



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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**Autumn in the Algarve and Alentejo
31 October – 7 November 2015**

Participants

Pauline Kell and Alice Lester
Chris and Mary Ash
Barry and Denise Madden
Anne Nicholas
Ian Holmes
Derek and Zena Tutt
Peter Easingwood and Susi Lewis-Jones

Leaders:

Domingos Leitão
Rob Macklin
Report and lists by Rob Macklin

We stayed in the Alte Hotel for 4 nights – www.altehotel.com
and the Hotel Mira Sagres for 3 nights – www.hotelmirasagres.com.
The pelagic trip was with www.marilimitado.com

Wildlife photos by Barry Madden and group photos Domingos Leitão, except Wilson's petrel by Pauline Kell.
Cover: a diving pale-phase booted eagle. Many of the photos first appeared on Barry's blog
www.easternbushchat.blogspot.co.uk

Below – the group on the beach near Vila do Bispo.



As with all Honeyguide holidays, part of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case SPEA's campaign against the illegal trapping of birds: more information on <http://www.spea.pt/en/participate/campaigns/illegal-trapping/>

Domingos Leitão, both Honeyguide leader and SPEA officer, accepted the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust cheque for €1000 (£763), made up of each group member's conservation contribution supplemented by Gift Aid and some additional funds in the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust. The news story about the donation had a lot of coverage in Portuguese media. The full story with links to online coverage is on <http://www.honeyguide.co.uk/wildlife-holidays/newsrelease.html>

This year's donation brings the total given to SPEA since the first Honeyguide holiday in mainland Portugal in 2005 to £4974. The total for conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays to the end of 2015 is £103,528.

Introduction

This was Honeyguide's second autumn trip to the Algarve and somewhat different to the first in 2013. Torrential rain on the first day was followed by unsettled conditions until later in the week when temperatures rose to 25°C. The first part of the week was based at Alte and included trips to Castro Marim on the Guadiana estuary and the Castro Verde grasslands. At Castro Marim we found an amazing array of herons, egrets, wildfowl and waders plus an osprey catching a grey mullet and 28 Audouin's gulls. At Castro Verde we had great views of at least eight great bustards including a fly past, good views of black-bellied sandgrouse and an amazing encounter with an imperial eagle.

The weather improved in the second half of the week where we stayed at Vila do Bispo. The majority of the group enjoyed our pelagic trip out of Sagres harbour, going out 10 miles to the edge of the continental shelf. We were treated to great views of storm petrels and a Leach's petrel but the star bird was a rare Wilson's petrel. At the raptor viewpoint at Sagres we found an Egyptian vulture, goshawk, plus great views of booted and short-toed eagles. Another highlight here was a super view of a yellow-browed warbler. At Monchique we had great views of firecrests, crested tits and Dartford warblers plus our only two griffon vultures of the trip. Before heading home we managed a quick visit to Quinta do Lago where we saw purple gallinules and Domingos found a large chameleon, to everyone's delight – a great way to end an eventful and hugely enjoyable trip to the Algarve and Alentejo after a rather trying first day!

31 October: To Alte

With flights coming into Faro from Luton, Glasgow and Bristol plus Domingos on the train from Santarem, we all met up in arrivals, sorted out and loaded up the buses and headed north-west to our hotel in the early evening. Unfortunately John and Ann Titchmarsh were unable to join us due to illness. It was overcast in Faro but still pleasantly warm at 18°C although the weather forecast for tomorrow looked a little daunting. We had a splendid evening meal at the hotel, discussing our hopes for the coming week and hoping the weather would be kind to us.

01 November: Municipal Museum at Faro and Alte

The day dawned with ripples of thunder, strong southerly winds and torrential rain, although azure-winged magpies could still be heard 'cackling' in the hotel gardens. Unfortunately the rain intensified throughout the morning meaning we had to abandon our planned visit to Rocha da Pena and Benemola Spring. We decided to drive into Faro and visit the municipal museum; this proved to be a good choice with the museum hosting artifacts from the Iron Age, Roman remains including a stunning mosaic through to huge religious paintings and more modern art. Barry and Denise still managed to find a black redstart on the roof of the museum and a kestrel flew overhead.

With the rain still falling in buckets we had our packed lunches in the buses before heading back to the hotel in Alte. Fortunately the rain abated by mid-afternoon and we were able to explore the agricultural area around the hotel. Birds were few and far between but we did manage to locate at least 14 azure-winged magpies and a single jay actively moving through the scrub. Two chiffchaffs were found in gardens, a meadow pipit perched up on telegraph wires while both grey wagtail and serin flew overhead.



Azure-winged magpie, and a rainy start to the week, viewed from inside a minibus.

We also took time out to have a look at the vegetation here and the new book *Flora of the Algarve* proved invaluable. The dominant vegetation included mastic trees and bushes, carob trees, kermes oaks and Japanese loquats with fruit-bearing strawberry trees proving an irresistible lure to foraging azure-winged magpies. A small purple thistle was still in flower, identified as *Atractylis gummifera* while two species of asparagus were found – *Asparagus albus* and *A. acutifolius*.

Roads across the Algarve were awash with flood water, several towns and villages flooded, major landslips and road gullies blocked. Not quite what we expected but we hoped for better fortune in the coming days.

