

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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**Flowers and Birds in the Lot
8 – 15 May and 15 – 22 May 1999**

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Participants
8 – 15 May

George Shutter
Nicholas Armfelt
Rosemary MacDonald
Beryl Scrivener
John Deery

15 – 22 May

George Shutter
Nicholas Armfelt
Malcolm Crowder
Helen Crowder
Peter Burge
Sue Burge
Kate Dalziel
Pamela Ive
Beryl Ranwell
Philip Clarkson Webb
Sue Clarkson Webb
Julie Gayner

Leaders: David Collins

Chris Durdin

Our host at Maison Meulet, Galoubet: Lynn Todd

I first visited Galoubet in September 1990, and have returned in the May of every year since, with the exception of 1992. There must be something drawing me, and a total of 16 Honeyguide groups, to this quiet corner of rural France. It can't be the solar-heated swimming pool; my week this year was the wettest ever and the only one where there was more than enough other water to make the pool less than tempting.

The best of food & wine is a big factor, which delights the taste buds and contributes to the genial atmospheres. The visual show includes orchids, which steal the show for many: military, lady, monkey, woodcock, lizard and pyramidal orchids in the small field outside the back door, and a dozen others a short walk away. The assault on the senses is completed by the sounds of woodlark and golden oriole by day, and nightingale and nightjar by night. In truth these things are not easily divisible: It's the whole package that makes it work.

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 Lot was this year supplemented by a group in the Camargue, 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.

You will have read in the brochure that the money from this holiday goes to the 'Refuge LPO' campaign. One issue that prompted this campaign was the French law whereby, in some departments, it was illegal to forbid hunting on your own land. Pamela Ive, a resident of the Lot with us in week two, told us that this had recently been changed, at long last. This is some good news to offset, in part, the attempts by the French authorities to extend the hunting season, contrary to the European Union's Wild Birds Directive which the LPO, supported by the RSPB, is resisting through the institutions of the EU.

The holiday reports from both weeks are combined here as usual, though probably for the last time for a while as the plan is one week only in the year 2000. There is much in common, but also differences, not least the weather as well what we saw. We start with our daily logs, then continue with various lists including cheeses & wine and a thorough butterfly report by Nicholas Armfelt, with us for both weeks. I hope this makes a good souvenir and *aide memoire* for those on the holidays and gives a good taste of the area for anyone thinking of going to Galoubet in the future.

Chris Durdin

Illustrations by Rob Hume. Front cover: Maison Meulet, Galoubet.

Week 1, 8 – 15 May 1999
with David Collins

Saturday 8 May – Gatwick to Galoubet

Touchdown at Toulouse, and there was Jean-Claude to meet us. Very soon we were speeding up the motorway towards Galoubet. Occasional sightings of Black Kite and Buzzard were expected, but two Little Egrets beside a small lake were rather more surprising. Less than two hours from the airport we were close to our destination. Finally we dropped down through the oak woods into the secluded valley which was to be our home for the next week. There was Lynn and the rest of the team to welcome us and show us to our rooms at Maison Meulet.

Shortly afterwards we were tucking into our first delicious meal of the week complete, as always, with fine wine and a selection of the best French cheeses. The food and hospitality are part of the special attraction of this holiday, as important in their own way as the orchids, butterflies and birdsong.

Sunday 9 May – Local Walks

Nightingales can be hard to see, but when I opened my window on the first morning I was surprised to have a view of one singing in the bush just a few feet away. The first bird seen by the rest of the early morning risers was Short-toed Treecreeper. We were delighted to discover that, as in the previous year, a pair was nesting under the roof of the pigeonier. They were busy bringing food to their young, repeatedly creeping up the wall of the pigeonier like clockwork toys, just as they had done before. The early morning walks are devoted mainly to birdwatching, and we tried not to notice the orchids that would be the focus of attention after breakfast: but how can you ignore Lady Orchids in peak condition? Although we heard plenty of Bonelli's Warblers giving their dry, rattling song, we were unable to get good views. However, two Cirl Buntings were more obliging.

After breakfast we explored the flower-rich meadows immediately behind the house, accompanied as usual by the friendly local dog Gibus, and continuing to the "oriole wood". Indeed, orioles were much in evidence, and in no time at all we had magnificent views of two males and a female chasing through trees and even perched in the open. This can be a difficult bird to catch sight of, and we were delighted to have seen it so easily: but it was the orchids that really stole the show. In the meadows it was hard to know where to look next. There were plenty of Military Orchids in full bloom, a large cluster of fine Lady Orchids, along with Woodcock Orchids, Monkey Orchids, Fly Orchids, Burnt-tip Orchids and Early Spider Orchids. In the wood itself a Firecrest was singing although we were unable to locate it, and there was a constant chorus of orioles: both the mellow fluting of males and the shrieking catcalls of females. There were more orchids too, including Narrow-leaved Helleborine, several groups of the strikingly coloured Violet Birdsnest and two spikes of its dowdier relative the Birdsnest Orchid.

Leaving the wood, we doubled back across the meadows towards the house. By now it was already quite hot, and there were plenty of butterflies about. The meadows behind the house are particularly good for Duke of Burgundy Fritillary, and we saw a number of these beautiful little butterflies, together with several Berger's Clouded Yellows and a splendid Purple-shot Copper. Remarkably, we realised that it was already time for lunch, but not before a magnificent Short-toed Eagle put in a very unexpected appearance over the house. We had lunch (and a very fine lunch at that) in the garden, with a Blackcap singing very noisily in a nearby tree (as it did all week).

After lunch we set off in the opposite direction, passing first down a stony lane between meadows full of Sainfoin and Meadow Clary and then through shady woodland with Narrow-leaved Helleborine and Early Purple Orchid. Butterflies were much in evidence, including both Glanville and Knapweed Fritillaries in the meadows, and a splendid Red-underwing Skipper in a field where Green-winged Orchids were abundant. Crossing a small lane, we finally came to a meadow where Loose-flowered Orchids were in flower before heading back.

It proved to be a lovely warm evening, so dinner was provided outside in the garden. After that we assembled in front of the house to await the Barn Owl. While we waited we were treated to a fine chorus of Nightingales, a Nightjar churred on the opposite side of the valley, and two Scops Owls could also be heard. At about 9.45, the Barn Owl duly flew from the pigeonier, and we headed for our beds.

Monday 10 May – St Cirq Lapopie and Pech Merle

The early morning walk started well with a Wryneck calling strongly just below the house. We tried to spot it amongst the trees but its camouflage defeated us, although we did catch a glimpse of it in flight. A Melodious Warbler was more co-operative, and we had good views of one singing from the top of a bush.

Jean-Claude arrived shortly after breakfast to take us to St Cirq, an immaculately kept old cliff-top town above the River Lot. We were dropped off at a parking area just above the town and made our way back down the road, botanising as we went. There were plenty of interesting plants to identify so it took us a close to an hour to cover the 200 yards or so. The more attractive species included Bloody Cranesbill, large quantities of Meadow Saxifrage, various ferns and Wood Scabious. There were two Firecrests singing opposite the post office but, as with yesterday morning, we were unable to see one.

