

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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THE CÉVENNES

5 – 13 June and 15 – 23 June 2009

The Cévennes

5–13 June (week 1) and 15–23 June 2009 (week 2)

Holiday participants

Week 1

Fran Ashcroft
Sue and Peter Burge
Helen and Edward Cox
Helen and Malcolm Crowder
Sally Cullum and Barry Hennessey
Suzanne Hunter and Lesley Scott
Sallie and Humphrey Kay
Robin McKeown

Week 2

Peter and Elonwy Crook
Geoff Firth and Angela Shoulder
Bob and Pam Harris
Julia Maynard
Gill Page
Val Pritchard
Sandy and Marie Watt

Leaders

Rachel and Robin Hamilton

Our hosts at La Gare aux Ânes: Sylvain Goleo and Nicolas Lasne. <http://lagareauxanes.free.fr>

Daily diary by Rachel and Robin. Plant list by Rachel Hamilton, other lists by Robin Hamilton.

Photos edged brown by Helen Crowder; edged green by Rachel Hamilton.. Millau Viaduct photo from Wikimedia Commons.

Front cover montage by Helen Crowder from week 1; l. to r. Blue aphyllanthes, Przewalski's horse, extreme picnic on Mount Aigoual, meadow fritillary, *Hoplia caerulea*, *brebis* sheep, red-backed shrike, six-spot burnet, lunch at Jassenove.

Below: The Dourbie valley and Nant from the Causse du Larzac.



As with all Honeyguide holidays, £35 of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case for the protection of vultures and other wildlife of the Grands Causses. This programme of habitat management combined with research, survey and education, is managed by La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, the French Bird Protection League) in partnership with landowners. The conservation contribution this year of £35 per person was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, bringing the total to £1125 from the two holidays in the Cévennes. This was combined with contributions to LPO from Honeyguide's Dordogne and French Pyrenees holidays, and a total of £2,405 was handed over to LPO's Gwenaëlle Plet in the French Pyrenees.

This brings Honeyguide's total contributions to LPO since the first Honeyguide holiday in France in 1991 to £12,923. The total for conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 was £60,821 at September 2009.

Day 1: Friday 5 June, Arrival

Nobody regretted leaving behind the dull English weather when we set off on our lunchtime flight to Rodez – despite the prospect of a Ryanair lunch – and we were relieved to find Robin McKeown from Australia, there to meet us, joining the holiday at the end of her European tour. We were soon a world away; buzzards, both black and red kites and even a Montagu's harrier entertained us on our drive. On the way we passed small examples, tiny tasters, of the sort of rugged limestone landscapes that we were to explore later in the holiday and we sped across the spectacular Millau Viaduct on to the Causse du Larzac. We left the motorway and experienced for the first time the carpets of colour bordering the road: blue aphyllanthes, yellow and white rockroses, mauve thyme, and the vast, rocky, limestone grasslands dotted with box and juniper, extending to the distant hills. We soon arrived at la Gare aux Ânes, the converted railway station which was to be our charming if eccentric base for the holiday. While Sylvain Goleo, our host at the hotel, welcomed us and directed us to our rooms we waited in the warm garden and took in the local birds: serins, greenfinches, linnets and chaffinches in the trees above us and a woodlark singing in the distance. We settled in and then met for a drink, and dinner – our first taste of the local cuisine: *jambon cru* with melon, local *saucisson*, pasta and a spicy cabbage accompaniment. The cheeseboard followed: Roquefort of course, but plenty of others to choose from too. Finally, a beautiful *tarte aux poires* with *crème anglaise* appeared and orders were taken for coffee and tisanes. One or two people enjoyed a stroll in the garden before bed and listened to several nightingales vying with one another against the background of nocturnal insect noises.

Day 2: Saturday 6 June, Exploring the Causse around la Gare aux Ânes & la Couvertoirade

Tired the evening before, we had agreed that an organised walk before breakfast on the first morning was not a good idea, but nonetheless a few early risers had been about and Malcolm reported serin, curl bunting and nightingale all in the garden with pyramidal and man orchids along the track opposite. We met for breakfast which was presided over by Sylvain's partner, Nicolas Lasne: piles of fresh bread and croissants, a selection of charcuterie and cheeses, fruit juice and coffee, and choices of teas and tisanes.

After breakfast we loaded an enormous hamper into a minibus and set off to explore the surrounding limestone causse. We turned onto a rough track that took us away from the road and uphill through light scrub and grassland, and when we got out of the minibuses we were assailed by the powerful scent of thyme crushed under the wheels – so called 'common' thyme, *Thymus vulgaris* – the familiar culinary herb, though confined in the wild to southern and western Europe. We had disturbed butterflies too: Adonis blues, black-veined whites (*right, on pyramidal orchid*) and a southern marbled skipper; it was still early and cool enough for them to wait around to be examined, identified and photographed. A Bonelli's warbler repeatedly taunted us from the scattered small oaks and pines, a whitethroat and a chiffchaff were singing and we watched a woodlark again and again in its song-flight from the tops of pine trees. A firecrest sang tantalisingly close and eventually showed itself, and three griffon vultures gave a leisurely fly-past. In the meantime, we were also acquainting ourselves with the vast array of plants, many in flower: Pyrenean flax, yellow and white rockroses, mountain lettuce, butterfly orchids, pretty blue tufts of carduncellus - like a stemless knapweed - nestling in the grass, bright yellow hairy viper's grass and little mats of felty germander. We came upon an open area richly scattered with pyramidal orchids but many of them had been rooted up and the tubers eaten, probably by wild boar. We drove on up the track, a certain amount of curiosity among the group as to where it might lead, and arrived at the hilltop and a strange, enormous 'pine tree', a mobile phone mast in disguise.



Our next stop was at the nearby fortified Templar village of la Couvertoirade. Sensitively restored, la Couvertoirade is an important relic of the significant Templar presence in the area in the days of the crusades. There is interesting 'tourist' shopping to be done, including good local crafts and produce, as well as the chance to delve into the ancient history. The quiet village is home to plenty of wildlife; ferns and wild flowers grow in the old dry stone walls where wrens, starlings and swifts nest and serins and black redstarts sing from the rooftops. A group of six griffon vultures soared overhead. The day had turned chilly and damp so we were glad of an opportunity for coffee, and a beautifully appointed loo in a room carved out of the ancient stone walls, before returning to the minibuses, passing on the way an ancient dewpond – a paved *lavogne* – used to provide water for the flocks of sheep that graze the causse grassland.

Lunchtime was approaching so we drove a little further south and again followed a track off the road among some dramatic rock formations. We found a sheltered corner and unpacked Sylvain's hamper: piles of plates and cutlery emerged and then cold roast chicken and a delicious salad of rice with tomato, pineapple and artichoke hearts, French bread, of course and a huge pot of Sylvain's home-made salad dressing. The feast was rounded off with chunks of cheese and fresh peaches.

After lunch the sun came out, and with it the butterflies again, amongst them a wall brown, a turquoise blue and several cleopatras. We set off for a walk around the rocky hill. Sheltered from the sun by a box tree we found a few Pasque flowers, still just in flower, more butterfly orchids and round-headed rampion. Malcolm caught the sound of a quail calling and we stopped for everyone to hear it. We lured a tarantula *Lycosa narbonensis* into view from deep in its burrow, using a grass flower head, admired the iridescence of a forester moth and Suzanne found a baton blue among the startling electric-blue carpets of aphyllanthes. A ringtail harrier started up from practically beneath the feet of the leading group, almost certainly a Montagu's, but it was gone before we could be quite sure. We scattered grasshoppers and crickets as we crossed a scree-field of broken dolomitic (magnesium-rich) limestone studded with the tiny tufts of Gerard's thrift *Armeria girardii*, one of the many Causse endemics. The weird landscape here consists of bare rocky hillocks eroded so as to expose the strata from which they are formed. Scots pines grow abundantly, but in stunted, 'bonsai' forms, and provide shelter for a scattering of other flowers: the Causse endemic subspecies of alpine aster, the fat yellow daisy heads of *Inula montana* and the delicate little cream umbellifer *Trinia glauca*.

We scuttled back to the minibuses ahead of a light shower and continued south, pausing to admire two Montagu's harriers elegantly quartering the hillside, to the village of la Pezade. The landscape is more gentle here and the soil deeper and richer, so a diverse meadow flora has developed and the lack of intensive agriculture allows it to thrive. Drifts of fragrant orchids greeted us, and we could hardly avoid walking on the tiny frog orchids and the much taller man orchids lurking in the grass. Military, lady and bee orchids were going over but lizard and pyramidal were coming out nicely; in all we counted thirteen orchid species there. The sky was clearing and the sun came out, so we enjoyed a beautiful evening, and so did the clouds of butterflies; Glanville fritillaries and black-veined whites were everywhere, six-spot burnet moths were abundant and we spent a few moments watching the activity at a wood ants' nest. It was a three-bunting spot: corn bunting, curl bunting and yellowhammer, all singing for us.

We arrived back at la Gare aux Ânes in time to change and meet for a drink before dinner, briefly going over some of the days' records. Then dinner arrived: a mixed salad topped with crisp *lardons*, grilled trout, fresh from the local organic fish farm, a cheeseboard and *crème caramel* to finish.

Day 3: Sunday 7 June, The Causse Noir and the Vultures of the Gorges de la Jonte

We woke to a dull and chilly morning and an overcast sky but there were a few takers for an early walk. We watched the activity in the garden trees: serins and goldfinches flitting about, greenfinches doing their pretty 'butterfly' song-flight and great tits feeding young, and then we set off briskly eastwards along the quiet Sunday-morning road. We could hear several nightingales, skylarks were singing all around, a distant cuckoo called, a blackcap was singing from the hedgerow behind the garden and then a superb male Montagu's harrier appeared above the hill. We watched it for many minutes casting backwards and forwards over the hillside, gradually getting closer and eventually gaining height and disappearing – just in time for us to get to breakfast.

A highly successful reintroduction programme for the griffon vulture has made a big impact on the ornithological interest in the Grands Causses and it seemed appropriate to make our acquaintance with the project early in the holiday, so today we set off northwards towards the famous Gorges de la Jonte.

In order to get there though, we can take in a number of other special places. After breakfast it was brighter and warmer as we drove down off the Causse du Larzac into the valley of the River Dourbie. We drove slowly through the little medieval town of Nant, watching the swirling flocks of swifts and house martins, and a single crag martin, and then followed the river along the Gorges de la Dourbie. The Dourbie is the third largest of the gorge-forming rivers (after the Tarn and the Jonte) that divide the great limestone plateau of the Grands Causses into its component parts and the road twists along the valley revealing beautiful views at every turn.



At la Roque Ste Marguerite we turned uphill onto the Causse Noir. As we reached the plateau at the top, two ravens passed in front of us and we caught a brief glimpse of a harrier. The dark pinewoods that give the Causse Noir its name closed in around us and just as we came to our first stop, a roe deer fleetingly appeared beside the road. Evidence of ancient habitations is to be found all over the causses and here, hidden among the pines is a beautifully constructed *toit-citerne*, literally a 'roof-cistern', an underground space roofed with stone tiles, for collecting and storing water – still perfectly maintained though hardly used. We could hear, and occasionally caught a glimpse of jays, a family of coal tits called from the pines and as usual a Bonelli's warbler sang, but refused to show itself. A whole new collection of flowers carpeted the woodland floor. A colony of fragrant orchids populated a ditch and in the shade of the pines, Lesley found several red helleborines just coming out. We found a nice specimen of common spotted orchid and a rather tatty fly orchid, and then, to our delight, a group of the Causse endemic Aymonin's orchid *Ophrys aymoninii* (left) – like a fly orchid but with a yellow edge to the lobes of the lip. There was a colony of bird's-nest orchids under a pine tree and sheets of bearberry covering the shady rocks.

A little further on the ruined *prieuré* and church of St Jean des Balmes was the location for our next stop. We strolled among the tall pines and Helen (Crowder), a little ahead of the group, called us up for a perfect sight: not only crested tits but also a group – presumably a family party – of crossbills, all feeding up in the treetops and taking no notice of their audience. We had wonderful views, even of the huge crossed bills. Turning back, we enjoyed the sight of two species of wintergreen: nodding wintergreen *Orthilia secunda* and green wintergreen *Pyrola chlorantha*, in flower together.

It was lunchtime and we unpacked another feast – cold roast lamb and salad, cheese and beautiful fresh pineapple, and we sat comfortably on the old priory walls to enjoy it.

There are some fantastic viewpoints along the road that descends off the Causse Noir into the Gorges de la Jonte. We stopped at the best of them to admire the spectacular scene and to get an idea of the geography laid out in front of us: the confluence of the Jonte and the more famous Tarn, the Causse Méjean between and the Gorges du Tarn winding away in front of us. As ever, there were one or two griffon vultures in the sky above. We drove down to Peyreleau and crossed the Jonte into le Rozier. The Vulture Information Centre is about 5 kilometres up the river from le Rozier and we arrived in good time for our booked viewing of the film about the reintroduction programme – in time to see good views of both griffon and black vultures overhead and, from the terrace, we also had excellent views of both species on their nests; it was especially exciting to see the young black vulture teetering precariously on its rickety-looking nest on a pine tree immediately opposite the viewing platform. We went inside for the informative video presentation and live webcam views of vultures at the feeding station, and for a guided tour of the museum and the viewing *belvedere*. It is this LPO/PNC conservation project that we were supporting through our contributions; though directed at the vultures, the knock-on effects benefit in a very real way conservation programmes throughout the causses.

By now the sun was very hot and we were glad to be directed to the cool terrace of a little café a few kilometres along the gorge. An assortment of drinks arrived and we were watching the crag martins below us in the gorge when we were distracted by a superb view of two short-toed eagles soaring over the cliffs above us. They performed beautifully, they hovered, they dangled their feet, they showed their pale undersides; everyone had excellent views. Then one of them perched, clearly silhouetted on the cliff, and we could all look at him through the telescopes. It was a perfect introduction to this beautiful and distinctive bird. We continued on up the gorge to the town of Meyrueis, so that we could return home by a different route. This took us up onto the schists at the eastern edge of the causse and onto acid rock. The vegetation changed immediately: bracken under the pines and cistus by the roadside. There were clumps of red helleborine fully out and we passed a dead red squirrel on the roadside.

It is a slow drive home and we were ready for a drink and dinner: *crudités*, followed by herb-roasted chicken and green beans, then cheese, and *crème brûlée* to finish.

Day 4: Monday 8 June, Mont Aigoual and the True Cévennes

The early risers emerged to a cool breeze from the east and optimistically thin cloud. Two cirl buntings were singing at the end of the garden and we decided to try and track down a very enterprising melodious warbler, valiantly singing a trio with two nightingales. We failed to get a good view of the melodious warbler but after a bit of a scramble we found ourselves in the meadow at the end of the garden where the dewy grass was supporting sleepy butterflies and moths, just crawling up to start the day: Adonis blues, black-veined whites, a burnet companion and several chimney-sweeper moths.

Nicolas, as always, solicitously attended to our breakfast needs, especially strong coffee, and then disappeared to interrogate the *météo*. He returned with the news that the weather might well improve, so we set off eastwards for our trip onto the schists and granites of the true Cévennes, and the summit of Mont Aigoual. Our route took us through the village of Sauclières. There is a substantial quarry near there and at the quarry office in the village, they display a number of very interesting fossils found over the years. By far the most exciting are a number of limestone slabs showing the footprints of several crocodilian dinosaurs, of various sizes, preserved from the muddy shorelines of the Jurassic sea, out of which the causse limestone was deposited. The finest examples are in museums but the quarrymen delighted in talking to us about those they still have on show (*one pictured right*).



