



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Tarifa & Gibraltar
11th – 18th February 2013

Holiday participants

Angela Turner and Sue Montgomery
Anne McGregor
Brian Austin and Mary Laurie-Pile
Brennan and Karin Auger
Marie Watt
Peter and Elonwy Crook
Will Warham

Leaders

Frank Vargas and Chris Durdin

Report by Chris Durdin

Our base was Huerta Grande www.huertagrande.com
El Grupo Ornitológico del Estrecho (GOES) www.grupoornitologicodelestrecho.org

All photos in this report were taken during the holiday, those edged green by Chris Durdin, edged blue by Brennan Auger and edged orange by Karin Auger. Front cover: common dolphins in the Algeciras Bay; rock marigold *Calendula suffruticosa*; the Strait of Gibraltar with Morocco in the distance and *Aloe succotrina* and Bermuda buttercups in the foreground.

Below: lunch under the bandstand in the Botanic Gardens in Gibraltar (Peter Crook).



As with all Honeyguide holidays, part of the price was put towards a conservation project in the host country, in this case for El Grupo Ornitológico del Estrecho (GOES - The Ornithological Group of the Strait). It wasn't possible to meet GOES on this occasion, but we linked up instead with their colleagues from the Tumbabuey Grupo de Anillamiento, who we watched ringing birds adjacent to the Palmones estuary – see the account for 17th February.

The conservation contribution this year of £40 per person was supplemented by gift aid from those eligible, plus a cash donation of 10€ from one group member, leading to a donation of 620€, about £525, given to GOES. This is our third donation to GOES, the three donations totalling 1646€. The total for conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays since 1991 is £83,447, to February 2013.

Tarifa and Gibraltar, 11th – 18th February 2013
Daily Diary

Monday 11th February – Gibraltar to Huerta Grande

We woke to snow at Gatwick and elsewhere in the south-east, a reminder of why now was a good time to go to southern Spain: happily, the airport was still working well. The flight was fine until wind caused the odd wobble on the approach to Gibraltar, but the landing smooth, though Frank on the ground, who was waiting just beyond the short walk to the Spanish border, had wondered if we might be diverted to Málaga. It was quite chilly in the wind – ‘You should have been here yesterday’ was the gist of Frank’s advice on the weather – though the sun did come through later. We noted a few hirundines coming through (house martins, probably) and studied Bermuda buttercup for the few minutes until Frank’s minibus and Katrin’s from Huerta Grande were with us. We loaded up, drove west past the urban sprawl of Algeciras, noting several white storks on nests along the way, and soon reached the sign for Pelayo and the turn for Huerta Grande.



Gibraltar from Algeciras bay.

Will was there to meet us, having arrived from Dublin via Málaga yesterday. We were settled into rooms, group members in the three houses and me in one of the wooden lodges in the grounds. It was soon time for a light lunch of soup, scrambled egg with green beans (*revuelto de judías*) and delicious slices of orange with a light dusting of cinnamon, sugar and oil.

We took a couple of hours to walk around the extensive grounds of Huerta Grande, starting at the large walk-through mosaic outside the only occasionally opened information centre for the Natural Parks of the Strait of Gibraltar and Los Alcornocales (the cork oaks). Birds included serins, griffon vultures overhead, and about 20 house martins freshly arrived from a clearly visible Africa. Blackcaps, song thrushes and chaffinches were singing, the thrushes winter visitors like the occasional robin. We all enjoyed an excellent view of a blue rock thrush on some bare branches, then a fan-tailed warbler sat surprisingly still, soon followed by a very close firecrest. Flora was mostly plants of disturbed ground, with abundant Bermuda buttercup and a lot of ramping fumitory. Nice finds in flower were the strange chocolate-coloured flowers of Andalusian birthwort *Aristolochia baetica*, field woundwort and Spanish bluebell. A large yellow broom-like flower was later pinned down as teline *Teline monspessulana*.

Then there was time to relax while Frank and I returned to Algeciras to pick up the second minibus, before gathering at 7:30 for an excellent evening meal. After checklists there was soon another bird to add: tawny owl, which remained vocal at Huerta Grande all week, as were stripeless tree frogs.

Tuesday 12th February – La Janda and Barbate

Rain at breakfast time was exactly as the weather forecast said, and the forecast was also right in that it stopped by the time we’d reached La Janda for our first stop. This is the remnant of a once extensive wetland, where now rice cultivation is widespread, also bringing in many birds. It was difficult for the first ten minutes to know which way to look: there was a fine male marsh harrier, two green sandpipers in a ditch and a single crane in a field. Small birds kept popping up, too: a fan-tailed warbler sitting still on a bush, stonechats on wires, swallows, crested lark, corn buntings and various finches. It became apparent that a distant bird of prey was a short-eared owl. A common and rather charming wild flower was fedia *Fedia cornucopae*, forming little red patches among the trackside grass. Some also looked at squirting cucumber, the leaves of milk thistle and a red-and-black ground bug, identified later from a photo as *Spilostethus pandurus* – it wasn’t one of those in Chinery. An Egyptian mongoose ran across the road and was seen by some in the first minibus. This prompted discussion on their origin: see note on p.12.