We had lunch on the mound above the old church, with spectacular views out over the valley and the river hundreds of feet below. Flocks of swifts wheeled in front of us, and these included several of the much larger Alpine Swifts. The views over pan-tiled roofs are one of the most characteristic features of this lovely old town, and today each view was complete with a singing Black Redstart.

Having finally relocated John and Beryl (!) we drove on to the caves at Pech Merle. The caves have outstanding stone-age cave paintings of prey animals such as horses, bison, deer and mammoths. After visiting the caves we walked down through the woodland to our pre-arranged pick-up point in the valley below. There were plenty of flowers to study on the way, including both White and Common Rockrose, Monkey Orchid, Nottingham Catchfly, Narrow-leaved Lungwort, and the oddly named Brown Vetch. This last species is a delicate little vetch with a solitary, orange-red flower.

Back at Maison Meulet it was a lovely warm evening so after another outdoor dinner, we headed across the valley in search of Nightjars. The Nightingales were in exceptionally good voice as we set out, and a Nightjar began churring as we arrived at the usual spot. We were fortunate enough to have fairly close views of one in flight: John's first, and his highlight of the week.



Tuesday 11 May – Gourdon and walk from Vaillac

The early morning walk produced good views of two different Melodious Warblers plus a variety of the usual species.

After breakfast the first stop of the day was at the old market town of Gourdon. We walked up to the viewpoint beyond the church to admire the sweeping views over the town and its surrounding countryside. A distant Honey Buzzard was our first of the week, as were a Grey Wagtail singing from the top of the church tower and a Serin feeding on weeds on the church roof! Two Swallowtails on elder proved to be the only ones we saw. Back at the minibus I caught a glimpse of a Tree Sparrow in a weedy garden: sadly my first one for several years.

After a short detour to pick up my telescope from Maison Meulet, Jean-Claude dropped us at the charming little village of Vaillac where we had lunch at a shaded picnic table by the church. It would have been a delightfully restful spot for lunch except for the appearance of two Honey Buzzards, a Hobby and a number of interesting looking blue butterflies. George and Nicholas worked hard at the latter and we eventually added both Mazarine and Escher's.

The walk back along a series of green lanes from Vaillac was hot but very rewarding. The highlights included a very beautiful Green-underside Blue which we caught and examined in the butterfly pot, John's first Tree Pipit perched in a tree, and a Hoopoe giving its distinctive three-note call somewhere in the distance. But above all it was the countless meadows full of flowers and butterflies that will remain in the memory. In the open country between Beaumat and Merle we came upon a family of Stonechats and our

first Com Buntings. George caught a glimpse of something pink, black and white (a Hoopoe?) disappearing into a hedge, but on investigation only a Sparrowhawk could be located. The final stretch of the walk was the Runner's Track with George's sharp eyes in action again, this time spotting two magnificent Red Kites.

The excitement of the day was not quite over, however. Just before dinner there was a fine Hobby hawking insects over the house, and at dusk we heard both Scops Owl and Tawny Owl. This last species was very noisy during the night and disturbed the sleep of several of the group (but not the leader!).

Wednesday 12 May – local walks

Only George and Nicholas joined me for the pre-breakfast walk today. We at last managed to get good views of Bonelli's Warbler singing on an exposed branch. Through the telescope we could see its plain white underparts and rather plain face. Even better though was a superb male Lesser Spotted Woodpecker in a poplar tree, found by a combination of the leader's sharp ears and George's sharp eyes. The telescope was brought to good use again, and we had excellent, prolonged views.

The morning walk was over the higher ground beyond the Mayor's house. This produced a good range of flowers including a number of Green-winged Orchids, while the butterflies included Safflower Skipper, Escher's Blue and Black-veined White. As we were eating our lunch back at Maison Meulet, we were surprised to see a pair of Short-toed Eagles flying up the valley. Then we strolled up the Runner's Track, stopping frequently to add new plants to the growing list, and also making a concerted effort with the butterflies. New species for the week included Provençal Short-tailed Blue, Brown Argus and Meadow Fritillary.

Gibus had evidently been rolling in something rather unpleasant and the Australian girls at Maison Meulet had been threatening to give him a much needed bath. We were encouraged, therefore, to see him standing in the pool above the track. Sadly, this only seemed to make matters worse.

On the way back down we chanced upon a Cirl Bunting's nest with three eggs, and best of all was a Large Tortoiseshell on the track (yes, they really are LARGE). There were also a number of the big, unmistakable spikes of Lizard Orchid, although none were yet open.

In the evening we were taken to the Climat Hotel in Labastide-Murat where we had a pleasant dinner. On the way back a few of us got out at the Nightjar spot to listen to (but not see) the Nightjars.

Thursday 13 May – Rocamadour

The early risers spent some time trying to see the resident Wryneck, which was calling in the hedge behind Gibus's house. Again, there were brief flight views but we were unable to see it perched. For John's benefit we went back to the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker tree, but no luck. We did, however, obtain good views of Bonelli's Warbler again.

Jean-Claude arrived after breakfast to take us to Rocamadour. As usual, we stopped on the way at the limestone plateau for a spell of botanising. The flora here is rather different and there are a number of alpine plants. We soon spotted Pyrenean Toadflax, Pyrenean Flax and Pyrenean Spurge. All this despite the fact that the area is actually lower than Maison Meulet! Better still as far as Rosemary was concerned were some large clumps of Lizard Orchid, including a number which were open. Other attractive plants included Montpellier Milk-vetch and Large Speedwell. Butterflies were also good. This is a good spot for Baton Blue and it was not long before we had one in the butterfly pot. We also added Spotted Fritillary, and there were good numbers of Red-underwing Skipper.

We had initially arranged for Jean-Claude to take us on to Rocamadour for lunch, but we were enjoying the natural history so much that we decided to extend our stay. He therefore headed off to town to have lunch, promising to pick us up at 2.30. We sat on a shady bank to eat our lunch. Nearby were large numbers of spikes of St. Bernard's Lily, and overhead we had good views of no less than three Honey Buzzards and a yet another Short-toed Eagle. Then we found a magnificent flower-filled meadow, with large quantities of what appeared to be Carlina-leaved thistle, another Alpine species, while a crucifer with rather unusual winged fruits proved to be Buckler Mustard. There were plenty of fritillaries and blue butterflies, and George managed to get video footage of what proved to be a Provence Chalkhill Blue some way north of the indicated range in our books.

In Rocamadour itself we divided the remaining time between good old-fashioned sightseeing, buying presents and lounging contentedly on the shaded terrace of a café, from where we saw Crag Martin.

Friday 14 May – local walks

There was a rather spectacular thunderstorm overnight, and today was cool and damp. A few hardy souls set out for the usual pre-breakfast walk, but this was soon rained off. We even had to have breakfast indoors!

There was only a light drizzle when we set off on our all day walk to Beaumat and the rain stopped completely after an hour or so, but it felt distinctly cool after a week of hot, sunny weather. Gibus had evidently had his wash and smelt much better today, and despite the inclement weather he accompanied us all the way.

