

# Honeyguide

## WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX

Telephone: 01603 300552

www.honeyguide.co.uk E-mail: honeyguide@tesco.net



**Algarve**  
**30 March – 6 April 2009**

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**Holiday participants**

George Malcolm and Sonia Donaghy  
Pam Muirhead  
John Minihane  
Julian Lawrence

Leaders

Chris Durdin  
Deric Brown

Hotel Belavista da Luz: [www.belavistadaluz.com](http://www.belavistadaluz.com)

Report and photos by Chris Durdin.  
Front cover: bald ibises at Pêra Marsh; right, *Epipactis lusitanica*

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 £35 per person was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, leading to a total of £205 (€220) given to the Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA, BirdLife Portugal). We were very pleased to welcome SPEA volunteer Rui Euphrasia to the Hotel Belavista da Luz to receive the cheque.

This is our fourth donation to SPEA, £1528 to date. The total conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays since 1991 was £56,741 at the end of April 2009.

For coverage of this story in the Algarve Resident (the online version of a newspaper in English) and a group picture follow this link:

<http://www.algarveresident.com/story.asp?XID=31182>



## Algarve 30 March – 6 April 2009

### Monday 30 March – from the UK to the Algarve

The easyJet flight from Stansted was nearly an hour late leaving but only half an hour late arriving in Faro, and we were quickly through baggage reclaim. George and Sonia's flight from Leeds-Bradford was, by contrast, a little early and they were there to meet us, as planned. We found the man from Luzcar then the minibus, loaded up, bought some diesel and an hour later we were in Luz, by which time it was dark.

'Culture shock' is a phrase sometimes linked with travelling abroad, this time to the Hotel Belavista's evening entertainment. We had missed mum, who sings traditional Portuguese Fado, a son was an Elvis impersonator. If you ever wondered where all the rock and rollers from the 1950s have gone, here's the answer: they are in the Algarve, still strutting their stuff. The food was, as ever, very good: most people opted for fish.

### Tuesday 31 March - walk from Luz to Lagos

Breakfast was at a civilised 8.30 after being a little late last night, and at 10 we were ready for our first day's walk. Some of the local special wildlife was apparent in moments: azure-winged magpies and Sardinian warblers, and mirror orchids under the hedge in the scrub next the hotel. We walked down into Luz, pausing to sniff the flowers of *Coronilla vincentina* and the leaves of Peruvian pepper tree. Two pallid swifts buzzed past a few times: house martins were plainly here in good numbers then farther down the road by the Fortealeza, two common swifts. The showiest of the flowers by the shore were patches of yellow *Astericus maritimus* and we noted many common wayside flowers too, such as crown daisies. There was a nice sprinkling of waders on the shore: a grey plover, a couple of turnstones and two Kentish plovers, the last a little distant. While Julian went fossil hunting I used the butterfly net to catch an Egyptian locust on a palm: we all studied the vertical black and white lines on its eyes.

Pausing briefly to sample some loquats – the first ever scrumping Honeyguiders? – we moved out of Luz and into the more natural hillside vegetation, rich especially with pyramidal orchids and grey-leaved cistuses. A flock of house martins and swallows fed over the meadow below, and we had good views of the first of countless fan-tailed warblers. Many flowers were noted: two of the best were the *Centauria pullata* (below, with mallow-leaved bindweed) and purple



flowered honeywort. It's quite a hill up to the obelisk so John, supported ably by Julian, had to take it slowly. Three more orchid species were noted on the way up – bumblebee, yellow bee and small-flowered serapias – and we found some of the extraordinary red *Cytinus ruber* that is a parasite on Cistus.

At the top, butterflies were beginning to show well: both swallowtail and scarce swallowtail, clouded yellow and Spanish marbled white all being easy to see on the wing, and green-striped white in the bug box. These were as we walked along the clifftop path, accompanied by alpine swifts, eventually meeting Deric. We dropped down into Porto de Mos where he had his minibus and our picnics.

Deric then drove us a kilometre or so beyond the built up area, resuming the walk through fields of hairy lupins. This took us to the impressive rock stacks of Pont de Piedade, a popular spot for other visitors too, where we found some shags on a rock and a first class view of a bottle-nosed dolphin spotted by George. Collecting John and Pam who'd stopped a little way up the road

near the joint-pine bushes, we followed the 15 Stations of the Cross into Lagos. Julian demonstrated why picking a prickly pear fruit is a bad idea, and is probably still picking the spiky hairs out of his hand to this day. There was a pause to watch a red-rumped swallow with some other hirundines, then to study some Judas trees. Lagos had rather too much building work going on the front, so we walked along the edge of the port, where there were Sandwich terns and two white storks flying through, one carrying a stick. Catching the number 4 bus was the plan but as this meant a wait of more than half an hour we piled into two taxis instead to return to Luz.

#### Wednesday 1 April – the west coast

Deric joined us for the day and dropped us to take a delightful walk into Boca do Rio, eventually meeting us at the other end. The sound of bee-eaters caught our ears and about three came through, and a southern grey shrike perched on a fig tree. There was a steady trickle of new flowers, including the showy Iberian milk-vetch in flower (it was already in seed on the scrub next to the Hotel Belavista) and a patch of champagne orchids. The wind was occasionally chilly as the river valley – former rice fields – came into view, Deric walking up to meet us. His eyes were usefully peeled as he found the Portuguese speciality Lusitanian mirror orchid, plus narrow-leaved helleborine. Cetti's warblers sang from the wet bits and stonechats perched on drier bits, and we heard distant chiffchaffs and cuckoo. In the pine trees there was a curious song, which turned out to be the chaffinch-like *splink splink* of Iberian chiffchaff. Like the tortoise and the hare, John in low gear was at the minibus first.

