

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Algarve
30th March – 6th 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

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

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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 30th March – 6th April 2009

Monday 30th 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 31st 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 Forteleza, 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 cistus. 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* (left, 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

taking place 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 1st 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 in 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 2nd 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, feeling 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 3rd 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 (*above*). 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 4th 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 (*below*) – 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 reassuringly 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 about 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 5th 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* Ssp. *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 (*below*) 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 6th 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.



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Checklists Birds

Little grebe	Recorded on four days, including Pêra Marsh 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 th 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 nd 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	Four at Pêra Marsh on both visits 2nd & 6th April. Immatures from the captive breeding scheme in Cadiz, all with three rings and radio transmitters [see, for example, www.agnbi.org/projects/pe].
Spoonbill	Five at Pêra Marsh on 6th April.
Greater flamingo	23 at Pêra Marsh on 6th April.

Gadwall	Several pairs at Pêra Marsh, three pairs at Quinta do Lago on 6 th April, several in display flight in the Alentejo on 3 rd April.
Mallard	Recorded on six days.
Shoveler	One male from the hide at Quinta do Lago, 6 th April.
Pochard	About 10 loafing on the edge of the golf course at Quinta do Lago, 6 th April.
Red-crested pochard	20 from the hide at Quinta do Lago, 6 th April.
Black-shouldered kite	Super views in Alentejo, 3 rd April.
Black kite	Several in Alentejo, 3 rd April.
Red kite	Several in Alentejo, 3 rd April.
Griffon vulture	Lots in Alentejo, 3 rd April.
Black vulture	One in Alentejo, 3 rd April.
Buzzard	Seen on three days.
Short-toed eagle	One in the Alentejo on 3 rd April.
Marsh harrier	At Pêra Marsh on 2 nd April.
Hen harrier	An immature male in the Alentejo on 3 rd April.
Montagu's harrier	A superb male in the Alentejo on 3 rd April.
Sparrowhawk	One at Espiche, 5 th April.
Booted eagle	Three in the Alentejo on 3 rd 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 rd 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 st April.
Moorhen	Seen on four days.
Purple gallinule	Rather elusive at Pêra Marsh but seen well at Quinta do Lago on 6 th April.
Coot	Seen on four days.
Red-knobbed (or crested) coot	We had been alerted about one at Quinta do Lago, 6 th 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 four, including two males in flight display in the Alentejo on 3 rd April.
Great bustard	Lost count in the Alentejo on 3 rd April: estimated in the region of 200 seen.
Oystercatcher	One, Alvor estuary, 2 nd 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 rd April; one at Pêra Marsh on 6 th April.
Collared pratincole	Two at Pêra Marsh, 6 th 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 nd April; two distant birds on the foreshore at Luz on 31 st March.
Golden plover	A small group seen by Deric and John on the Alvor estuary on 2 nd April.
Grey plover	At Quinta do Lago and on the foreshore at Luz on 31 st 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 Marsh (both visits).
Dunlin	Groups gaining summer plumage at both Quinta do Lago and Pêra Marsh on 6 th April.
Snipe	One dropped into the reedmace at Quinta do Lago on 6 th April.
Bar-tailed godwit	Singles at Alvor estuary and Quinta do Lago.
Whimbrel	Recorded on three days.
Redshank	Alvor estuary, 2 nd April.

Greenshank	Alvor estuary, 2 nd April, Arade estuary and Quinta do Lago.
Common sandpiper	Recorded on five days, including about 10 during the boat trip up the Arade estuary on 4 th April.
Mediterranean gull	Four immatures on the lagoon at the Alvor estuary 2 nd April; two immatures at Pêra Marsh on 6 th April.
Black-headed gull	Five at Pêra Marsh on 6 th April.
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	One adult gave fine views at the Alvor estuary on 2 nd April; seen on both visits to Pêra Marsh.
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	Four in the Alentejo on 3 rd 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	Two in Luz on 31 st March.
Alpine swift	About 20 during our coastal walk on 31 st March; also seen north of Silves on 2 nd April.
Little owl	Three in the Alentejo on 3 rd April, one on 4 th April.
Bee-eater	Seen on six days, with especially good views at Boca do Rio on 1 st April.
Roller	One in the Alentejo on 3 rd April.
Hoopoe	Seen or heard on six days.
Green woodpecker	Heard only on three days. The Iberian subspecies is <i>sharpei</i> , which sounds different and lacks the black mask.
Short-toed lark	Two heard at Pêra Marsh on 6 th April.
Calandra lark	Common in the Alentejo on 3 rd 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 in the protected west coast, 5 th 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 four days.
White wagtail	Only recorded at Sagres on 1 st April.
Yellow wagtail	A blue-headed wagtail at the Silves Tide Mill on 4 th April; also at Pêra Marsh on 6 th 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 wood areas in the protected west coast, 5 th April.
Black redstart	Several singing at Sagres fort on 1 st 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 st April.
Blue rock thrush	Two pairs at Sagres fort on 1 st April.
Blackbird	Recorded every day.
Song thrush	Two late winter birds at Espiche on 5 th 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 st April.
Iberian chiffchaff	Two singing at Boca do Rio on 1 st April and on our return to the west coast wood on 5 th April.