The conditions were ideal for slugs and snails, and we saw a number of the big Edible Snails. More surprising was the large quantity of what looked like brown sea-weed! This jelly-like stuff appeared to have been washed off trees, and collected in heaps on the tracks.

In the wood just beyond Pisserate we found our first Red Helleborine of the week: just coming into flower. Emerging into more open country near Le Plegat a shout from Nicholas alerted us to a Hoopoe flying across the fields. In the hamlet itself we saw our first Redstart, and there was a pair of rather tame looking Red-crested Pochards on a pond! Much more exciting was Crested Cow-wheat growing beside the track. While admiring these, a Quail began calling in the adjacent cornfield.

Just short of Beaumat, the rain came on steadily, and with the prospect of a wet picnic looming we decided to take a short-cut back to Maison Meulet where we could eat lunch in comfort. Our luck seemed to be in today: despite the conditions, we soon spotted another Hoopoe. It disappeared into a hedge at the exact spot where George thought he had seen one disappear on Tuesday. Another mystery solved! A few hundred yards further on, we heard a Wryneck calling from a copse. At last we spotted it on a dead branch next to what appeared to be its nest-hole. We gave the Runner's Track a miss and returned to the house along the road. Rosemary found the peculiar Cone Knapweed, a Mediterranean species, and we spotted an unopened Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem.

After a late, leisurely lunch we went through the checklist. By the time we had done that the weather had improved somewhat so we set off along the road to Cayrès, concentrating on roadside plants in an effort to add a few more species to the list. This weed hunt became quite engrossing, and we tracked down such delights as Knotgrass and Rough Chervil. So totally involved were we in this pursuit that it was something of a shock to hear George say, "Is that a Peregrine?" Looking up we saw no less than three different birds of prey circling above us: a Honey Buzzard, a Hobby, and yes, a Peregrine Falcon! It is most unusual to see a Peregrine at Galoubet, and the opportunity to study Hobby and Peregrine together is also very unusual. The Peregrine certainly looked much stockier, with thicker wings and a heavy body. Before turning back we saw another Red Kite, there was badger hair on some wire, and Marsh Frogs watched us passing from a shaded pond.

Saturday 15 May – Galoubet, Toulouse and home

The big news this morning was that Beryl had finally made it for the pre-breakfast walk! The best we could manage though was good views of Cirl Bunting. Meanwhile, Rosemary, who had somehow missed us and set off in the opposite direction, found the only Southern White Admiral of the week. After breakfast we walked up the road to Merle to check out the Wryneck tree, adding one last butterfly (Large Wall Brown) and one orchid (Bee) on the way. There was also a group of nine Man Orchids and another opportunity to see the Cone Knapweed for those who missed it yesterday.

The Wryneck was not at home, so we set off back to Maison Meulet for the last time, via the Runner's Track. After one last meal it was time for Rosemary, Beryl, John and myself to leave Galoubet, envious that Nicholas and George still had a week left in this naturalist's paradise.

For the record the final tally for the week was 75 species of birds, 45 species of butterflies and 268 species of plants (19 orchids).

Saturday 15 May – Gatwick to Galoubet

After a straightforward flight, we were met outside baggage reclaim by David Collins and the three from the first group who were not staying. Helen's case and Philip's trolley were missing; happily the wrestling with the airport bureaucracy about this was surprisingly painless. Jean-Claude took just around the corner to where the coach from Guy Transports was parked. The first part of the journey is up the *péage*, then off the motorway and past Cahor before heading into the limestone area as we neared our base. Buzzards and black kites were identified, unlike the large gull seen both on this journey and the return that therefore doesn't make the list. There is a magnificent view over Cahors part way along the route. On the last leg, there were excavations for the new motorway being built through the area. The journey was a touch over two hours.

At Galoubet, there to meet us was Lynn Todd, our host at Maison Meulet, this year's cook, Alan, housekeepers Jules and Sonia, George and Nicholas still in residence from week 1 and Pamela who'd driven from Puy L'Evêque, elsewhere in the Lot. We were soon settled into our rooms and then gathered at the table for the first of many splendid meals. Cream of lettuce soup was accompanied by a Gaillac Perlé; enquiring about the main course we gathered it was chicken d'Alan (i.e. his special recipe). Tonight's red wine was a Côtes du Rhône Villages from Valreas, and as ever there were three cheeses, one hard, one soft and one blue, before the sweet, a pear flan in a ground almond base with kiwi fruit sorbet. It takes some stamina to cope with food as good as this for a week, but when the going gets tough, those tough Honeyguiders get going ...

Sunday 16 May – local walks

Breakfast at Maison Meulet is at 9am so there is time for a pre-breakfast walk to concentrate on birds when they tend to be at their best. This week's routine was to start off at 7.30, and this morning a well-attended walk – 10 of us – went up the road towards and beyond the house of Maurice, who is both the local farmer and mayor of the commune of Beaumat. A cirl bunting was singing in fine view, especially in the telescope; the woodlark remained more distant on this walk. Two honey buzzards and the trilling song of a Bonelli's warbler were a reminder that this was no English oak wood, and the same could be said for the flutey calls of golden orioles. We failed to ignore violet birdsnest orchid (*limodor*) and narrow-leaved helleborine on this bird walk, and that applied still more strongly to the two red squirrels back at Maison Meulet.

After breakfast we started by looking at the host of orchids in Maison Meulet's fields. Just a few yards from the back door and there are woodcock, lady and the best monkey orchid we saw anywhere. We looked at the topknots of blue tassel hyacinths (*right*) and the difference between the five-lobed field maples and three-lobed Montpellier maples that so often grow side-by-side in this area. The military orchids are in all Lynn's meadows, but especially under the washing line. Through a gap in the hedge and the next field is juniper and oak scrub, but equally orchid-rich. Here for now we only looked into the nearest corner, full of lady and military orchids. In the old well just beyond the swimming pool we noted three fern species, common polypody, rustyback and the black-stemmed maidenhair spleenwort.

Down the road a honey buzzard flew over, mobbed by crows, over the hedges of dogwood, hawthorn and spindle. We already had a long list of geraniums: long-stalked cranesbill was added along the roadside. Adonis blue butterflies were taking up minerals from the ground. Com buttercup was found along the way, a rare plant now in the UK, and a tiny small toadflax. The blue of blue gromwell was seen at the base of the hedge on the left and of chalk milkwort in the grass on the right.



Pretty black and red shield bugs on cow parsley are so regular here I could even remember their name – *Graphosoma italicum*. Approaching Cayrès, there is an eclectic collection of tins and plastic pots on fence posts, put there to stop the posts from rotting. They also make fine homes for paper wasps, and there were the nests and the wasp, on each one lifted.