02 November: Castro Marim and Rio Formosa Natural Park at Tavira

A day of heavy showers and occasional sunny periods started brightly as we had an early breakfast and headed east down the motorway to the 2,000 hectare Castro Marim reserve on the Guadiana estuary. Our first exploration was along a track with scrub on one side and open water, salt pans and saltmarsh on the other. We immediately spotted a hunting female marsh harrier over the saltmarsh while a kestrel flew over carrying prey. Two white storks were feeding on the saltmarsh while nine great crested grebes and 12 little grebes were feeding on the open water. This area supported many gulls, mostly lesser black-backed gulls, although we did have excellent views of at least 16 Mediterranean gulls flying in right over our heads as two Sandwich terns fished along the water's edge. The thick scrub on our right hosted a large flock of 1,000+ spotless starlings as well as 70 goldfinches and 50+ linnets. We spotted a bright Spanish sparrow perched in the top of a small bush which was then joined by a male Sardinian warbler out in full view, and a chiffchaff. A southern grey shrike gave us all good views as it perched up on overhead wires, three crag martins flew low over the scrub and brief shafts of sunshine brought out several painted ladies and two red-veined darters.

More raptors soon began to appear. A pale-phase booted eagle soared overhead causing panic amongst the smaller birds, before an osprey hovered into view and began fishing over the open water, successfully as it turned out as it caught and carried off a grey mullet. Two more marsh harriers quartered the area and our only red kite of the day soared high overhead. Barry then picked up a kingfisher as it darted by and Ian spotted a hoopoe as it disappeared into the saltmarsh. We walked up to the end of the track to investigate the open lagoons where at least 50 greater flamingos were feeding, most of them bright pink adults. As we headed back to the buses the heavens opened, and we quickly scrambled into our dry haven.



Fan-tailed warbler (*zitting cisticola*), osprey and tarantula.

We drove over to the imposing and very large information centre which overlooks a series of lagoons. On the way in a small pool sported six black-tailed godwits, a ruff and a green sandpiper. At the centre our earlier osprey was perched up in full view on a dead tree, redshanks, dunlin and ringed plovers were feeding in the lagoons and a fan-tailed warbler, also known as *zitting cisticola*, was flitting through the saltmarsh. After looking around the centre we had our picnic lunches on the outdoor tables and were delighted to see three Caspian terns directly overhead followed almost immediately by a late swift and a swallow. We walked up to the viewpoint where many white *Narcissus serotinus* were in flower plus a single merendera and autumn squill. The view over the reserve was fantastic but the wind was quite strong, making birding difficult. Seven more Caspian terns were found on the muddy banks criss-crossing the lagoons, two shelducks were feeding in the shallows and a large flock of 45 avocets and seven nearby black-winged stilts were taking advantage of the shelter offered by the lagoons.

We had very welcome coffee and hot chocolate in Castro Marim, where a crested lark was foraging on a busy roundabout, before we took the minibuses onto the tracks through the salt pans and lagoons. Yet another female marsh harrier was quartering the area and a small wetland produced 22 cattle egrets, 15 black-winged stilts, two female ruff (or reeves) plus single wheatear and swallow. Denise then spotted two hoopoes at the local farm before a huge salt lorry thundered past disturbing everything. On the open lagoons we found a small flock of 11 gadwalls while a little egret and a spotted redshank were feeding along a narrow ditch. A large number of gulls were located out on the lagoon banks and when we managed to get our telescopes on them we were delighted to count at least 18 adult Audouin's gulls plus several probable juveniles. Birds then just kept on coming as 70 shovelers took flight across the saltmarsh, four Mediterranean gulls flew over, four immature greater flamingos took to the air while further waders included another spotted redshank, a greenshank, 20+ ringed plovers and a common sandpiper.

As we walked back to the buses we were caught in a torrential downpour, which thankfully was brief, so we moved on to the Rio Formosa Natural Park at Tavira. The wind was whipping across this area, and tucked away in the cover of the lagoons were small numbers of waders including black-winged stilts, avocets, redshanks and black-tailed godwits. At least 60 greater flamingos were defying the weather on the open water and we managed to find yet another 16 Audouin's gulls. A great day's birding, for the most part in good weather, was brought to an end by the sighting of a ringtail hen harrier being buffeted by the wind as it attempted to hunt over the saltmarsh.

03 November: Castro Verde

Another early breakfast followed by a one hour drive north to Castro Verde in the Alentejo. Just outside Alte a red fox scuttled across the road. Our destination was a private nature reserve out on the wide open grasslands and as we approached the area some 70 cattle egrets were feeding amongst livestock, a raven flew over the road, at least three southern grey shrikes were on telephone wires and three red kites drifted lazily overhead.

We drove through the gates of the reserve and immediately spotted five black-bellied sandgrouse in low flight over the grassland. The area was alive with wintering skylarks and meadow pipits with many, significantly larger, calandra larks adding to the mix. It was no surprise to see more raptors taking advantage of the potential food source and along with several more red kites and kestrels we found an immature peregrine perched up on rocks and a merlin dashing low over the grasslands. Our first common buzzard then came into view, a southern grey shrike perched up in full view and a flock of 70 lapwings took flight. Our attention was soon taken by the sight of six male great bustards out on the grassland slopes with three of them taking flight and giving the group a great flypast – superb! At this point we did notice a splendid patch of merenderas in flower, the only flowering plants in a dry landscape!