A little farther along the elevated track that looked over the area, the wetlands had attracted a single spoonbill plus flocks of lapwings and ringed plovers. We'd already seen any number of white storks – these and cattle egrets and a few little egrets were becoming routine – but a single black stork flying through was exciting as an early migrant and, like the black kites seen shortly before, Frank's first of the spring. We took time to enjoy a group of cranes, and to watch some more birds join them on the ground, building up to 21 adults – yet not a single juvenile from 2012.



Glossy ibis behind some barbed wire at Barbate; fedia, a tiny valerian.

Moving on, we pulled up to park by the entrance to a *depuradora* (water purification plant) where Ann noticed a bird fly off that could only have been a black-shouldered kite. It reappeared a few minutes later, hovered over the marshes, flew right over us, continued to fly in sight for a while and was joined by another. Those who'd looked for a bush down the short path to the marshes of the river Barbate returned with news of good birds. They were still there after we'd enjoyed gazpacho and Frank's picnic spread: about 40 black-winged stilts, a close glossy ibis and several purple gallinules on a superb, flooded area of marsh. Shovelers, moorhens and several chiffchaffs added to the mix, then many more glossy ibises and purple gallinules a little farther on. Here we were overlooking an area of marsh managed for nature by Frank's farming family. We stopped for a brief gossip with Stephen Daly, a bird guide who lives locally.



The stilt marsh by Barbate river. Note the umbrella pines on the hillside.

Driving on, we searched fields without success for the northern bald ibises that are being re-established here. We stopped again at the top of the road leading to La Janda, where we watched black kites and a flock of 62 white storks just in from Africa, taking advantage of the much improved weather to head north into Europe.

A final stop didn't yield the hoped-for rufous bush robin, though there was a brief but good view of a male Sardinian warbler.

After dinner, Frank's minibus wouldn't start for him to return home for the night, until it was jumpstarted by running it down the hill at Huerta Grande. To be continued ...

Wednesday 13th February – Los Alcornocales Natural Park, Punta Canedo and Palmones estuary

... with the news in the morning that it was more than a flat battery, rather a duff starter motor. The outcome, to Hertz's credit, was that they brought a replacement minibus from Málaga and Frank was able to collect that from Algeciras and be with us by lunchtime. In the meantime, Juan Luis ('One-Loo') from Huerta Grande was willingly pressed into service, along with a Huerta Grande minibus. The very local visit already planned proved ideal, to El Bujeo in Los Alcornocales Natural Park. Frank even managed to direct Juan Luis to the exact rock where a special local plant grows: the carnivorous Lusitanian sundew. It wasn't yet in flower, but there were several specimens clinging like epiphytes to the rock, with some of the long thin leaves uncurling like a miniature fern frond, covered with sticky glands like any sundew.

The birds and flowers were thin on the ground to start with, though there was interest in autumn squill leaves, southern daisies, two species of tree heather and Spanish bluebells. A dog joined us, jumping all over me every time I went down to look at a flower, especially a sand crocus *Romulea*. Bigger birds started to move as the air warmed, firstly local griffon vultures, then a good trickle of small groups of black kites just arrived in Europe and moving north. Juan Luis proved knowledgeable: he stopped to point out Andalusian rhododendron and southern polypody, and he knew a route which meant we could return to collect the buses and drive onwards in a circuit through the park. We paused around midday in an open area, where swallows, griffons and black kites continued to move, a siskin buzzed through and the sun was bringing out daisy and storksbill flowers.

Next stop was one of Fundacion Migres's raptor watch points, which meant driving past some military signs and some excessively kitted out soldiers. The viewpoint looked over Tarifa and was very beautiful, if thin on birds as the wind was in the wrong direction, save for our first lesser black-backed gull. A white butterfly flying fast and low caught my eye, and I followed up my hunch about its ID by chasing it through the red aloes (pictured on the front cover): in the butterfly net it proved to be a migrant, namely a green-striped white.

After a late lunch at Huerta Grande, three elected to stay at base and the rest of us drove east. First stop was a cliff-top viewpoint – Punta Canedo – from where it was possible to see Sandwich terns over the sea, a whimbrel on a rock and Sardinian warblers in the scrub. From there we drove round urban Algeciras to the compact little estuary at Palmones, with an easy and charming promenade. Somehow only Frank saw the osprey, and the rest of us noted various waders, a group of spoonbills and more Sandwich terns.

Thursday 14th February – Gibraltar

The whale-watching company we'd used previously wasn't running in February, so instead we tried a dolphin-watching company operating out of Gibraltar, combined with our day on the rock. After parking in the underground car park in La Linea, we walked across the border and the airport runway and were met by Fiona from Dolphin Safari. We were away by 11 o'clock on, in effect, a private charter for the 13 of us. The boat's crew soon noted some gull activity, which is often linked to dolphins and so it proved. There was a pod of nine common dolphins that seemed to enjoy surfacing and swimming under the boat, offering superb views of this gorgeous marine mammal.



Three of the nine common dolphins by the boat.