As we returned for lunch, we helped to redirect the taxi driver who had brought Helen's suitcase back towards Toulouse. The telescope was swapped for the butterfly net for the afternoon walk. Soon caught for examination in the butterfly box was a green hairstreak. A day-flying lattice heath moth didn't need to be caught. As we moved through the wood there was birdnest orchid, common twayblade by the path and early purple orchids still in good condition. Fly honeysuckle had generally lost its pairs of creamy-white flowers hanging from leaf junctions, but green berries in their place were showing. Another shrub with obscure berries, plainly overlooked in previous years, was Cornelian cherry. It's so similar to dogwood, which flowers erratically in the shade, that it takes a bit of getting your eye in to find it. A diversion into a field on the left revealed wild candytuft, bumt-tip orchids and fly orchids, and an exclamation from Beryl about the strange plant between her knees revealed a man orchid. On the right, beyond where a digger had heaped some spoil, Nicholas led us to spikes of green-winged orchids. Kate pointed out bee orchid and early spider orchid completed the *Ophrys* orchid collection. George and Nicholas kept us all up to speed on the fritillaries, for which their eyes were well-attuned from previous trips and last week's finds; the most distinctive of these, perhaps, is spotted fritillary, which I caught.

In the damp meadow at the end of the track there was just one poet's narcissus, but plenty of star-of-Bethlehem and the thick green leaves of the autumn-flowering meadow saffron. Several loose-flowered orchids were there too, and a single specimen of robust marsh orchid, the latter sharing with woodcock orchid the distinction of not being in the northern Europe field guides. A brimstone was caught and a black kite seen as we turned to retrace our steps to Maison Meulet.

During the checklist session, outside the downstairs *pigeonnier*, it became apparent that short-toed treecreepers were nesting in the *pigeonnier* tower.

The mild weather tempted us into a walk after supper. As we approached the D22, a nightjar flew over, then another was found, churring, silhouetted on a perch in the centre of an oak that looked as if it had been struck by lightning. A distant scops owl whistled and a glow-worm was seen on the home stretch.

Monday 17 May - Pech Merle and St Cirq Lapopie

Another well-attended pre-breakfast walk that went past Gibus's house heard song thrushes and blackbirds, but this was outdone by George's quick ear, which alerted us to wryneck. A roe deer in the field just beyond the D22 didn't hang around for long before disappearing into the wood. Eyes dropped to the roadsides for cone knapweed and argyrolobium. Cuckoo, tree pipit and melodious warbler were other finds this morning.

Heading south, Pascal, today's driver, kindly stopped in the wood after I spotted some orchids, and we piled out to look at lesser butterfly orchids.

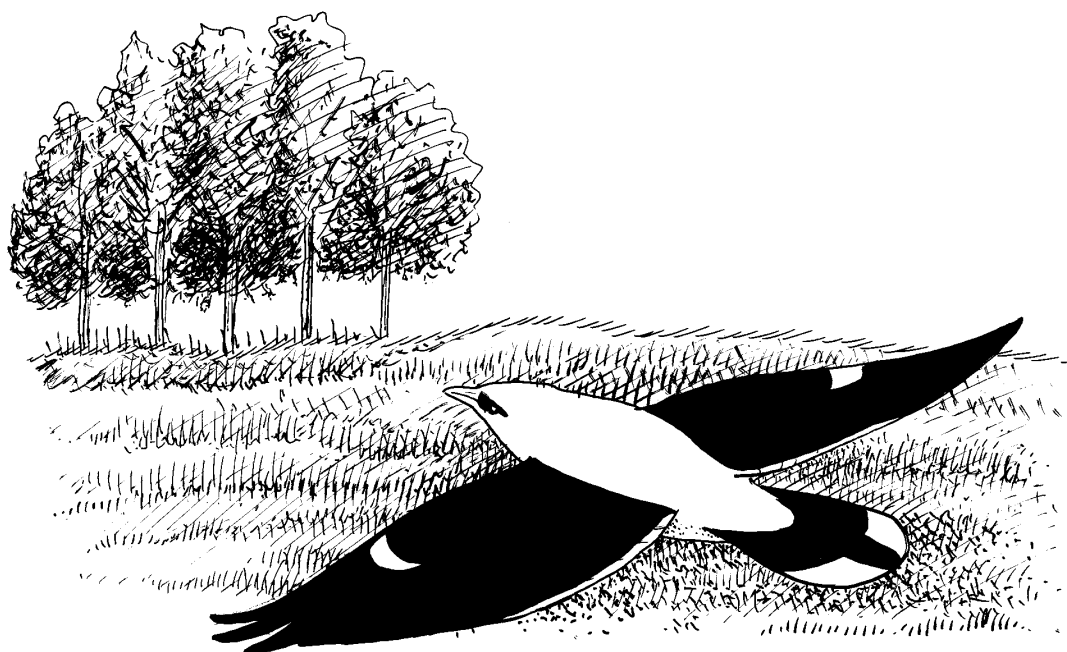
It was only damp as we walked down the hill from the car park into St Cirq, and pale toadflax, bloody cranesbill and Nottingham catchfly were noted, and a specimen of tare collected which was confirmed as hairy tare over coffee. But this was the start of a very wet week. It rained so hard we soon took shelter for coffee. St Cirq is a magnificent village perched high above the Lot valley, steeped in history and now tastefully restored for quiet tourism combined with some natural history. This was taken in from the vantage point of the café, before some climbed to the top of the castle mound, seeing yellow woundwort and French figwort on the ascent. Several shopped, possibly for shelter as much as retail-therapy, and everyone rendez-vous'ed successfully at the bottom of the village at 12.45 where the minibus met us.

The drive to Pech Merle is a short one, but the rain meant we stayed in the minibus to eat packed lunches, all except Helen and Malcolm, who returned with some winged broom. The cave tour followed. Many caves have fine stalactites and stalagmites; here also are prehistoric cave paintings of auroch, bison and mammoth, a child's footprint preserved in petrified mud, evidence of bears from long ago and an astonishing subterranean column of tree roots. The explanation is in French, today by a little Frenchman described memorably by Nicholas as a troglodyte. With a little careful listening and reference to the English translation, it's not too difficult to get a good feel for it all.

We braved the rain for some botanising on the slopes by the road. We looked at blue bugle *Ajuga genevensis*, which has stems all hairy rather than two lines on common bugle. One of the UK's rarest flowers, the semi-parasitic crested cow-wheat, is common here, as too is the toxic swallow-wort and the sticky-to-the-touch Nottingham catchfly, some of which was very red. Common milkwort and a speedwell, apparently *Veronica prostrata* subsp. *scheereri*, grew alongside the road. But as the rain persisted we didn't, and returned to Maison Meulet to dry out.

Tuesday 18 May – Gourdon. and walk from Vaillac

The early risers were rewarded with two ravens over Maison Meulet, two golden orioles seen fleetingly then a male oriole (*below*) pursued a crow. A melodious warbler on a tree in the middle distance then came to a roadside ash and sang in full view. A buzzard that we'd seen on a tree stump on the limestone scarp on the way out was still there as we returned, and the local red squirrel and a difficult to see firecrest were in the trees below Maison Meulet.