We followed the river Dourbie upstream, stopping briefly to admire the spectacular natural schist rockery of flowers beside the road, and a hummingbird hawk-moth on a brilliant patch of thyme. Shortly after the village of Dourbies we stopped in Laupies for a walk beside the river. A common sandpiper panicked characteristically and flew off upstream, and a grey wagtail appeared for us, bobbing prettily among the boulders in the river. It is a very attractive riverside walk, past an ancient ruined

bridge, clumps of maiden pink, spiked rampion and white false helleborine *Veratrum album*, up to a new bridge, which provides an excellent platform from which to watch the tumbling river and enjoy the view; a short-toed eagle was hanging in the air above us.

A few kilometres further up the valley we caught sight of white dots in the riverside meadows and scrambled down the bank to enjoy the last few flowers of pheasant's eye narcissus. The roadsides were bright pink with stands of the tall thrift *Armeria arenaria* and the hills above the road were yellow with purging broom.

The wind was still quite strong and the clouds were moving fast so we pressed on in the hope that we might have some clear weather around the summit of Mount Aigoual, or even pass up through the layer of cloud. This optimism was not justified however, and we arrived at the summit in a bitter wind and thick, dense cloud with visibility down to a few yards. Lunch was a fairly business-like affair, consumed in the shelter of the buses, with eyes regularly turning upwards in the hope that the watery sun would eventually break through or the clouds blow over. It was not to be, so we trooped over to the huge castle-



like building which is the met-station, and which was completely invisible from the car park. It was quite a surprise to find the restaurant buzzing with activity: groups of walkers, cyclists and day-trippers, undaunted by the conditions. We stoked up on hot coffee and chocolate and decided to give the butterflies a miss. Slowly retracing our route off the summit we were able to pay our respects to the last few wild tulips and elder-flowered orchids in the grass beside the road.

It was too foggy still for a walk in the beech woods near the top as we had intended so we drove down below the cloud base and, after being cooped up in the minibuses for a long time were glad of a walk along the lane leading across the river to the hamlet of Prunaret. We were rewarded with a ditch-full of robust marsh orchids, a fine short-toed eagle hovering in textbook style, with its legs dangling below and staying so steady that we could watch it well through telescopes, and then Barry spotted a rock bunting (*left*) which also obligingly stayed singing on the same twig for the telescopes to come into use again.

The last part of the journey was in pleasant evening sunshine. We arrived home in time for a brief review of the days sightings and sat down to a very welcome dinner of charcuterie, followed by succulent roast pork with lentils and finally an apple flan.

Day 5: Tuesday 9 June, The Heart of the Causse du Larzac

A blue sky welcomed us at last but we were chilly as we walked along the track opposite that leads onto the causse. We had some very good views of a red-backed shrike perched high on the bushes and flying purposefully between them. The butterflies were not yet 'up' and we found a group of five black-veined whites sleeping on a clump of tufted vetch. A buzzard flew over as we turned back for breakfast.

We drove down through Nant again (we were due to explore it later in the week) and turned up onto a new part of the Causse du Larzac. A rough track leads to a radio mast and an isolated farm and we drove along it towards the top of the causse, dropping off a group of 'striders' on the way. We parked at the edge of the wood and the rest of us 'strolled' on through the flowery grassland, disturbing butterflies, grasshoppers and other insects along the way. The striders soon caught up and we enjoyed the spectacular view from the cliff top, overlooking Nant and the Dourbie valley, with the medieval village of Cantobre perched on a rocky outcrop between the Dourbie and its tributary, the Trévezet. We could hear sheep bells in the distance and as we walked on a circl bunting and a Bonelli's warbler sang a charming duet, giving us a helpful opportunity to compare their songs. We managed a brief view of the circl bunting in the telescope before it flew off. We walked on to the song of blackcaps and woodlarks, with the air heavy with the scent of Etruscan honeysuckle, now in full flower. We came to a little natural pool in the rocks, where clay has accumulated and impeded the drainage, and watched both broad-bodied chaser and southern hawker dragonflies whirling round us and among the rushes. Near the pool, a fine sermountain flower was hosting a group of black and red bugs *Graphosoma italica*.

The path carries on through sheltered grassland and scattered bushes. Barry went in search of an elusive warbler that kept tantalisingly out of sight but at last revealed itself as a subalpine warbler. There was evidence of a big population of orchids in the grass, sadly mainly over, but we found recognisable lady orchids, military orchids, man orchids, bee orchids, an early spider orchid and a woodcock orchid. Then a delighted Fran found a fine clump of violet limodore.

We drove on, into the heart of the Causse du Larzac, to the hamlet of Montredon. Here, we visited a charming stone-paved *lavogne*, set among the scattered bushes which now, with diminished grazing, are all too abundant on the causse. The water was alive with movement: water boatmen, pond skaters and tadpoles, with long strings of toad spawn stretching round the edge. A small grass snake swam across and lurked for a while near some emergent rushes, stretching its head up above the

water to show the yellow patches on each side of its neck; there was plenty for it to eat. We took stock of the general surroundings of the *lavogne*; we would be returning that evening in the quest for nightjars.

Yet further into the Causse du Larzac, miles from anywhere, lies the Ferme Auberge Jassenove. We had booked lunch there and arrived in good time for aperitifs in the sunny garden. Catherine and Renaud Galtier welcomed us warmly and chatted as we relaxed and sharpened our appetites. In due course, we were ushered into the dining room and began our feast, everything fresh and organic and supplied either from the Galtiers' farm or from those of neighbours on the causse. A terrine with a delicately dressed salad was followed by a perfect Roquefort soufflé. For the meat course we had requested *brebis*, the local lamb, so important to the long-term maintenance of the character of the causse (and the producers of the milk for Roquefort cheese), and this was accompanied by a casserole of creamy potatoes. The cheeses were all local: Roquefort and *tome de brebis* (made in Montredon) and little local goat's cheeses. Then we finished with a delicious fruit flan, and coffee in the garden. The options after lunch were for a snooze in the sun, in the exceptionally comfortable garden chairs, or a walk around the Galtiers' extensive estate guided by Renaud, together with his father, who had managed the farm and established the restaurant many years ago. In spite of the temptation, almost everyone elected to go for a walk!

The Jassenove land consists of a large area of beautiful and secluded causse, with huge rocky outcrops (the dolomitic limestone formations known as ruiniform reliefs because of their likeness to ruined buildings), grazed grassland and open scrub and woodland. Our first target was an underground *citerne* with a beautifully vaulted roof. We peered into it only to see the perfect inverted reflection of someone else peering in from the other end. The grazed turf was studded with flowers: blue flax, white daisies, yellow alyssum, thrift, catchflies, wild strawberries, cow-wheat, butterfly orchids; the list went on and on. The Galtiers showed us a rock that had been struck by lightning in a recent storm and a huge boulder had fallen and shattered below. An enormous twisted pine had assumed the form of a tent and was enclosed by box bushes. A short-toed eagle circled overhead as our walk brought us back to the house where we collected the others, now rested, thanked and said goodbye to our hosts and moved on.

A few kilometres further on lies the hamlet of les Baumes, where huge recesses in the cliff face (*abris*) have been walled in to form a troglodyte house, known to have been inhabited since at least the middle ages. We had permission to explore the now abandoned dwelling (*right*) and we could see evidence of many generations of complex internal constructions. There were the remains of defence structures too, known as machicolations: over the entrance, the wall protruded and holes had been left through which stones (or worse) could be dropped on intruders. Griffon vultures were soaring above us in the perfect blue sky, we had a lovely view of a short-toed eagle and at last, we heard the characteristic 'chiaoau chiaoau' of a chough, though without catching sight of it.



Les Baumes is separated from the neighbouring village of St Martin du Larzac by two or three kilometres of very exposed causse – to sun in summer and to cold winds or even snow in winter. So, in the middle ages, in order to protect travellers and livestock moving between the villages, a double box hedge was cultivated to form a sheltered tunnel. Much of this *buissière* still remains intact and is now well maintained. Striders set off from les Baumes to follow this ancient track and a minibus-load of strollers drove round to St Martin to meet them at the other end.

We had arranged a 'light' dinner at la Gare aux Ânes to take account of the Jassenove lunch, and Sylvain produced a lovely quiche and salad – though in very generous quantities. Then after coffee we returned to the *lavogne* at Montredon arriving a little after sunset. The first out of the minibuses crossed the lane to take up positions beside the *lavogne* hoping to catch a glimpse of a nightjar coming down to drink. They startled a leveret, which darted off down the road. The rest of the party were hardly out of the minibuses before we heard the first nightjar, clearly calling from fairly close. We all settled down as comfortably as possible and listened: nightingales and blackbirds were the principal songsters, with blackcaps and a distant song thrush. It was a beautiful, calm evening and there were nightjars churring all round us, some far away, some closer and some moving around, but sadly none of them came to drink at the *lavogne* and as the darkness deepened, we decided to return home.

Day 6: Wednesday 10 June, Caves, Steppes and Horses on the Causse Méjean

After yesterday's late night we decided to give the early walk a miss. But it was fine and sunny as we assembled for breakfast and discussed the irony of spending the morning underground. It was good to have the bright weather for the drive along the Gorges de la Dourbie and we turned right in la Roque Ste Marguerite to follow the tiny narrow lane that leads up a side valley straight onto the Causse Noir. Then it was straight down again, and along the Gorges de la Jonte, past the vultures (there they

were, wheeling around above us) and up onto a third *causee*, the *Causse Méjean*. Its very different, more prairie-like character was immediately obvious, but that was for later. Our first stop was for an 11.30 visit to the famous Aven Armand, a cavern large enough to accommodate Notre Dame Cathedral. Our English-speaking guide took us down a tunnel in a little train and we alighted onto a gallery overlooking the cavern below. This awe-inspiring space is very sensitively presented, with subtle lighting allowing the extraordinary structures to speak for themselves. There are more stalagmites here – over 400 – than in any other known cave in Europe. Our guide gave us an account of the discovery of the Aven, explained the chemistry and geography of the formation and was happy to field the barrage of technical and historical questions. As we were the only group in the cave at the time he also gave us a magical experience, without warning, by turning out the lights, leaving only the faint shaft of daylight from the original hole in the roof! We came away with minds and cameras loaded with images.

On the surface again there was time for some shopping and Edward's expertise in gemstones was put to very good use in the choice of necklaces and pendants. There was also time for refreshments at the café while we watched serins and a black redstart and searched in vain for the quail that we could hear calling persistently in the nearby field.

Our next destination was a lunch spot and on the way we stopped to watch a group of three black kites hunting over a freshly cut hayfield, being pestered by two red kites. We selected a hilltop where we could get off the road and which commanded a 360° view over the surrounding steppe so that we could keep a look out for more raptors. However, none appeared and we ate another excellent picnic and drove on.

A triangular walk connects three villages (*les trois hameaux*) and we decided to divide up again into 'striders' and 'strollers'. Robin led the striders along two legs of the walk while Rachel led the strollers along the third. A little minibus juggling completed the arrangements.

Walking from Drigas to le Buffre the striders were first attracted to a large number of assorted blue butterflies flying vigorously in the flower-rich turf. A male northern wheatear appeared and then Peter spotted a male black-eared wheatear and we all had a superb view – for perfect comparison. Fran had wandered away from the path and encountered a colony of military orchids, some still in reasonable condition. As we walked among them, we found lots of the Cévennes endemic *Ophrys aymoninii* together with burnt-tip orchids and further on we found some bushes of wild lavender growing beside the path. Barry and Sally, who had strolled off the track, called us over to show us a patch of one-flowered wintergreen growing at the edge of a pinewood. We reached the village of le Buffre, our halfway point and we watched a red-backed shrike, and then both a brimstone and a small tortoiseshell, a scarce species in Britain recently. We passed a beautiful *lavogne* where swallows were drinking and damselflies, broad-bodied chasers and southern hawker dragonflies all hunted over the water. There was more one-flowered wintergreen further on and another group of Aymonin's orchid. Eventually we found our way down to Hûres where the two groups were reunited.

In the meantime the strollers set off from Hûres, bearing in mind that the village was known for its population of rock sparrows. We were not disappointed, and found them flitting between the trees, a pile of stones and electricity wires behind the church. An astonishing display of Venus's looking-glass fringing a cornfield captured our attention and we strayed along its edge looking for other arable weeds: poppies, bedstraws and scarlet pimpernel. Among the flowers of the rocky turf, the butterflies were very active and, far from being strollers, Helen (Crowder) and Edward leapt about with their butterfly nets after fritillaries and blues. The most satisfactory capture was a purple-shot copper, unmistakable in its brilliant colouring. The dry stone walls sheltered green hellebore and sweet-briar, the electric blue false sainfoin and pale yellow *Urospermum*. There were tiny sour fruits on the wild gooseberry and colourful banks covered in the mauve of the fine-leaved tufted vetch *Vicia tenuifolia*. We passed a surprisingly large quarry, mining the limestone into stone blocks for building, and meadow clary and wild thyme sprawled on the piles of rock and scuttling lizards disappeared among the stones. Butterflies accompanied us all the way: black-veined whites, scarce and common swallowtails, coppers, small heaths, pearly heaths, skippers, blues and fritillaries. At last we came to the village of Drigas where Helen (Cox), resting a strained back, had been watching swallows and martins gathering mud for their nests in a puddle beside the road. We retrieved the minibus and drove on to Hûres, and the other group.



A trip to the vast expanse of the *Causse Méjean* is not complete without visiting another great reintroduction project. This time, it is the wild Przewalski's horses of Mongolia (*above*) that are being raised on the steppe-like plateau in a well thought through breeding programme that is allowing significant numbers of horses to be returned to the wild in Mongolia. A huge area of *causee* is enclosed and the horses run wild, fairly remote from people and forming family groups. When these are

established, whole families can then be returned to the wild, but in the meantime they make a beautiful sight quietly moving about and grazing on the grassy slopes.

During the sunny day, the dominant grass over much of the causses, especially abundant on the Causse Méjean, had been coming out. This is the feather grass, *Stipa pennata*, known in French as *cheveu d'ange*, angel's hair. We took a minor road that leads across the causse towards the Jonte and across the steppes covered in feather grass, so that we could enjoy it at its best as it turned the whole plateau silver in the evening sunlight. We soon joined the main road and drove down into Meyrueis, up again onto the eastern edge of the Causse du Larzac – where we passed several red-backed shrikes and a lucerne field full of cornflowers, down into Trèves at the head of the Gorges du Trévezet, up onto the Causse Begon, down to St Jean de Bruel in the Dourbie valley and finally onto the Causse du Larzac where, just before we arrived home, we had a good view of a cuckoo as it flew close alongside the minibuses.

Sylvain did a little research before dinner as he was planning to offer a traditional Aveyronnais dish of stuffed tripe, and the English attitude to tripe was well known! Half the group were 'up for it' and very good it was too! The rest had roast chicken. But before that, Sylvain had prepared delicious *oeufs cocotte* and the meal was rounded off with a fruit tart.

