.

The afternoon was given over to crossing the wide, open spaces of the main stony plain at La Crau. Our first stop was to search for little bustards and we were rewarded with excellent views of two birds which flew right past the group. Two corn buntings were in song here and three fresh wall brown butterflies were found sheltering from the strong wind. Ten tree sparrows and a whinchat were also found here and good views were had of another stone-curlew. Overhead a short-toed eagle hunted for reptiles and a female kestrel gave us all good views.

### **Tuesday April 27th**

Overnight rain and a cloudy start put off any attempt at heading into the mountains and we decided to go to Pont du Gard. A forty minute drive saw us arrive in light rain at this superb Roman aquaduct which was built in 19BC and still remains in excellent condition. An early arrival meant that we had the place to ourselves for an hour or so. At least two golden orioles were singing in the trees around the car park and several bee-eaters included one that perched up in a dead tree giving us good views. The sheer number of swifts and swallows was amazing as they hunted insects off the tops of the trees. As we walked up to the aquaduct the first of over 40 alpine swifts screamed through the air and were joined by several crag martins. One pair of martins was building their nest on the arch of the aquaduct which was safely out of reach of the crowds that soon began to build up. Seven bee-eaters then perched up in trees along the river allowing us to get good views of them through the telescopes.



We then walked down into the surrounding woods and although we could hear firecrests they were very difficult to pin down. Another golden oriole shot across the path, green woodpeckers called and two great-spotted woodpeckers drummed incessantly. A kingfisher shot along the river at great speed and a black redstart searched for insects on the rocks by the river. The catchfly which was growing in profusion turned out to be the Italian variety and butchers broom was found in shady corners. *Smilax aspera* had us confused for a while but we were soon diverted by some beautiful Calabrian soapwort and the strange birthwort *Aristolochia clematitis*. There were two species of asparagus here; *officinalis* and *speneri* as well as field madder and the giant Mediterranean spurge up by the bridge near a mastic tree. We had lunch on the shingle bank by the river and were entertained by superb views of two kingfishers and a little egret, which seemed not to notice our presence. Two grey wagtails flitted along the river, two bee-eaters called overhead and June spotted three terrapins hauled out of the river on a dead branch.

After lunch we took the road to Les Baux and stopped on the outskirts to admire sheets of blue aphyllanthes in flower. A short-toed eagle soared overhead and both robin and chiffchaff sang from the scrub. There was yellow flax here and greater celandine and no doubt all sorts of other lovely things but sadly the rain got the better of us. We then moved on to the town of Les Baux itself which has been largely restored since 1945. We had a couple of hours looking round this fascinating medieval fortress where alpine swifts and crag martins skimmed around the walls and a serin sang. On the way back to Arles we stopped to admire and photograph a stunning hay meadow filled with sanfoin, poppies, white campion and borage. False fox-sedge was in the roadside ditch and we identified a new spurge as

*Euphorbia nicaeensis*. Our last stop of the day was at a flooded rice field on the outskirts of Arles which held a large number of waders. These were identified as 53 ruff, three wood sandpipers and a little ringed plover. Three gull-billed terns were also hunting the area, bringing to an end an exhilarating day.

### **Wednesday April 28th**

A sunny and breezy start with conditions becoming hotter throughout the day. Another day spent in exploration of the Camargue with the aim of getting right down to the open waters of Fangassier. Our first stop was at a flooded rice field near Le Sambuc where 30 whiskered terns were hawking for insects. As we watched these superb birds a marsh tern came briefly into view and showed itself to be a stunning summer-plumaged white-winged black tern. Moving on we turned right, past the village, towards Tour du Vallat. We could hardly believe our luck when we saw a magnificent roller perched up on a roadside fence. We screeched to a halt and set up the telescopes. We need not have worried as the bird behaved impeccably and hunted for insects in the neighbouring fields allowing us all to see it well and for long enough to allow some to wander off botanising and find some lovely specimens of salsify. The usual short-toed eagle was soaring overhead and then a hobby flashed over the head of the roller and away across the fields. As if this wasn't enough we stopped near Fangassier to have a look at a hoopoe in a roadside field although it proved somewhat elusive! Both pied and spotted flycatchers were found in the scrub here, where there was a nice clump of Roman nettle, another hobby flashed over and a buzzard drifted by.