We moved on to a high point on the reserve, the only signs of human habitation being a derelict farmhouse and a lonely shepherd with his dog. Several calandra larks gave us all great views, showing off their black underwings, a wheatear perched up on a rock pile and a very obliging Thekla lark joined the wheatear in full close-up view. A very large raptor was soaring high in the distance and even with our telescopes it was hard to get a positive identification although it looked to be an adult imperial eagle. A distant flock of 30 golden plovers were joined by several lapwings and we again tracked down five great bustards in the near distance bringing the tally to at least eight birds. Below us a small lake held three gadwalls, at least 30 lapwings, two snipe and a grey heron and most of these were scattered by a hunting ringtail hen harrier. Moving on to another high vantage point by an old farmstead, Domingos soon spotted a black-shouldered kite in a eucalyptus tree before Rob found a little owl perched up on a pile of rocks. Yet another red kite drifted slowly along the skyline and a hoopoe flew across the track giving most of us good views.



Steppe at Castro Verde.

We planned to have lunch by the river but our progress was hampered by yet more great wildlife, particularly a superb flock of 13 black-bellied sandgrouse with the sun reflecting brilliantly off their chestnut backs, but also six red-legged partridges, two more red kites and another six kestrels. We made a quick loo stop in São Marcos do Ataboeira where several large white butterflies were nectaring on the planted flowering shrubs. As we approached the Ribeira da Chada de Curral da Velha the buses came to a shuddering halt as Susi spotted a raptor on a roadside carcass. This turned out to be a juvenile Bonelli's eagle on a dead cattle egret; the bird quickly flew off as we scrambled out of the buses but luckily it soon reappeared flying fast and low over the treetops. Counting our luck we drove the short distance to the river and immediately spotted yet two more soaring Bonelli's eagles, a large adult female and a smaller immature male – pure magic!

By now the sun had broken through and temperatures rose steadily to 20°C, a real boost for the group after recent days. The warm conditions brought out several dragonflies with red-veined darters ovipositing, brief views of an epaulet skimmer and at least one southern hawk. Birds were also much in evidence with a woodlark in full song before perching up obligingly in a dead tree, a great spotted woodpecker flew over the road, a sparrowhawk soared overhead and two fan-tailed warblers were found with chiffchaffs in the scrub.

Time for coffee, back at São Marcos, and on the way Ian spotted another black-shouldered kite in the stone pines. Mid-afternoon was now approaching and our last stop of the day was another area on the private reserve with great views over miles of surrounding grassland. Seven black-bellied sandgrouse immediately took flight and several red kites were in the skies before Domingos noticed an immature Spanish imperial eagle on the ground, apparently on a lamb carcass! A grey heron and three teal were on a small pond as we attempted to get closer to the feeding eagle, but our progress was interrupted by 20-odd calandra larks showing very well right in front of the group and two hoopoes feeding on the ground. However we did manage to get much closer to the eagle and we had unrivalled views of it being mobbed by a red kite, looking for a share of the spoils, before sitting proudly atop a rock pile, presumably digesting its meal. As Anne said, "It was worth coming just to see this magnificent eagle." Time to head back to Alte for our final night at the hotel but not before we saw four more black-bellied sandgrouse flying low over the grasslands – what a day!

04 November: Salgados Lagoons at Pêra, Alvor Estuary and Salema

A woodlark was noted at the Alte hotel as we bade our farewells and headed to the west. Our first stop was at the Salgados Lagoons at Pêra, which held a large amount of water after recent heavy rain. An Iberian hare scooted across the grassland as we arrived and we immediately spotted 12 little egrets and several superb glossy ibises: numbers of this species grew to 26 birds. The lagoons themselves held large numbers of coots and mallards but our attention was immediately taken by 23 spoonbills feeding in the shadows. A male and female marsh harrier were hunting over the lagoons and reedbeds scattering the wildfowl, a kestrel hovered over the open grassland and a Caspian tern left the lagoons and flew out to sea. Domingos heard an unusual call from the tamarisk scrub, a bluethroat that unfortunately soon disappeared into cover. By this time the clouds were rolling in and heavy rain drove us off for coffee and hot chocolate at a local bar.



Spoonbill.

After the rain abated, we ventured back to the lagoons as a hoopoe flew across the road in front of us and two white storks settled at the back of the site. At the wetland we found an interesting hole in the sand which surprisingly housed a splendid, if irate, Mediterranean tarantula! By this time glossy ibis numbers had risen to the dizzy heights of 44 birds while on the open water were 70 shovelers, 10 little grebes, 28 pochards, 10 gadwalls and six pintails. Several waders were feeding on the muddy edges including four black-tailed godwits and three sanderlings while up to six fan-tailed warblers and eight chiffchaffs were moving purposefully through the scrub. The storm clouds gathered once more so we decided to continue moving west but wondered if we would be able to get to Monchique.

Unfortunately the rain intensified and Monchique was covered in low cloud so it was time for a rethink. We decided to head for the Alvor estuary and miraculously, the sun appeared right on cue and we were treated to a glorious afternoon. Several kestrels, a buzzard and two female marsh harriers were hunting over the nearby dry grassland where at least 10 gaudy azure-winged magpies flitted quickly through the trees.

Out on the coastal lagoon seven spoonbills were feeding alongside eight greater flamingos, six black-winged stilts and several redshanks. The estuary itself supported a few waders including three grey plovers, knot, bar-tailed godwit and three oystercatchers. Mary was particularly delighted by the emergence of scores of fiddler crabs on the estuary edge. A greenshank called and flew in and 17 greater flamingos flew west but our attention was quickly turned to a hunting osprey fishing successfully in the lagoons – the second such sighting in the week. Two ringtail hen harriers then appeared, and with the osprey, inducing panic in the feeding waders – what a few minutes!!