Day 7: Thursday 11 June, Nant, Cantobre and the Dourbie

The weather looked unsettled again but we optimistically persuaded ourselves that it was brightening from the south-east. The family group of linnets in the garden was getting more vocal and active by the day and we watched their antics while we deliberated where to go, summoning up the energy to stride up to the top of the hill opposite. Skylarks and woodlarks accompanied our walk and we had nice views of curl bunting, yellowhammer and red-backed shrike. At the bottom of the hill we found the entrance to our very own *aven*, unromantically protected by an old wooden pallet. A cuckoo and a quail were calling, a stonechat was flitting about and we saw the fourth woodpigeon of the week. At the summit, the short turf was exquisite with delicate flowers, dwarfed by the exposed conditions: the charming delicate pink everlasting flower *Xeranthemum inapertum*, covering a large apparently disturbed area with tiny plants, and several patches of the fragrant yarrow, *Achillea odorata*. We arrived back puffed, and late for breakfast, but to the usual warm welcome and perfect coffee from Nicolas.

The River Dourbie was our focus today. We drove down into Nant and then the group dispersed to explore the little town while Robin and Rachel delivered a minibus to the far end of our walk along the river. A vast flock of swifts, with house and crag martins, was feeding over the town park and from time to time birds could be seen flying up to their nests under the eaves and in the roofs of the tall town houses. Some people visited the beautiful Romanesque church where, for a euro-in-the-slot, your tour can be accompanied by a very appropriate CD of organ music. Lesley went in search of some special French candle lamps and then she and Suzanne took themselves off down the enticing narrow streets to revel in the unspoilt character of a France that we can now seldom find. The very informative visitor centre, housed in a former church, occupied some in a very useful geology and local history lesson. The *papeterie* provided a useful source of books, maps, souvenirs and postcards, and finally there were refreshments to be had under the ancient stone arches of the old market.

We walked (or drove) down to the old bridge, where we stood looking down on the river with, below us, a dipper, a white wagtail and a pair of grey wagtails feeding three youngsters. Swallows and martins were gathering mud and we left Helen (Cox), whose back was still giving her trouble, with plenty to watch beside the river.

The river walk started along a well-made track through farmland, with wild gladioli flowering among the corn, and goat's-beard and birthwort beside the track and, to Robin M's delight, a beautifully developed lizard orchid for her to examine at close quarters, and smell – as Helen had been urging everyone to do in order to make sense of the French name *orchis bouc* – billy goat orchid. The hillside beside the track is terraced and the stone walls were encrusted with ferns: rustyback and maidenhair spleenwort. Then the track climbed up across a rocky spur and we found yellow-wort, stonecrops and fragrant herbs. As we moved into the welcome shade of beech and downy oak, a blackcap and a nightingale were singing, a spotted flycatcher sat on a branch and we found some pine marten droppings containing several cherry stones. Green hellebore, spurge laurel (*right*) – its black berries glistening in the damp air – the spotted leaves of lungwort (this subspecies a Cévennes endemic) and the bold pink flowers of red helleborine, bastard balm and knotted crane's bill. Further into the wood a firecrest and a nuthatch were singing. The path ran through fields again as we approached our destination, with a buzzard calling over the cliffs across the valley, and as we walked down to the river, we found a striped hawk-moth. The drivers left the group to scan the river from the bridge and went back to Nant to retrieve the other minibus, with Helen (Cox), Sallie and Humphrey, Sallie delighted at having found a dipper at the Nant bridge. Then we gathered everyone up and drove a little further downstream to Cantobre Bridge, and our picnic.



We ate our picnic beside the river, where the entomologists had a busy time with Adonis blues, caddis-flies, a southern white admiral, banded demoiselles and a beautiful pink and yellow moth which Humphrey identified as *Rhodostrophia calabra*, as well as a bright green crab spider, foolishly trying to hide in wait for its prey on a pink scabious.

After lunch we made our way – some on foot and some in a minibus – through some rather radical roadworks up to Cantobre, a tiny medieval village perched strategically, and perilously, on a rocky outcrop at the confluence of two gorges, the Dourbie and the Trévezet. Cantobre has been well cared for and still has a few inhabitants of many decades' standing. The flower that is the symbol of the *causse*, the *cardabelle*, is pinned, for good luck, to nearly every doorway. The wildlife is abundant and confiding, with swifts at their nests in the cliff beside our path, black redstarts singing from the rooftops, lizards scuttling in the dry leaves and the rocks covered with flowers like a natural rock garden. We took the circular path round the village: elder trees looking wonderful in full flower, delicate Montpellier maple fruits beginning to colour and shady rocks covered in polypody ferns. There was another little Romanesque church to see with a southern speckled wood visiting the flowers in the garden outside. We sat on the seat in front of the church to enjoy the view and looking up, we watched a black kite, then repaired to the *buvette* for welcome drinks and ice creams, with a cleopatra flying among the tables.

We had another evening activity planned so dinner was early: a salad of *jambon cru*, wonderful *confit de canard* followed by a mouth-watering *chocolat fondant*, and we returned to the Cantobre Bridge for an 8 o'clock appointment with Paul Knapp. Paul has been the resident naturalist at the local campsite for many years and has made a study of the population of beavers that has recently re-established itself (with the aid of some controlled reintroduction) in the Dourbie. There is a beaver family with territory just below the bridge and we set up our telescopes and waited on a track overlooking the river. Perfectly on cue, an excited whisper from Paul and we could see one swimming beside the bank. It came right past us and then climbed out, scrambled up the bank opposite and began to chew a branch off a small willow tree. After a while, the branch was free, the beaver tugged it down and into the water and we watched as it towed it up stream, into the shelter of some overhanging branches and out of sight. What a view! We waited for some time after that and occasionally caught sight of another animal, grooming itself, feeding and swimming short distances. We were well satisfied, though, with the first view and went home content, but not before several people had bought signed copies of the new Crossbill Guide to the Cévennes, of which Paul is a co-author.

Day 8: Friday 12 June, South across the Causse du Larzac to Lapanouse and the Roquefort Caves.

The last full day of the holiday dawned with a cloudless sky and we walked along the path opposite between four fields, all of which had quails calling in them. Two or perhaps three nightingales were singing too, one at least from the Gare aux Ânes garden and a couple of circling buntings performed for us. Wherever we looked on the meadow, black-veined whites – dozens of them – were warming up in the sunshine and both skylark and woodlark were singing.

We set off across the Causse du Larzac to the west, towards the edge of the *causses*. We drove through l'Hospitalet du Larzac, another in the sequence of Templar and Hospitaller villages dating from the 11th and 12th centuries. The Cernon rises near



l'Hospitalet du Larzac, flows westwards through the western edge of the Causse du Larzac and then turns north into the Tarn, below Millau. We followed the Cernon valley first through Ste Eulalie de Cernon, one of the Templar commanderies and then through Lapanouse de Cernon. We crossed the village on a tiny stone bridge and drove up onto the hill to the south of the village. Here we encountered a more or less disused railway line, (part of the line that used to pass la Gare aux Ânes) and a derelict railway station (very much like the buildings at la Gare aux Ânes).

We parked under the shade of some magnificent trees and a blackcap was singing brilliantly from the top of a *Robinia* tree, in full view for us all to see it well. The butterflies were fantastic and Humphrey, Sue, Helen and Edward headed off to see what was about. There were plenty of meadow browns and pearly heaths but the spotted and marbled fritillaries caused most excitement. Rachel and Robin had a particular mission and, in the shelter of some blackthorn bushes close to the railway line, they found the last few specimens of the endemic Aveyron orchid, a very pretty and delicate ophrys, *Ophrys aveyronensis* (left), still in good condition.

We crossed the railway line and carried on along the well-used track up the hill. This little valley at Lapanouse is well known for its orchids and for its butterflies. The orchids were certainly past their best but the other flowers were wonderful. Burnt-tip, pyramidal and lizard orchids were taking over from the earlier *Ophrys* and *Orchis* species, though there were still some butterfly orchids and a few military orchids were hanging on. Wild roses were coming out, including the apple-scented sweet-briar; crocus-leaved salsify *Tragopogon crocifolius* was looking beautiful with its terracotta and yellow flowers. The majestic umbellifer, sermountain *Laserpitium siler* was clearly very attractive to insects: Helen (Cox) found ten six-spot burnet moths and a transparent burnet on a single sermountain inflorescence (*next page*), and all sorts of other insects were out in force. We had a very good view of a southern white admiral and the grassland was dotted with fritillaries, skippers and blues. There were rose chafers on the brambles and we found a mating pair of longhorn beetles whose realistic mimicry of wasps must surely have deterred potential predators. Long-tailed tits were calling from the trees and then

a new call drew our attention to a pair of crested tits in a pine tree. They searched for food among the branches, giving us excellent views. We also heard a firecrest singing, and eventually got a superb view of that as well.

We set off back to the minibuses for lunch. A French couple drew up in a car and asked if we could direct them to the 'special' orchid; we showed it to them, they photographed it and went away happy! And we sat down in the cool shade to enjoy our last Gare aux Ânes picnic, though Humphrey and Sue could hardly be torn away from their butterfly identification to find time to eat.

Roquefort production and the *brebis* sheep which supply the milk from which it is made are vital to the whole culture, economy and ecology of the fragile *causse*. So after lunch we followed a tiny road along the pretty Cernon valley and, at St Rome de Cernon joined the main road leading to Roquefort, the final scheduled destination of the holiday. There were half a dozen griffon vultures overhead as we arrived at the Papillon Cave where we were booked on a 2 o'clock tour. Papillon is one of only eight establishments entitled to use the name 'Roquefort' for the distinctive blue cheese. We watched films demonstrating the historical and present-day manufacture of the cheese, from management of the *brebis*, production of the *Penicillium* culture that gives the blue veining, preparation and maturing of the cheese, before touring the Caves to see some of the processes in action. At the end of the tour we were invited to taste cheeses and then we were able to buy them to take home in special insulated packs.

The route back from Roquefort took us across the gently undulating western edge of the Causse du Larzac and, near to Ste Eulalie we were brought to a halt by a flock of fourteen black birds which turned out, at last, to be choughs. We watched them playing elegantly in the air currents, and then they settled on some rocks and we could look at them in the telescopes while they strutted about and preened. At this point, there was a division of interests, with one minibus-load keen to have another stop or two on the *causse* while a second group was interested in a visit to the Templar Commandery at Ste Eulalie. The *causse* group lingered near the choughs and watched a tawny pipit silhouetted on rocks on the skyline and then moved on to stop again on a pretty, rocky hillside, to enjoy the late afternoon insects and flowers. The Ste Eulalie group briefly explored the beautifully restored fortified village, with what is said to be the only church in Christendom where the altar is at the west end. (In 1641, the then Commander, annoyed because the villagers' route to the church passed through his courtyard, had the altar moved and a door opened in the east end.) The Ste Eulalie group also managed a brief stop for refreshment.

Sylvain had kindly invited us all to have an aperitif with him and Nicolas before dinner which, weather permitting, was to be a barbecue. So we all gathered in the evening sunshine while the delicious smells of the barbecue wafted over to us. When all was ready, we went indoors to enjoy our perfectly cooked steaks and chops.

After dinner, Robin and Rachel had a little surprise for the group as the previous evening they had found their way to their room unexpectedly illuminated. So we trooped off to the old signal-box and found two glow-worms shining brightly at the foot of the wall. For several people it was a 'first'.



Highlights

As is customary at the end of a Honeyguide Holiday, and especially as this was the first Honeyguide Holiday in the Cévennes, we were very keen to hear from everybody which moments they would remember as highlights of the week.

Barry

A place: Aven Armand – this was beautifully presented compared with so many caves; a bird: seeing red and black kites together; a plant: the three different wintergreens.

Edward

Seeing the large tortoiseshell, now almost extinct in the UK.

Peter

The dinosaur footprints, and their remarkable similarity to the footprints of birds 100 million years later.

Fran

Many, many, many memorable moments, the sunny evening on the first day in the orchid meadow at la Pezade; the beavers; the nightjar evening – no nightjars but such a peaceful atmosphere.

Helen (Cox)

The beautiful views of the wild horses; the quantities of wild flowers everywhere compared with what we have become used to at home.

Helen (Crowder)

Jassenove – the French lunch and being shown round their land afterwards; the blue aphyllanthes everywhere; the butterflies at Lapanouse ; getting an excellent view of a short-toed eagle sitting on the cliff above the Jonte.

Humphrey

The flowers: the staggering colour of the blue aphyllanthes, the fields full of all sorts of colour, the variety of orchids; the birds, especially the short-toed eagle, not seen before; the butterflies, especially wood white, one of the species that started his interest in butterflies 75 years ago, and the marbled fritillary.

Lesley

The privilege of being one of the first Honeyguiders to come to this wonderful area; Aven Armand, especially the stalagmites and the moment when we were plunged into darkness; the spectacular colours of the cleopatras; the red helleborines.

Malcolm

Discovering a fantastic area of France - valleys and mountains and sense of space; birds: when Helen spotted the crossbills and crested tits; the best ever butterflies; the fantastic flowers, especially the sermountain.

Robin (McKeown)

Relief at the start of the holiday to find that her luggage space in the back of the Renault Trafic minibuses was big enough to take her luggage; the lizard orchids, first in bud then in full flower with all their 'wonderful curly things'; the six-spot burnets on top of the sermountain; the wild horses, just like those in cave paintings in the Dordogne.

Sallie

The dipper – especially because they found it themselves; the wonderful colours and quantities and variety of flowers and the butterflies on them; the crossbills – a reminder of the picture in the Observer's Book of Birds years ago.

Sally

The beautiful wild horses; Aven Armand with its quantities of stalactites and stalagmites; the number of different insects on the sermountain; fields full of such a variety of flowers *en masse*.

Sue

The spectacular scenery and winding roads; the Mont Aigoual 'experience'; plants – many, but especially the gromwell; butterflies – marbled fritillary was wonderful, but the twin-spot fritillary was the most exciting; birds: the combination of crossbills and crested tits.

Suzanne

Three things: the multitude and multiplicity of orchids; the incredible mediaeval villages – so many of them and so close together; the beavers – a first encounter with them.

Rachel

Seeing three wintergreens; the wonderful view of the beavers; being shown the grounds at Jassenove by the Galtiers; having the chance to share our special part of France with experienced naturalists like Honeyguiders.

Robin (Hamilton)

The best sighting ever of beavers; the wonderful views of short-toed eagles; showing our friends our favourite part of France – and finding that they like it.

Day 9: Saturday 13 June, The Cirque de Navacelles and the Mediterranean

It was another hot, cloudless day as we prepared to leave la Gare aux Ânes. The birds were singing and the butterflies were busy in the garden. Sylvain and Nicolas waved us off and we headed east towards Alzon, and then up onto the Causse de Blandas. At a brief stop on the causse someone disturbed a leveret which ran off along the road and turned into a field. Sue went off with her butterfly net and returned triumphant with an Amanda's blue, and on a bush just ahead of us beside the road, a large raptor turned out to be a short-toed eagle. We had fantastic views of it as it took off, circled above us and then soared and hovered against the clear blue sky. We stopped next at the viewpoint on the lip of the Cirque de Navacelles, a magnificent landform created from a deeply incised meander in the Gorge de la Vis where, in addition, an oxbow lake has formed and silted up, leaving the only genuinely fertile land for many, many miles. We followed the steep road down to the village and the river Vis at the bottom of the cirque, where it was the profusion of insects that caught our interest. We followed a lesser purple emperor beside the river where lots of beautiful demoiselles, a broad-bodied chaser and a gold-ringed dragonfly were all hunting over the water. All the low vegetation beside the river was dotted with jewel-like blue chafer beetles *Hoplia caerulea*. We walked along the riverside path and crossed the old bridge, enjoying the view and listening to the scratchy song of a subalpine warbler. There were fishermen after the trout that we could see lurking among the stones and swimming vigorously

just to stay still in the fast-moving water. We sat under the trees and ate our picnic lunch and then we trooped off to the café for coffee and ice creams before heading southwards for the last leg of the journey to Montpellier.