Great tit	Seen on four days.
Nuthatch	In the protected west coast wood, 5 th April.
Short-toed treecreeper	One at Boca do Rio on 1 st April, heard from one minibus at Quinta do Lago.
Southern grey shrike	Seen on four days including in Alentejo and at Espiche on 5 th April.
Woodchat shrike	Seen on four days, first recorded by the Alvor estuary on 2 nd April.
Jay	On our return to the west coast wood on 5 th April.
Azure-winged magpie	Seen daily, including in the scrub, gardens and old orchards by the hotel.
Chough	One at Sagres fort on 1 st April.
Jackdaw	Recorded on two days.
Raven	Two birds on the Lagos walk on 31 st March; in Alentejo on 3 rd 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 rd April.
Tree sparrow	One by the Alvor estuary on 2 nd 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 psammmodromus: 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 (right, and caterpillar, far right)
 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 *Pyrrhocoris 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-plantain family

Alisma plantago-aquatica water-plantain

Anacardiaceae - Pistachio 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
Smyrnium 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

crown daisy, entirely yellow

Chrysanthemum coronarium

crown daisy, yellow and white

Chrysanthemum coronarium var. *discolor*

Mediterranean field thistle

Galactites tomentosa

stink aster/stinking inula

Inula (or Dittrichia) graveolens

spiny golden star

Pallensis spinosa

common sow thistle

*Sonchus oleraceus**Tolpis barbata***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

Caprifoliaceae - Honeysuckle family*Lonicera implexa***Caryophyllaceae** - Pink family*Paronychia argentea*

Mediterranean catchfly

Silene colorata

small-flowered catchfly

Silene gallica

Italian catchfly

Silene italica

bladder campion

Silene vulgaris

corn spurrey

Spergularia arvensis

purple sand-spurrey

Spergularia purpurea

Chenopodiaceae

Beta vulgaris Ssp. *Maritime*
Halimus halimus

sea beet
 shrubby orache

**Cistaceae - Rockrose family**

Cistus albidus
Cistus crispus
Cistus ladanifer
Cistus monspeliensis
Cistus populifolius (right)
Cistus salviifolius
Halimium calycinum
Tuberaria guttata

grey-leaved cistus
 gum cistus
 narrow-leaved cistus
 sage-leaved cistus
 yellow rock rose
 spotted rock rose

Convolvulaceae - Bindweed family

Convolvulus althaeoides
Convolvulus tricolor

mallow-leaved
 bindweed

Crassulaceae

Umbilicus rupestris

navelwort

Cucurbitaceae

Ecballium elaterium

squirting cucumber

Dipsacaceae

Scabiosa crenata

Ericaceae - Heath family

Erica australis

Euphorbiaceae - Spurge family

Euphorbia helioscopia
Mercurialis annua
Ricinus communis

sun spurge
 annual mercury
 castor oil plant

Fabiaceae was Leguminosae - Pea family

Anthyllis tetraphylla
Anthyllis vulneraria Ssp. *praepropera*
Astragalus echinatus
Astragalus lusitanicus
Ceratonia siliqua
Cercis siliquastrum
Coronilla valentina Ssp. *glaucia*
Dorycnium hirsutum
Genista hirsuta
Lathyrus ochrus
Lotus creticus
Lupinus angustifolius
Lupinus luteus
Lupinus micranthus
Medicago polymorpha
Melilotus indicus
Ononis natrix
Ornithopus compressus
Psoralea bituminosa
Scorpiurus muricatus
Spartium junceum
Trifolium angustifolium
Trifolium campestre

bladder vetch
 Mediterranean kidney vetch
 carob
 ▶ Judas tree
 dorycnium
 winged vetchling
 southern birds foot trefoil
 narrow-leaved lupin
 yellow lupin
 hairy lupin
 toothed medick
 small melilot
 large yellow restarrow
 compressed birdsfoot
 pitch trefoil
 annual scorpion vetch
 Spanish broom
 narrow-leaved clover
 hop trefoil

<i>Trifolium resupinatum</i>	reversed clover
<i>Trifolium stellatum</i>	star clover
<i>Trifolium tomentosum</i>	woolly trefoil (<i>right</i>)
<i>Vicia laxiflora</i>	slender tare
<i>Vicia villosa</i>	fodder vetch



Fagaceae - Oak family	
<i>Quercus coccifera</i>	holly/prickly/kermes oak
<i>Quercus suber</i>	cork oak

Geraniaceae - Geranium family	
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	common storksbill
<i>Erodium malacoides</i>	soft storksbill
<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	cut-leaved cranesbill
<i>Geranium molle</i>	dovesfoot cranesbill
<i>Geranium purpureum</i>	little robin
<i>Geranium rotundifolium</i>	round-leaved cranesbill

Lamiaceae (Labiatae) - Mint family	
<i>Lavandula stoechas</i>	French lavender
<i>Phlomis purpurea</i>	
<i>Prasium majus</i>	Spanish hedge nettle
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	rosemary
<i>Salvia verbenaca</i>	wild clary
<i>Thymus camphoratus</i>	