Turning left past the headland was a lucky choice as we straightaway ran into a flock of 10 or so bee-eaters settling on a fig tree and giving super views. Below on the floodplain was a nice mixed flock of cattle and little egrets. After some pottering on a headland, we drove to a hillside near Vila do Bispo for lunch. Here there were many of the large blue *Scilla peruviana*, many of which were almost stemless in the windswept conditions. A quail called as we ate, and with the squills were both tassel and common grape hyacinths.

Pam had been to Sagres Port in her boat 27 years before, which was as good a reason as any to take a look. It's little changed in that time – unlike Lagos. A whimbrel flew up from a corner, a shag fished in the harbour, Sandwich terns settled on buoys and we studied the gulls, prompted by two lesser black-backs with the usual yellow-legged gulls.

Sagres Fort makes great stop even if the history of Henry the Navigator's School of Navigation doesn't grab you. There was a black-eared wheatear outside and numerous black redstarts. Inside we found blue rock thrush and a red-billed chough zapped past, while out at sea there was a steady trickle of gannets, a reminder that this is the Atlantic and not the Mediterranean. It's like a coastal limestone pavement with super flowers: patches of bright blue shrubby pimpernel (*below, right*), spiny hedgehog pea *Anthyllis echinatus*, pink antirrhinums (*below, left*), the unusual wild carrot *Daucus halophilus*. Oh – plus loos and an ice cream shop!



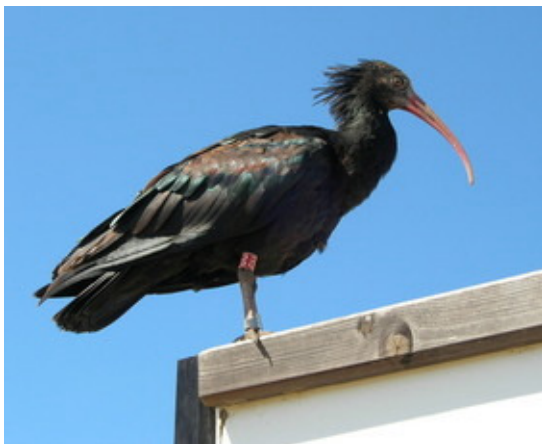


Thursday 2 April – Alvor estuary, Pêra Marsh and inland

Just east of Lagos lies the Alvor estuary, and our drive took us through Lagos where we noted four white stork nests, two of which were on tall industrial chimneys. Deric dropped us and continued up the track with John while the rest of the group did a walk round of three sides of a lagoon. Immediately there were waders: greenshank, redshank, common sandpipers and Kentish plovers, while the saltmarsh vegetation was studded with bright yellow spikes of *Cistanche*. We looked at the sea, compared the yellow peas of *Medicago marina* and *Lotus creticus* and found two stag beetles. There was a nice – if slightly tricky to ID – group of immature Mediterranean gulls, dwarfed by the huge Caspian tern that then floated past us, with its magnificent bright red beak shiny in the sun. About 10 Sandwich terns came past, showing again just how big the Caspian tern really is. There were five sanderlings in their winter colours of grey, tame as usual on the lagoon edge, leading us to the embankment to complete this short circuit. Two woodchat shrikes on a wire were our first, by which a hoopoe flew past and azure-winged magpies moved between the pines. We then continued alongside the estuary, past oyster lays, cottage-industry sized shellfish processing and fish ponds of various sizes by which there were bee-eaters and many black-winged stilts.

We popped into the motorway services to use the loos before arriving at Pêra Marsh – strictly the Lagoa dos Salgados – to eat our picnic lunches by some pink *Cistus crispus* and yellow buttonweed. At best, this is one of the best birdwatching spots in Algarve, yet the most problematic in terms of management: periodically it gets drained by the neighbouring golf course and there is a long-running challenge to get it managed properly, involving SPEA, the RSPB and various Portuguese bodies and landowners. Deric had called in after dark on Monday evening and seen it had been drained; Domingos from the main SPEA office said much the same, so the visit was as much as anything to see the controversial site ahead of the visit by Rui from SPEA on Saturday. So it was a pleasant surprise to find it half-filled with water with many avocets and black-winged stilts, a little group of sanderlings and some distant purple gallinules.

Then four large, dark birds appeared in the distance over the marsh – plus a marsh harrier. “Glossy ibises” I called out: then they circled and landed on the edge of the water close to us. Deric, alerted by word on the local birding grapevine, was quick to see that they were, in fact, bald ibises: one of the world’s rarest birds. We studied them carefully, puzzled over their lack of baldness – due to not being adult birds, and noted the colour-rings on both legs on all birds. Two then landed on the sign right by us, and all four came even closer on the dry land, one turning over bits of paper. An internet search later confirmed suspicions: they have often been seen here in recent months and come from a reintroduction project near Cadiz, evidently now preferring Portugal to Spain.



We headed inland in search of cork oak. Above Silves there was a sprinkling of cork oaks, which had survived a large bush-fire two years ago, explaining the rather uniform stands of gum cistus blanketing hillsides for mile after mile. It became a magical mystery tour, extraordinarily remote so close to the built-up coastal areas. We ended up doing a long drive on tracks through this wilderness between two *barragens* – reservoirs – from one of which fishermen were pulling out large numbers of largemouth bass, we learnt, introduced from the USA. It was mostly rather birdless, though we did hear the distinctive Iberian subspecies of green woodpecker and see strawberry trees and *Cistus populifolius*.