A house martin then appeared but we were really excited to discover four late red-rumped swallows hawking for insects along the lagoon edge – these birds should have been in Africa by now. The warm weather brought out a hunting emperor dragonfly patrolling the lagoon edge together with several red-veined darters and a single red admiral. Back out on the estuary we spotted nine sanderlings and a solitary ringed plover before a loose flock of 32 Sandwich terns settled down on a sandbank.

Time to head off but we stopped off at the small coastal town of Salema for cold beers and ice cream. Even here there were wildlife delights with several gannets offshore, three crag martins overhead and a blue rock thrush, plus a black redstart on the local buildings. We finally reached our hotel Mira Sagres in Vila do Bispo in early evening, checked through the logs before dinner and looked forward to our pelagic trip out of Sagres tomorrow.

05 November: Pelagic off Sagres and Sagres area

Before we left the hotel after breakfast Susi found two strange looking rhinoceros dung beetles, one unfortunately dead but the other released outside. Today the group split into two for the morning, seven to go on the pelagic trip and five to explore the coastal scrub around Sagres harbour. The pelagic group met up with Daniela and Sebastião, the skipper, donned our lifejackets and headed out approximately 10 miles offshore to the edge of the continental shelf.



Wilson's petrel and "brave sailors in the land of Henry the Navigator" as Domingos puts it.

Several gannets glided gracefully over the waves before we encountered an amazing flock of 70 Cory's shearwaters. Our aim was to find a trawler which usually attracts lots of birds but on this occasion we were unable to do so. Instead we reached the edge of the shelf and Sebastião began to throw 'chum' (mashed up fish) into the sea to attract the birds. We did not have to wait long before the first of several great skuas came to investigate, followed by more gannets and yellow-legged gulls. Within this melée up to 12 storm petrels turned up, daintily dancing over the waves and picking pieces of food. They were soon joined by a Leach's petrel, the forked tail being very obvious, before the star of the day, a Wilson's petrel, arrived on the scene, coming very close to the RIB. This particular bird was noticeably larger than the storm petrels and dangled its legs to walk continually on the water – an amazing sight and Pauline got the picture to confirm our identification. In the excitement Ian lost his bird book overboard but somehow Sebastião retrieved it! A sooty shearwater then glided by and, surprisingly, a meadow pipit flew high to the south-east. Time to head back to shore but not before three Balearic shearwaters drifted over the waves, yet another new species for the trip. As we approached the harbour two shags were fishing close-in, Chris spotted a herring gull on the harbour wall and another ringtail hen harrier drifted over, bringing to an end a great pelagic trip.

The group exploring the coastal area around the harbour came up with our first great black-backed gull and a peregrine plus a wealth of smaller birds including two blue rock thrushes, six black redstarts, a serin and several corn buntings. We all met up in the harbour and drove back to the hotel to freshen up and collect the picnic lunches. We decided to spend the afternoon out on the heath at the raptor viewpoint and as we drove into Sagres encountered a female peregrine and an osprey, both perched up in full view on telegraph poles.

We drove on to the raptor viewpoint out on the heath where we had lunch in the sunshine. Almost immediately two short-toed eagles were soaring overhead, soon to be joined by a sparrowhawk, two buzzards, scores of crag martins and two swallows hawking for insects over the pines. Susi then found an interesting species of longhorn beetle and our first violet carpenter bee buzzed around the camp. Autumn crocus was in flower here growing among Phoenician juniper and the leaves of sea squill while we managed to also find several friar's crows in flower. Several Sardinian warblers were chattering away in the scrub but proving elusive but we did get excellent views of five Thekla larks and at least six woodlarks.

Domingos went off turning over stones and came up with a very large yellow scorpion for all of the group to see.



A scorpion, and a scorpion moment.

More insects appeared in the shape of several huge robber flies, natives of North Africa, before we saw our first clouded yellow of the trip. More flowering plants included the Portuguese subspecies of large yellow restharrow, viper's bugloss and sweet alison.

It was time for coffees, beers and ice creams at a local bar on the edge of the heath. Here weasel's snout was in flower and another butterfly appeared in the shape of a small white. To end the day we followed local roads across the area and quickly turned up several more buzzards and kestrels plus four feeding white storks. Ian's sharp eyes picked up a little owl perched up on a wall while a blue rock thrush and black redstart were found on derelict farm buildings. A raven then flew lazily across the road and a 64-strong flock of red-billed choughs flew right over us, calling as they made their way to their coastal roost. We finally ended the day at the Cabo de São Vicente where we located another four Thekla larks and a steady stream of mainly adult gannets making their way eastwards – a fitting end to another splendid day.

06 November: Martinhal Lagoons, Monte de Cabranesa at Sagres and Budens Marsh

Finally a cloudless sky as we boarded the buses for further exploration of the Sagres area. Our first stop was at the Martinhal lagoons, which appeared quiet at first but we soon found six Kentish plovers and a ringed plover on the mud, both common and green sandpipers plus three water pipits. Two immature Mediterranean gulls then appeared before yet another osprey flew overhead – a good start to the day.

We then moved on towards Sagres and the Cape and were rewarded by fantastic views of two pale-phase booted eagles hunting low over the heath. Pauline spotted four short-toed eagles in the sky giving us a fantastic few minutes of raptor watching. We moved on to a small fort at Beliche where 100 Cory's shearwaters were resting on the water and we had close-up views of two of the short-toed eagles. A peregrine and another four kestrels were seen in this area plus another southern grey shrike on the telephone wires followed by our second clouded yellow.



Two flight shots of pale-phase booted eagles. On the right-hand picture you can see the 'landing lights' – the white on the leading edge of the wing.