We drove up out of the Cirque at the southern end and then carried on southwards, leaving the *causse* behind and joining the A75 near Lodève. From there, the journey took about an hour, but not without the inevitable grim outskirts of Montpellier. However, we were there in good time, spent a few minutes reconnoitring the airport departure arrangements and then drove a little way along the coast to the Étang de Mauguio. This was a very different world. We were welcomed by a party of about thirty flamingos, quietly feeding just offshore. An avocet was scuttling nervously along the far bank with a shelduck and two oystercatchers nearby. At least three little egrets made an appearance and a few common terns were flying about and fishing in the shallow water. A grey heron stalked slowly along at the bottom of the reeds and we had a nice fly-past of a purple heron. There were a lot of gulls about, mostly yellow-legged and black headed; we looked in vain for Mediterranean. Then, as we had turned to go back to the minibuses, a slender-billed gull flew by.

It didn't take long to get back to the airport, park the minibuses (ready for Robin and Rachel to drive back to la Gare aux Ânes to prepare for the second group). We had time for a drink and found ourselves sitting down at 6.30 in the airport restaurant for a very satisfactory final dinner together. Everyone went in relays to check in and then, after a leisurely meal we bade farewell to Robin M, heading for a Montpellier hotel on her way back to Australia, before the rest of the group disappeared up the escalator to fly back to Stansted.

Species Lists Week 1

Birds	Latin Name	Notes
Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Three at Étang de Mauguio
Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	One at Étang de Mauguio
Purple heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	One at Étang de Mauguio
Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	Ca thirty at Étang de Mauguio
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	One at Étang de Mauguio
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	One on the Jonte at le Rozier
Griffon vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Several seen every day throughout the region. Several nests at le Truel
Black vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	An adult overhead and a young bird on the nest at le Truel
Short-toed eagle	<i>Circus gallicus</i>	Good views almost every day throughout the region
Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	A few between Rodez and Sévérac le Château; two on the Causse Méjean
Black kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Several between Rodez and Sévérac le Château; three on the Causse Méjean; one at Cantobre
Montagu's harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	One between Rodez and Sévérac le Château; one near la Gare aux Ânes; one near la Couvertorade and one near Dourbies
Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	A few seen every day
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	A few seen every day
Red-legged partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	One near le Truel; a few on the Causse du Larzac
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	A few heard almost every day throughout the region
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Two at Étang de Mauguio
Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	One at Étang de Mauguio
Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	One on the Dourbie at les Laupies
Black-headed gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Several at Étang de Mauguio
Slender-billed gull	<i>Larus genei</i>	One at Étang de Mauguio
Yellow-legged gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	A few at Étang de Mauguio
Common tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	A few at Étang de Mauguio
Rock dove/feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Seen occasionally in towns and villages
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Occasional in wooded areas
Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Frequently seen in villages
Turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Seen or heard almost daily
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Seen or heard almost daily
Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	Heard at Montredon
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Several seen every day
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Seen or heard on most days
Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	One in the Gorges de la Jonte
Skylark	<i>Audouard arvensis</i>	Several seen every day
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	Several seen every day
Crag martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	Common in gorges and occasionally in villages

Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Several seen every day
House martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	Several seen every day
Tawny pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	One near Ste Eulalie
White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	Commonly seen by rivers and in villages
Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Occasionally seen on the Dourbie
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Seen or heard on most days
Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	One on the Dourbie at Nant
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	One or two heard or seen on most days
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	Abundant and ubiquitous, though seldom seen
Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	A few in every town and village
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	A few seen on most days in open habitats
Northern wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	A few on the Causse Méjean
Black-eared wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	One on the Causse Méjean near le Buffre
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	One at Montredon
Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Occasional ones and twos on the causses
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Several seen every day
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Abundant and widespread in causses and gorges
Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Occasional on causses
Subalpine warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	One on the Causse du Larzac above les Cuns and one near the Cirque de Navacelles
Melodious warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	Two holding territory near la Gare aux Ânes and occasional singing males elsewhere
Bonelli's warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	Common and widespread
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	A few seen or heard every day
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	One at Nant and one on the Causse Noir
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>	One seen well near Lapanouse; occasionally heard elsewhere
Spotted flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	One near Nant and one at the Cirque de Navacelles
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	A few seen every day
Coal tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	Individuals on the Causse Noir and near Lapanouse de Cernon
Blue tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	Occasional individuals in causses and gorges
Crested tit	<i>Parus cristatus</i>	Small numbers on the Causse Noir and near Lapanouse de Cernon
Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	Occasional individuals in causses and gorges
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	One beside the Dourbie near Cantobre
Red-backed shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	A few seen every day on the causses
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Several seen every day
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	A few seen every day
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Common in gorges and villages
Red-billed chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	Several flocks seen in gorges and causses
Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone corone</i>	Common and widespread
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Occasional individuals in causses and gorges
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Small numbers in towns and villages
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Small numbers in towns and villages
Rock sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	Small numbers in Hûres on the Causse Méjean
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Common and widespread
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Small flocks seen almost daily
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Common and widespread
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Common and widespread
Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	Seen every day at la Gare aux Ânes and elsewhere near villages
Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	A family group on the Causse Noir
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Seen on most days on causses
Cirl bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	A few seen every day on the causses
Rock bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	A male seen well near les Laupies
Corn bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	Several seen every day on the causses

86 species

Mammals

Pipistrelle
Hedgehog
Mole
Hare
Red squirrel
Pine Marten
Wild boar
Przewalski's horse

Butterflies

Swallowtail
Scarce swallowtail
Black-veined white
Large white
Small white
Green-veined white
Clouded yellow
Brimstone
Cleopatra
Wood white
Green hairstreak
Purple-shot copper
Green-underside blue
Baton blue
Silver-studded blue
Amanda's blue
Turquoise blue
Adonis blue
Lesser purple emperor
Southern white admiral
Large tortoiseshell
Red admiral
Painted lady
Small tortoiseshell
Twin spot fritillary
Marbled fritillary
Glanville fritillary
Knapweed fritillary
Spotted fritillary
Lesser spotted fritillary
Heath fritillary
Provençal fritillary
Meadow fritillary
Nickerl's fritillary
Marbled white
Meadow brown
Small heath
Pearly heath
Speckled wood
Wall brown
Large wall brown
Southern marbled skipper
Essex skipper
Small skipper
Large skipper

45 species**Reptiles**

Common wall lizard
Green lizard
Grass snake

Amphibians

Common Toad
Midwife toad

Fish

Brown trout

Moths

Green oak tortrix
6-spot burnet
Transparent burnet
Burnet *Zygaena osterodensis*
Burnet *Zygaena rhadamanthus*
Forester
Fox
Striped hawkmoth
Small elephant hawkmoth
Hummingbird hawkmoth
Buff tip
Pine processionary
Brown tiger
Clouded buff
Pale mottled willow
Spotted clover sp
Silver Y
Burnet companion
Wave sp
Snout sp
Mother Shipton
Rhodostrophia calabra
Chimney sweeper
Treble-bar

Other insects

Banded demoiselle
Beautiful demoiselle
Gold-ringed dragonfly
Southern hawker
Broad-bodied chaser
'Millwall bug' *Graphosoma italicum*
Ascalaphid *Libelloides macaronius*
Caddis fly
Wood ant
Violet carpenter bee
Cockchafer
Chafer *Hoplia caerulea*
Rose chafer
Soldier beetle
Glow-worm
Longhorn beetle *Leptura maculata*

Other invertebrates

Tarantula *Lycosa narbonensis*

Plant list follows on from week 2 species list.

Day 1: Monday 15 June, Arrival

It was a happy meeting at Rodez Airport when Robin and Rachel gathered up the group after a smooth flight from Stansted. The fine afternoon set off the French countryside as we sped eastwards to join the A75 north of Millau. There were black kites everywhere: we counted at least seven on the first part of the journey, as well as several buzzards. The spectacular Millau Viaduct (*below*) glinted in the sunshine as we ‘flew’ over the Tarn Valley and onto the vast rock expanse of the Causse du Larzac, with a griffon vulture soaring lazily overhead



Leaving the *autoroute*, we wound through the lanes across the *causse*, very close now to the rocky, flower-rich grassland which we could admire, and passing through tiny unspoilt stone hamlets, their doors emblazoned with the flower heads of the emblematic acanthus-leaved carline thistle, the ‘*cardabelle*’, symbol of the *causse*. We drew up in the drive at la Gare aux Ânes to the sizzling sound of serins busy in the treetops beside the house. Sylvain Goleo, who, with his partner Nicolas Lasne, owns and runs the little hotel, met us and showed us to our rooms in the attractively converted – if eccentric – station buildings. The last of the group, Sandy and Marie, on a long tour through Europe, soon arrived and we all met in the bar and took our drinks out into the garden for the first exploration of the rich surroundings. A nightingale was singing from the end of the garden and a quail was calling from the field alongside us. Lizard and pyramidal orchids were coming up in the lawn and the meadow was alive with butterflies.

We trooped in for dinner: succulent ham with slices of sweet, ripe melon, then roast chicken. Cheese followed and then we had bowls of strawberries. Wine flowed freely and the meal was rounded off with coffee, tea or a variety of tisanes. The nightingales serenaded us as we went off to bed.

Day 2: Tuesday 16 June, Exploring the Causse around la Gare aux Ânes & la Couvertoirade

The bright morning brought out a good muster for an early walk. The first task, though, was to usher the pygmy goats back into their paddock. The serins were singing and fluttering among the trees and skylarks were easy to pick out singing high against the wispy cloud. We crossed the road to the track onto the *causse*: several black-veined whites and a meadow fritillary were sleepily making their way up the grass stalks and we could look at them closely without disturbing them. Ranging further afield Marie found a small heath, Julia a six-spot burnet and Peter a fine black and orange buprestid beetle. We had a good view in the telescope of a corn bunting singing and of a male red-backed shrike.

Nicolas was, as usual, presiding over breakfast, ensuring a steady flow of perfect coffee (or tea, of course) as well as fruit juice, piles of fresh bread and croissants, a selection of charcuterie and cheeses, fresh fruit and yoghurt.

What few clouds there had been were clearing by the time we loaded the great picnic hamper into the minibus and set off to explore the Causse du Larzac. After a few miles we turned off the road onto a rough track and headed up the rocky hillside. The scent of crushed thyme assailed us as we climbed out of the minibuses and looked around. Almost at once we heard a bird call which was surprising for the area and, looking up, we caught sight of three bee-eaters flashing past us against the clear blue sky. Distant specks resolved into a party of ten griffon vultures that gradually soared towards and above us and then disappeared. A mistle thrush was singing in the distance, a whitethroat was performing its characteristic song-flight and we watched a turtle dove flying repeatedly to and fro, doubtless feeding young.

Among the little bushes of thyme (common thyme, *Thymus vulgaris*, familiar as a culinary herb but not found in the wild in Europe except in the south) we found a feast of other low-growing flowers: a fine 'cardabelle', acanthus-leaved carline thistle, was lurking under a box bush; carduncellus, a sort of stemless knapweed tight against the ground, was a beautiful deep mauve against its dark green foliage; the bright yellow flowers of hairy viper's grass *Scorzonera hirsuta* shone out in the sunshine; the delicate white grass-leaved dog daisies *Leucanthemum graminifolium* waved precariously on their long stems; charming yellow cushions of lesser horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis glauca* buzzed with insects. Further up the hill, we came upon a clearing which might have been a show of pink and silver with pyramidal orchids growing through the very special *causse* grass known in France as 'cheveu d'ange', angel's hair or, literally, as feather grass *Stipa pennata*, for its extraordinary fine silver feather-like seed-heads. Instead, it had been devastated, presumably by wild boar, rooting up the orchids and eating the tubers. Nearby, Val found a papery white pupal case containing the remains of a fat pupa which had also been eaten – a juicy meal for someone. A short-toed eagle appeared over the hill and hung in the sky with its characteristic hovering action, feet dangling, searching for snakes and lizards. A Bonelli's warbler sang continually nearby but defied all efforts to get a good view, unlike an obliging firecrest that, annoyed by our presence, sang vigorously for Gill and Geoff to get the best view of their lives. A southern white admiral was cooperative too and posed beautifully for photographs. Finally, we drove to the top of the track to elucidate its purpose and found our landmark, a mobile phone mast disguised as a pine tree.

Our next stop was at the little Templar village of la Couvertoirade. We had scarcely left the car park when we heard a hoopoe calling in a nearby tree. We could locate it precisely but, frustratingly, could not find an angle from which it was actually visible. There were serins everywhere and black redstarts on the roofs of houses, singing strongly and popping their heads above the stone parapets. We began by skirting the village outside the ramparts to visit a beautifully preserved 'lavogne', a paved dewpond used since medieval times for watering the sheep flocks before they are folded for the night, and again in the mornings before they are led out to graze on the *causse* for the day. Inside the village, we explored the maze of lanes and alleyways, rich in wildlife: birds, insects and tiny flowers in the walls and crevices. There are two or three restaurants and bars and several shops selling local and more general produce, crafts and souvenirs, including Nicolas' beautiful ceramics and engravings; everyone's needs were satisfied.

It was lunchtime, so we drove on a little further south and took a turning off the road and into a secluded area among the rocks. We unpacked our hamper – a feast of cold meats and cheeses and amazing salads and fresh fruit, and we listened to a cirl bunting singing nearby. We tantalisingly heard a subalpine warbler too and at last caught a glimpse of it in a pine tree. We cleared away our lunch and prepared for a walk exploring the rather surreal landscape of rocky hillocks eroded into strange lunar forms. Marie called us over to see a green hellebore and a butterfly orchid and, as we set off, we had another brief view of the subalpine warbler. We crossed an area of broken dolomitic (magnesium rich) limestone, almost bare of plants except for a mass of tufts of the tiny and rare *causse* endemic, Gerard's thrift *Armeria girardii*, a very good spot for insects; Val found a silver studded blue; we had a very good look at a female cleopatra; several clouded and pale clouded yellows flew past us fast in the warm sunshine; we identified a baton blue and we hunted after beetles and grasshoppers. In the shelter of a box bush we found a nice specimen of bug orchid and some broad-leaved helleborines just coming out. Rockroses and unfamiliar, softly coloured plants clung to the arid ground: the tiny cream umbellifer *Trinia glauca*, crested knapweed *Centaurea pectinata* and its even more delicate relative *Xeranthemum inapertum*.

At a shout from Gill, we all got a superb view of a male Montagu's harrier and on a rocky outcrop we saw both viviparous and wall lizards. While we were searching for more lizards, a distinctive trill drew our attention to a family group of crested tits. We all had good views as the parents fed their young on a nearby pine tree. A yellowhammer was singing in the valley and as we headed back to the minibuses we stopped to look at a plant of milkwort in flower which had a fine green stick-insect *Bacillus rossius* crawling slowly over it.