The boat then moved out of Algeciras Bay to the edge of the Strait to scan for signs of some recently sighted whales, without success, though a gannet did fly past. It was a chance to see both sides of the Rock from the water on a sunny, bright day, hear some historical commentary, and all within a very calm 90 minutes.

We walked to the Botanic Gardens, hearing a singing chiffchaff on the way and pausing for the distinct peppery smell of the crushed leaves on a Peruvian pepper tree. We ate our picnic under the bandstand, overlooking several Dragon Trees. We then ascended the Rock in the cable car to the land of Barbary macaques and clear views in several directions, though few birds today. Down over the rails there were several fine plants of *Scilla peruviana* with its big cone-shaped mass of blue flowers. Several of the group also had a distinctly average cup of coffee from a machine in the café. There was a harsh lesson for one group member who brought the coffee outside – no problem there – plus a plastic wrapped biscuit. A loitering macaque jumped on her and wrestled away the biscuit, then quietly unwrapped it and ate it.



Barbary macaque, and Bermuda buttercup growing out of a limestone cleft.

We then headed down the hill, which is a slow and steady walk on a quiet road that today took us 2¼ hours. Sardinian warblers clacked and a possible rock thrush was seen, but it was pretty quiet for birds apart from these and the ubiquitous yellow-legged gulls. But the now hot afternoon sun brought out Iberian wall lizards and butterflies, notably Cleopatras and Spanish festoon, and one or two violet carpenter bees. The flowers were interesting and the timing was good for some regional or local specialities. We found the Iberian friar's cowl *Arisarum simorrhinum* and lots, again, of the Andalusian birthwort, two sometimes confused species. Shrubs included lentisc, Mediterranean buckthorn, scrubby scorpion vetch and shrubby germander *Teucrium fruticosus*. Rather local specialities were toothed lavender *Lavandula dentata* and the orange-centred yellow flowers of rock marigold *Calendula suffruticosa* and, on the point of flowering, giant Tangier fennel *Ferula tingitana*. Naturalised freesias grew in several places.

Back in the Botanic Gardens, two monarch butterflies were on the wing. The group then split, with some taking a taxi to Casemates Square and others walking along Main Street. After a drink we caught the no.5 bus back to the frontier, retrieved the minibuses in La Linea and returned to Huerta Grande.

Friday 15th February – Playa de los Lances, Bolonia

On the protected sandy beach at Playa de los Lances, the best new birds had something in common: they were both seabirds with red beaks. A few Audouin's gulls mostly kept themselves separate from the one lesser black-backed gull and the many yellow-legged gulls. A fine Caspian tern sat in good view, and there were several Sandwich terns, too. Kentish plovers, sanderlings and a little egret added to the mix. On the low vegetated sandy edge to the beach there were many sand crocuses, *Paronychia argentea* and patches of webs and caterpillars from *Ocnogyna baetica*, the winter webworm moth. It was already getting hot as we returned along the wooden boardwalk to the minibuses, and two of us changed into shorts.

We moved onto a Bronze Age burial site at Los Algarbus. We had to be content with looking in through the secure fencing as the site was closed, perhaps a reduction in service linked to public spending cuts. On the outside were some more friar's cowls in flower, and huge quantities of the leaves. The first of several clouded yellow butterflies today flew past and there was a fine male black redstart. Those keeping an eye on the sky alerted us to a flock of migrating white storks, then another, which linked together in a thermal and flew off in a mass, some 120 birds. They were immediately followed by a few dozen griffon vultures. We had our picnic here to a southern Europe backdrop of chattering Sardinian warblers and twittering serins.

Frank knew that mandrakes grew here and, after we'd eaten, having turned over the leaves of scores of scruffy plant rosettes, eventually I found one with two plump fruits.

The Roman town at Bolonia was in ancient days known as Baelo. With its trading and fish-processing it does great credit to the organisation and civilisation of the Romans, if a little marred here today by an ugly visitor centre, though at least entry was free to us as citizens of the European Union. We pottered round, taking photos and occasionally noting wildlife, which included Italian sainfoin, black redstarts, Thekla lark and an ombu tree. As our time disappeared, we saw Marie break into a trot to photograph the theatre in a far corner of the extensive site.



Mandrake, with two plump fruits.

Our final stop today was Bolonia cliffs, a little farther up the road, passing gum cistus scrub, just one bush of which had flowers. Two hoopoes perched obligingly on a roadside wire. A crag martin failed to hang around for all to see and the ravens were a rather brief fly-past, but blue rock thrushes put on a good show for all. There were also glimpses of a rock bunting, but not so the whole group could see it.



The Roman town at Bolonia, with a natural sand dune sweeping up the hillside beyond.

Both Frank and I had been struggling again with coughs/cold, so were glad to get back to base and dose up with paracetamol.

Saturday 16th February – Laguna de Medina and Bonanza

There was a little guessing game in my minibus: how does 'Frank's time' compare with 'real time'? We didn't expect the journey up the main motorway to Laguna de Medina to take only the predicted 40 minutes, and it was an hour and a quarter.