By tradition we always have one night in a fish restaurant in Lagos. Tonight we were at Os Lambertos and very good it was too.

#### Friday 3 April – Alentejo

Full steam ahead up the motorway and it really was just one hour from the hotel to the motorway's end, where the action started in a way that the following list of sightings hardly captures. First to catch the eye was a pale, hovering bird of prey: a black-shouldered kite, that we saw drop into vegetation and fly in front of the minibus. Just down the road another pale bird of prey, this time a super-slim, elegantly-floating male Montagu's harrier.

Ten minutes later and we were at a supermarket on the edge of Castro Verde for a coffee, snack and loos. Leaving there on the Beja road there was our third pale bird of prey, this time the palest of pale-phase booted eagles that I have ever seen. We turned off the road to head across the steppes and immediately ran into several calling, flying calandra larks, and an Iberian hare for good measure. We paused briefly at the LPN's information centre, learning that the odd roller had arrived: we were lucky enough to catch a view of one later, after a few false starts from ravens and crows. Driving out from there we passed a large tower built especially for nesting lesser kestrels, but it was the calling great spotted cuckoos that really caught the eye. Then some sandgrouse flew past, then more; not the best of views but a late winter flock of black-bellied sandgrouse, perhaps 20 birds or more. Better still, two little bustards flew past, the male doing its wing quivering display flight, then another and a fourth also in display flight. Then the first of many great bustards started to appear, first in flight, then on the ground: we must have seen 100 during the day. Along the road were spotted rockroses.

Passing through a farm, a little owl could be seen on a tiled rooftop, but it moved off rather too quickly. Then close to a watercourse, white with water crowfoot, a stone-curlew walked slowly into a low patch of gum cistus. A singing woodlark was located on a dead eucalyptus branch.



Lunch was on the wide-open plains near another purpose-built lesser kestrel nesting structure, that is once we'd settled down after a black vulture and several griffons drifted past, plus a red

kite for good measure. Pam and Julian tried to re-find the little owls that had shot off from a rock pile as we had arrived, though without success. Here there were some yellow toadflaxes *Linaria spartea* and black-centred *Tolpis*, but the best flowers through the day were really the masses of white mayweed, brick-red dock and yellow hawkweeds that dominated so many fields.

Back through the gates of another part of the LPN reserve and we moved towards a stack of vultures we'd seen in the distance. Two more booted eagles came past, then in the same bit of sky a pure white short-toed eagle. A late wintering lapwing stood by a pond, along with gadwalls. Elsewhere, flocks of cattle egrets were moving around to feed in the grassland, sometimes with sheep, sometimes without.

Back on the Castro Verde - Mertola road we stopped to take photos of the long line of white storks' nests on specially adapted old concrete pylons (*previous page*). Our final pause was by a bridge farther along this road, where bee-eaters and hoopoes called and we found a Cetti's warbler in some oleander. There was a delightful clump of yellow common jonquils by the water's edge, and Spanish terrapins had hauled out onto rocks to bask in the afternoon sun. Sadly it was 4.30, time to leave, and we were back at the hotel at 6 pm on the dot. All in all quite a day, and a great introduction to the delights of the Alentejo.

A little gentle dance music tonight with Rene and George, both now 84, on the dance floor as for every Friday night here, a great lesson in how to stay fit and elegant.

#### Saturday 4 April – Silves

A slightly later 9:30 departure to drive to Portimao for a river trip up the Arade estuary. The boat *Cegonha* (stork) was away promptly at 10:30 and took exactly an hour to reach Silves, the ancient Moorish capital of Algarve. In Portimao, every chimney of the old sardine factories had a white stork nest. With the tide up, there were no mudflats but still there were some 10 common sandpipers along the way, plus a greenshank and a good sprinkling of egrets, herons, cormorants and Sandwich terns. Hundreds of yellow *cistanches* lit up the saltmarsh edge. Some brilliant bee-eaters caught the eye as we neared Silves; Spanish terrapins were hauled out on muddy edges and there was a shoal of grey mullet by the steps as we landed.

After a coffee or ice cream and some impromptu juggling with satsumas, we walked though the covered market, past Indian bead trees about to burst into purple flower and into the town square where we found our first violet carpenter bee buzzing round the jacarandas. Just outside the town, past an orchard, we arrived at the Recanto dos Mouros, our restaurant for lunch, within sight of the impressive castle of Silves – and the odd passing monarch butterfly as we ate outside, albeit under welcome shade this hot day. A tasty selection of appetizers, starters and main courses followed, if a little OTT for quantity, including wild boar stew and black pig. Sonia and I left the diners with their coffee to stroll the few yards up the hill to the core monarch area. Here bristle-fruited silkweed, the food plant of this striking looking butterfly, is well established, and after a little searching we'd found at least 11 black and yellow caterpillars to show the others who soon followed on (there are pictures in the wildlife checklists on page 12 of this report).





The final stop of the day was at a restored tide mill on the outskirts of Silves, which seems to be reassuring popular as a place to visit with a combination of heritage and countryside. Julian found a blue-headed yellow wagtail, there was an attractive mix of Mediterranean scrub species and a tiny yellow gromwell in the car park.

We had a guest tonight, Rui Euphrasia, a volunteer ‘caretaker’ for SPEA who keeps an eye on the Pêra Marsh Important Bird Area. He confirmed the Spanish release scheme origin for the bald ibises and told us some of his monitoring work on the marsh and the complexities of moving towards a management agreement with landowners, government agencies, local authorities, SPEA and the RSPB involved. The hope remains quite strong that a sluice will be installed so that the periodic flushing out of the lagoon can be done in a less damaging and *ad hoc* style. Rui was optimistic that a second golf course – one already abuts the marsh, which is where the ibises spend much of their time – will be a valuable buffer for the wetland. He left with our best wishes and our usual cheque to support SPEA’s work. We exercised our minds by debating the future of nature tourism in the Algarve in general and for the Hotel Belavista in particular.