Gourdon market was its usual bustling self and we divided to look for maps, gifts or whatever or to admire the goats cheese and cherries in the small provisions market by the church. Up above the church, Pamela's lost glasses were found by Helen, and also found were a grey wagtail singing on the church roof, serins and black redstart. Dropping down a level, we looked at a tree sparrow and a recently fledged youngster of the same species. Coffee was at the Hotel Divan, served by a man with a moustache that would make even Hercules Poirot a little envious, and which evidently gave him the courage to flirt with Beryl as one might imagine only a Frenchman would have the presence and style to do. Then back at the coach for the agreed 12.30 departure and with Jean-Claude on to the pretty village of Vaillac. A picnic table in the village centre could not have been more convenient. Short-toed eagle, honey buzzards and hobbies interrupted lunch, but we were well finished as Lynn and Alan arrived with their own shopping to squeeze in purchases and picnic boxes.

"The walk back to Galoubet is only four miles or so, but it seemed at times longer in today's heat," says the 1998 holiday report. Not quite today's reason for the walk seeming longer than usual. Happily, the first leg was dry. We paused for wall rue and group photos on a small bridge in Vaillac, then for dame's violet by the river. An incredibly dark butterfly was confirmed by Nicholas as false heath fritillary - false teeth fritillary, someone said. A honey buzzard did its full wing clapping display several times. Up the hill, pausing for Roman snails, the view back over Vaillac's chateau, breath and the occasional plant, including more lesser butterfly orchids, not usually here. On the left were fields dense with pyramidal orchids. Sue was at first dismissive about her catch in the butterfly net she'd bought as Peter's birthday present, but realisation that it was our first wood white and not a moth made it well worthwhile. A tree pipit sang and perched in view.

Storm clouds were gathering and thunder approaching as we descended through the wood. It was raining as we made it across the stepping stones in the stream at the bottom of the slope – the secateurs having made it a little easier. But nothing made the ascent easy as rain turned to hail, and we battled to the shelter of Beaumat church. I was failing to get Maison Meulet on the phone when Lynn turned up and took two car loads of damp people back to base. Five walked, and the passing of the storm made for a good walk. A wood warbler was singing as we left Beaumat, then in the more arable area we saw stonechat, whitethroat, corn bunting and turtle dove. There were fleeting glimpses of Bonelli's warbler on the last leg and the first red helleborine in flower.

Wednesday 19 May – local walks

The early risers sought Bonelli's warblers, which were heard well but seen poorly. A cuckoo bubbled, and a family party of nuthatches was in the Bonelli's warbler corner at the junction of the Galoubet road and the D22. Pamela and Nicholas left the main party a little earlier and were rewarded with views of golden oriole and roe deer.

Gibus, the dog from Michel's house down the road, joined us on the morning walk which, although not in the sunshine we hoped for, was at least reasonably dry, and the sun did come out. He has a great knack of making friends with groups at Maison Meulet, and knows the rules about keeping out of the house. But what does he do for walks the rest of the year? We passed Maurice's farm. Some reflected that the rabbits and pigeons in the cages were unlikely to be pets. Then in the wood we looked for violet helleborine: there was the odd one there, but not in flower. Scent can help with flowers, as two then illustrated. One of the handful of Mediterranean plants in this area is pitch trefoil, and the smell of tar is strong, very distinctive and no doubt would discourage any browsing mammal. 'Once bitumen, twice shy' as George put it. Then, discussing the differences between dog roses and field roses (none of the latter were found) prompted Sue B to ask about sweet briar. There they were, leaves smaller than dog rose and with brown glandular hairs on the reverse, and with a subtle smell of apple.

This walk used to go to the road, then left and left again down another track. The motorway under construction proved no problem: it has only clipped the end of the walk and a track connecting our two tracks and maintaining the circular walk had been scraped through a field. The woods on the descent through the Combe de Cayrès were full of limodors, some in fine flower rather than their sometimes gone-over look.

After a short siesta after lunch, a smaller party came out and headed up the runner's track, so called as the tumble down shack at the bottom was described by an early visitor to Galoubet as a 'runner', for conversion. Nicholas had told us how rich the bottom part of the track was for butterflies, but the weather was against us. However the wild gladiolus was there, in the centre of the track half way up. Perhaps we should have left it there as the heavens opened and the usually wet runner's track was close to being a stream bed. Two turned left back to Galoubet at the top, but the rain then stopped and several continued round the block to La Croix Blanche and left to Merle. We heard a wryneck and had a cracking view of a woodlark on a wire. Coming back on the road, it struck me that not only was this an exceptionally good year for woodcock orchids, but there were several strange versions or *Ophrys* hybrids around this year.

An innovation this year is to eat out at the Hotel Climat in the small market town of Labastide-Murat. It gives the Maison Meulet team a night off, and makes a nice change, and the Climat was most hospitable. The buffet of hors-d'oeuvre and the cabécou (local sheep's cheese from the Causse de Gramat) were very good.

Monsieur Guy of Guy Transports collected us. I first met him in 1990, and he has been trying to learn to count in English ever since. In ten years, he has reached ten – though still struggles with 'eight'. We discussed the weather. "Pas chaud," said Guy. "Pas sec," I replied.

Thursday 20 May – Rocamadour and the Causse de Gramat

A red squirrel ran down the road behind Maison Meulet for the pre-breakfast crew. A Bonelli's warbler teased us with song and fleeting glimpses on the usual corner. Returning a little early due to rain, Michel, Gibus's owner, passed us. We asked where Gibus was this morning. I think he thought we were more likely to know than he was.

It was pouring with rain again so it was first stop Rocamadour. An advantage of the large minibus now run by Guy Transports is that we were able to approach from opposite. So we paused to over view this astonishing site and now major tourist attraction place that part clings to, is part hewn from, the cliffs above the river Alzou. Two hours here gave time for a coffee, the walk to the shrine with the black virgin and up past the 13 Stations of the Cross to the 14th, the cross in the garden at the top. Some walked both ways; others took the *ascenseur*. There were natural history diversions too, as the rain eased: a screeching group of alpine swifts; a nest of black redstarts; singing serins; crag martins; maidenhair fern in damp cracks; robins and chaffinches feeding youngsters.

Lunch was at the limestone plateau between Calès and Rocamadour, now a regular stopping point. Jean Claude left us eating picnics, soon under umbrellas. A cache of less than useful stuff – telescope, butterfly net and picnic boxes, was left under an oak, and we went on botanical exploration. Immediately grabbing attention was a group of lizard orchids in full flower, and the brave took a deep sniff of their smell, said to be billy goats, and certainly anything but sweet. Down the path were the St Bernard's lilies in their usual spot. Montpellier milk-vetch, pink convolvulus, fumana, argyrobium and large speedwell were logged, and as we descended the slope there was a mass of Pyrenean (or white) flax *Linum suffruticosum*. All the time a woodlark sang low overhead, and there was the odd interruption for a grey heron and various birds of prey, including short-toed eagle. By the road was the large umbellifer that proved so difficult to pin down in previous years, but looks fine as Pyrenean angelica. Pyrenean toadflax (= prostrate toadflax) was the third of David's four Pyrenean-named plants from last week; spurges were tackled the following day but I lacked the conviction (or courage?) to add Pyrenean spurge to the list. Samples of shrubs were pocketed, later confirmed as turpentine tree and Mediterranean buckthorn.