On arrival there was a superb male Spanish sparrow on show from the car park, with some dowdier females. We walked the combination of paths and boardwalk, avoiding mountain bikers from time to time, where we had our first face to face encounter with paperwhite narcissi, having seen them previously in various damp roadsides. Some very tall specimens – for this species – of sombre bee orchid *Ophrys fuscus* were the next notable find, then a fine red kite. From the hide, the scene at the slightly misty lake was dominated by gulls, but to our right were a few pochards and shovelers. After a little patience we were rewarded as some red-crested pochards joined the shovelers and two female white-headed ducks appeared with the 'ordinary' pochards.

Just 25 minutes away were three more lakes, in a group, nature reserves at Puerto de Santa Maria. We lunched by the first, Juncosa, which was awash with 300+ coots and a score or so of purple gallinules, and again shovelers, pochards, red-crested pochards and the occasional mallard. A marsh harrier quartered the marsh and swallows, crag, sand and house martins hunted over the water. A paper wasp nest under a dwarf fan palm leaf kept us amused. A quick scan suggested we'd do well to miss the second lake, Salada, so instead we part drove and part walked to the third, Chica.

Hundreds of shovelers were joined here by 13 white-headed ducks, three black-necked grebes and more red-crested pochards. This third lake was in a sea of arable, though Frank explained it was in an agri-environmental scheme to restrict the impact of farming on the lake.

Forty minutes on and we were at the edge of the Coto Doñana National Park at salt pans aptly called Bonanza. These were hooching with birds, waders especially. A flock of 80 avocets were only some of those here, and there was a similar number of stilts. Dunlins and redshanks were the next most numerous, with smaller numbers of black-tailed godwits, ringed plovers, turnstones and common sandpipers. The flamingos were a notably deep pink, and there was also a clear pinky tone to the plumage of many slender-billed gulls that seemed especially at home in the lagoons, feeding energetically in a leaning-forward method that gave a distinctive jizz. A single spoonbill and a distant osprey added to the mix. At the end of the track we overlooked the river, from where the alert Ann noted two red kites perched on a dead tree trunk, then a short-eared owl over the marshes.

The return journey had two complications, with the buses getting split for a short period while one was making a loo stop. More memorable was that it was carnival day in Sanlúcar de Barrameda, causing diversions. We'd seen people starting to assemble in fancy dress on the way through, and by now they were flooding in. The colour co-ordination, visual impact and creativity was astonishing: dice, superheroes, ladybirds, rock'n'rollers, clowns, and scores more that one couldn't put a name to. Then it was full speed along the motorway and back just in time for dinner.

Sunday 17th February – Palmones and La Janda

It wasn't possible to meet El Grupo Ornitológico del Estrecho (GOES - The Ornithological Group of the Strait) this year, but Frank's superb network of contacts meant instead we had the pleasure of meeting their close colleagues from the Tumbabuey Grupo de Anillamiento (ringing group). They were working in an overgrown garden on the edge of the Palmones estuary, the opposite side to where we'd visited a few days ago. The local authority had very recently changed the locks on the entrance gate, meaning a slightly awkward scramble round the edge of a ditch to get in, but once there it was a pleasant oasis and plainly well used by wintering birds.

Most of the birds retrieved in three visits to mist nets were 'controls' – retraps of blackbirds, greenfinch, robins, blackcaps and a surprising winter visitor, a dunnock. A Cetti's warbler, mainly a resident species, was particularly good to see close-to, with its rounded tail and clearly short wings. Brian, a qualified ringer in the UK, took part in the weighing, measuring and condition checks of the birds, which were all doing fine but had not yet started to put on sufficient weight for their return migration north, suggesting they'd be there for some weeks yet.



Brian helps to weigh, measure and check the condition of the ringed birds.
A Cetti's warbler from behind, showing its rounded tail and short wings.

A group of crag martins flew over us, and other hirundines, too. Angela and Sue took the short walk round the garden to scan the estuary, returning with news of the osprey we'd struggled to see from the other side. The rest of us then thanked and left the ringers, and were soon also enjoying superb views of the osprey from a substantial, if underused, two-tier concrete viewing platform. There were also greenshanks, spoonbills, marsh harriers and other estuary birds, and a great spotted cuckoo flew low overhead.

We returned to Huerta Grande for lunch, after which three of us tackled bringing forward Will's return flight from Málaga, as his knee was playing up and restricting what he could do with his additional days in Spain.

Then we revisited La Janda. It's a landscape ruined by agricultural intensification, with a backdrop of wind turbines which provoke mixed responses, but it has a knack of turning up wildlife. On the first corner, some caught a good glimpse of an otter in the wide ditch, plus a kingfisher. Farther along there was a superb male hen harrier. After some careful study of a mammal on a ditch edge, it revealed its tail and its identity as a brown rat. A hovering black-shouldered kite was buzzed in the air by a female hen harrier, there was an astonishingly bright female marsh harrier on ground, and again a male hen harrier and another black-shouldered kite as we retraced our route.

On the way back we paused for fuel and chocolate at a garage adjacent to a hotel in which Angela had stayed some years ago on a previous birdwatching holiday in the area.