We then drove out to the middle of Fangassier over a somewhat rough track and into a very exposed area of the Camargue. Birds were few and far between out here although we were able to get relatively close to several flamingos. An avocet then flew by and a large group of waders was identified as 150 grey plovers. Smaller birds here included a male blue-headed wagtail and very brief views of a spectacled warbler. A very pungent yellow flower here was curry plant and a painted lady flew by bringing the butterfly total up to 20 species. We decided to leave this area for lunch as the wind was beginning to whip up the sand and moved back to the hoopoe spot. Three black-winged stilts and a spotted redshank were found in some small pools, a female marsh harrier flew over and upset the stilts and a large, black carpenter bee buzzed around the scrub.

After lunch we headed back to the wetlands and reedbeds at Mas d'Agon where seven whiskered terns lazily hunted for fish over the lake. Several great-crested grebes appeared to be breeding on the lakes while both reed and great reed warblers sang from the reeds. We then had a superb view of a purple heron as it flew up and then located several red-crested pochards feeding in the shallows at the reedbed edge. Two small ducks flew in and turned out to be male garganeys which began to feed amongst the weed on the surface of the lake. A bee-eater and a great white egret flew over and several black-tailed skimmer dragonflies were on the wing along the roadside dykes. As we headed back towards Arles via Bouchard we encountered yet another flooded field which was covered in gulls, including at least forty of the Mediterranean variety.

In the evening we all piled back into the mini-buses and drove off towards Dom d'Estoublon in the hope of catching up with the local eagle owls. We didn't really expect too much from this very difficult species but were totally amazed when Rita spotted "Le Grand Duc" perched up on the overhanging rock with the ear tufts erect and showing really well. This magnificent owl then launched itself into the air and drifted across the valley right over our heads - utterly superb and the highlight of the trip for many of us!

### **Thursday April 29th**

Our first stop was at the Abbaye de Montmajour just outside Arles to have a look around this impressive Benedictine abbey. A short-toed eagle soared over the valley below and a male black redstart was seen on the roof of the abbey. A nest within the confines of the building contained a single egg and was probably black redstart.

We then moved on towards La Caume in the Chaîne Des Alpilles and arrived at the car park by late morning. We had a bit of a look around here and an early lunch before the walk up the road towards the summit in the afternoon. Flowers were a little sparse here but a girl bunting sang in the car park and Rosemary found a crested tit in the local pines. Immediately after lunch Rosemary had a purple patch

as she found another crested tit and the first scarce swallowtail butterfly of the trip. The vegetation here was typical Mediterranean garrigue dominated by shrubs such as box and Kermes oak with Maritime pines on the lower slopes. Lots of *Genista scorpius* brightened up the woodland and there were patches of both *Thymus vulgaris* and *capitatus* as well as plentiful rosemary. As we climbed higher out of the trees the flowers started to get more interesting although it was tragic that for some way up the roadsides had been mown as a fire-break - very disappointing for our botanists! Jackdaws and swifts were enjoying themselves in the stiff south-easterly breeze but there was no sign of the Egyptian vultures which are known to breed on the cliffs here. We sat and watched for the vultures for about forty minutes without luck although the view was superb and we did see several alpine swifts. There was a lot of amelanchier in flower on the slopes and a brilliant blue flower turned out to be mountain lettuce. Other plants here included orange birds-foot, Mediterranean kidney-vetch, hoary rock-rose, globularia and blue flax. Nottingham catchfly adorned the roadsides as we climbed, with bladder senna, shepherd's needle, lavender and narrow-leaved valerian. Yet more butterfly species were found on the higher slopes with several baton blues, a glorious Moroccan orange-tip and a single green hairstreak.