#### Sunday 5 April – west coast and local walk

With a late departure the following day, this was like our bonus day in Algarve. The morning was spent in open maritime pine woodland in the west coast Natural Reserve. It was a gentle potter looking at a rich range of flowers, including many small-flowered and heart-flowered serapias orchids (*the latter, right*), blue *Scilla odorata* in a damp area well dug over by wild boar and several helleborines with small leaves, which after later study can be named as *Epipactis lusitanica* (or *Epipactis tremolsii* subsp. *lusitanica* if you’re a lumper rather than a splitter). The botanising reminded us very emphatically that the Mediterranean flora, wonderful though it is, has its limitations in the western Algarve: several identifications were puzzled out later with a selection of other books. A woodlark sang from a tree top and our first nightingale was heard in the valley below.

We moved a short distance to another open area in the wood, with even more orchids in profusion. We heard our first skylark, saw our first sparrowhawk and Iberian chiffchaff sang here too. A dung beetle doing what dung beetles do best made for a popular cameo role.

After a lunch of Caesar salad back at the Belavista, we took a siesta before reconvening at 4:30 for a late afternoon visit just the other side of the main road to a golf course that’s been under construction north of Espiche for some years. It’s set in a rich and undisturbed area so made for a delightful potter. The lake had terrapins, but the bad news is that they were escaped red-eared ones. In among the scrub, of at least three types of *Cistus*, we found last lingering blooms of yellow anemones, green-winged and woodcock orchids. Bee-eaters came over as we left, as if to wish us farewell, there was a good view of a southern grey shrike on a fence and two late wintering song thrushes were a surprise.





Sunday 6 April – Pêra Marsh, Quinta do Marim and home

An earlier discussion about the week's itinerary had thrown up the sensible idea that our visit to the Ria Formosa Natural Park, close to Faro, would be ideal for the final day ahead of our early evening flights. But we started by returning to Pêra Marsh, where a group of 23 greater flamingos was immediately obvious as we arrived. They weren't the only new arrivals: five spoonbills were loafing among the hundreds of bustling black-winged stilts. Scanning a row of gulls we picked up two collared pratincoles, albeit rather distant and, as on our previous visit, a Caspian tern. Our friends the four bald ibises then returned, again perched on the signboard and settled on the ground next to us, though didn't go for the bread that Deric thoughtfully provided for them.

The area was encouragingly busy with naturalists, including a large group of students on the viewing platform. The local purple gallinules didn't wish to show well today but the Caspian tern flew past. We ducked under the rather over-sized wooden walkway across the dunes to find some pretty three-leaved snowflakes. Here we heard, but couldn't find, a short-toed lark, and another was singing but equally invisible as we returned to the minibuses.

After loos at Loulé service station, we drove to Quinta do Lago. The approach past upmarket housing, golf courses and fancy roundabouts is all rather manicured but this all abuts the large Ria Formosa Natural Reserve, the estuary, lagoon and sand dune complex we had seen from the air as we landed at Faro airport a week earlier. After eating picnics, all those with full energies walked east along the edge of a golf fairway – the tide was right in, so keeping us off the shore – to a hide overlooking a lake with reedmace islands and fringes. There were some 10 pairs of red-crested pochards, other ducks including shoveler, pochard and gadwall and both little and great crested grebes. However it was soon the coots we were scanning, as word of a crested (or red-knobbed) coot had reached us. We found it, and its small red knobs above the white face were just visible, though much more obvious was a white neck collar so the bird could be traced: like the ibises a visitor from Spain, this time the Coto Doñana. Talk then turned to whether there might be a little bittern here so we scanned all the distant reedbed fringes, only for one to fly up right under our noses in front of the hide, landing in the open on a small platform of dead reedmace below us.

Returning along the shore, the tide having dropped, we found a woodchat shrike (*right*), fiddler crabs on the edge of their holes on the exposed mud, plus a sprinkling of grey plovers and other waders roosting on islands or moving around. Some of us then walked east to the other lagoon, though the water level there was unusually high and it was almost devoid of birds.

Then it was time to drive to Faro airport, return the minibus, for Deric to head back to the Belavista while both the Leeds-Bradford and Stansted contingents queued side by side for the return flights home.