Over our final meal at Huerta Grande we were entertained by Katrin's friend Jesus on guitar, and very good he was too. Perhaps the less said about other musical contributions the better; the virus didn't help!

Monday 18th February – Gibraltar and home

We were away immediately after breakfast in a convoy of three minibuses, as I needed to drop mine at Hertz in Algeciras before piling into Katrin's bus for the last leg to La Linea. After saying farewell to Frank and Katrin we took the short walk across the border to the new Gibraltar airport terminal. The incoming easyJet flight was late due to freezing fog at Gatwick, a reminder of the winter we'd left behind, but much of the time was made up on the return flight.



Pine processionary moth caterpillars in Gibraltar.

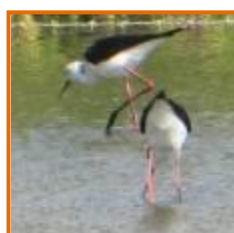
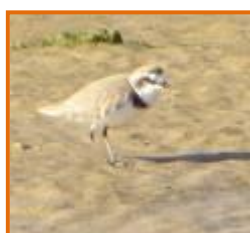
HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS as nominated by group members

Sue	The expression on Brian's face when blowing on a robin's breast (for a bird-in-hand condition check), purple swamp-hen.
Ann	Dolphins and white storks.
Brian	Black-shouldered kites, the flock of white storks arriving.
Mary	Highlight was flamingos, lowlight being mugged by an ape!
Karin	Dolphins, big flock of griffons, hen harrier.
Brennan	Black-shouldered kite, black-winged stilts and male hen harrier.
Will	Close views of black-winged stilts and seeing lots of raptors.
Peter	Firecrest, sandstone cliff above Bolonia.
Elonwy	Slender-billed gull, the salt pans.
Marie	Slender-billed gull, black-shouldered kite, Huerta Grande.
Angela	Dolphins, rat and raptors finale!
Chris	Slender-billed gulls, Andalusian birthwort, carnival!
Frank	The good numbers of white-headed duck, still vulnerable in Spain so it's great to see numbers increasing. The sombre bee orchid at Medina lagoon, I would never have spotted that one without the help of the Honeyguiders. Thanks guys!

SPECIES LISTS, 11th – 18th FEBRUARY 2013 – BIRDS

Little grebe	In double figures at Juncosa lake, 16 th
Great crested grebe	Laguna de Medina, 16 th
Black-necked grebe	3, Chica lake, 17 th
Gannet	1, Algeciras Bay, 14 th
Cormorant	Recorded on six days
Grey heron	Recorded on five days
Little egret	Recorded on five days
Cattle egret	Common wherever there were livestock, recorded daily
Black stork	1 on 12 th , 1 on 17 th
White stork	Recorded every day. Notable flocks of migrants: 62, 12 th and 120, 15 th
Glossy ibis	20, Barbate river, 12 th
Spoonbill	Recorded on four days, notably 9 at Palmones, 13 th
Greater flamingo	Good numbers at Bonanza salt pans, 16 th
Mallard	Recorded on five days
Pintail	2, Palmones, 17 th
Shoveler	12 at Barbate, 12 th , also at Bonanza, 16 th
Red-crested pochard	At Laguna de Medina, Juncosa and Chica lakes, 16 th
Pochard	Outnumbering red-crested pochards at Laguna de Medina, Juncosa and Chica lakes, 16 th
White-headed duck	2 at Laguna de Medina and 13 at Chica lake, 16 th
Osprey	Recorded on three days, with the best view at Palmones, 16 th
Black-shouldered kite	2 at Barbata, 12 th and 2 at La Janda, 17 th
Red kite	1 at Laguna de Medina and 2 at Bonanza salt pans, 16 th
Black kite	Recorded on four days, including 52 on 13 th
Egyptian vulture	An adult seen from the 2 nd minibus, 12 th
Griffon vulture	Seen on six days, with counts of 30 at El Buejo, 13 th , and 50 over the Bronze Age burial site, 15 th
Marsh harrier	Recorded on 4 days
Hen harrier	2 males and a female at La Janda, 17 th
Buzzard	Recorded on six days, all appeared to be resident birds
Booted eagle	Dark phase bird, 17 th
Lesser kestrel	One on 12 th Feb.
Kestrel	Seen every day
Peregrine	1 at La Janda, 12 th , 1 at Bolonia cliff, 15 th
Red-legged partridge	Recorded on three days
Pheasant	Heard on the first visit to La Janda, a group seen on the second visit, 17 th
Moorhen	Recorded on three days
Purple swamp-hen/ Purple gallinule	12 at Barbata, 12 th ; c.20 at Juncosa lake, 16 th
Coot	c.300 at Juncosa Lake, 16 th , but no trace of a red-knobbed coot
Black-winged stilt	Both visits to La Janda, with 40 on 12 th ; also 100+ at Bonanza salt pans, 16 th
Avocet	A flock of 80 in the air was roughly half of those at Bonanza salt pans, 16 th
Lapwing	Recorded on three days, including 100+ at La Janda, 12 th
Golden plover	30 at La Janda, 12 th
Grey plover	Recorded on five days at the various coastal sites
Little ringed plover	La Janda, 17 th
Ringed plover	Recorded on five days at coastal sites and La Janda
Kentish plover	4 at Playa de los Lances, 15 th
Snipe	At La Janda on 12 th and 17 th
Black-tailed godwit	At Palmones on 14 th and Bonanza salt pans, 16 th
Whimbrel	1 on a rock in the sea below the viewpoint at Punta Canedo, 13 th
Curlew	1 at Palmones, 17 th
Redshank	Recorded on three days
Greenshank	2 at Palmones, 17 th
Green sandpiper	Recorded on three days
Common sandpiper	Recorded on two days
Turnstone	A few at Bonanza salt pans, 16 th
Sanderling	4 at Palmones, 13 th , 80 at Playa de los Lances, 15 th , and at Bonanza salt pans on the 16 th
Dunlin	60 at Palmones, 13 th and recorded 2 other days
Audouin's gull	16 at Playa de Los Lances, 15 th
Lesser black-backed gull	Single birds recorded on four days, all coastal
Yellow-legged gull	Seen daily, often in big numbers.
Black-headed gull	Recorded on five days, including a count of 100 at Palmones on 13 th
Slender-billed gull	Not counted but dozens at Bonanza salt pans, 16 th