We climbed right to the top of La Caume and set about searching for Bonelli's eagles which were known to breed in the area. Several unused nests were found on the adjacent cliff before Russell spotted fresh greenery on a nest tucked away on one side. It appeared that something was actually sitting on the nest and this was only confirmed when a female Bonelli's eagle turned her head sideways to give herself away. What was probably another Bonelli's was located in the far distance and an eagle soaring up close to us was of the short-toed variety. Flowers at the summit included white rock-rose, white asphodel, *clypeola* and some fabulous yellow irises (*lutescens*).

We arrived back down at the car park to scenes of devastation; June had been admiring 23 spikes of violet bird's nest orchid when a large flock of sheep came wandering through the wood and ate them all!

### **Friday April 30th**

The penultimate day and a trip to the Petite Camargue and the coastal town of Sainte Maries de la Mer. The problem of early fog soon diminished as the sun began to break through in early morning. We took the back road through Gimeaux and soon found five greenshanks and several black-winged stilts on a flooded rice field. A turtle dove was on the overhead wires here and two great reed warblers sang from the reed-fringed dykes.

Our first real stop was at Le Paty de la Trinité where we walked alongside dykes and marshes. Almost at once we heard our first booming bittern of the trip as up to 10 bee-eaters flew over the trees. Four blue-headed wagtails were on the nearby fields and at least two cuckoos called with one flying straight past the group. The tamarisk-laden bank was known to be a favourite roosting place for night herons and up to five birds were seen here although the views were somewhat fleeting. Eight ruff were feeding in the shallows and the reed areas held singing great reed warblers plus moustached and reed warblers. Four coypu were long dead on the path probably as a result of control by local farmers. Several butterflies included painted lady and southern speckled wood and a bearded tit "pinged" from the extensive reedbeds.

We then moved on to the information centre and viewing room at the Parc Ornithologique. Three of the group then had the luck to see a bittern flying right past the centre before disappearing into cover. The lake here was fairly quiet with several little egrets and a pair of teal and a pair of swallows were nesting under the eaves of the centre. We managed to find a lunch spot here away from the troublesome mosquitoes amongst several tassel hyacinths when two bee-eaters flew over.

After lunch we paid a visit to the coastal resort of Sainte Maries de la Mer and had a look at the famous church - very impressive. Several Sandwich terns, a little tern and a red-breasted merganser were offshore here and two cormorants flew over the town. After this we headed out to the Mas de Cacharel and along a really bumpy track which the trucks managed to cope with. We had very close up views of flamingos here and camera shutters were clicking away furiously! Up to 60 avocets were feeding in the pools and other waders in this area included several Kentish plovers, 11 ringed plovers, two little stints and a very handsome looking black spotted redshank. The day was brought to a close by at least two spectacled warblers in the scrub, possibly feeding young.

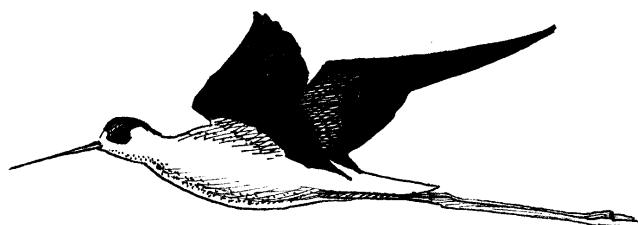
### **Saturday May 1st**

For several of the group and the three leaders there was a 5:30 am start for a dawn patrol of the Camargue. It was certainly a bit chilly as we arrived at the Mejanes viewpoint where two nightingales were competing with each other by voice. At least six purple herons flew over but the stars of the show were two night herons, one of which was seen very well indeed.

We then moved the short distance to Mas d'Agon where three red-crested pochard flew over the road and three squacco herons were feeding in the shallows. A splendid group of 20 little egrets was feeding together along the reed edge and, at this time of the morning, coypus seemed to be everywhere. Another bittern boomed far off across the reeds and at last, four great reed warblers put in appearance by singing from the tops of the reeds. On the drive back to the hotel for breakfast we encountered a field full of gulls which on closer inspection included at least 40 Mediterranean gulls.

After a leisurely breakfast it was time to take our leave from Simone and Marcel at the Hotel de Granges for the drive back to the airport at Marseilles, all clutching our May-day *muguet des bois*. A short stop en-route gave us final views of bee-eaters on the wires and a glorious clump of rosy garlic on the roadside here. All in all a marvellous week and we felt we had gained a real flavour of this part of Provence.