## Checklists

### Birds

- Little grebe:** recorded on four days, including at Pêra marshes and Quinta do Lago
- Great crested grebe:** two on the lagoon at Quinta do Lago
- Gannet:** about 20 offshore at Sagres. A reminder that this is the Atlantic and not the Mediterranean.
- Shag:** five on the rocks or the sea around Pont de Piedade, one in the harbour at Sagres Port
- Cormorant:** seen on four days, in estuaries or marshes rather than the open sea
- Little bittern:** superb view of one from the hide at Quinta do Lago, 6<sup>th</sup> April
- Cattle egret:** seen almost daily as we travelled, especially where there were livestock
- Little egret:** seen on five days
- Great white egret:** Deric and John saw one on the Alvor estuary on 2<sup>nd</sup> April
- Grey heron:** seen on six days
- White stork:** seen on five days, including nests in Lagos, by the Arade estuary and large numbers in Alentejo.
- Bald ibis:** 4 at Pêra marsh on both visits 2<sup>nd</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> April. Immatures from the captive breeding scheme in Cadiz, all with three rings and radio transmitters [see, for example, [www.iagnbi.org/projects/pe](http://www.iagnbi.org/projects/pe) ]
- Spoonbill:** 5 at Pêra marshes on 6<sup>th</sup> April
- Greater flamingo:** 23 at Pêra marshes on 6<sup>th</sup> April
- Gadwall:** several pairs at Pêra marshes, 3 pairs at Quinta do Lago, 6<sup>th</sup> April, several in display flight in the Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April
- Mallard:** recorded on six days
- Shoveler:** one male from the hide at Quinta do Lago, 6<sup>th</sup> April
- Pochard:** about 10 loafing on the edge of the golf course at Quinta do Lago, 6<sup>th</sup> April
- Red-crested pochard:** 20 from the hide at Quinta do Lago, 6<sup>th</sup> April
- Black-shouldered kite:** super views in Alentejo, 3<sup>rd</sup> April
- Black kite:** several in Alentejo, 3<sup>rd</sup> April
- Red kite:** several in Alentejo, 3<sup>rd</sup> April
- Griffon vulture:** lots in Alentejo, 3<sup>rd</sup> April
- Black vulture:** 1 in Alentejo, 3<sup>rd</sup> April
- Buzzard:** seen on three days
- Short-toed eagle:** 1 in the Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April
- Marsh harrier:** at Pêra marshes on 2<sup>nd</sup> April
- Hen harrier:** an immature male in the Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April
- Montagu's harrier:** a superb male in the Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April
- Sparrowhawk:** one at Espiche, 5<sup>th</sup> April
- Booted eagle:** three in the Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, all pale-phase birds including one that was remarkably pale
- Lesser kestrel:** scores around LPN's artificial nesting blocks and over the plains of Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April
- Kestrel:** seen almost daily, except in Alentejo where they may have been overlooked due to so many lesser kestrels
- Red-legged partridge:** seen on three days, including in Alentejo
- Quail:** calling on 1<sup>st</sup> April
- Moorhen:** seen on four days
- Purple gallinule:** rather elusive at Pêra marshes but seen well at Quinta do Lago, 6<sup>th</sup> April
- Coot:** seen on four days
- Red-knobbed (or crested) coot:** we had been alerted about one at Quinta do Lago, 6<sup>th</sup> April. Fairly distinctive mostly due to its white neck collar, rather than the tiny red knobs. From a reintroduction project in Spain [see for example <http://www.terra.es/personal7/jidies/fulica.htm> ]
- Little bustard:** at least 4, including 2 males in flight display in the Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April
- Great bustard:** lost counts in the Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April: estimated in the region of 200 seen
- Oystercatcher:** 1, Alvor estuary, 2<sup>nd</sup> April
- Black-winged stilt:** lots but not counted at Pêra marsh on both visits
- Avocet:** lots, though fewer than stilts, at Pêra marsh on both visits
- Stone-curlew:** a pair and one other in the Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April; one at Pêra marsh on 6<sup>th</sup> April
- Collared pratincole:** 2 at Pêra marsh on 6<sup>th</sup> April, sadly on the ground and a bit distant
- Ringed plover:** at both Alvor estuary and the estuary at Quinta do Lago
- Kentish plover:** good views at Alvor estuary 2 April; two distant birds on the foreshore at Luz on 31<sup>st</sup> March
- Golden plover:** a small group seen by Deric and John on the Alvor estuary 2<sup>nd</sup> April

**Grey plover:** at Quinta do Lago and on the foreshore at Luz on 31<sup>st</sup> March  
**Lapwing:** a late wintering bird in the Alentejo  
**Turnstone:** on the foreshore at Luz, Alvor estuary and at Quinta do Lago  
**Sanderling:** groups still in winter plumage on the Alvor estuary and at Pêra marshes (both visits)  
**Dunlin:** groups gaining summer plumage at both Quinta do Lago and Pêra marshes on 6<sup>th</sup> April  
**Snipe:** one dropped into the reedbed at Quinta do Lago on 6<sup>th</sup> April  
**Bar-tailed godwit:** singles at Alvor estuary and Quinta do Lago  
**Whimbrel:** recorded on 3 days  
**Redshank:** Alvor estuary 2<sup>nd</sup> April  
**Greenshank:** Alvor estuary 2<sup>nd</sup> April, Arade estuary and Quinta do Lago  
**Common sandpiper:** recorded on 5 days, including about 10 during the boat trip up the Arade estuary on 4<sup>th</sup> April  
**Mediterranean gull:** four immatures on the lagoon at the Alvor estuary 2<sup>nd</sup> April; 2 immatures at Pêra marsh on 6<sup>th</sup> April  
**Black-headed gull:** 5 at Pêra on 6<sup>th</sup>  
**Yellow-legged gull:** common and seen daily  
**Lesser black-backed gull:** recorded on three days  
**Sandwich tern:** recorded on five days, abundant (c200) on the Alvor estuary  
**Caspian tern:** 1 adult gave fine views at the Alvor estuary on 2<sup>nd</sup> April; seen on both visits to Pêra  
**Black-bellied sandgrouse:** big flocks in Alentejo  
**Rock dove/feral pigeon:** none seen this year that looked like real rock doves  
**Collared dove:** seen daily  
**Great spotted cuckoo:** 4 in the Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April  
**Cuckoo:** heard on both visits to the protected west coast NP, but away from the coast  
**Swift:** seen on five days, including in Luz and at Faro airport as we left  
**Pallid swift:** 2 in Luz on 31<sup>st</sup> March  
**Alpine swift:** about 20 during our coastal walk on 31<sup>st</sup> March; also seen north of Silves on 2<sup>nd</sup> April  
**Little owl:** 3 in the Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1 on 4<sup>th</sup> April  
**Bee-eater:** seen on six days, with especially good views at Boca do Rio on 1<sup>st</sup> April.  
**Roller:** 1 in the Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April  
**Hoopoe:** seen or heard on six days  
**Green woodpecker:** heard only on three days. The Iberian subspecies is *sharpei*, which sounds different and lacks the black mask.  
**Short-toed lark:** two heard at Pêra marshes on 6<sup>th</sup> April  
**Calandra lark:** common in the Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April  
**Crested lark:** seen almost daily  
**Woodlark:** on two days, both in wooded areas in the protected west coast  
**Skylark:** singing in an open area next to pine woods areas in the protected west coast, 5<sup>th</sup> April  
**Sand martin:** recorded two days  
**Swallow:** seen daily  
**Red-rumped swallow:** seen on four days  
**House martin:** seen almost daily.  
**Meadow pipit:** this winter visitor was recorded on 4 days  
**White wagtail:** only recorded at Sagres on 1<sup>st</sup> April  
**Yellow wagtail:** a blue-headed wagtail at the Silves Tide Mill on 4<sup>th</sup> April; also at Pêra marsh on 6<sup>th</sup> April but not identified by subspecies  
**Wren:** heard on three days; two of these in the protected west coast  
**Nightingale:** heard while we were in pine woods areas in the protected west coast, 5<sup>th</sup> April  
**Black redstart:** several singing at Sagres fort on 1<sup>st</sup> April  
**Stonechat:** first seen just east of Luz; recorded on six days  
**Robin:** John saw one in a town garden as we drove towards Quinta do Lago  
**Black-eared wheatear:** a male at Sagres on 1<sup>st</sup> April  
**Blue rock thrush:** 2 pairs at Sagres fort on 1<sup>st</sup> April  
**Blackbird:** recorded every day  
**Song thrush:** 2 late winter birds at Espiche on 5<sup>th</sup> April  
**Cetti's warbler:** heard on five days  
**Fan-tailed warbler:** seen or heard daily; roughly 20 between Luz and Lagos.  
**Sardinian warbler:** seen daily, especially outside the hotel in Luz  
**Blackcap:** heard most days at Luz and seen twice  
**Chiffchaff:** singing at Boca do Rio on 1<sup>st</sup> April