Caspian tern	1 at Playa de Los Lances, 15 th
Sandwich tern	Recorded on three days, including 20 at Palmones on 13 th and 18 at Playa de los Lances on the 15 th
Feral pigeon	Seen daily
Stock dove	3 reported on two days (11 th and 13 th) at Huerta Grande
Woodpigeon	Recorded on six days, mostly at Huerta Grande
Collared dove	Seen daily.
Great spotted cuckoo	1 low overhead at Palmones, 17 th
Tawny owl	Heard at Huerta Grande every night; seen by some group members
Short-eared owl	1 at la Janda, 12 th and 2 at Bonanza salt pans, 16 th
Hoopoe	2 at Bolonia cliffs, 15 th
Kingfisher	La Janda, 17 th
Great spotted woodpecker	Seen or heard six days at Huerta Grande
Green woodpecker	Heard at Huerta Grande, 15 th
Crested lark	Recorded on four days
Thekla lark	Seen well at Bolonia Roman site
Skylark	Wintering birds heard & seen in flight at Laguna de Medina, 16 th
Sand martin	Recorded on 12 th and 16 th
Crag martin	Recorded on four days
Swallow	Seen on six days
Red-rumped swallow	1 bird dashed through at Bonanza salt pans, 16 th and Palmones, 17 th
House martin	Seen on six days
White wagtail	Seen daily
Grey wagtail	Single birds on 12 th and 13 th
Wren	Heard (usually) or seen daily at Huerta Grande
Dunnock	1 in the hand at the ringing session at Palmones, 17 th
Robin	Seen daily at Huerta Grande
Stonechat	Seen on five days
Black redstart	Seen on six days
Blue rock thrush	At Huerta Grande on 11 th and at the cliffs at Bolonia on 15 th
Rock thrush	A bird seen at Gibraltar seems only to fit this species
Blackbird	Seen daily at Huerta Grande
Song thrush	Heard almost daily at Huerta Grande
Cetti's warbler	Heard or seen almost daily, including at Huerta Grande
Zitting cisticola/Fan-tailed warbler	Singing birds seen on five days
Sardinian warbler	Seen or heard on six days
Blackcap	Seen daily
Chiffchaff	Seen or heard daily. Wintering birds on most wetland edges, and heard singing in Gibraltar
Firecrest	Seen or heard daily at Huerta Grande
Blue tit	Five days at Huerta Grande
Great tit	Four days, mostly at Huerta Grande
Short-toed treecreeper	Singing at Huerta Grande, 17 th
Jackdaw	Recorded on two days
Raven	Recorded on four days
Carrion crow	Recorded on two days
Spotless starling	Seen daily
House sparrow	Seen daily
Spanish sparrow	5 in the car park at Laguna de Medina
Chaffinch	Daily at Huerta Grande
Serin	Daily at Huerta Grande, and elsewhere
Siskin	On 5 days at Huerta Grande, a wintering flock estimated at 40 on 15 th
Greenfinch	Daily at Huerta Grande
Goldfinch	Seen every day but one
Linnet	Seen or heard every day
Cirl bunting	1 at La Janda, 12 th
Rock bunting	Seen briefly at Bolonia cliffs, 15 th
Corn bunting	Recorded on five days, seen best at La Janda



Chiffchaff, Kentish plover, white stork flock, black-winged stilts, little egret.

Reptiles and amphibians

Terrapin, thought to be European pond terrapin, near the *depuradora*.
Moorish gecko, at Huerta Grande.

Spanish wall lizard, especially on Gibraltar.
Stripeless tree frog, heard daily at Huerta Grande.