Rob and Kathy Macklin  
May 1999



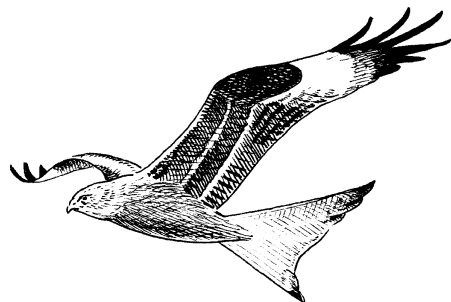
### **Camargue, 24 April – 1 May 99, Itinerary**

- Day 1 London Gatwick to Marseille, drive to Arles via N568, lunch at Hotel des Granges. Afternoon walk around environs of hotel.
- Day 2 Arles - Étang de Vaccares observation post via Gageron and Villeneuve, Mas d'Agon with lunch at Domaine de Mejanes. Afternoon along east side of Étang de Vaccares at Marais de Romieu, Pont Noir and south to Salin de Badon. Return via Tour du Valat and Le Sambuc.
- Day 3 La Crau at Aerodrome du Vallon, lunch at Étang d'Entressen. Afternoon across La Crau via Peau de Meau.
- Day 4 Pont du Gard via Tarascon and Beaucaire, lunch by Gardon River at Pont. Afternoon visit to Les Baux via Val d'Enfer.
- Day 5 East side of Étang de Vaccares via Tour du Valat, south to Étang du Fangassier. Lunch by roadside at St Bertrand. Part of the group to Arles for the afternoon, the remainder to the observation post on the north shore of Étang de Vaccares and Mas d'Agon. Evening visit to Mt. Valence.
- Day 6 Visit to Abbey de Montmajour. Late morning walk and lunch among pines with afternoon climb (for some!) to summit at La Caume, Les Alpilles.
- Day 7 West side of Étang de Vaccares (edge of Petit Camargue) via Grimeaux and Le Paty de la Trinité, south to Parc Ornithologique for lunch, then to St Maries-de-la-Mer, returning via Mas de Cachereil, Albaron and Mas du Pont de Rousty.
- Day 8 Dawn visit to observation post at Étang de Vaccares and Mas d'Agon for some. Arles to Marseille via Mas Thibert and Port St Louis. Afternoon flight to Gatwick with lunch on board.



## BIRDS

<b>Little grebe</b>	Largely heard, especially at Mas d'Agon where up to six.
<b>Great crested grebe</b>	Occasional on larger water bodies, up to six at Étang d'Entressen.
<b>Cormorant</b>	Two in the Petite Camargue.
<b>Bittern</b>	Largely heard, especially at Le Paty de la Trinité and Mas d'Agon. One sighting, at Parc Ornithologique.
<b>Night heron</b>	Recorded at Paty de la Trinité and Mas d'Agon, where returning to daytime roosts at dawn.
<b>Squacco heron</b>	Up to five at Mas d'Agon, where some excellent sightings.
<b>Cattle egret</b>	Now seemingly more abundant than little egret, with up to a hundred on some days. First recorded as a breeding bird as recently as 1957! Often seen riding on horses or cattle.
<b>Little egret</b>	Frequent in marshy places.
<b>Great white egret</b>	Singles on three days - very rare until the early 60s, this species now occurs regularly in small numbers and may breed?
<b>Grey heron</b>	Numerous with many breeding colonies in reedbeds.
<b>Purple heron</b>	Frequent in marshy areas around Étang du Vaccares.
<b>Greater flamingo</b>	Numerous sightings, including thousands within the salines of Étang du Fangassier and the Petit Camargue.
<b>Mute swan</b>	Occasional, on larger water bodies.
<b>Shelduck</b>	Frequent in the salines of the central Camargue.
<b>Gadwall</b>	Two only.
<b>Teal</b>	Two at Parc Ornithologique was the only sighting.
<b>Mallard</b>	A common resident of marshes and rice fields alike.
<b>Garganey</b>	Two males at Mas d'Agon was the only record.
<b>Shoveler</b>	Up to two on three days.
<b>Red-crested pochard</b>	Occasional sightings at Mas d'Agon , Paty de la Trinité and Salin de Badon.
<b>Red-breasted merganser</b>	A single female on the sea at St Maries de la Mer.
<b>Black kite</b>	The most numerous bird of prey throughout the drier farmed areas and among the rice fields. Hugh numbers over the rubbish tip at Entressen!
<b>Red kite</b>	A single at La Crau.