Linaceae - Flax family	
<i>Linum bienne</i>	pale flax

Malvaceae - Mallow family	
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	common mallow

Meliaceae - Persian Lilac family	
<i>Melia azedarach</i>	P Persian/Indian bead tree

Moraceae - Mulberry family	
<i>Ficus carica</i>	fig

Myoporaceae - Myoporum family	
<i>Myoporum tenuifolium</i>	P ngaio

Oleaceae - Olive family	
<i>Jasminum fruticans</i>	wild jasmine
<i>Olea europaea</i>	P olive

Orobanchaceae - Broomrape family	
<i>Cistanche phelypaea</i>	
<i>Orobanche foetida</i>	

Oxalidaceae - Sorrel family	
<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i>	Bermuda buttercup

Papaveraceae - Poppy family	
<i>Fumaria capreolata</i>	ramping fumitory
<i>Papaver dubium</i>	long-headed poppy
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	common poppy

Plantaginaceae - Plantain family	
<i>Plantago arenaria</i>	branched plantain
<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	buck's horn plantain
<i>Plantago lagopus</i>	
<i>Plantago maritima</i>	sea plantain
Platanaceae - Plane tree family	
<i>Platanus orientalis</i>	oriental plane
Plumbaginaceae - Thrift family	
<i>Armeria pungens</i>	
<i>Limoniastrum monopetalum</i>	limoniastrum
Primulaceae - Primula family	
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	scarlet pimpernel
<i>Anagallis minima</i>	chaffweed
<i>Anagallis monelli</i>	shrubby pimpernel
Rafflesiaceae - Rafflesia family	
<i>Cytinus ruber</i>	
Ranunculaceae - Buttercup family	
<i>Anemone palmata</i>	yellow anemone
<i>Ranunculus peltatus</i>	pond water crowfoot
Resedaceae - Mignonette family	
<i>Reseda lutea</i>	wild mignonette
<i>Sesamoides canescens</i>	Sesamoides (Polunin 375a)
Rosaceae - Rose family	
<i>Eriobotrya japonica</i>	P loquat
<i>Prunus dulcis</i>	almond
<i>Rosa canina agg</i>	dog rose
<i>Rubus ulmifolius (R. sanctus)</i>	bramble
<i>Sanguisorba minor Ssp. magnolia</i>	Mediterranean salad burnet
Rubiaceae - Bedstraw family	
<i>Galium aparine</i>	goosegrass
<i>Sheradia arvensis</i>	field madder
Rutaceae - Rue family	
<i>Ruta chaleensis</i>	fringed rue
Scrophulariaceae - Figwort family	
<i>Antirrhinum majus Ssp. cirrigerum</i>	large snapdragon
<i>Bellardia trixago</i>	bellardia
<i>Linaria algarviana</i>	spotted/purple and white (Algarve)
<i>Linaria amethystea</i>	'Amethyst' toadflax, tiny purple and white (Alentejo)
<i>Linaria spartea</i>	yellow
<i>Misopates orontium</i>	lesser snapdragon/weasel's snout
Tamaricaceae - Tamarix	
<i>Tamarix africana</i>	tamarisk
Urticaceae - Nettle family	
<i>Parietaria judaica</i>	pellitory of the wall
<i>Urtica membranacea</i>	membranous nettle

Valerianaceae - Valerian family
Fedia cornucopiae

fedia (*below*)



Verbenaceae - Verbena family
Lantana camara

P lantana

MONOCOTYLEDONS

Agavaceae - Agave family
Agave americana

American agave

Amaryllidaceae - Daffodil family

Leucojum tricophyllum

three-leaved snowflake

Narcissus jonquilla

common jonquil (Alentejo)

Pancratium maritimum

sea daffodil (leaves)

Araceae - Arum family

Arum italicum

large cuckoo pint

Dioscoreaceae - Yam family

Tamis communis

black bryony

Iridaceae - Iris family

Gladiolus italicus

cornflag

Gynandriris sisyrinchium

barbary nut

Iris albicans

P

Liliaceae - Lily family

Allium roseum

rosy garlic

Anthericum ramosum

Asparagus albus

hollow-leaved asphodel

Asphodelus fistulosus

Asphodelus ramosus

Fritillaria lusitanica (leaves only)

tassel hyacinth

Muscari comosum

grape hyacinth

Muscari neglectum

Ornithogalum spicatum (Polunin 1639a)

Jacinto-do-Algarve

Scilla odorata

rough bindweed

Scilla peruviana

NiF sea squill

Smilax aspera

Urginea maritima (=*Drimia maritima*)

Orchidaceae - Orchid family

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

**Poaceae - Grass family**

<i>Arundo donax</i>	giant reed
<i>Briza maxima</i>	large quaking grass
<i>Briza minima</i>	quaking grass
<i>Lagurus ovatus</i>	hare's tail
<i>Lamarcchia aurea</i>	Golden dog's-tail
<i>Stipa gigantea</i>	

Palmae - Palm family

<i>Chamaerops humilis</i>	dwarf fan palm
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