Time to move on to the raptor watchpoint but before we reached the area Domingos found a yellow-browed warbler right out in the open on the edge of the scrub giving us all wonderful views – a real treat! Before lunch we all scanned the skies for signs of migrating raptors and quickly picked up two short-toed eagles high in the sky as well as two buzzards and three kestrels. Two birds flying high turned out to be white storks but the highlight of the morning was an immature Egyptian vulture moving through, the only one of the trip. More raptors then hove into view, first two sparrowhawks then a hen harrier circling with another large raptor, which on inspection turned out to be an immature male goshawk – a real find. Derek then had a serin fly over, two ravens drifted through and 17 wood pigeons flying fast were almost certainly migrants. Before lunch Domingos came up with yet another goodie in the shape of a Mediterranean banded centipede *Scolopendra cingulata*, all of six inches long!

Sticking to the week's tradition we headed off for coffee and ice cream after lunch before exploring the agricultural land on the back road to Vila do Bispo. Five raptor species were located in this area, three kestrels, three peregrines high in the sky, two buzzards and both ringtail hen harrier and female marsh harrier. Much to its indignation the latter was bombed by the hen harrier as it landed in the scrub. Two more southern grey shrikes were also seen and a flock of 24 migrating stock doves flew overhead while yesterday's large flock of choughs also took to the air.

Our final destination was Buden's Marsh, seven kilometres to the east of Vila do Bispo. We arrived there in bright sunshine and with a superb light quality across the marsh. Almost immediately we spotted three lesser emperor dragonflies buzzing across the open water and Domingos caught a praying mantis, though unfortunately most of the group had walked up the track and missed it. Both moorhen and water rail called from the depths of the reedbed while overhead two more pale-phase booted eagles were joined in the air by six red kites. Another ringtail hen harrier was hunting low over the reeds, a kingfisher called and Ian was delighted to find a common waxbill which was soon joined by another. We were searching for flowering autumn lady's tresses but early November was too late and we had to be content with one which had just gone over. Domingos then found another amphibian, an Iberian painted frog, while the group found two fan-tailed warblers, a couple of blackcaps and very brief views of a singing Cetti's warbler.

It was time for a group photo, so we drove the short distance to the beach where Domingos set up his time-delay camera for a shot in front of the sea. Birds here included more Thekla larks, a black redstart, five little egrets and a new bird in the shape of a turnstone. Tired and hot, we stopped off at Salema for cold beers and coffees before heading back to the hotel.

After dinner the group presented Domingos with a cheque for 1000 euros. Domingos explained that this donation would go towards SPEA's work in educating the public that trapping of small birds is illegal. It seems the downturn in Portugal's economy is leading to an increase in trapping for food and to sell to restaurants. The total now donated by Honeyguide to SPEA stands at £4,974 and the amount of conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays up to the present date is more than £103,000.

07 November: Monchique, Quinta do Lago and home

Our last day was sunny and hot with temperatures peaking at 25°C, typical Algarve weather! We were due at Faro airport at 4pm so we had time to fit in two sites, at a push. We left Vila do Bispo and drove for an hour to Monchique, the highest point in the Algarve at 902 metres, dividing the Algarve from Alentejo. We stopped off in the cork oak forest on the slopes of Serra de Monchique to look for woodland birds and we were not disappointed. With the aid of technology Domingos tempted out many species and we had fantastic views of at least three crested tits and five firecrests, one of the crests coming to within three metres. Two nuthatches also put in an appearance along with both green and great spotted woodpeckers. Another new species was a wren, and a flock of 30 siskins were feeding in the alders. In the warm conditions several butterflies appeared, particularly southern speckled woods but also small copper and a male brimstone.

Time to head for the summit and on the way up roadsides were covered in a purple convolvulus, morning glory, growing among maritime pines and Portuguese oaks. At the summit hundreds of crag martins and the odd house martin were circling the radio masts while a buzzard flew by serenely. Two fan-tailed warblers and a black redstart gave us all good views and a careful search of the thick, mainly gorse scrub turned up at least eight Dartford warblers chattering away. While we were admiring these delightful small warblers two griffon vultures soared into view, the only sightings of this species on the trip, a special moment. Derek reported a small blue butterfly and we soon found one perched up for all to see, a long-tailed blue (not Lang's short-tailed blue as we originally thought). Domingos then heard alpine swifts overhead but all six of these were very difficult to see as they flew high and into the sun. As happens on most trips someone gets to see something the others don't and on this occasion Rob saw a monarch butterfly fly past as we walked up to our lunch spot.

Bizarrely, for a busy Saturday, the café was closed and more importantly so were the loos! We couldn't believe it so stopped on the way down for much needed coffee, ice cream and the rest! Here by the roadside were several chiffchaffs, two black redstarts, one a bright male, and Mary found our only Iberian wall lizard.

With the clock ticking we headed off to the coast and a wetland site at Quinta do Lago surrounded by golf courses for the wealthy but a magnet for waterbirds. Walking along the shore we encountered single grey plover, whimbrel and curlew plus two ringed plovers, three Spanish sparrows on the saltmarsh and three clouded yellow butterflies. On reaching the wetland we discovered it was full of wildfowl with large numbers of mallards, gadwalls and shovelers plus a few pochards and new birds for the week in the shape of two wigeons and a pair of tufted ducks. Both Spanish and red-eared terrapins were in full view but our attention was quickly taken by at least eight gaudy purple gallinules (or swamp-hens) pulling up tufts of vegetation from the lake. Several of the group took a look through the mastic and tamarisk scrub with Denise finding our only short-toed treecreeper of the trip and at least 20 azure-winged magpies. One of the highlights of the trip was then produced by Domingos who found a large chameleon in the scrub to the delight of everyone but particularly Zena. What a great way to end a wonderful and eventful week in Portugal!