Butterflies

Swallowtail
Spanish festoon
Large white
Clouded yellow
Cleopatra
Green-striped white (*right*)
Monarch

Speckled wood
Wall brown
Holly blue
Red admiral
Painted lady
Peacock
Small copper



Other notable invertebrates

Violet carpenter bee.
Paper wasp *Polistes* sp.
Pine processionary moth caterpillars and tents.
Silver Y moth.

Ocnogyna baetica, the winter webworm moth – webs and masses of emerging caterpillars at Playa de los Lances were this species.
7-spot ladybird.
Ground bug *Spilostethus pandurus*.



Paper wasps *Polistes* sp. and nest on the underside of a dwarf fan palm; emerging caterpillars of *Ocnogyna baetica*, the winter webworm moth; and a ground bug *Spilostethus pandurus*.

Mammals

Common dolphin, nine from the boat in Algeciras Bay.
Barbary macaque, Gibraltar.
Egyptian mongoose, La Janda.
Otter, La Janda.

Deer sp., probably red deer, seen from the minibus towards Laguna de Medina.
Rabbit.
Brown rat, La Janda.

Frank sent the following note on Egyptian mongoose after we returned:

It has been traditionally and widely accepted that the Egyptian mongoose, *Herpestes ichneumon*, was introduced to the Iberian Peninsula by the Arabs during historical times. They were employed for eliminating rodents and reptiles, as in the case of the genet. However, more recent and sophisticated studies refute this idea, supporting a scenario of sweepstake dispersal* during late Pleistocene sea-level fluctuations. This way Egyptian mongoose, unlike genet, would have naturally colonised the Iberian Peninsula across the Strait of Gibraltar more than 10,000 years ago ... no doubt the debate must go on ...

*Sweepstake dispersal route: a term coined by G. G. Simpson in 1940 to describe a possible route of faunal interchange which is unlikely to be used by most animals, but which will, by chance, be used by some. It requires a major barrier that is occasionally crossed. Which groups cross and when they cross are determined virtually at random (Wikipedia).

PLANTS

Numbers refer to Blamey & Grey-Wilson, *Mediterranean Wild Flowers*.

Polunin refers to Polunin & Smythies, *Flowers of south-west Europe*.

Some are planted species, marked P. NiF = not in flower.

Common northern European plants e.g. shepherd's purse, groundsel, are not usually noted; planted trees are only noted when of special interest.

	Pinaceae – Pines
<i>Pinus pinea</i>	stone / umbrella pine 3
<i>Pinus nigra</i>	black pine 4
	Fagaceae – Oaks
<i>Quercus suber</i>	cork oak 27
<i>Quercus canariensis</i>	an oak (not <i>Q. faginea</i> as noted in the report of September 2011)
	Urticaceae – Nettle family
<i>Urtica membranacea</i>	membranous nettle 49
<i>Urtica urens</i>	annual nettle
	Aristolochiaceae – Birthworts
<i>Aristolochia baetica</i>	Andalusian birthwort 58
<i>Aristolochia paucinervis</i>	Green-flowered birthwort (Not in Blamey or Polunin)
	Chenopodiaceae – Fathen family
<i>Halimione portulacoides</i>	Sea purslane 100
	Phytolaccaceae – Pokeweed family
<i>Phytolacca dioica</i> P	Ombu 113
	Caryophyllaceae – Pink family
<i>Paronychia argentea</i>	paronychia 136
<i>Silene colorata</i>	Mediterranean campion 180
	Ranunculaceae – Buttercup family
<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i> subsp <i>ficariiformis</i>	lesser celandine – the more robust southern form 252a
<i>Ranunculus</i> sp.	water crowfoot sp.
	Fumariaceae – Fumitories
<i>Fumaria capreolata</i>	ramping fumitory 303
	Resedaceae – Mignonette family
<i>Reseda alva</i>	white mignonette 375
	Droseraceae – Sundews
<i>Drosophyllum lusitanicum</i>	drosophyllum, a sundew 381 NiF
	Crassulaceae – Stonecrop family
<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	navelwort 396
	Leguminosae – Pea family
<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i> P	Judas tree 430 NiF
<i>Ceratonia siliqua</i>	Carob 431 NiF
<i>Acacia dealbata</i> P	'mimosa' or silver wattle 432
<i>Calycotome spinosa</i>	spiny broom 452
<i>Lygos monosperma</i>	retama (a white broom) 480
<i>Spartium junceum</i>	Spanish broom 481
<i>Teline monspessulana</i>	teline 459
<i>Vicia villosa</i>	fodder vetch 510
<i>Lotus creticus</i>	southern birdsfoot trefoil 632 (Roman ruins)
<i>Coronilla emerus</i>	scorpion vetch or false senna 693
<i>Hedysarum coronarium</i>	Italian sainfoin or French honeysuckle 710
	Oxalidaceae – Sorrel family
<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i>	Bermuda buttercup 735
	Geraniaceae – Geranium family
<i>Geranium molle</i>	dovesfoot cranesbill 741
<i>Geranium columbinum</i>	long-stalked cranesbill 746
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	common storksbill 761
	Euphorbiaceae – Spurges
<i>Euphorbia helioscopia</i>	sun spurge 700
<i>Mercurialis annua</i>	annual mercury 820
	Meliaceae – Persian lilac family
<i>Melia azedarach</i> P	Indian bead tree or Persian lilac 843 NiF

Pistacia lentiscus
Schinus molle P

Rhamnus alaternus

Cistus albidus
Cistus salvifolius
Cistus ladanifer
Tuberaria guttata

Echballium elaterium

Opuntia ficus-indica

Ferula tingitana
Smyrniolum olustatum
Crithmum maritimum

Arbutus unedo P
Erica arborea
Erica australis
Rhododendrum ponticum baeticum

Sherardia arvensis

Olea europaea spp. *oleaster*

Vinca sp. *difformis* ?