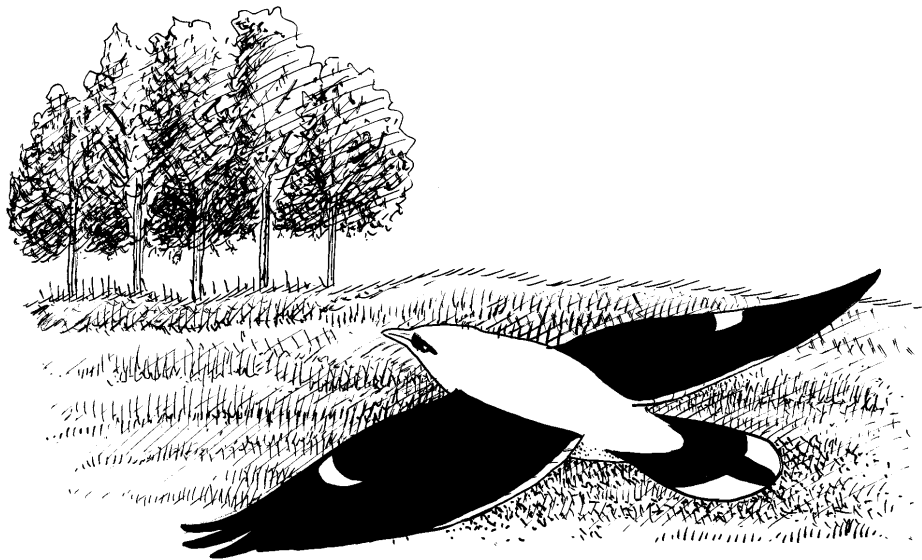


<b>Short-toed eagle</b>	A single bird soaring over our picnic table soon after our arrival at the hotel, followed by several others on a number of days. A bird that appears to have become much more frequent in the Camargue in recent years.
<b>Marsh harrier</b>	The most numerous raptor throughout the marshes, up to fifty on some days. The central areas of the Camargue alone were estimated to hold over 80 pairs in the mid-80s.
<b>Montagu's harrier</b>	Only recorded at La Crau, where up to three.
<b>Sparrowhawk</b>	Occasional brief sightings of singles.
<b>Buzzard</b>	Occasional singles, usually in farmland or hill country.
<b>Bonelli's eagle</b>	The back of an incubating bird of prey at La Caume was thought to belong to this species but the bird never left its eyrie, which has held this species in past years.
<b>Kestrel</b>	The most frequent small bird of prey in all habitats.
<b>Hobby</b>	Occasional sightings - less obvious than in recent years.
<b>Red-legged partridge</b>	Two at La Crau the only sightings.
<b>Pheasant</b>	More often heard than seen, especially in farmed areas.
<b>Moorhen</b>	Frequent in marshy places, along canal edges and around flooded rice fields.
<b>Coot</b>	Very common on larger water bodies.
<b>Little bustard</b>	Up to ten birds seen well in various parts of La Crau. Sadly this splendid species is showing dramatic declines in much of France.
<b>Oystercatcher</b>	A single sighting only.
<b>Black-winged stilt</b>	Frequent in flooded rice fields and around marshy pools - fifty plus on some days.
<b>Avocet</b>	Frequent in saline pools, most numerous on the west side of the Camargue.
<b>Stone-curlew</b>	Up to ten birds seen and heard well at La Crau.
<b>Pratincole</b>	Three flying in the distance was the best we could do for this elusive species.
<b>Little ringed plover</b>	Several at Tour du Valat and at Pont du Gard.
<b>Ringed plover</b>	Rather elusive but up to eleven together at Cacharel.
<b>Kentish plover</b>	Confined to the salines, where occasional sightings of up to five birds.
<b>Grey plover</b>	A flock of c150 birds high above Étang du Fangassier was the only sighting.
<b>Lapwing</b>	Two only, now a very rare breeding bird in the Camargue.
<b>Little stint</b>	Two near Cacharel, with ringed plovers in the salines.
<b>Ruff</b>	Occasional in flooded rice fields with a notable 53 together in one place near Arles.