**Iberian chiffchaff:** two singing at Boca do Rio on 1<sup>st</sup> April and our return to the west coast wood on 5<sup>th</sup> April

**Great tit:** seen on four days

**Nuthatch:** in the protected west coast wood, 5<sup>th</sup> April

**Short-toed treecreeper:** 1 at Boca do Rio on 1<sup>st</sup> April, heard from one minibus at Quinta do Lago

**Southern grey shrike:** seen on four days, including in Alentejo and at Espiche on 5<sup>th</sup> April

**Woodchat shrike:** seen on four days, first recorded by the Alvor estuary on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

**Jay:** on our return to the west coast wood on 5<sup>th</sup> April

**Azure-winged magpie:** seen daily, including in the scrub, gardens and old orchards by the hotel.

**Chough:** 1 at Sagres fort on 1<sup>st</sup> April

**Jackdaw:** recorded on two days

**Raven:** two birds on the Lagos walk on 31<sup>st</sup> March; in Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April

**Spotless starling:** recorded on all bar one day, including in Luz.

**House sparrow:** seen daily, especially at the hotel, where they made a lively dawn chorus

**Spanish sparrow:** a flock by a farm in Alentejo on 3<sup>rd</sup> April

**Tree sparrow:** 1 by the Alvor estuary on 2<sup>nd</sup> April

**Serin:** seen on all bar one day

**Greenfinch:** seen on all bar one day

**Goldfinch:** seen daily

**Linnet:** seen daily

**Corn bunting:** seen daily; abundant in Alentejo

Total: 125 species

### Reptiles and amphibians

Spanish (stripe-necked) terrapin: river in Alentejo; river Arade; Ria Formosa

Red-eared terrapin: (escape) golf course under construction at Espiche

Large psammodromus: several places, but generally not seen well

Iberian water frog: several places

### Mammals

Bottle-nose dolphin

Rabbit

Iberian hare

### Fish

Widemouth bass

Grey mullet

### Butterflies

Swallowtail

Scarce swallowtail

Large white

Small white

Green-striped white

Clouded yellow

Cleopatra

Painted lady

Monarch

Common blue

Small copper

Green hairstreak

Spanish marbled white

Meadow brown

Wall

Small heath

Speckled wood





### Other notable invertebrates

- Fiddler crab
- Egyptian locust
- An armoured beetle *Sepidium elongatum* (right)
- Violet carpenter bee
- Paper wasp *Polistes* sp
- Pine processionary moth (tents)
- Dung beetle
- Fire bug *Pyrrhocis apterus*



### Algarve flowers 2009

P = planted NiF = not in flower

#### SPERMATOPHYTA

Conifers

##### Araucariaceae

Araucaria heterophylla Norfolk island pine

##### Cupressaceae - Cypress family

Cupressus sempervirens  
Juniperus phoenicea Phoenician juniper

##### Ephedraceae - Joint pine family

Ephedra fragilis

##### Pinaceae - Pine family

Pinus pinaster maritime pine  
Pinus pinea umbrella pine

#### ANGIOSPERMS

##### Aizoaceae - Aizoon family

Carpobrotus edulis Hottentot fig

##### Alismataceae – water-plantainfamily

Alisma plantago-aquatica water-plantain

##### Anacardiaceae - Pistacio family

Pistacia lentiscus mastic tree or lentisc  
Schinus molle P Peruvian pepper tree

##### Apiaceae - Carrot family

Daucus carota wild carrot  
Daucus halophilus  
Eryngium maritimum sea holly  
Foeniculum vulgare fennel  
Scandix pecten-veneris shepherd's needles  
Smyrnum olusatrum alexanders  
Thapsia sp (either T. garganica or T. villosa) a large-flowered yellow umbellifer