Spending the afternoon here meant the pleasure of exploring further up the hill than ever before. This took us to what was nicknamed Nicholas's meadow - a semi-arable, semi-meadow mass of sainfoin, alpine thistle and who knows what else, with pale clouded yellows dashing to and fro. This prompts me to note a conclusion we came to about Berger's clouded yellow and pale clouded yellow. Most seem to be the former, from close examination, partly because they prefer old limestone grassland/scrub which dominates this area, partly because they are rather sedentary so potter around and are relatively easy to catch. Pale clouded yellows prefer sainfoin meadows/crops, and they dash around like the migrants they are.

George appeared from the farm at the top of the road with a colossal jar of honey, and we all meandered down the road as the rain began again to rejoin the minibus and return to base. We came back via Gramat. The large building there was a convent, now a religious school, explained Jean Claude: "a Gramat school," quipped George. There was time for a little shopping at the *huit-à-huit* supermarket in Labastide-Murat, with wine, chocolate and fly swats in the shape of a frog proving popular purchases.

Friday 21 May – Local walk

It was cool but essentially dry as we headed through the wood on the limestone scarp at Pisserate, Gibus with us for his morning walk. Red helleborine was seen by all for the first time, and we studied the subtle differences between dogwood and Comellian cherry. Challenged to sort out the local spurges, the most frequent was established as Irish spurge, sun spurge was found on a small arable area, and finally some caper spurges around the gardens at Le Plegat. It was here that a hoopoe was seen from a distance, going in and out of the buildings, and a male redstart atop a conifer still enough for all to see through the telescope.

"What's this?" asked Sue B., looking at a polygonum. "Knotgrass," I replied. "I know it's not grass, but what is it?" she continued.

We were revising cranesbills when a familiar 'wet-my-lips' call announced a quail. Two common buzzards eased past a little farther along. Then, just beyond the crossroads ahead, the profile of ears, head and neck of a hare on the skyline. A right turn where the hare had now disappeared was followed another to Merle, before we dropped down onto the D22 for the last leg. A debate started about the *Helichrysum*: did it smell enough of curry to be curry plant? I think it did, but some convincing was needed. Then a real goodie: sickle hare's ear, a small yellow umbellifer, just down the slope. Bonelli's warbler showed well for the first time.

We had late picnic lunches back at Maison Meulet and, after a suitable break, a reduced party went out again. First stop was under the hedge in Lynn's meadow just before the red helleborine, but to look at adderstongue ferns. The afternoon walk was a repeat of Sunday afternoons, all the way down to the wet meadow, with a long diversion into the wild candytuft field with all its orchids. The walk back was along

the road, including a minor diversion to look at spiked star-of-Bethlehem. Wild carrot in the meadow caused the short diversion, but a mysterious umbellifer proved more difficult to name. There were many more in the semi-arable field on the left before Gibus's house, and studying the books the penny dropped. Armed with a trowel, the great pignut, one of the UK's rarest plants, but evidently common here though previously unrecorded, was then brought to the final checklist meeting, for later planting, nut and all, at Maison Meulet.

The last evening was the first mild one since last Sunday, prompting a dusk walk. The nightjar was on the same perch; nightingales sang, as ever; a bam owl screeched; a scops owl responded to a whistle; and there were 10 or more glow-worms, especially back at Maison Meulet. OK, it had been a wet week, but life was good.

Saturday 22 May – Galoubet, Toulouse and home

The final morning walk for Gibus and the rest of us was a wettish one, and many were recapping – with each others' help – on plants learned during the week. Nigel Spring, leading the next group at Maison Meulet, and his partner joined us for a while and again on the coach back to Toulouse in Jean-Claude's safe hands. Two little egrets from the coach were a surprise - until it was revealed that they were seen by the first group as it went north a fortnight ago.

I asked for nominations for the wildlife experience of the week on the return journey, which made an interesting and sometimes surprising collection of favourites. Not everyone could choose one, especially the two-weekers, so here and there I've stretched a point and noted more. Here they are.

Pamela: orchids

Julie: orchids

Kate: wild gladiolus, and 'Nicholas's meadow' on the Causse

Peter: the hare's ears

Sue B: song of the golden oriole

Sue C W: seeing golden oriole

Philip: orchids

Malcolm: alpine swifts at Rocamadour

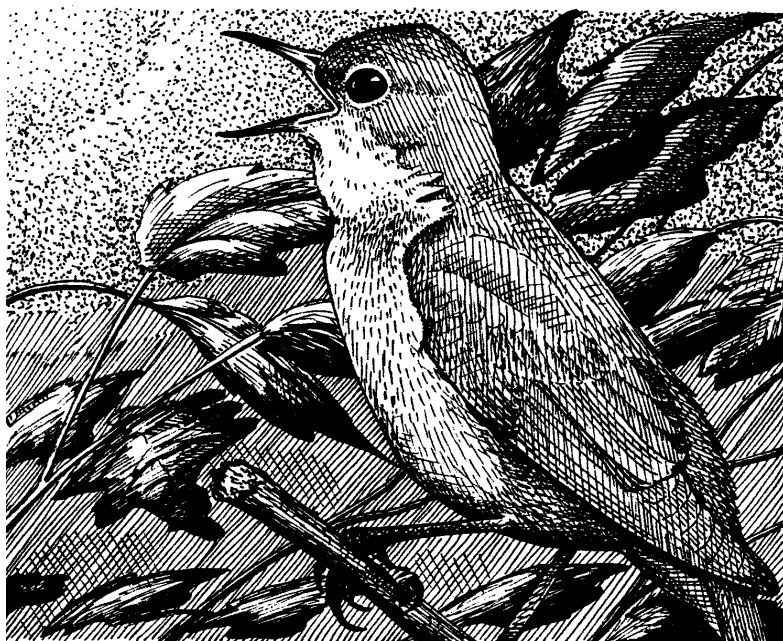
Helen: wild flower meadows; churring nightjars

George: alpine thistles on the Causse; lesser spotted woodpecker (last week); orchids in general

Beryl: 'the place'

Nicholas: woodlark and nightingale song (*below*); orchids, alpine swifts at Rocamadour, false heath fritillary, and argyrobium

Chris: great pignut



CHEESE AND WINE

Our usual bit of fun for the report is to list the cheeses in addition to the birds, butterflies and so on. They were served, traditional French style, between the main course and pudding, and every evening there were at least three - one hard (H), one soft (S) and one blue (B). We recorded the wines too – white (W) and red (R). I can't promise they are all spelt correctly!