<b>Redshank</b>	A single near Cacharel.
<b>Spotted redshank</b>	Some fine birds in summer plumage, in salines especially.
<b>Greenshank</b>	Occasional groups in flooded rice fields.
<b>Wood sandpiper</b>	Occasional along margins of marshy pools, especially from the observation post at Étang de Vaccares.
<b>Common sandpiper</b>	Four at Étang d'Entressen, among stones on the shore.
<b>Mediterranean gull</b>	Frequent in flooded rice fields, their distinctive calls often filling the air!
<b>Black-headed gull</b>	Numerous and widespread.
<b>Yellow-legged gull</b>	Abundant in coastal locations and especially at the rubbish tip at Entressen.
<b>Gull-billed tern</b>	Small groups of this stout tern seen in flooded rice fields.
<b>Sandwich tern</b>	Small numbers at sea at St.Maries.
<b>Common tern</b>	Small numbers at several Étangs and in the salines.
<b>Little tern</b>	A single in the salines near Cacharel.
<b>White-winged black tern</b>	A single, in full summer plumage, with whiskered terns feeding in flooded rice fields.
<b>Whiskered tern</b>	c35 feeding in flooded rice fields.
<b>Rock dove/feral pigeon</b>	Widespread and common.
<b>Woodpigeon</b>	Occasional singles in farmland.
<b>Collared dove</b>	Common around habitation.
<b>Turtle dove</b>	Small numbers, often on wires.
<b>Cuckoo</b>	Rather scarce with only occasional birds in song.
<b>Barn owl</b>	A single at dawn one the last day.
<b>Eagle owl</b>	Splendid views of two birds at Mt Valence, both perching and flying. Voted the sighting of the trip by many!
<b>Tawny owl</b>	A single heard close to the hotel.
<b>Nightjar</b>	Heard at Mt Valence.
<b>Swift</b>	Thousands on passage on some days - numerous on all days.
<b>Alpine swift</b>	Wonderful views at Pont du Gard with many birds within feet of us, also at Les Baux and La Caume.
<b>Kingfisher</b>	Excellent views of up to five birds by the Gardon River at Pont du Gard.
<b>Bee-eater</b>	Seen on several days with some excellent sightings of perched birds at times. Few will forget their distinctive calls that we came to know well.
<b>Roller</b>	Singles on three days, all from roadsides.