Holiday highlights

Pauline	Black-shouldered kite
Alice	The pelagic trip
Anne	The whole group
Chris	Wilson's petrel
Mary	Beach full of fiddler crabs
Derek	Yellow-browed warbler
Zena	The chameleon
Ian	"Sebastião retrieving my bird book from the ocean"
Barry	Silence of the grasslands
Denise	Iberian hare
Peter	Storm petrels
Susi	Booted eagles
Domingos	Yellow-browed warbler
Rob	Juvenile Spanish imperial eagle close-up

SPECIES LISTS

Birds – 147 species

Little Grebe	Noted at four sites, max.12 at Castro Marim & 10 at Salgados Lagoon.
Great Crested Grebe	Nine at Castro Marim.
Cory's Shearwater	70 on pelagic off Sagres & 100 on sea at Cabo de São Vicente.
Balearic Shearwater	Three on pelagic off Sagres.
Sooty Shearwater	One on pelagic off Sagres.
Wilson's Storm Petrel	One on pelagic off Sagres.
Storm Petrel	12 on pelagic off Sagres.
Leach's Storm Petrel	One on pelagic off Sagres.
Gannet	Peak of 300+ off Cabo de São Vicente.
Cormorant	Widespread & common esp.at Castro Marim.
Shag	Two in Sagres harbour and one at Beliche.
Cattle Egret	Peak of 140 on Castro Verde area.
Little Egret	Peak of 12 at Salgados Lagoons.
Grey Heron	Peak of nine at Salgados Lagoons & Alvor Estuary.
White Stork	Peak of 20+ on road to Monchique.
Spoonbill	23 at Salgados Lagoons & seven at Alvor Estuary.
Greater Flamingo	110 at Castro Marim & 25 at Salgados Lagoons/Alvor Estuary.
Shelduck	Two at Castro Marim.
Wigeon	Two at Quinta do Lago.
Gadwall	Peak of 32 at Salgados Lagoons.
Teal	Peak of 26 at Castro Marim.
Mallard	Widespread & common.
Pintail	Six at Salgados Lagoons & six at Quinta do Lago.
Shoveler	Peak of 100+ at Quinta do Lago.
Pochard	Peak of 28 at Salgados Lagoons.
Tufted Duck	Pair at Quinta do Lago.
Black-shouldered Kite	Three at Castro Verde.
Red Kite	Peaks of 13 at Castro Verde & six at Budens Marsh.
Egyptian Vulture	Immature bird at Sagres.
Griffon Vulture	Two at Monchique.
Short-toed Eagle	Peak of four at Sagres.
Marsh Harrier	Peak of four at Castro Marim.
Hen Harrier	Seen at several locations, max. three at Sagres.
Goshawk	Immature at Sagres.
Sparrowhawk	Seen at Castro Verde & Sagres.
Buzzard	Widespread but uncommon.
Spanish Imperial Eagle	Adult & immature at Castro Verde.
Bonelli's Eagle	Three at Castro Verde.
Booted Eagle	Peaks of four at Sagres & two at Budens Marsh.
Osprey	Seen at Castro Marim, Alvor Estuary, Martinhal & Sagres.
Kestrel	Widespread & relatively common.
Merlin	One at Castro Verde.
Peregrine	Seen at three locations, max.three on road to Vila do Bispo.
Red-legged Partridge	Peak of 12 at Castro Verde.
Water Rail	Heard at Budens Marsh.
Moorhen	Widespread but not common.
Purple Gallinule	Eight at Quinta do Lago.
Coot	Widespread & common.
Great Bustard	Eight males at Castro Verde.
Oystercatcher	Three at Salgados.
Black-winged Stilt	Peak of 40 at Castro Marim.
Avocet	50 at Castro Marim.
Ringed Plover	Peak of 30 at Castro Marim.
Kentish Plover	Six at Martinhal.
Golden Plover	30 at Castro Verde.
Lapwing	Peak of 330 at Castro Verde.
Turnstone	One on rocks on beach by Budens Marsh.
Sanderling	Three at Salgados Lagoons & nine at Alvor Estuary.
Dunlin	Peak of 15 at Castro Marim.
Knot	One at Alvor Estuary.
Ruff	Three at Castro Marim.
Snipe	Peak of three at Castro Verde.
Black-tailed Godwit	20 at Castro Marim & five at Salgados Lagoons.
Bar-tailed Godwit	One at Alvor Estuary.
Whimbrel	Two at Sagres Harbour & one at Quinta do Lago.
Curlew	One at Castro Marim & Quinta do Lago.
Redshank	Widespread but not common.
Greenshank	Two at Castro Marim & one at Alvor Estuary.
Green Sandpiper	Two at Castro Marim and one at Castro Verde & Martinhal.
Common Sandpiper	Two at Castro Marim and one at Sagres & Martinhal.
Great Skua	12 on pelagic off Sagres.
Mediterranean Gull	Peak of 21 at Castro Marim.