SATURDAY

Brebis (H – Pyrenees)
Reblechon (S)
Bleu d'Auvergne

Gaillac perlé (W)
Côtes du Rhône Villages – Valreas (R)

SUNDAY

Bleu de Bresse, Alps
Etorki, from the Basque country, (H)
Comté (H)
Chamois D'Or (S)
St Nectaire, Auvergne (S)

Jurançon (W)
Chateau Labastide-Guilhem, Corbières (R)

MONDAY

Pont L'Evêque (S)
Tomme de Montagne, Languedoc (S)
Roquefort (B)

Muscadet sur lie (W)
Cahors - La Tour Chambert (R)

TUESDAY

St Agur (B)
Chaume (S)
Morbrière (H)

Bourgoyne Aligote (W)
Alsace Gewurtraminer (W)
Chateau Grandfont, Bordeaux (R)
Beryl's extra red: Morgon

WEDNESDAY – at the Hotel Climat,
Labastide-Murat

Domaine de San de Guilhem (W)
Vin en pichet (jugs) des coteaux du Quercy (R)

THURSDAY

Forme d'Ambert (B)
Tomme de Savour (H)
Vigny, from Gourdon (S)
Lingot du Berry (S, goats cheese)

Roussette de Savoie (W)
Morgon, Beaujolais Villages (R)

FRIDAY

Cantal entre-deux (H)
Roquefort (R)
Le cabrau (S, goats cheese)
Brie meaux (S)

Pouilly-Fumé – Loire (W)
Chateau tour Prignac - Médoc (R)

INVERTEBRATES

See following report by Nicholas Armfelt for butterflies. Other invertebrates noted:

Latticed heath – a day-flying moth
Mother Shipton moth (George & Nicholas, wk 2)
Elephant hawkmoth sp. 2
5-spot burnet moth 2
6-spot burnet moth 2
An orangey burnt moth *Zygaena fausta* 2
Graphosoma italicum - black and red shield bugs
Ascapthalus libelluloides - something between a lacewing and an ant-lion
Carpenter bee 2
Paper wasp 2
Broad-bodied chaser dragonfly
Gold-ringed dragonfly *Cordulegaster* sp. 2

ORCHIDS

| | week 1 | week 2 |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|
| Robust marsh orchid | | x |
| Lizard orchid | x | x |
| Violet birdsnest orchid | x | x |
| Birdsnest orchid | x | x |
| Common twayblades | x | x |
| Woodcock orchid | x | x |
| Bee orchid | x | x |
| Fly orchid | x | x |
| Early spider orchid | x | x |
| Loose-flowered orchid | x | x |
| Early purple orchid | x | x |
| Military orchid | x | x |
| Lady orchid | x | x |
| Monkey orchid | x | x |
| Bumt-tip orchid | x | x |
| Man orchid | x | x |
| Pyramidal orchid | x | x |
| Green-winged orchid | x | x |
| Violet helleborine | | leaves |
| Red helleborine | x | x |
| Narrow-leaved helleborine | x | x |
| Broad-leaved helleborine | | leaves |
| Lesser butterfly orchid | | x |

Twenty three species of orchids is a reminder of how rich this area is. For completeness, the following species of orchid have been found in previous years: white helleborine, dark red helleborine, early marsh orchid, southern marsh orchid, common spotted orchid.

In hindsight (this note added in 2013), the identification of lesser butterfly orchid in this and other holidays in The Lot is surprising, especially as all *Platanthera* orchids on our Dordogne holidays have been noted as greater butterfly orchid. Both species occur through most of France, including in both of these departments, according to *Les Orchidées de France, Belgique et Luxembourg* by the Société Française D'Orchidophile. According to this book, lesser butterfly orchid is indifferent to soil type, with greater preferring calcareous soil. We certainly looked carefully at the orchids in The Lot, and noted the parallel pollen masses typical of lesser.

| <u>Reptiles and amphibians</u> | week 1 | week 2 |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Grass snake | | x |
| Green lizard | x | |
| Wall lizard | x | x |
| Marsh frog | x | |

Mammals

Rabbit
Hare
Red squirrel
Roe deer



Early spider orchid

BIRDS

Birds marked with a 1 or 2 were seen only on the first or second week respectively, otherwise everything was seen (or occasionally just heard, one week) both weeks. H = heard.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------|---------|
| Little egret | | Robin | |
| Grey heron | 2 | Nightingale | |
| Mallard | | Black redstart | |
| Honey buzzard | | Redstart | |
| Black kite | | Stonechat | |
| Red kite | 1 | Blackbird | |
| Sparrowhawk | 1 | Song thrush | |
| Short toed-eagle | | Mistle thrush. | |
| Buzzard | | Melodious warbler | |
| Kestrel | | Whitethroat | |
| Hobby | 1 | Blackcap | |
| Peregrine | 1 | Bonelli's warbler | |
| Red-legged partridge | 1 | Wood warbler | H, wk 2 |
| Quail | H | Chiffchaff | H |
| Rock dove/feral pigeon | | Firecrest | H |
| Woodpigeon | | Spotted flycatcher | 1 |
| Collared dove | | Long-tailed tit | |
| Turtle dove | | Marsh tit | H, wk 1 |
| Cuckoo | | Blue tit | |
| Bam owl | | Great tit | |
| Scops owl | H | Nuthatch | |
| Tawny owl | H | Short-toed treecreeper | |
| Nightjar | | Golden oriole | |
| Swift | | Jay | |
| Alpine swift | | Magpie | |
| Hoopoe | | Jackdaw | |
| Wryneck | | Carrion crow | |
| Green woodpecker | | Raven | |
| Great spotted woodpecker | 1 | Starling | |
| Lesser spotted woodpecker | 1 | House sparrow | |
| Woodlark | | Tree sparrow | |
| Skylark | | Chaffinch | |
| Crag martin | | Serin | |
| Swallow | | Greenfinch | |
| House martin | | Goldfinch | |
| Tree pipit | | Linnet | |
| Grey wagtail | | Cirl bunting | |
| White wagtail | | Corn bunting | |
| Wren | | | |



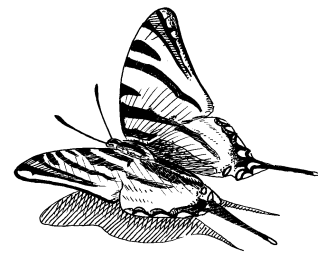
THE LOT – May 1999: BUTTERFLIES by Nicholas Armfelt

Here is an annotated list of the butterflies that I saw on our holiday. In fact I doubtless saw more species than are here listed, for I had tantalizing glimpses of several others that I haven't had the courage to 'claim'. One has to err on the side of caution. I suspect that there were actually 80+ species on the wing in May in the areas we visited.