##### Apocynaceae - Oleander family

Nerium oleander oleander  
Vinca difformis periwinkle

##### Araliaceae - Ivy family

Hedera helix ivy

##### Asclepiadaceae - Milkweed family

Gomphocarpus fruticosus bristle-fruited silkweed

##### Asteraceae (was Compositae) - Daisy family

Arctotheca calendula Cape daisy  
Asteriscus maritimus yellow sea aster  
Bellis annua annual daisy  
Bellis sylvestris southern daisy

Calendula arvensis	field marigold
Centaurea pullata	
Chrysanthemum coronarium	crown daisy, entirely yellow
Chrysanthemum coronarium var. discolor	crown daisy, yellow & white
Galactites tomentosa	Mediterranean field thistle
Inula (or Dittrichia) graveolens	stink aster / stinking inula
Pallensis spinosa	spiny golden star
Sonchus oleraceus	common sow thistle
Tolpis barbata	

**Boraginaceae** - Borage family

Anchusa azurea	large blue alkanet ( <i>below</i> )
Anchusa undulata	undulate alkanet
Borago officinalis	borage
Cerithe major var purpurascens	honeywort
Cynoglossum creticum	blue hound's tongue
Echium plantagineum	purple viper's bugloss
Lithodora diffusa	scrambling gromwell



**Brassicaceae** (Cruciferae) - Cabbage family

Lobularia maritima	sweet alison
Malcolmia littorea	sand stock
Nasturtium officinale	nasturtium
Raphanus raphanistrum	wild radish
Sinapis arvensis	charlock

**Cactaceae** - Cactus family

Opuntia ficus-indica	prickly pear
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**Caprifoliaceae** - Honeysuckle family

Lonicera implexa	
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**Caryophyllaceae** - Pink family

Paronychia argentea	
Silene colorata	Mediterranean catchfly
Silene gallica	small-flowered catchfly
Silene italica	Italian catchfly
Silene vulgaris	bladder campion
Spergularia arvensis	corn spurrey
Spergularia purpurea	purple sand-spurrey

**Chenopodiaceae**

Beta vulgaris ssp. maritima	sea beet
Halimus halimus	shrubby orache

**Cistaceae** - Rockrose family

Cistus albidus	grey-leaved
Cistus crispus	
Cistus ladanifer	gum cistus
Cistus monspeliensis	narrow-leaved cistus
Cistus populifolius ( <i>right</i> )	
Cistus salvifolius	sage-leaved cistus
Halimium calcycinum	yellow rock rose
Tuberaria guttata	spotted rock rose

**Convolvulaceae** – bindweed family

Convolvulus althaeoides	mallow-leaved bindweed
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Convolvulus tricolor

**Crassulaceae**

Umbilicus rupestris navelwort

**Cucurbitaceae**

Ecballium elaterium squirting cucumber

**Dipsacaceae**

Scabiosa crenata

**Ericaceae** - Heath family

Erica australis

**Euphorbiaceae** - Spurge family

Euphorbia helioscopia sun spurge  
Mercurialis annua annual mercury  
Ricinus communis castor oil plant

**Fabiaceae** was Leguminosae - Pea family

Anthyllis tetraphylla bladder vetch  
Anthyllis vulnararia ssp praepropera Mediterranean kidney vetch  
Astragalus echinatus  
Astragalus lusitanicus  
Ceratonia siliqua carob  
Cercis siliquastrum P Judas tree  
Coronilla valentina ssp. glauca  
Dorycnium hirsutum dorycnium  
Genista hirsuta  
Lathyrus ochrus winged vetchling  
Lotus creticus southern birds foot trefoil  
Lupinus angustifolius narrow-leaved lupin  
Lupinus luteus yellow lupin  
Lupinus micranthus hairy lupin  
Medicago polymorpha toothed medick  
Melilotus indicus small melilot  
Ononis natrix large yellow restharrow  
Ornithopus compressus compressed birdsfoot  
Psoralea bituminosa pitch trefoil  
Scorpiurus muricatus annual scorpion vetch  
Spartium junceum Spanish broom  
Trifolium angustifolium narrow-leaved clover  
Trifolium campestre hop trefoil  
Trifolium resupinatum reversed clover  
Trifolium stellatum star clover  
Trifolium tomentosum woolly trefoil  
Vicia laxiflora slender tare  
Vicia villosa fodder vetch