The last stop of the day took us through the hamlet of la Pezade to an area of less rugged landscape with deeper and lushier soils, known for its orchids. As we arrived we were again greeted by a group of griffon vultures flying low overhead, and we could hear a quail calling from a cornfield. Geoff and Angela spotted the first raven of the week and a pair of woodpigeons flew by. The orchids were spectacular: groups of fragrant orchids stood out in the long grass and there were tiny frog orchids and much taller man orchids in such numbers that it was hard not to tread on them. There were remnants of other, earlier *Orchis* species too, and one or two *Ophrys*. But it was the lizard orchids that were the stars of the show, standing tall and erect and uncurling their tails in the evening sunlight. The longer grass was yellow with bird's foot trefoil and yellow rattle, there were patches of dodder scrambling through it and we found a silver-Y moth feeding on a field scabious flower. The edge of

the cornfield was purple with Venus's looking glass (*previous page*). Julia wandered off, following the trail of a hummingbird hawk-moth and was astonished when a quail flew up at her feet; though we heard quails every day, this was the week's only glimpse of this elusive bird.

We hurried back to la Gare aux Ânes so that we could catch the swimming pool in the sunshine and Gill intrepidly took the plunge. We met for drinks and reviewed the day and then enjoyed another excellent meal: charcuterie, followed by a beautiful, tender steak – individually cooked according to taste. A selection of cheeses followed, including Roquefort of course and the meal was rounded off with a wide choice of ice creams.

Day 3: Wednesday 17 June, The Causse Noir and the Vultures of the Gorges de la Jonte

We woke to an overcast sky but it was warm and as we set off up the road towards the railway bridge, the cloud was beginning to clear from the north. Swifts were flying low after insects over the fields and we could hear two woodlarks singing. A melodious warbler in the scrub along the old railway cutting was in full song; it refused to show itself but the family of linnets gave us plenty to watch.

We were heading northwards today and stopped for a brief shop in Nant (due to be explored properly later in the week). A nuthatch was searching a tree trunk just in front of the minibuses where we parked, several black redstarts were singing from the roof corners of the tall town houses, swifts wheeled overhead and, with house and crag martins were swooping up to nest holes under the eaves.

We carried on down the Dourbie valley, enjoying the changing views as the road follows every twist and turn of the gorge. At la Roque Ste Marguerite we took the larger of the two roads uphill onto the Causse Noir, across the open plateau and into the pinewoods that give the causse its name. The scattered habitations on the causses today are in sharp contrast to earlier periods where much larger populations have been supported and our first stop was close to an abandoned farmstead, where a beautiful *toit-citerne* is still maintained in excellent condition. Water for stock and crop irrigation is always a problem on the very free-draining soils and many solutions have been developed over the centuries. In this case, literally a 'roof-cistern' has been constructed where an underground cistern is covered at ground level by a beautiful stone roof designed solely to collect rainwater and convey it into the tank below for storage. It would have been constructed in open causse grassland but now, with the much reduced grazing, it is surrounded by pinewoods, though nonetheless very picturesque.

So, after much photography and discussion of the structure and technology of the *toit-citerne*, we began to enjoy the natural history. Some of the flowers were quite spectacular: an extensive stand of fragrant orchids in the ditch, big patches of bearberry – just coming into fruit – on the rocks, a huge plant of the statuesque umbellifer, sermountain beside the building and, lurking under the low branches of a pine tree, a colony of bird's-nest orchids. The butterflies were new: a female common blue and a mating pair of Glanville fritillaries, and Marie made good use of her new butterfly net to catch a brown argus for us to look at and identify. A Bonelli's warbler was singing – they are so widespread and abundant in the area – we heard jays and coal tits and then a cough, and managed to watch it flying overhead across a clearing in the trees.

Half a mile further on is another piece of evidence of a former, more densely populated time: the ruined church and *prieuré* of St Jean des Balmes. We parked the minibuses and went for a walk among the pines with our eyes and ears alert. The first delights were at our feet: two wintergreens, green wintergreen *Pyrola chlorantha* and nodding wintergreen *Orthilia secunda* were in perfect flower and looking charming against the carpet of fallen pine needles. Marie entertained us with her



photographic endeavours and the ingenious use of a dentist's mirror to photograph the open flower from below. Various tits were calling from the treetops but lunch was too tempting so we strolled down to find our picnic spot in the dappled shade among the priory ruins. Two noble volunteers carried the hamper up from the minibus and we laid out the cold lamb and tomato salad, breads and cheeses and delicious apricot flan. In the meantime, Julia had potted off and came back with news of a pair of crossbills.

The next stage took us into the Gorges de la Jonte, down a beautiful road with fantastic views along the Jonte and the Tarn valleys (*left*). We stopped for photographs at a viewpoint to enjoy the view and get our bearings.

Everywhere we had so far been there had been griffon vultures in evidence and this spectacular bird was the purpose of today's expedition. For many years a highly successful reintroduction programme for the griffon vulture has been operating in the Grands Causses and has made a big impact on the general ornithological interest in the area. It is this conservation project that Honeyguide is supporting. The centre of the project is in the village of le Truel in the Gorges de la Jonte and it was today's destination. As we approached the Vulture Information Centre, we could see large numbers of birds flying above the cliffs. We were booked in for a viewing of a film about the programme, with live webcam images of vultures on the nest and at the feeding station, and for a guided tour of the museum and viewing terraces. From the roof terrace we had wonderful views of both griffon vultures and black vultures at their nests, the former sensibly in suitable places on the cliffs but the black vultures ridiculously perched precariously on a platform of sticks in a pine tree opposite us on the other side of the gorge. There were numbers of alpine swifts and crag martins wheeling about in the gorge around us, and then a raven and a large flock of choughs appeared. We watched the aerobatics of the choughs and very obligingly six of them perched on a tree not far away so that we could get several telescopes trained on them.

It was a hot afternoon and the little café along the road was very welcome, with its shady terrace and stone tables. A southern white admiral visited the flowers in the garden and, rather incongruously, we could see a pair of mallard far below us in the river. We continued up the river to the little market town of Meyrueis at the head of the gorge and then took the road around the eastern edge of the Causse Noir, off the limestone and onto the schist. The change in geology was very evident in the change in the flora to acid loving cistuses, bracken and heathers. We dropped down to Trèves at the head of the Trévezet, up onto another causse, the Causse Begon and then down to the Dourbie again at St Jean de Bruel.

We had an interesting pause just before we arrived back at Gare aux Ânes: a pine marten had been killed by a car and was lying beside the road. It was a close encounter with an animal that one seldom sees but it was seriously marred by the smell, so we didn't examine it for very long.

It was still warm and sunny when we arrived home and, after a little time to relax and change we met with a drink on the terrace to discuss what we had seen during the day. Dinner was soon ready: a platter of *crudités* followed by succulent roast lamb. A great selection of cheeses came next, and finally slices of fragrant apricot tart.

Day 4: Thursday 18 June, Mont Aigoual and the True Cévennes

Another lovely day dawned and the early risers set off along the disused railway line. The melodious warbler was singing in the usual place, but it was still elusive. We walked on up the track, past a robin singing on an oak tree, with an 'autumnal' quality to its song. The sunshine had brought out lots of insects, including the black and red 'Millwall' bugs and the charming little chimney-sweeper moths. We turned back and had the sun behind us, and at last enjoyed a superb telescope view of the melodious warbler singing on a treetop. And the fresh flowers were brilliant in the early light – field scabious, Etruscan honeysuckle, bath asparagus. Even more butterflies were coming out: a pearly heath and two green hairstreaks, and a beautiful micro moth *Adela reaumurella* whose antennae are twice as long as its body.

We had planned an eastwards expedition today onto the schists and granites of the true Cévennes, and the summit of Mont Aigoual but the first stop was about 6 km from Gare aux Ânes in the village of Sauclières. There is a substantial quarry near there and at the quarry office in the village they display a number of very interesting fossils found over the years. By far the most exciting are a number of limestone slabs showing the footprints of several crocodilian dinosaurs, of various sizes, preserved from the muddy shorelines of the Jurassic sea, out of which the causse limestone was deposited. The finest examples are in museums but the quarrymen delighted in talking to us about the ones they still have on show.

We carried on along the south side of the Dourbie, through the village of Dourbies and, taking advantage of the beautiful day, pressed on towards Mont Aigoual. We paused briefly to admire the last few pheasant's eye narcissi in a meadow and a fine display of giant thrift *Armeria arenaria* beside the road and we were just getting back into the minibuses when a short-toed eagle flew close by and perched on a tree not far away, giving us brilliant telescope views of its large head and bright yellow eyes – and even some reasonable photographs. As we drove through the pinewoods near the summit, we heard a goldcrest singing and as we emerged into the open moorland at the summit a meadow pipit performed its parachuting song-flight. We parked at the summit and paused to get our bearings and enjoy the view – 360° of misty distant hills. We walked around the meteorological station, watching several small tortoiseshells and two swallowtails. We found an ichneumon fly and a digger wasp *Ammophila*. A skylark and a meadow pipit sang in the clear air, a grey wagtail and a black redstart searched for food on the buildings, and not far away a female northern wheatear was collecting food. The restaurant at the station drew us and we took our drinks out in the sunshine and then strolled back to the minibuses to enjoy another delicious picnic.

After lunch, for those who wanted, there was time to visit the well-presented and very informative meteorological exhibition and museum, and the information centre and shop, and then we took a longer route across the alpine grassland, away from the bustle of the centre and car parks, and had a look for flowers. Just the names give a real sense of altitude: alpine lady's mantle *Alchemilla alpina*, alpine clover *Trifolium alpinum*, mountain everlasting *Antennaria dioica*, bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus*, alpine hawkweed *Hieracium alpinum*, and the startlingly blue flower heads of globe-headed rampion *Phyteuma hemisphaericum*.

We stopped on the way home in the hamlet of Laupies where there is a short walk that takes you down to the river and along it for a few hundred yards to where a newly constructed bridge – a lovely viewpoint for river-watching – takes the track across. It is a very pretty stretch of river, with huge tumbled boulders and an ancient ruined bridge. There were clouds of beautiful demoiselles *Calopteryx virgo* flying over the water and settling on leaves and twigs, the males showing off their brilliant blue iridescence. We saw the first peacock butterfly of the week and Peter found a comma and Bob a speckled wood. The path is through damp riverside grassland which is full of flowers: maiden pink, *Dianthus deltoides*, spiked rampion *Phyteuma spicatum*, the curious green-flowered hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium* ssp *sibiricum*, the Cévennes endemic subspecies of our garden lungwort *Pulmonaria longifolia* ssp *cevennensis*, a beautiful pure white-flowered woodrush *Luzula nivea*, another garden familiar *Doronicum austriacum*. We saw the short-toed eagle again in the same place as we drove on to Dourbies and then took the northerly, shorter route along the valley, over the Causse Begon back to St Jean de Bruel and home.

There was time for Gill to have her swim when we got back. We had drinks on the terrace and then went in for dinner. We began with a dish of charcuterie and then Sylvain produced *pavé de saumon*, with lovely new potatoes. After the cheese came the most delicate and irresistible *chocolat fondant*, with coffee and tea to finish off the meal.

After dinner, the night was warm and still so some of us decided that we would take out our bat detectors and see what was about. One or two sizeable bats appeared on a circuit round the drive and we picked up several with pipistrelle-like calls. The highlight of the session though was undoubtedly a brief fly-past along the drive by a nightjar.

Day 5: Friday 19 June, The Heart of the Causse du Larzac

Friday dawned clear with a light haze that quickly faded in the warm sunshine. A quail, a red-legged partridge and a cuckoo were calling as we walked along the track opposite which was covered with the fresh burrows of tawny mining bees. We found a sleeping spotted fritillary, perfect for close inspection, and had a good view of a red-backed shrike on top of a bush.

After breakfast we drove through Nant and up onto a new part of the Causse du Larzac. A well-made track leads through pinewoods to a couple of isolated farms and a radio mast. We drove to the end of the wood and then walked through flower-rich limestone grassland and low scrub to an amazing cliff-top viewpoint. It was sunny with scattered cloud and we could see the river Dourbie sparkling in the valley below. The warm sunlight shone back at us from the red roofs of the little town of Nant and across the gorge, we looked towards yesterday's destination and the summit of Mont Aigoual.



In the wood, Peter and Elonwy found masses of bird's nest orchids and the red helleborines were in full flower. Statuesque plants of sermountain stood boldly among the rocks and golden-drop sheltered in the shade of box bushes and fragrant Etruscan honeysuckle. We puzzled over some broomrapes and admired fine spires of lizard orchids (*detail, left*) growing amongst the angel's hair grass. It was perfect for insects too: there were bee-flies; Geoff found an ascalaphid *Libelloides coccajus*; a hummingbird hawk-moth was feeding on the wild thyme and freshly emerged marbled whites were everywhere. There was a purple-shot copper, a scarce swallowtail and several burnet moths *Zygaena fausta*. We heard two firecrests singing on opposite sides of the track and one of them showed itself well. We heard the bubbling call of a female cuckoo and then the familiar note of the male. Three griffon vultures flew by and a woodlark was singing in the background as we spotted the parachuting song-flight of a tree pipit. It landed in a tree and gave us an excellent view. There is a little natural *lavogne*, where clays have gathered and rendered the limestone impervious. There, we found two broad-bodied chasers, one of which had recently emerged from its larval case and was perched, drying its wings. As we watched, it took its first flight. Further on, we found both common and Adonis blues but a subalpine warbler that was singing nearby refused to show itself.

Our next stop was in the hamlet of Montredon, deep in the Causse du Larzac. On the edge of the village is a well-maintained *lavogne* and, weather permitting, it was our intention to return there that evening in the hope of hearing, and even seeing, nightjars. It seemed a good idea to familiarise the group with somewhere they were likely to visit in the dark.

We were departing from the normal pattern today and, instead of a picnic, we had booked lunch at one of the best traditional *Fermes Auberges* in the area, Jassenove. It is miles from anywhere and as we arrived we were speculating as to how it could be so successful in such an isolated place when we turned the corner of the drive and found the car park already occupied by a couple of private helicopters. Clearly, Jassenove's reputation had spread further than we realised. As ever, we had a wonderful welcome from Catherine and Renaud Galtier who chatted with us over aperitifs and then served us the most delicious traditional Aveyronnais meal – on a long table in front of an immense fireplace with huge basket full of the fluffy seed-heads of *cheveu d'ange* hanging from a beam above the table. Everything was homemade and grown or raised either on

their own farm or that of close neighbours on the *causee*. A terrine with a delicately dressed salad was followed by a perfect Roquefort soufflé. The meal was briefly interrupted as our fellow guests were ready to depart and we watched the spectacle of the helicopters preparing to go and then taking off into the afternoon sunshine – one to Toulouse and the other to Annecy! After the excitement we went back inside for the meat course. We had requested *brebis*, the local lamb, so important to the long-term maintenance of the character of the *causee* (and the producers of the milk for Roquefort cheese), and this was accompanied by a casserole of creamy potatoes. The cheeses were all local: Roquefort and *tome de brebis* (made in Montredon) and little local goat's cheeses. Then we finished with delicious fruit and chocolate flans, and coffee.