1. Grizzled Skipper. Week 2: one only, at Merle.
2. Safflower skipper. Week 1: one only, on the track above the Mayor's house. Similar to Large Skipper, which occurs in higher mountains.
3. Red-underwing Skipper. Week 1: a beautiful specimen caught in David's net near the Green-winged Orchids at Pisserate alerted us to this species. Subsequently we saw at least four on the Causse de Gramat.
4. Dingy Skipper. Weeks 1 and 2. Plentiful, both near Galoubet and on the Causse de Gramat.
5. Swallowtail. Week 1: two of them hill-topping at Gourdon, on Elder at the summit by the church. George also saw one in week 2.
6. Scarce Swallowtail. Both weeks. Widespread near Galoubet and elsewhere. Mostly singles.
7. Large White. Week 1. Very scarce.
8. Small White. Week 1. This too was scarce, with just a couple of sightings.
9. Green-veined White. Weeks 1 and 2. Quite widespread, but particularly common at Galoubet.
- 10 Black-veined White. Widespread, numerous.
- (11. Bath White. Several seen – and even photographed – by George at the Alpine Thistle Meadow on the Causse de Gramat. Maybe some of my own 'female orange-tips' were actually Bath Whites.)
12. Orange-tip. Weeks 1 and 2. Widespread and reasonably common.
13. Pale clouded Yellow. I found it impossible to be certain about the identification of pale clouded yellow and Berger's Clouded Yellow. My impression was that Berger's Clouded yellow was very common everywhere, but that the butterflies flying fast over the meadows looked to be Pale Clouded yellow.
14. Berger's Clouded Yellow. I hardly liked to look at this extraordinarily beautiful butterfly lest it should set me wondering whether perhaps it might be a Pale Clouded Yellow after all!
15. Cleopatra. Week 1: Causse de Gramat. Week 2: Pisserate.
16. Brimstone. Widespread and reasonably common.
17. Wood-white. Fairly common and widespread.
18. Southern White Admiral. Week 1: just a glimpse. Week 2: a good view of a gloriously vivid mint specimen near Vaillac.
19. Large Tortoiseshell. Week 1 – seen 3 times on the Runner's Track: a worn specimen left over from hibernation.
20. Comma. Week 2. Likewise a worn specimen on the Runner's Track.
21. Painted Lady. Week 1: near Beaumat. Week 2: a fine fresh specimen on the summit in Gourdon.
22. Red Admiral. Widespread, though not numerous.
We did, however, see three at once on the Runner's Track.
(Larger fritillaries. These were seen in several places, but I couldn't tell what they were.)
23. Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Week 2: just one, a worn specimen at Cayrès.
24. Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. Weeks 1 and 2. In several places, but identification difficult. We twice had specimens in the net, and they looked to be this species.
- 25 Violet (Weaver's) Fritillary. Week 2: one near Cayrès.

26. Knapweed Fritillary. Weeks 1 and 2. Extremely common, with many newly emerged specimens looking fantastically beautiful. It is a variable butterfly, and the upperside tends to look quite complicated. (Oh dear! I know what you are going to say: How can I be sure that some of our so-called Knapweed Fritillaries weren't Provençal Fritillaries? Shush! You are not supposed to ask such questions!)
27. Glanville Fritillary. Even more widespread and abundant during our stay than the Knapweed Fritillary – and that's saying something. Glanville has a tidier pattern on the upperside, and the row of black dots in the orange submarginal band made the identification reasonably easy.
28. Spotted Fritillary - Weeks 1 and 2. First seen on the Causse de Gramat, but subsequently seen quite frequently near Galoubet. The vividness of the orange-red upperside in fresh specimens takes one's breath away. The underside shows up well too.
29. False Heath Fritillary. Week 2 at Vaillac: two fresh specimens which were my butterflies of the week! The darkness of the male specimens is vivid and noticeable. But not just the darkness: the submarginal band of pale (almost white) spots helps to make identification easy.
30. Heath Fritillary. Would that this species had been equally easy to identify! But it wasn't. I finally caught up with it 'definitely' on the Causse de Gramat on the final Thursday of our stay – fine fresh specimens – but I guess that we had actually been seeing it on earlier occasions.
31. Meadow Fritillary. Weeks 1 and 2 – good clear analysed sightings with the insect in the net. But it's a devil of a job to separate it from the Heath Fritillary. (Meadow Brown. I think I saw this both weeks, but only once each. And that seems odd for a butterfly that normally occurs in quantity. No-one else reported it on the trip, so I am disallowing my own sightings !)
32. Small Heath. Widespread, common.
33. Pearly Heath. None till towards the end of Week 1. After that it was common.
34. Speckled Wood. The southern form, with spots orange rather than creamy white. Widespread and quite common even on the dull days. Galoubet and elsewhere.
35. Large Wall Brown- Oh dear! Have I used up my "butterfly of the week"? No, I shan't delete Fa1se Heath Fritillary. That stands. But the Large Wall Browns were magnificent. And – oh yes indeed! – the Purple-shot Copper and the Green-underside Blue also were fabulously pretty, astounding, breathtakingly beautiful, the specimens newly-emerged, pristine!
- The first Large Wall Browns were out at the end of Week 1. In Week 2 we saw many of them, along the banks at Merle for example, and high at the summit of the town of Gourdon.
36. Wall Brown. Widespread and very common.
37. Duke of Burgundy Fritillary. The only European butterfly in the *Riodinidae* (Metalmarks) family. We saw plenty of them in the first meadow at Galoubet. A few elsewhere nearby.
38. Green Hairstreak. Widespread both around Galoubet and on the Causse de Gramat.
- (39. Small Copper. Sighted by David by the stone seat at Galoubet)
- Sooty Copper. George and I felt sure that we were looking at a mint-new specimen of this common and familiar species. But when I went to the butterfly book to browse I noticed that there is a sooty female form of the Purple-shot Copper – so maybe that was what we saw. Confirmation is needed. My guess is that we really did see Sooty Copper.
40. Purple-shot Copper. David netted a magnificent specimen on the first day when we did a walk in the meadows of Galoubet. I saw it, or a similar one, on the Saturday between the weeks.
41. Provençal Short-tailed Blue. We saw it early in week 1, but it took us a few days to capture one to check that it lacked the orange spots. We saw others later. (Short-tailed Blue could be there too, but we didn't identify it.)
42. Little (Small) Blue. Quite widespread and common.

43. Holly Blue. Plenty near the house at Galoubet. No holly to be seen, so I suggest that the vernal foodplant may be Snowberry.
44. Green-underside Blue. On the track up from Vaillac we saw two ravishingly beautiful specimens, the first of which was caught by David in his net.
45. Baton Blue. Week 1 only. Plenty on the Causse de Gramat.
46. Brown Argus. Quite common and widespread. They are so tiny that it is easy to overlook them.
47. Mazarine Blue. Just one, Week 1 – at Vaillac. I was the only person who saw it, but the identification was clear.
48. Escher's Blue. Week 1, past the Mayor's house. This is the largest of the blues we saw. I think that we saw several of them in the same field in Week 2, but we couldn't get close enough to verify.
49. Chapman's Blue. Week 1 at Vaillac, female. Week 2, both male and female closer to Galoubet.
50. Provence Chalkhill Blue. I must admit that I was not altogether surprised when George's video revealed that this was the species he had filmed. (David, George, and I have examined the film carefully). I was under the impression that I had seen this myself up there on the Causse de Gramat. This is only the second or third time that I have seen a Provence Chalkhill Blue - so apart from the Safflower Skipper, it is my newest butterfly of the trip. Previously I had seen it in Spain.
51. Adonis Blue. Common!
52. Common Blue. The identification can be difficult, for you have to see the spot in the cell to make sure it is not Chapman's Blue. However I did see about 10 Common Blues, including several females on the Causse de Gramat on the Thursday of Week 2.



Scarce swallowtail