Ipomoea purpurea

Cerinthe sp.
Borago officinalis
Cynoglossum sp.

Teucrium fruticans
Mentha suaveolens
Rosmarinus officinalis
Lavandula stoechas
Lavandula dentata
Salvia verbenaca
Stachys arvensis

Solanum nigrum
Solanum sodomaceum
Mandragora autumnalis
Nicotiana glauca

Orobanche ramosa

Viburnum tinus

Fedia cornucopiae

Anthemis sp. *arvensis*?
Bellis sylvestris
Dittrichia viscosa
Astericus maritimus
Chrysanthemum coronarium
Calendula suffruticosa
Calendula arvensis
Galactites tomentosa

Anacardiaceae – Pistacio family

mastic tree or lentisc 865
Peruvian pepper tree 871

Rhamnaceae – Buckthorn family

Mediterranean buckthorn 885

Cistaceae – Rock-rose family

grey-leaved cistus 961
sage-leaved cistus 965 NiF
gum cistus 971
spotted rockrose 985

Cucurbitaceae – Cucumber family

squirting cucumber 1032

Cactaceae – Cactuses

prickly pear 1040

Umbelliferae – Umbellifers / carrot family

Tangier giant fennel 1142
Alexanders 1087 NiF
rock samphire 1101

Ericaceae – Heather family

strawberry tree 1176
tree heath 1178
Spanish heath 1181
Andalusian rhododendrum NiF

Rubiaceae – Bedstraw family

field madder

Oleaceae – Olive family

wild olive 1248a

Apocynaceae – Oleander family

intermediate periwinkle? 1263

Convolvulaceae – Bindweeds

morning glory 1319

Boraginaceae – Borage family

a honeywort
Borage 1395
a houndstongue, almost in flower

Labiatae – Mint family

tree or shrubby germander 1429
round-leaved or apple mint 1523 NiF
rosemary 1526
French lavender 1528
toothed lavender 1530
wild clary 1545
field woundwort

Solanaceae – Potato family

black nightshade 1563
apple of Sodom 1565
mandrake 1573 in fruit
shrub tobacco 1582

Orobanchaceae – Broomrapes

branched broomrape 1655

Caprifoliaceae – Honeysuckles

laurestinus 1711

Valerianaceae - Valerian family

fedia 1720

Compositae – Daisy family

a common white corn? mayweed
southern daisy 1793
aromatic inula 1842 NiF
yellow sea aster 1848
crown daisy 1895
rock marigold 1907
field marigold 1908
galactites 1971

Silybum marianum
Centaurea pullata

Asphodelus aestivus
Aloe succotrina
Urginea maritima
Scilla peruviana
Hyacinthoides hispanica
Ruscus aculeatus
Ruscus hypoglossum
Smilax aspera
Allium triquetrum
Agave americana P
Pancreatium maritimum
Narcissus papyraceus

Romulea bulbocodium (= *R. clusiana*)
Arisarum simorrhinum
Freesia refracta

Washingtonia filifera P

Chamerops humilis

Ophrys fusca

Cynodon dactylon
Arundo donax
Phragmites australis
Typha angustifolia

Selaginella denticulata

Asplenium trichomanes
Asplenium adiantum-nigrum or *obovatum*
Polypodium cambricum
Pteridium aquilinum

milk thistle 1982 NiF
2006

Liliaceae – Lily family

common asphodel 2089
2100
sea squill, leaves & bulbs 2163
2183
spanish bluebell 2191
butcher's broom 2219
large or southern butcher's broom 2220
smilax or sarsaparilla 2222
three-corned leek 2229
century plant 2253
sea daffodil 2270 leaves
paperwhite narcissus 2278

Iridaceae – Iris family

a sand crocus 2314
friar's cowl 2378
freesia. Naturalised on Gibraltar.

Palmae - Palms

one of the most widespread planted palms 2355
dwarf fan palm 2357 Widespread, including on
Gibraltar. Together with Cretan palm, the only native
European palms.

Orchidaceae – Orchids

sombre bee orchid 2424

Gramineae – Grasses

Bermuda grass 2481
giant reed 2494
reed
lesser reedmace

Selaginellaceae – Selaginella family

Mediterranean selaginella

Pteridophyta – Ferns

maidenhair spleenwort 2525
a black spleenwort
southern polypody
bracken



Paperwhite narcissus; *Drosophyllum lusitanicum*; *Centaurea pullata*