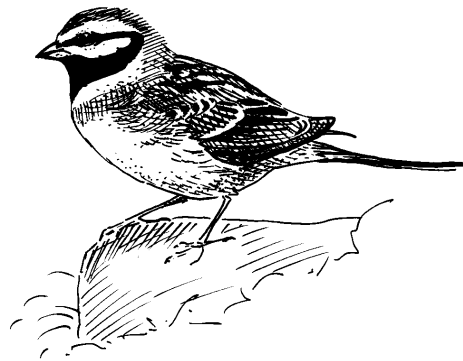
<b>Hoopoe</b>	Two sightings only - this species seems to have become rather scarce in the Camargue in recent years, although as recently as the late 80s it was described as “an abundant breeder”.
<b>Green woodpecker</b>	Heard on several days.
<b>Great spotted woodpecker</b>	A single at Pont du Gard was the only record.
<b>Short-toed lark</b>	8-10 birds recorded at La Crau, some displaying.
<b>Crested lark</b>	Surprisingly scarce with only a few heard.
<b>Skylark</b>	Recorded on a number of days, in a wide range of habitats.
<b>Sand martin</b>	Up to twenty over a number of water bodies.
<b>Crag martin</b>	Most numerous at Pont du Gard, where seen really well, but also at Les Baux and La Caume.
<b>Swallow</b>	A widespread and abundant migrant.
<b>House martin</b>	Recorded on many days, up to a maximum of c40.
<b>Tawny pipit</b>	A single at La Crau.
<b>Yellow wagtail</b>	Frequent amongst <i>Salicornia</i> in particular, all of the blue-headed race.
<b>Grey wagtail</b>	Two at Pont du Gard, rare elsewhere.
<b>White wagtail</b>	Up to five at Pont du Gard, scarce elsewhere.
<b>Wren</b>	Occasional singles.
<b>Robin</b>	Occasional singles heard.
<b>Nightingale</b>	Widespread and common, its song heard in a wide range of habitats.
<b>Black redstart</b>	Singles at Les Baux and the Abbey de Montmajour.
<b>Whinchat</b>	A single at La Crau.
<b>Stonechat</b>	Two at Paty de la Trinité.
<b>Northern wheatear</b>	Six sightings at La Crau.
<b>(Blue rock thrush)</b>	Song heard at La Caume was thought to be of this species but no bird was seen.
<b>Blackbird</b>	A single in the grounds of the hotel was the only sighting!
<b>Cetti's warbler</b>	A widespread and common ditch-side bird, its explosive call heard everywhere.
<b>Fan-tailed warbler</b>	Again widespread and common, its ‘zitting’ call well learnt.
<b>Moustached warbler</b>	Rarely, in dense reedbeds, not seen.
<b>Reed warbler</b>	The common ‘warbler’ of all reedbeds.

<b>Great reed warbler</b>	The harsh song of this large thrush-like warbler was heard best on the last day of the trip reflecting its arrival period in the Camargue.
<b>Spectacled warbler</b>	Best seen in the <i>Salicornia</i> scrub of the Petit Camargue, where up to five birds including some handsome males.
<b>Sardinian warbler</b>	A scattering of records - this species doesn't get any less secretive!
<b>Whitethroat</b>	Occasional singles.
<b>Blackcap</b>	Especially well represented at Pont du Gard but also recorded elsewhere.
<b>Chiffchaff</b>	Occasional singles.
<b>Willow warbler</b>	One - two on several days.
<b>Pied flycatcher</b>	Occasional singles.
<b>Spotted flycatcher</b>	A single sighting only, at Mas d'Agon.
<b>Bearded tit</b>	Heard only, at several reedbed sites.
<b>Crested tit</b>	Three among the pines at the base of La Caume.
<b>Blue tit</b>	Several at Pont du Gard.
<b>Great tit</b>	Most numerous at Pont du Gard.
<b>Golden oriole</b>	Up to three in song at Pont du Gard, some brief sightings.



<b>Jay</b>	A single en route to La Caume.
<b>Magpie</b>	A widespread and abundant species, huge numbers at La Crau.
<b>Jackdaw</b>	Widespread and often abundant.
<b>Carrion Crow</b>	Very common.
<b>Raven</b>	A single heard at La Caume.

<b>Starling</b>	Not especially numerous, usually near cattle.
<b>House sparrow</b>	Still widespread and very common, unlike in Britain.
<b>Tree sparrow</b>	Small numbers in several places, including close to the hotel.
<b>Rock sparrow</b>	A single at Pont du Gard.
<b>Chaffinch</b>	Common at Pont du Gard and La Caume, scarce or absent elsewhere.
<b>Serin</b>	Frequent, especially its distinct call, excellent views at Pont du Gard in particular.
<b>Greenfinch</b>	Largely seen close to the hotel .
<b>Goldfinch</b>	A common and widespread species.
<b>Linnet</b>	Few sightings of this scarce species in the Camargue.
<b>Cirl bunting</b>	Seen at Pont du Gard and heard elsewhere.



<b>Reed bunting</b>	Surprisingly scarce with only occasional sightings.
<b>Corn bunting</b>	Occasional in agricultural land.

Ref: The Birds of Camargue, Paul Isenmann, Societé d'Études Ornithologiques, 1993.