Black-headed Gull	Widespread & common.
Audouin's Gull	28 at Castro Marim.
Yellow-legged Gull	Widespread & common.
Herring Gull	One at Sagres Harbour.
Great Black-backed Gull	Immature in Sagres Harbour.
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Widespread & common.
Sandwich Tern	Two at Castro Marim and 32 at Alvor Estuary.
Caspian Tern	10 at Castro Marim & one at Salgados Lagoons.
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	25 at Castro Verde.
Feral Pigeon	Widespread & common.
Stock Dove	24 at Sagres.
Woodpigeon	Migrant flock of 17 at Sagres.
Collared Dove	Common in towns & villages.
Little Owl	Single birds at Alte, Castro Verde, Salgados & Sagres.
Swift	One at Castro Marim.
Alpine Swift	Six at Monchique.
Kingfisher	Single birds at Castro Marim and Budens Marsh.
Hoopoe	Peak of four at Castro Verde.
Green Woodpecker	One at Monchique.
Great-spotted Woodpecker	One at Castro Verde & Monchique.
Calandra Lark	Minimum of 40 at Castro Verde.
Crested Lark	Widespread & common.
Thekla Lark	Peak of eight at Sagres.
Woodlark	Peak of seven at Sagres.
Skylark	Widespread & common.
Crag Martin	Widespread & common with several hundred at Monchique.
Barn Swallow	Peak of four at Sagres.
Red-rumped Swallow	Four at Alvor Estuary.
House Martin	Single birds at Alvor Estuary & Monchique.
Meadow Pipit	Widespread & common.
Water Pipit	Three at Martinhal.
Yellow Wagtail	One at Vila do Bispo and two at Sagres.
Grey Wagtail	One at Alte.
White Wagtail	Widespread & common.
Wren	Only at Monchique.
Robin	Small wintering numbers.
Bluethroat	One at Salgados Lagoons.
Black Redstart	Peak of seven at Sagres.
Stonechat	Widespread & common
Whinchat	One at Sagres.
Wheatear	Noted at Castro Marim, Castro Verde & three at Salgados Lagoons.
Blue Rock Thrush	One at Salema and five around Sagres.
Blackbird	Widespread & uncommon.
Song Thrush	One at Alte & Alvor Estuary.
Cetti's Warbler	Singles at Castro Verde & Salgados Lagoons but two at Buden's Marsh.
Fan-tailed Warbler	Peak of 13 at Salgados Lagoons & Alvor Estuary.
Dartford Warbler	Minimum of eight at Monchique.
Sardinian Warbler	Widespread & common.
Blackcap	Two at Buden's Marsh.
Chiffchaff	Widespread & common.
Yellow-browed Warbler	One at Sagres.
Firecrest	Five at Monchique.
Blue Tit	Noted at Alte and Monchique.
Great Tit	Recorded in small numbers.
Crested Tit	Three at Monchique.
Nuthatch	Two at Monchique.
Short-toed Treecreeper	One at Quinta do Lago.
Southern Grey Shrike	Peak of eight at Castro Verde.
Jay	Single birds at Alte and Castro Verde.
Azure-winged Magpie	Peak of 40 in & around Castro Marim.
Magpie	Widespread & common.
Red-billed Chough	64 at Sagres.
Jackdaw	Peak of 40 at Castro Verde.
Carrion Crow	15 at Castro Verde.
Raven	Peak of four at Castro Verde.
Spotless Starling	Widespread & common.
House Sparrow	Widespread & common.
Spanish Sparrow	Three at Castro Marim & Alvor Estuary.
Common Waxbill	Two at Buden's Marsh.
Chaffinch	Peak of 500+ at Sagres.
Serin	Noted at Alte & Sagres.
Goldfinch	Widespread & common.
Greenfinch	Widespread & reasonably common.
Linnet	Widespread & common.
Corn Bunting	Peak of 10 at Castro Verde.

Butterflies – 10 species				
Brimstone	Large White	Small White	Clouded Yellow	Small Copper
Long-tailed Blue	Red Admiral	Painted Lady	Wall Brown	Southern Speckled Wood

Mammals – 3 species		
Iberian Hare	Red Fox	Wild Boar – signs only

Reptiles & amphibians – 7 species			
Spanish terrapin	Red-eared terrapin	Iberian wall lizard	European chameleon
West Iberian painted frog	Iberian water frog	Iberian parsley frog <i>Pelodytes (punctatus) ibericus</i>	

Odonata – 6 species					
Epaulet Skimmer	Red-veined Darter	Southern Hawker	Migrant Hawker	Emperor	Lesser Emperor

Notable Invertebrates & Crustaceans – 12 species		
Fiddler crab	Louisiana crayfish	Yellow scorpion
Mediterranean banded centipede <i>Scolopendra cingulata</i>	Dung beetle	Rhinoceros dung beetle
Longhorn beetle	Violet carpenter bee	Robber fly <i>Pogonosoma maroccanum</i>
Praying mantis	Mediterranean tarantula	Garden spider <i>Araneus diadematus</i>



Purple swamp-hen (gallinule), long-tailed blue and chameleon.

Plants

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

Where there is no number, usually these are plants in floras from northern Europe

e.g. *Wild Flowers of Britain & Europe* by Fitter, Fitter & Blamey/*Wild Flowers of the Algarve* by Thorogood & Hiscock.