woolly trefoil

<b>Fagaceae</b> - Oak family	
Quercus coccifera	holly / prickly / kermes oak
Quercus suber	cork oak
<b>Geraniaceae</b> - Geranium family	
Erodium cicutarium	common storksbill
Erodium malacoides	soft storksbill
Geranium dissectum	cut-leaved cranesbill
Geranium molle	dovesfoot cranesbill
Geranium purpureum	little robin
Geranium rotundifolium	round-leaved cranesbill
<b>Lamiaceae</b> (Labiatae) - Mint family	
Lavandula stoechas	French lavender
Phlomis purpurea	
Prasium majus	Spanish hedge nettle
Rosmarinus officinalis	rosemary
Salvia verbenaca	wild clary
Thymus camphoratus	
<b>Linaceae</b> - Flax family	
Linum bienne	pale flax
<b>Malvaceae</b> - Mallow family	
Malva sylvestris	common mallow
<b>Meliaceae</b> - Persian Lilac family	
Melia azedarach P	Persian/Indian bead tree
<b>Moraceae</b> - Mulberry family	
Ficus carica	fig
<b>Myoporaceae</b> - Myoporum family	
Myoporum tenuifolium P	ngaio
<b>Oleaceae</b> - Olive family	
Jasminum fruticans	wild jasmine
Olea europaea P	olive
<b>Orobanchaceae</b> - Broomrape family	
Cistanche phelypaea	
Orobanche foetida	
<b>Oxalidaceae</b> - Sorrel family	
Oxalis pes-caprae	Bermuda buttercup
<b>Papaveraceae</b> - Poppy family	
Fumaria capreolata	ramping fumitory
Papaver dubium	long-headed poppy
Papaver rhoeas	common poppy
<b>Plantaginaceae</b> - Plantain family	
Plantago arenaria	branched plantain
Plantago coronopus	buck's horn plantain
Plantago lagopus	
Plantago maritima	sea plantain
<b>Platanaceae</b> - Plane tree family	
Platanus orientalis	oriental plane
<b>Plumbaginaceae</b> - Thrift family	
Armeria pungens	
Limoniastrum monopetalum	limoniastrum
<b>Primulaceae</b> - Primula family	
Anagallis arvensis	scarlet pimpernel
Anagallis minima	chaffweed



Anagallis monelli		shrubby pimpernel
<b>Rafflesiaceae</b> - Rafflesia family		
Cytinus ruber		
<b>Ranunculaceae</b> - Buttercup family		
Anemone palmata		yellow anemone
Ranunculus peltatus		pond water crowfoot
<b>Resedaceae</b> - Mignonette family		
Reseda lutea		wild mignonette
Sesamoides canescens		Sesamoides (Polunin 375a)
<b>Rosaceae</b> - Rose family		
Eriobotrya japonica	P	loquat
Prunus dulcis		almond
Rosa canina <i>agg</i>		dog rose
Rubus ulmifolius (R. sanctus)		bramble
Sanguisorba minor <i>subsp</i> magnolii		Mediterranean salad burnet
<b>Rubiaceae</b> - Bedstraw family		
Galium aparine		goosegrass
Sherardia arvensis		field madder
<b>Rutaceae</b> - Rue family		
Ruta chalepensis		fringed rue
<b>Scrophulariaceae</b> - Figwort family		
Antirrhinum majus <i>subsp</i> cirrhigerum		large snapdragon
Bellardia trixago		bellardia
Linaria algarviana		spotted/purple & white (Algarve)
Linaria amethystea		'Amethyst' toadflax, tiny purple & white (Alentejo)
Linaria spartea		yellow
Misopates orontium		lesser snapdragon / weasel's snout
<b>Tamaricaceae</b> - Tamarix		
Tamarix africana		tamarix
<b>Urticaceae</b> - Nettle family		
Parietaria judaica		pellitory of the wall
Urtica membranacea		membranous nettle
<b>Valerianaceae</b> - Valerian family		
Fedia cornucopiae		fedia
<b>Verbenaceae</b> - Verbena family		
Lantana camara	P	lantana



*Fedia cornucopiae*

**MONOCOTYLEDONS**

**Agavaceae** - Agave family

*Agave americana* American agave

**Amaryllidaceae** - Daffodil family

*Leucojum tricophyllum* three-leaved snowflake  
*Narcissus jonquilla* common jonquil (Alentejo)  
*Pancreatium maritimum* sea daffodil (leaves)

**Araceae** - Arum family

*Arum italicum* large cuckoo pint

**Dioscoreaceae** - Yam family

*Tamias communis* black bryony

**Iridaceae** - Iris family

*Gladiolus italicus* cornflag  
*Gynandris sisyranthium* barbary nut  
*Iris albicans* P

**Liliaceae** - Lily family

*Allium roseum* rosy garlic  
*Anthericum ramosum*  
*Asparagus albus*  
*Asphodelus fistulosus* hollow-leaved asphodel  
*Asphodelus ramosus*  
*Fritillaria lusitanica* (leaves only)  
*Muscari comosum* tassel hyacinth  
*Muscari neglectum* grape hyacinth  
*Ornithogalum spicatum* (Polunin 1639a)  
*Scilla odorata* Jacinto-do-Algarve  
*Scilla peruviana*  
*Smilax aspera* rough bindweed  
*Urginea maritima* (=Drimia maritima) NiF sea squill

**Orchidaceae** - Orchid family

*Anacamptis pyramidalis* pyramidal orchid  
*Cephalanthera longifolia* narrow-leaved (sword-leaved) helleborine  
*Epipactis lusitanica*  
*Ophrys bombyliflora* bumble bee orchid  
*Ophrys speculum* (*O. ciliata*) mirror orchid  
*Ophrys (speculum) lusitanicus* (*O. vernixia*) Lusitanian mirror orchid  
*Ophrys scolopax* woodcock orchid  
*Ophrys lutea* yellow bee orchid  
*Orchis champagnouxii* champagne orchid  
*Orchis italica* Italian man orchid  
*Orchis morio* green-winged orchid (gone over)  
*Serapias cordigera* heart-flowered tongue orchid  
*Serapias parviflora* small-flowered tongue orchid

**Poaceae** - Grass family

*Arundo donax* giant reed  
*Briza maxima* large quaking grass  
*Briza minima* quaking grass  
*Lagurus ovata* hare's tail  
*Lamarckia aurea* Golden dog's-tail  
*Stipa gigantea*

**Palmae** - Palm family

*Chamaerops humilis* dwarf fan palm



Small-flowered tongue orchid