After lunch – which had been a very leisurely matter – we were able to spend some time exploring the Galtiers' land, a very considerable area of secluded *causee*. There is grassland and woodland and some fine examples of the dolomitic rock formations known as 'ruiniform reliefs' because their appearance is reminiscent of ruined buildings. We were free to roam but followed a route past another ancient *citerne*, this time fed by an underground watercourse and with a vaulted stone roof. The grazed turf was studded with flowers: blue flax, white daisies, yellow alyssum, thrift, catchflies, wild strawberries, cow-wheat and butterfly orchids. Some months ago, a large rock had been struck by lightning in a storm and a huge boulder had fallen and shattered below. The great pile of rock was flaky and friable, suggesting that water had soaked into it and then boiled and blown the rock apart when the lightning struck. Marie's energy with her net caught us a clouded buff moth and Peter went off and successfully tracked down a Bonelli's warbler, singing in a pine copse. We heard a croak and, looking up, we managed to catch a good view of a raven flying overhead. We found ourselves back at the house and a girl bunting and a serin were singing as we took our leave of our charming hosts.

Our next destination was the hamlet of les Baumes, three or four kilometres away. Here, the deep recesses in the limestone cliffs have been walled in to make a troglodyte house, known to have been inhabited since at least the middle ages. We had permission to explore the now abandoned dwelling and we could see evidence of many generations of complex internal constructions. There were the remains of defence structures too, known as machicolations: over the entrance, the wall protruded and holes had been left through which stones (or worse) could be dropped on intruders.

Les Baumes is separated from the neighbouring village of St Martin du Larzac by two or three kilometres of very exposed *causee* – to sun in summer and to cold winds or even snow in winter. So, in the middle ages, in order to protect travellers and livestock moving between the villages, a double box hedge was cultivated to form a sheltered tunnel (*right*). Much of this *buissière* still remains intact and is now well maintained. Time was getting on so instead of walking the length of the *buissière* we decided to drive to the St Martin end and walk a short length of it, under the ancient box trees. Then it was time to return to Gare aux Ânes.



Knowing that we would have eaten well at Jassenove, we had arranged a 'light' dinner at la Gare aux Ânes and Sylvain produced a delicious lasagne, with salad, followed by strawberries. Then, after coffee, we returned to the *lavogne* at Montredon arriving a little after sunset. As we arrived, a nightjar was calling clearly. We settled down around the *lavogne* and made ourselves as comfortable as possible, obscured by the bushes. Nightjars continued to call and once or twice our hopes were raised as we heard the characteristic 'qweek qweek' flight note. A solitary midwife toad called a few times too but we had to content ourselves with a beautiful sky and a large, unidentified bat.

Day 6: Saturday 20 June, Caves, Steppes and Horses on the Causse Méjean

After last night's excursion we decided not to meet for an early walk; another glorious day greeted us with cloudless skies and a welcome cool wind.

After breakfast we set off northwards again, along the Gorges de la Dourbie to la Roque Ste Marguerite. This time, we took an almost impossibly tiny right turn in the village and drove up a narrow side valley onto the Causse Noir. The light woodland was close around us and we could hear chaffinches, tits, Bonelli's warblers and woodlark as we passed. There was no stopping on the *causee* this time and we drove straight across, down into the Gorges de la Jonte, along past the vultures – lots of them soaring above the cliffs – and then turned up onto a 'new' *causee*, the Causse Méjean. As we emerged from the woodland on to the steppe-like plateau, a red kite flew across in front of the minibuses, but we pressed on for our appointment at the famous Aven Armand.

Aven Armand (*below*) is huge cavern discovered in the 19th century by the famous French speleologists Martel and Armand and celebrated for its astonishing array of stalagmites which, at over 400, outnumber those in any other known cave in Europe.



We had an English-speaking guide for our 11.30 tour and everyone was captivated by the awe-inspiring scene, very sensitively presented, and by the extraordinary story of the cave's discovery.

We emerged into the daylight; a fair amount of trade was conducted at the information centre and gift shop which specialises in local crafts and semi-precious stones, and then a pause for refreshment seemed to suit everyone. There were white wagtails feeding in the car park and a black redstart singing from the roof of the building. We found a table for drinks and a short-toed eagle appeared and gave us superb views as it hovered quite close above us in brilliant sunshine.

The Causse Méjean is very different in character from the other causses we had visited; its topography is more gently undulating. Though the underlying limestone is covered by only shallow soils, there is extensive, prairie-like cultivation in places. Where there are no crops, though, there is beautiful steppe grassland which was just reaching its most magical as the vast expanse of '*cheveu d'ange*' *Stipa pennata* was coming out and painting the whole landscape silver. We found a 360° viewpoint for our picnic and a red kite flew by. We looked across to Mont Aigoual while we ate our lunch of smoked salmon, tomato and potato salad with delicious dressing, Gruyère cheese, local bread and fresh peaches.

There is a very attractive group of three villages (*les trois hameaux*) connected by a triangular walk and a rather longer road route. We decided to walk between two of them: from Drigas to le Buffre. So, while Robin and Rachel delivered a minibus to the far end of our walk, the group explored Drigas and watched a pair of rock sparrows collecting food.

We set off along a grassy track with a quail calling to our left, as ever, impossible to see. The stone walls are rather tumbled down and an enviable natural rockery of wild flowers: swallow-wort, rockroses, wild currants and gooseberries, burnet rose, rustyback fern, mountain germander. A fine male black-eared wheatear appeared and we watched it for some time on a rock a little distance from the track. The insects were enjoying the sunshine; we added great banded grayling, a small dark ascalaphid and red-winged grasshoppers to our week's record. The grassy track was fragrant with wild thymes and wild lavender bushes grew among the stones. The sharp colour of the Seguer's spurge *Euphorbia seguierana* shone out in the sunshine. An open grassy area on the left revealed large numbers of shrivelled remains of orchids, particularly the cause endemic *Ophrys aymoninii* together with burnt-tip orchids, and pyramidal orchids still at their best. There were large patches of dodder there too, like strings of fine pink vermicelli tangled in the grass. As we dropped down towards le Buffre, the track passes through some open pinewood where we found a large patch of one-flowered wintergreen *Moneses uniflora* looking perfect in the dappled sunlight.

Robin and Rachel went ahead to retrieve the other minibus from Drigas, leaving Bob to guide the last of the group to our rendezvous in le Buffre. They got caught up in an enormous flock of brebis being brought home for the night but eventually we all assembled at the ancient primitively carved stone cross in the middle of the village and boarded the minibuses for the last stop on the Causse Méjean.

Another internationally important reintroduction project is operating on the Causse Méjean. This time, it is the wild Przewalski's horses of Mongolia that are being raised on the steppe-like plateau in a well thought through breeding programme that is allowing significant numbers of horses to be returned to the wild in Mongolia. A huge area of cause is enclosed and the horses run wild, fairly remote from people and forming family groups. When these are established, whole families can then be returned to the wild, but in the meantime they make a beautiful sight quietly moving about and grazing on the grassy slopes.

We drove on to le Villaret, the centre of this project, and had lovely views of several groups of these pretty, sandy-coloured horses with their dark, bristly manes. Then, as we drove on to find a turning place, the first minibus had a wonderful view of another black-eared wheatear. Peter, who had missed the first one, was delighted as it showed itself well for him on the wall on his side of the road.

Time was getting on and we had quite long drive ahead so we went straight on to Meyrueis on the main road. In Meyrueis, as we waited in a traffic queue, a dipper flew up and then back down the river beside us giving many of the group a very good view. Then we set off back over the eastern end of the Causse Noir and into Trèves. As it was a Saturday, the complex

roadworks that had closed the direct road to Nant during the week had come to a stop so we took the beautiful route along the Gorges du Trévezel to rejoin the Dourbie below Cantobre and back via Nant to la Gare aux Ânes and dinner. There was just time for us to freshen up and, drinks in hand we sat down to a meal of luscious Mediterranean *moules*, followed by tender *blanquette de veau*, veal in a fragrant creamy sauce, cheeses and a sort of chocolatey trifle, Sylvain's special version of tiramisu.

Day 7: Sunday 21 June, Nant, Cantobre and the Dourbie

It was bright with scattered clouds but a cool wind so we decided to stay within the garden to see what was about. We had a perfect chance to examine a sleepy violet fritillary and several small heaths on the grass stalks, and a few fresh Adonis blues and a large grizzled skipper were beginning to move about as the day warmed up. The melodious warbler was singing continuously from the bushes at the end of the garden and a bright yellow serin posed nicely in the sunshine on the dead branch at the top of a poplar.

Today was the day to get to know the charming and unspoilt local town of Nant. So, while Robin and Rachel delivered a minibus to the next downstream river crossing, the group explored the town. Although it was a Sunday, some of the shops were open: the bookshop for maps, books and postcards, the grocery for chocolate, the bar in the cool shade of the vaulted market hall for drinks or coffee and the excellent and informative visitor centre in a disused church selling postcards, books, local crafts and produce as well as offering information. The fine Romanesque town church was between services and welcomed visitors who, for a euro-in-the-slot could enjoy a very good CD of organ music while they explored the church.

Robin and Rachel caught up with the group in the visitor centre and we made our way down to the old bridge. We watched crag martins very close, flying up to their nest under one of the arches. Both grey and white wagtails were bobbing on the rocks in the river and flying around catching insects. Our morning walk would take us along the river Dourbie, through rich riverine woodland, downstream towards Cantobre. From the bridge, we followed a well-used track through farmland, with wild gladioli, lizard orchids and birthwort in the hedgerows. We watched a griffon vulture being mobbed by one of a pair of buzzards, assisted by a carrion crow. The group spread out along the track through the wood which climbs over a rocky spur that was rich in butterflies enjoying the shelter and the sunlight: a Spanish gatekeeper, lots of marbled whites, several meadow browns (of the large southern European race *Maniola jurtina hispulla*), cleopatras and also a common white wave moth *Cabera pusaria*. As we went into the riverside woodland a great spotted woodpecker flew by and a nuthatch called from a nearby tree. Some of the woodland plants were quite new for the week: several species of bellflower, broomrapes and bastard balm, seed heads of oxlip, lungwort and hepatica, shiny black berries of spurge laurel, fly honeysuckle with a few flowers still out and pretty, mauve knotted crane's bill.

The track comes to an end in a campsite where we had left the minibus so, while Robin and Rachel were retrieving the other minibus from Nant, the group spread out and explored a sunny hillside beyond the campsite or spent some time scanning the river. When Robin and Rachel returned, Pam had news of a dipper and a grey wagtail by the bridge, and Bob and Peter told us excitedly of a good sighting of a black woodpecker in the wood on the hill.

A kilometre or so further on, a road turns off to follow the Trévezel and crosses the Dourbie at a high bridge below Cantobre. We took our hamper into the field beside the river there and enjoyed another amazing picnic, watching a spotted flycatcher also enjoying its lunch from a tree overhanging the river.

After lunch we made our way, some by minibus, others on foot, the half kilometre or so up to Cantobre (*below*). Cantobre is a tiny medieval village perched strategically, and perilously, on a rocky outcrop at the confluence of the two gorges, the Dourbie and the Trévezel. The village has been well cared for and still has a few inhabitants of many decades' standing. *Cardabelles* are pinned, for good luck, to nearly every doorway. Wildlife is abundant and confiding there, with swifts at their nests in the cliff beside our path, black redstarts singing from the rooftops, lizards scuttling in the dry leaves and the rocks covered with flowers like a natural rock garden. We admired the views along the two gorges, and took the circular path round the village. The delicate Montpellier maple fruits were colouring nicely and shady rocks were covered in polypody ferns and the weird dangling fruits of tower cress. There was another little Romanesque church to see with a Spanish gatekeeper and a male brimstone (the first of the week) visiting the flowers in the garden outside. The walk in the warm afternoon had brought on the need for



refreshment so we repaired to the *buvette* for welcome drinks and ice creams, and enjoyed the company of a female black redstart sitting tight on her nest just above our heads. Some of us decided to walk down to the bridge, and were rewarded with a superb view of a male hen harrier.

An early, quick dinner was required: a delicately dressed green salad with crisp *lardons*, local sausages with the celebrated local potato and cheese dish called *aligot* and a selection of deserts – *chocolat fondant* was the most popular. We were soon on our way back to Cantobre for a rendezvous with Paul Knapp at 8 o'clock. Paul has been the resident naturalist at the local campsite for many years and has made a study of the population of beavers which has recently re-established itself (with the aid of some controlled reintroduction) in the Dourbie. There is a beaver family with territory just below the bridge and we set up our telescopes and waited on a track overlooking the river. Paul gave us some very interesting information about the beavers and words of advice on beaver watching and we scanned the river for signs of movement. Our first reward was a dipper on a dead tree trunk but after a while, prolonged concentric ripples formed suggesting that a beaver was moving under the overhanging branches. Soon we saw him clearly swimming and collecting food, and in the shadows another one was grooming itself. A grey heron flew slowly past with a raucous 'fraank'. In all we had three really good beaver views and went away very content with our sightings, though not before several people had bought signed copies of the new Crossbill Guide to the Cévennes, of which Paul is a co-author.

Day 8: Monday 22 June, South across the Causse du Larzac to Lapanouse and the Roquefort Caves.

Our favourite early walk was along the track opposite leading onto the closest bit of *causse*. There was a completely clear sky and, though the wind had dropped, it was still pleasantly cool. We watched cirl and corn buntings singing and Marie appeared with a bright orange and black beetle *Trichius fasciatus* in her net. The 'usual' butterflies were just waking up, grass stems weighed down by two or three black-veined whites and fritillaries warming up on the flower heads of scabious.

After breakfast we set off across the Causse du Larzac to the west, towards the edge of the *causses*. We drove through l'Hospitalet du Larzac, another in the sequence of Templar and Hospitaller villages dating from the 11th and 12th centuries. Shortly after l'Hospitalet we stopped to watch a roe deer on a nearby hillside, and as we were about to move on, a hoopoe flew across in front of us.

The river Cernon rises near l'Hospitalet du Larzac, flows westwards through the western edge of the Causse du Larzac and then turns north into the Tarn, below Millau. We followed the Cernon valley first through Ste Eulalie de Cernon, one of the Templar commanderies, and then through Lapanouse de Cernon. We crossed the village on a tiny stone bridge and drove up onto the hill to the south of the village. Here we encountered a more or less disused railway, line, (part of the line that used to pass la Gare aux Ânes) and a derelict railway station (very much like the buildings at la Gare aux Ânes).



A blackcap was singing as we arrived at Lapanouse de Cernon. The insects were breathtaking and everybody set off in search of new species: Marie found a brown argus, Val a purple-shot copper, Gill and Julia a southern white admiral and Peter and Elonwy a longhorn beetle *Leptura maculata*. There were spotted fritillaries (left), marbled whites, meadow browns, a mating pair of common blues, three ilex hairstreaks, a Duke of Burgundy, clusters of six-spot and slender Scotch burnets on scabious flowers and a feathered footman moth. A Glanville fritillary landed on the handle of Marie's net and refused to leave it. We heard a subalpine warbler and after some careful stalking, got a good view. Further down the hill, a tree pipit stayed still long enough for several people to get a good view through the telescope.