P = planted, noted when of special interest

SPERMATOPHYTA – Conifers		
Araucariaceae		
<i>Araucaria heterophylla</i>	Norfolk island pine	P
Pinaceae Pine family		
<i>Pinus pinea</i>	stone / umbrella pine	3
<i>Pinus pinaster</i>	maritime pine	5
Cupressaceae Cypress family		
<i>Juniperus phoenicea</i>	Phoenician juniper	17
ANGIOSPERMS		
Moraceae Mulberry family		
<i>Ficus carica</i>	fig	42
Aizoaceae Aizoon family		
<i>Carpobrotus edulis</i>	Hottentot fig	115
Fagaceae Oaks		
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	sweet chestnut	23
<i>Quercus coccifera</i>	holly / prickly / kermes oak	24
<i>Quercus rotundifolia</i>	holm oak	26
<i>Quercus suber</i>	cork oak	27
<i>Quercus faginea</i>	Portuguese oak	30

Betulaceae Birch family		
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	alder	
Aristolochiaceae Birthwort family		
<i>Aristolochia baetica</i>		58
Chenopodiaceae Goosefoot family		
<i>Arthrocnemum macrostachya</i>	a perennial glasswort	84
<i>Suaeda vera</i>	shrubby seablite	94
<i>Halimione vulgaris</i>	sea purslane	100
Brassicaceae (Cruciferae) Cabbage family		
<i>Lobularia maritima</i>	sweet Alison	336
Crassulaceae		
<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	navelwort	396
Rosaceae Rose family		
<i>Eriobotrya japonica</i>	Japanese loquat	429
Fabiaceae (was Leguminosae) Pea family		
<i>Ceratonia siliqua</i>	carob	431
<i>Genista hirsute</i> ssp. <i>algarbrensis</i>		466
<i>Ulex parviflorus</i>	small-flowered gorse	473
<i>Spartium junceum</i>	Spanish broom	481
<i>Ononis natrix</i>	large yellow restharrow	556
Oxalidaceae		
<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i>	Bermuda buttercup	735
Anacardiaceae Pistacio family		
<i>Pistacia lentiscus</i>	mastic tree or lentisc	865
Malvaceae Mallow family		
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	common mallow	898
Thymelaeaceae Daphne family		
<i>Daphne gnidium</i>	daphne	936
Cistaceae Rockrose family		
<i>Cistus salviifolius</i>	sage-leaved cistus	965
<i>Cistus ladanifer</i>	gum cistus	971
<i>Cistus palhinhae</i>		972
Tamaricaceae Tamarix		
<i>Tamarix africana</i>	tamarix	1016
Cactaceae Cactus family		
<i>Opuntia maxima</i> (= <i>ficus-indica</i>)	prickly pear	1040
Myrtaceae Myrtle family		
<i>Myrtus communis</i>	common myrtle	1052
Punicaceae Pomegranate family		
<i>Punica granatum</i>	pomegranate	1064
Umbelliferae/ Apiaceae Carrot family		
<i>Eryngium maritimum</i>	sea holly	1073
<i>Ferula communis</i>	giant fennel	1141
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	fennel	1108
Ericaceae Heath family		
<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	strawberry tree	1176
<i>Erica arborea</i>	tree heather	1178
<i>Erica australis</i>	Spanish heath	1181
Araliaceae Ivy family		
<i>Hedera helix</i>	ivy	
Oleaceae		
<i>Olea europaea</i>	olive	1248
<i>Olea europaea</i> ssp. <i>oleaster</i>	wild olive	1248a
Apocynaceae Oleander family		
<i>Nerium oleander</i>	oleander	1256
Rubiaceae...Bedstraw Family		
<i>Rubia peregrina</i>	wild madder	1305
Convolvulaceae...Bindweed Family		
<i>Ipomoea purpurea</i>	common morning glory	1319
Boraginaceae Borage family		
<i>Echium vulgare</i>	viper's bugloss	1384

Lamiaceae (Labiatae) Mint family		
<i>Teucrium scorodonia</i>	wood sage	1433
<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>	thyme	1508
<i>Thymus capitatus</i>		1514
Scrophulariaceae		
<i>Misopates orontium</i>	lesser snapdragon / weasel's snout	1611
<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	foxglove	
Caprifoliaceae Honeysuckle family		
<i>Viburnum tinus</i>	laurustinus	1711
Dipsacaceae Teasel family		
<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	wild teasel	1732
Asteraceae (was Compositae) Daisy family		
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	perennial daisy	1792
<i>Dittrichia viscosa</i>	stink aster	1842
<i>Calendula arvensis</i>	field marigold	1908
<i>Carlina corymbosa</i>	flat-topped carline thistle	1920
<i>Atractylis gummifera</i>	atractylis	1931
MONOCOTYLEDONS		
Liliaceae		
<i>Asphodelus aestivus</i>	common asphodel	2089
<i>Crocus serotinus</i>	autumn crocus	2325
<i>Merendera filifolia</i>	merendera	2132
<i>Urginea maritima</i>	sea squill	2163
<i>Scilla autumnalis</i>	autumn squill	2189
<i>Asparagus albus</i>	white asparagus	2214
<i>Asparagus acutifolius</i>		2212
<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i>	butcher's broom	2219
<i>Smilax aspera</i>	common smilax, sarsaparilla	2222
Agavaceae		
<i>Agave americana</i>	agave, century plant P	2253
Amaryllidaceae		
<i>Pancratium maritimum</i>	sea daffodil	2270
<i>Narcissus serotinus</i>		2272
Palmae Palm family		
<i>Chamaerops humilis</i>	dwarf fan palm	2357
Araceae Arum family		
<i>Arisarum simorrhinum</i>	a friar's cowl	2378
Orchidaceae		
<i>Spiranthes spiralis</i>	autumn lady's tresses	2389
Gramineae		
<i>Typha angustifolia</i>	lesser reedmace	
<i>Arundo donax</i>	giant reed	2494
<i>Phragmites australis</i>	common reed	
FERNS (PTERIDOPHYTA)		
<i>Ceterach officinarum</i>	rustyback fern	2532
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	bracken	