Many of the orchids, *Ophrys* and *Orchis* spp, for which Lapanouse is renowned were well into the fruiting stage but pyramidal and lizard were wonderful, set off by the feather grass which was opening almost as we watched. We found a just recognisable specimen of one of the Aveyron endemic orchids, *Ophrys aveyronensis*, but sadly, its colour had completely faded. The sermountain was spectacular as ever, and laden with insects; field scabious, bright blue flax, the blue everlasting flower *Catananche* and surprising terracotta and yellow flowers of crocus-leaved salsify *Tragopogon crocifolius* studded the grassland; the sweet-briar and dog roses were in full flower.

We settled down to our last hamper picnic under the shade of the trees by the disused station: a delicious terrine, juicy tomatoes stuffed with salmon, chicory salad with more of Sylvain's excellent dressing, bread, cheese and fresh fruit. Julia went for a wander along the railway line and found the tail of an edible dormouse, all that was left by some predator.

Roquefort production and the brebis sheep which supply the milk from which it is made are vital to the whole culture, economy and ecology of the fragile *causses*. So after lunch we followed a tiny road along the pretty Cernon valley and, at St Rome de Cernon joined the main road leading to Roquefort, the final scheduled destination of the holiday. There are only eight establishments entitled to use the name 'Roquefort' for the distinctive blue cheese and we were booked on a 2 o'clock

tour of the Papillon Caves. We watched films demonstrating the historical and present-day manufacture of the cheese, from management of the *brebis*, production of the *Penicillium* culture that gives the blue veining, preparation and maturing of the cheese, before touring the Caves to see some of the processes in action. At the end of the tour we were invited to taste cheeses and then we were able to buy them to take home in special insulated packs.

The route back from Roquefort took us through a gently undulating version of the *causse* landscape with the harvest now in full swing. Occasional 'raptor alerts' generally turned out to be griffon vultures but one was a cloud of choughs wheeling and circling over a beautiful traditional stone barn. The grassland was silver with *cheveu d'ange* and we saw occasional family groups picking bunches of it for the house. A last visit to la Couvertoirade for one or two holiday memorabilia and been requested, a '20 minute' stop became a little stretched as people returned to the minibuses with bags bulging with pottery and produce. After a brief final stop on the *causse* it was time to go back for a last swim (for some) and a chance to pack, before we met to review our records for the week and enjoy the last meal at la Gare aux Ânes.

Sylvain had kindly invited us all to have an aperitif with him and Nicolas before dinner which, weather permitting, was to be a barbecue. So we all gathered in the evening sunshine while the delicious smells of the barbecue wafted over to us. We were joined by Ian, a friend of Peter's, and the two of them were intending to extend their holiday with a few days cycling in the area. When all was ready, we went indoors for dinner. The table was decorated with a vase of the lovely blue everlasting flower, *catananche*. We began our meal with smoked salmon which was followed by perfectly cooked steaks and chops and after the cheese, Sylvain wheeled in a magnificent strawberry gâteau.

Highlights

As is customary at the end of a Honeyguide Holiday, and especially as this was the first year of Honeyguide Holidays in the Cévennes, we were very keen to hear from everybody which moments they would remember as highlights of the week.

Angela

The Causse Méjean day, especially the rich variety of flowers; being inside the *buissière*, feeling the link with the past and imagining people inside it then; the views of short-toed eagles – three in one day.

Bob

The black-eared wheatear and hen harrier; angel's hair grass; Lapanouse with its profusion of butterflies; Jassenove – 'the best non-Pam-cooked meal I've ever eaten'.

Elonwy

The black-eared wheatear; short-toed eagle; cardabelle in all its stages; Aven Armand; a lovely group of people and a wonderful place to stay.

Geoff

The 'tucker': the food at la Gare aux Ânes; the firecrest; Mont Aigoual; the birds, especially the melodious warbler, short-toed eagle and tree pipit.

Gill

The angry little firecrest; blue aphyllanthes; Aven Armand.

Ian (Peter's friend)

The clouds of swifts carving through the air.

Julia

The Bonelli's warbler – going off and seeing it well; wonderful pyramidal orchids everywhere like weeds; the beavers; a lovely group of people.

Marie

Griffon vultures – seeing so many so well; angel's hair grass – how it changed the colour of the countryside; Lapanouse with its old station and the quantities of butterflies; all the good food.

Pam

Every day was lovely and peaceful; crested tits; red helleborine; Aven Armand; staying at la Gare aux Ânes.

Peter

The scenery – the contrast between the *causses* and the valleys - especially at the radio mast viewpoint – rolling countryside then a sheer cliff; the flowers and butterflies (as a birder); just two birds especially: the subalpine warbler and the black-eared wheatear.

Sandy

The first day with the scented thyme as soon as we got out of the van; Lapanouse with all the 'bugs and beasts'.

Val

The contrast between the *causses* and gorges; the way that the villages grow out of the ground; the firecrest; all the butterflies; blue flax; the Millau viaduct.

Rachel

The short-toed eagle on the way to Mont Aigoual; the pinks by the river at Laupies; introducing the secret Cévennes to Honeyguiders.

Robin

The superb views of short-toed eagles; all the blue flowers – aphyllanthes, flax, catananche; introducing old and new friends to the Cévennes.

Day 9: Tuesday 23 June, The Cirque de Navacelles and the Mediterranean

The weather was perfect again and the serins and linnets were serenading us as we loaded the minibuses and prepared to leave la Gare aux Ânes. Our flight from Montpellier was not until the evening so we had decided to make good use of the last day. Sylvain and Nicolas, and the dogs Pongo and Prune, and Marie and Sandy who were continuing their tour of southern France and Peter and Ian setting off on their bicycles, all waved us off and we headed east towards Alzon, and then up onto a 'new' cause, the Causse de Blandas. We came to a fairly sudden stop when, rounding a corner, a short-toed eagle took off from a branch overhanging the road immediately in front of Rachel's minibus. We had amazing views as it circled round and showed its pale underside. There were some new butterflies about too: great banded grayling, rock grayling, great sooty satyr and our old friend, cleopatra.

We stopped next at the viewpoint on the lip of the Cirque de Navacelles, a magnificent landform created from a deeply incised meander in the valley of the Vis where, in addition, an oxbow lake has formed and silted up, leaving the only genuinely fertile land for many, many miles. We tore some members of the group away from a couple of beautiful classic sports cars in the car park and followed the steep road down to the village and the river Vis at the bottom of the cirque. Along by the river there was an amazing crowd of butterflies all salting together by the bank: a lesser purple emperor, a swallowtail and about a dozen scarce swallowtails (*right*), several small whites, small skippers, common blues, green-underside blues, Adonis blues and long-tailed blues. They were so intent on gathering minerals from the damp patches that we could approach close enough for some good photographs and they appealed to small holiday-makers too, who enjoyed running in and making the butterflies scatter like confetti. All the low vegetation beside the river was dotted with jewel-like blue chafer beetles *Hoplia caerulea*. We walked along the riverside path and crossed the old bridge, enjoying the view and admiring a tree laden with ripe apricots, glowing in the sunshine. There were fishermen after the trout that we could see lurking among the stones and swimming vigorously just to stay still in the fast-moving water. We sat under the trees and ate our picnic lunch and then we trooped off to the café for coffee and ice creams before heading southwards for the last leg of the journey to Montpellier.



We drove up out of the Cirque at the southern end and then carried on southwards, leaving the cause behind and joining the A75 near Lodève. From there, the journey took about an hour, but not without the inevitable grim outskirts of Montpellier. We arrived at the airport in good time and then drove a little way along the coast to the Étang de Mauguio. It is hard to imagine a greater contrast with the landscape with which we had become so familiar. We parked the minibuses and stepped out into true Mediterranean heat. Scuttling from one patch of shade to the next we made our way along the path beside the étang to the shade of a hut with a large veranda and we scanned the water. There were about thirty flamingos feeding 100 yards or so away and a pair of avocets scuttled under the bank, vigorously sweeping for invertebrates just below the water surface. Common terns and a little tern flew past and dived for food, and flocks of black-headed gulls and yellow-legged gulls flew around us or stood about on a mud bank in front of us. A puzzling collection of rather static ducks turned out to be decoys but there were real ducks there in the form of three shelducks. Scanning the shore of the étang yielded oystercatchers, a few little egrets and a cattle egret, a redshank and a pair of black-winged stilts with a baby, almost too short in the leg for the water. A fan-tailed warbler called from over the reeds behind us and we watched a distant marsh harrier. We had been puzzling over a couple of gulls mixed in with the snoozing black headed gulls, with their heads under their wings and, just before we had to leave, at last they woke up and, pleasingly, revealed themselves as slender-billed gulls.

From this delightful spot it was only fifteen minutes' drive to Montpellier airport, where we returned the minibuses and enjoyed a good dinner at the airport restaurant before flying home, with a flock of flamingos beside the runway as the plane took off.

Species Lists week 2

Birds	Latin Name	Notes
Cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	One at Étang de Mauguio
Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	A few at Étang de Mauguio
Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	One over the Dourbie at Cantobre and one at Étang de Mauguio
Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	Ca thirty at Étang de Mauguio
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Three at Étang de Mauguio
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	A pair on the Jonte at le Rozier and one on the Dourbie
Griffon vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Several seen every day throughout the region. Several nests at le Truel
Black vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	An adult overhead and a young bird on the nest at le Truel
Short-toed eagle	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Good views almost every day throughout the region
Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	Two seen well on the Causse Méjean
Black kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Seven between Rodez and Sévérac le Château; one on the Causse Noir
Marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	One at Étang de Mauguio
Hen harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	An adult male seen well at Cantobre
Montagu's harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	An adult male seen well near la Couvertoirade
Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	A few seen every day
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	A few seen every day
Red-legged partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	Occasional individuals on the Causse du Larzac and Causse Méjean
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	A few heard almost every day throughout the region
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	A few at Étang de Mauguio
Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	A small flock at Étang de Mauguio
Black-winged stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	A pair with a chick at Étang de Mauguio
Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	One on the Dourbie near Nant
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	One at Étang de Mauguio
Black-headed gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Several at Étang de Mauguio
Slender-billed gull	<i>Larus genei</i>	Two at Étang de Mauguio
Yellow-legged gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	A few at Étang de Mauguio
Little tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	One at Étang de Mauguio
Common tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	A few at Étang de Mauguio
Rock dove/feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Seen occasionally in towns and villages
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Occasional in wooded areas
Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Frequently seen in villages
Turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Seen or heard almost daily
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Seen or heard almost daily
Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	A few heard at Montredon; one seen at la Gare aux Ânes
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Several seen every day
Alpine swift	<i>Apus melba</i>	A small flock in the Gorges de la Jonte
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Seen or heard on most days
Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	Three on the Causse du Larzac near la Couvertoirade
Black woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	One seen near Cantobre
Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Occasional sightings in wooded areas
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Several seen every day
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	Several seen every day
Crag martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	Common in gorges and occasionally in villages
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Several seen every day
House martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	Several seen every day
Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Several singing males on Mont Aigoual
Tree pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Singing males on the Causse du Larzac and near Lapanouse
White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	Commonly seen by rivers and in villages
Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Here and there on the Dourbie, at the summit of Mont Aigoual and at the Cirque de Navacelles
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Seen or heard on most days
Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	One on the Dourbie at Nant; one at Meyrueis
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Seen twice on the Causse du Larzac
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	One or two heard or seen on most days
Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	Abundant and ubiquitous, though seldom seen
Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	A few in every town and village
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	One in the Dourbie valley near Nant
Northern wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	A few on the Causse Méjean and a female collecting food on Mont Aigoual
Black-eared wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	Two on the Causse Méjean

Song thrush
Mistle thrush
Blackbird
Blackcap
Whitethroat
Subalpine warbler

Turdus philomelos
Turdus viscivorus
Turdus merula
Sylvia atricapilla
Sylvia communis
Sylvia cantillans

Fan-tailed warbler
Melodious warbler
Bonelli's warbler
Chiffchaff
Goldcrest
Firecrest
Spotted flycatcher
Great tit
Coal tit
Blue tit
Crested tit
Nuthatch
Red-backed shrike
Magpie

Cisticola juncidis
Hippolais polyglotta
Phylloscopus bonelli
Phylloscopus collybita
Regulus regulus
Regulus ignicapillus
Muscicapa striata
Parus major
Parus ater
Parus caeruleus
Parus cristatus
Sitta europaea
Lanius collurio
Pica pica

Jay
Jackdaw
Red-billed chough
Carrion crow
Raven
Starling
House sparrow
Rock sparrow
Chaffinch
Linnet
Goldfinch
Greenfinch
Serin
Crossbill
Yellowhammer
Cirl bunting
Corn bunting

Garrulus glandarius
Corvus monedula
Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax
Corvus corone corone
Corvus corax
Sturnus vulgaris
Passer domesticus
Petronia petronia
Fringilla coelebs
Carduelis cannabina
Carduelis carduelis
Carduelis chloris
Serinus serinus
Loxia curvirostra
Emberiza citrinella
Emberiza cirrus
Miliaria calandra

One on the Causse de Blandas
Occasional ones and twos on the causses
Several seen every day
Abundant and widespread in causses and gorges
Seen almost daily on causses
One heard on the Causse du Larzac above les Cuns; one glimpsed near la Couvertorade and one seen well near Lapanouse
One in song-flight at Étang de Mauguio
Two holding territory near la Gare aux Ânes; occasional elsewhere
Common and widespread
A few seen or heard every day
One near Nant; one heard on Mont Aigoual
One seen well near les Cuns; occasionally heard elsewhere
One near Cantobre
A few seen every day
Individuals on the Causse du Larzac and near Mont Aigoual
Occasional individuals in causses and gorges
Small numbers on the Causse Noir and near Lapanouse de Cernon
One in Nant and one beside the Dourbie near Cantobre
A few seen every day on the causses
Several seen every day
A few seen every day
Common in gorges and villages
Several flocks seen in gorges and causses
Common and widespread
Occasional individuals in causses and gorges
Small numbers in towns and villages
Small numbers in towns and villages
A pair in Drigas on the Causse Méjean
Common and widespread
Small flocks seen every day
Common and widespread
Common and widespread
Seen every day at la Gare aux Ânes and elsewhere near villages
A pair on the Causse Noir
Seen on most days on causses
A few seen almost daily on the causses
Several seen every day on the causses

95 species

Mammals

Hedgehog
Mole
Rabbit
Hare
Edible dormouse
Pine Marten
Wild boar
Przewalski's horse
Roe deer

Butterflies

Swallowtail
Scarce swallowtail
Black-veined white
Large white
Small white
Clouded yellow
Pale clouded yellow
Brimstone

Reptiles

Common wall lizard
Viviparous lizard
Green lizard

Amphibians

Common Toad
Midwife toad

Fish

Brown trout

Moths

Adela reaumurella
6-spot burnet
Slender Scotch burnet
Burnet *Zygaena fausta*
Forester
Hummingbird hawkmoth
Pine processionary
Clouded buff

Butterflies (cont'd)

Cleopatra
 Ilex hairstreak
 Green hairstreak
 Purple-shot copper
 Long-tailed blue
 Baton blue
 Silver-studded blue
 Brown argus
 Adonis blue
 Common blue
 Duke of Burgundy
 Lesser purple emperor
 Southern white admiral
 Large tortoiseshell
 Peacock
 Red admiral
 Painted lady
 Small tortoiseshell
 Comma
 Violet (Weaver's) fritillary
 Glanville fritillary
 Knapweed fritillary
 Spotted fritillary
 Meadow fritillary
 Marbled white
 Rock grayling
 Great sooty satyr
 Great banded grayling
 Meadow brown
 Spanish gatekeeper
 Small heath
 Pearly heath
 Speckled wood
 Wall brown
 Grizzled skipper
 Large grizzled skipper
 Small skipper

45 species**Moths (cont'd)**

Silver Y
 Chimney sweeper
 Cabbage
 Cream-spot tiger
 Feathered footman
 Common white wave

Other insects

Beautiful demoiselle
 Southern hawker
 Broad-bodied chaser
 Red-winged grasshopper
 Stick insect *Bacillus rossius*
 Ascalaphid *Libelloides coccajus*
 Ichneumon fly
 Digger wasp *Ammophila sp*
 Tawny mining bee
 Dung beetle
 Chafer *Hoplia caerulea*
 Bee beetle
 Longhorn beetle *Leptura maculata*

Other invertebrates

Crab spider *Misumenia vatia*
 Harvestman
 Roman snail

Plants of the Cévennes and Grands Causses: June 2009

This is a record of the species noted during two Honeyguide Holidays, June 5th – 13th and June 15th – 23rd 2009. It largely covers species seen in flower, excludes many grasses and similar species and is by no means comprehensive. Brief distribution notes are included and abundance is recorded using the 'dafor' scale:

d: = dominant
 a: = abundant
 f: = frequent
 o: = occasional
 r: = rare

l:=local/locally
 ld:=locally dominant
 la:=locally abundant
 lf:=locally frequent
 no prefix indicates a single locality

PTERIDOPHYTES: Horsetails, Clubmosses and Ferns***Aspleniaceae*: Spleenwort Family**

Asplenium ruta-muraria
Asplenium trichomanes
Ceterach officinarum

Wall Rue
 Maidenhair Spleenwort
 Rustyback Fern

f: on walls especially where sheltered and damp
 f: on walls especially where sheltered and damp
 f: on walls, often where dry and exposed

***Dennstaedtiaceae*: Bracken**

Pteridium aquilinum

Bracken

f: in humid places on schistic, acid soils

***Polypodiaceae*: Polypodies**

Polypodium vulgare

Common Polypody

f: on shady rocks; la: in Cantobre

CONIFERS

Cupressaceae: Cypresses and Junipers

<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Common Juniper	f: component of causse scrub
<i>Juniperus phoenicea</i>	Phoenician Juniper	o: component of causse scrub

Pinaceae: Pines, Spruces, Firs and Larches

<i>Picea abies</i>	Spruce	ld: woodland below summit of M Aigoual
<i>Pinus nigra</i>	Austrian, Black or Corsican Pine	o – ld: in woodland on Causse Noir
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Scots Pine	f: widespread on causses

Taxaceae: Yew

<i>Taxus baccata</i>	Yew	r: usually near habitation and often planted
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FLOWERING PLANTS

DICOTYLEDONS

Aceraceae: Maples

<i>Acer monspessulanum</i>	Montpellier Maple	f: widespread in scrub and deciduous woodland on limestone
<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field Maple	o: in deciduous woods; riverside woodland between Nant and Cantobre
<i>Acer opalus</i>	Italian Maple	In open woodland below viewpoint above le Rozier
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore	r: in deciduous woods

Anacardiaceae: Pistacio Family

<i>Cotinus coggygria</i>	Smoke-tree	lf: in limestone scrub in sheltered gorges
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Apiaceae (Umbelliferae): Umbellifers

<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley	r: riverside grassland beside Dourbie at Laupies
<i>Athamanta cretensis</i>	Cretan Athamanta	r: among rocks at Vulture Information Centre, Gorges de la Jonte
<i>Eryngium campestre</i>	Field Eryngo	f: in dry causse grassland
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i> ssp <i>sibiricum</i>	Hogweed (greenish-flowered form)	o: in damp roadside ditches; beside Dourbie at Laupies
<i>Laserpitium gallicum</i>	French Sermountain	o: on rocky hillsides and scree
<i>Laserpitium siler</i>	Common Sermountain	f: among rocks and in light woodland
<i>Meum athamanticum</i>	Spignel	o: in alpine grassland on summit of M Aigoual
<i>Trinia glauca</i>	Honewort	o: in dry stony causse grassland

Araliaceae: Ivy Family

<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy	f: on rocks, trees and old walls especially in shade
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Aristolochiaceae: Birthwort Family

<i>Aristolochia clematitis</i>	Birthwort	o: on waysides and in woodland in Dourbie valley near Nant
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Asclepiadaceae: Milkweeds

<i>Vincetoxicum hirundinaria</i>	Swallow-wort	f: among rocks in grassy places and roadsides
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Asteraceae (Compositae): Composites

<i>Achillea odorata</i>	Cream-flowered Sneezewort	la: on hilltop opposite la Gare aux Ânes
<i>Antennaria dioica</i>	Mountain Everlasting	f: in alpine grassland on summit of M Aigoual
<i>Arctium minus</i>	Burdock	r: in ditches in farmland; by farm at la Gare aux Ânes
* <i>Aster alpinus cebennensis</i>	Alpine Aster	f: in rocky causse grassland, among rocks and scree
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy	f: in grazed pasture at Jassenove
<i>Carduncellus mitissimus</i>	Carduncellus	f: in rocky causse grassland
<i>Carduus nutans</i>	Musk Thistle	o: in pasture on Causse Méjean
<i>Carlina acanthifolia</i>	Cardabelle, Acanthus-leaved Carline Thistle	f: in rocky causse grassland
<i>Catananche caerulea</i>	Blue Catananche	f: in rocky causse grassland
<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	Cornflower	o: comfield weed
* <i>Centaurea pectinata</i> ssp <i>supina</i>	Crested Knapweed	o: on dry sandy limestone soils and scree
<i>Doronicum austriacum</i>	Austrian Leopard's-bane	Beside Dourbie at Laupies
<i>Helichrysum stoechas</i>	Everlasting Flower	f: on dolomitic rocks and scree
<i>Hieracium alpinum</i>	Alpine Hawkweed	o: in alpine grassland on summit of M Aigoual
<i>Hieracium pilosella</i>	Mouse-ear Hawkweed	o: in causse grassland
<i>Inula montana</i>	Mountain Fleabane	o: in causse grassland
<i>Lactuca perennis</i>	Mountain Lettuce	o: in causse grassland
<i>Leucanthemum graminifolium</i>	Grass-leaved Ox-eye (or Dog) Daisy	r: in causse grassland
<i>Leuzia conferta</i>	Leuzia	r: in causse grassland
<i>Phagnalon sordidum</i>	Phagnalon	la: in crevices on rock faces in Cantobre and elsewhere
<i>Scorzonera hirsuta</i>	Hairy Viper's-grass	o: in causse grassland
<i>Tragopogon crocifolius</i>	Crocus-leaved Salsify	r: in causse grassland; Lapanouse
<i>Tragopogon pratensis</i>	Goat's-beard	o: on roadsides and in pasture
<i>Tussilago farfara</i>	Coltsfoot	Roadside in Laupies
<i>Urospermum dalechampii</i>	Urospermum	o: pasture near Hûres on Causse Méjean
<i>Xeranthemum inapertum</i>	Xeranthemum	o: dry, sandy causse grassland; la: on hilltop near la Gare aux

		Ânes
Betulaceae: Birches, Alders, Hazels and Hornbeams		
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	Alder	f: on riversides and in damp woodland
<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	Hornbeam	f: in deciduous woodland on limestone
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel	f: in deciduous woodland on limestone
Boraginaceae: Borage Family		
<i>Echium vulgare</i>	Viper's Bugloss	o: on dry limestone hillsides and in cause grassland
<i>Lithospermum arvense</i>	Corn Gromwell	r: waysides; track between wood and Cantobre campsite
<i>Onosma fastigiatum</i>	Golden-drop	o: in cause grassland; near radio mast Causse du Larzac
<i>*Pulmonaria longifolia ssp cevenensis</i>	Cevennes Lungwort	o: in riverside woodland and grassland
Brassicaceae (Cruciferae): Crucifers		
<i>Arabis turrita</i>	Towercress	f: on rocky cliffs especially in villages
Buxaceae: Box		
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	Box	a-ld: component of cause scrub; <i>buisnière</i> on Causse du Larzac
Campanulaceae: Bellflower Family		
<i>Campanula persicifolia</i>	Peach-leaved Bellflower	o: on roadsides and in open woodland
<i>Campanula rapunculus</i>	Rampion Bellflower	f: on roadsides and uncultivated ground
<i>Campanula trachelium</i>	Nettle-leaved Bellflower	o: in riverside woodland
<i>Legousia hybrida</i>	Small Venus' Looking Glass	Roadside outside la Gare aux Ânes
<i>Legousia speculum-veneris</i>	Venus' Looking-glass	f: weed of arable fields on light soils
Caprifoliaceae: Honeysuckle Family		
<i>Lonicera etrusca</i>	Etruscan Honeysuckle	a: widespread on causses
<i>Lonicera xylosteum</i>	Fly Honeysuckle	o: in riverside woodland between Nant and Cantobre
<i>Viburnum lantana</i>	Wayfaring Tree	f: in riverside woodland between Nant and Cantobre; la: on causses
Caryophyllaceae: Chickweeds, Pinks and Campions		
<i>Agrostemma githago</i>	Corn-cockle	In arable field near Drigas on Causse Méjean
<i>Arenaria montana</i>	Mountain Sandwort	Rocks beside Dourbie at Laupies
<i>Cerastium arvense</i>	Field Mouse-ear	Meadow in Dourbie Valley above Laupies
<i>Cerastium tomentosum</i>	Snow in Summer	la: around rocks and buildings at summit of M Aigoual
<i>Dianthus deltoides</i>	Maiden Pink	la: in meadows in Dourbie Valley Laupies and above
<i>Dianthus graniticus</i>	Granite Pink	Causse grassland near le Buffre, Causse Méjean
<i>Petrorhagia prolifera</i>	Proliferous Pink	f: scattered on limestone grassland throughout
<i>Saponaria ocymoides</i>	Rock Soapwort	o: on rocks and scree
<i>Silene conica</i>	Sand Catchfly	o: on sandy calcareous soils
<i>Silene italica</i>	Italian Catchfly	Meadow in Dourbie Valley above Laupies
<i>Silene nutans</i>	Nottingham Catchfly	o: on sunny banks on heavier soils
<i>Silene otites</i>	Spanish Catchfly	o: in cause grassland at Jassenove; Causse Méjean near Hûres
<i>Silene vulgaris</i>	Bladder campion	Meadow beside Dourbie at Laupies
<i>Stellaria holostea</i>	Greater Stitchwort	Riverside grassland beside Dourbie at Laupies
Celastraceae: Spindles		
<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>	Spindle	o: in hedges and deciduous woodland understorey on limestone
Cistaceae: Cistuses and Rockroses		
<i>Cistus laurifolius</i>	Laurel-leaved Cistus	f: in woodland understorey on acid soils
<i>Fumana ericoides</i>	Heath Fumana	o: in rocky cause grassland
<i>Helianthemum appeninum</i>	White Rockrose	a: in cause grassland throughout
<i>Helianthemum canum</i>	Hoary Rockrose	f: in cause grassland throughout
<i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>	Yellow Rockrose	a: in cause grassland throughout
Clusiaceae (Hypericaceae): St John's-words		
<i>Hypericum androsaemum</i>	Tutsan	Cantobre, probable garden escape
<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	Common St John's-wort	o: in rough grassland between wood and Cantobre campsite
Convolvulaceae: Bindweeds		
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field Bindweed	o: on roadsides on Causse du Larzac; field margins on Causse Méjean
<i>Convolvulus cantabrica</i>	Pink Bindweed	la: on rocky roadside cliffs in Cernon valley
Cornaceae: Dogwoods		
<i>Cornus mas</i>	Cornelian Cherry	f: in scrub and woodland on limestone
<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	Dogwood	a: in scrub and woodland on limestone
Crassulaceae: Stonecrop Family		

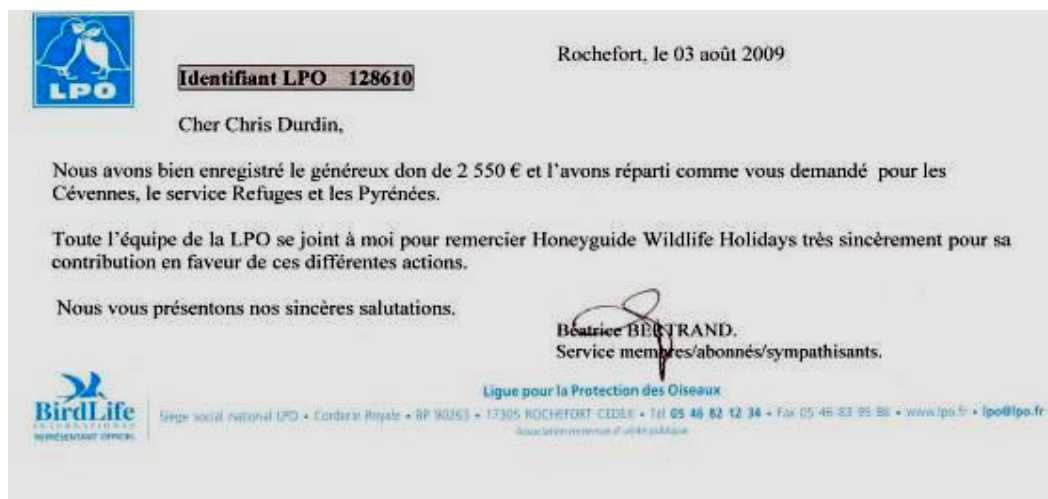
<i>Sedum acre</i>	Biting Stonecrop	a: on roofs, rocks and walls
<i>Sedum album</i>	White Stonecrop	f: on roofs, rocks and walls
<i>Sedum dasyphyllum</i>	Thick-leaved Stonecrop	f: on roofs, rocks and walls
<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	Navelwort	f: on rocks and old walls
Cuscutaceae: Dodder Family		
<i>Cuscuta spp</i>	Dodders	o: on grasses at la Pezade on Causse du Larzac; on legumes near Hûres on Causse Méjean
Dipsacaceae: Scabious Family		
<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	Teasel	Along track onto causse from la Gare aux Ânes
<i>Knautia arvensis</i>	Field Scabious	o: on waysides and grassy banks
<i>Knautia dipsacifolia</i>	Wood Scabious	f: on waysides and in damp grassland
<i>Phyteuma hemisphericum</i>	Globe-headed Rampion	r: in alpine grassland on summit of M Aigoual
<i>Phyteuma orbiculare</i>	Round-headed Rampion	o: in grassland near Hûres on Causse Méjean
<i>Phyteuma spicatum</i>	Spiked rampion	Riverside grassland beside Dourbie at Laupies
<i>Scabiosa columbaria</i>	Small Scabious	o: in rocky grassland in Cantobre
Ericaceae: Heath		
<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	Strawberry Tree	o: in woodland on acid soils
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	Bearberry	la: on rocks under pines on Causse Noir
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Heather	ld: on open hillsides on acid soils M Aigoual
<i>Erica arborea</i>	Tree Heath	o: in woodland on acid soils
<i>Erica cinerea</i>	Bell Heather	la: on open hillsides on acid soils M Aigoual
<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>	Bilberry	f: in alpine grassland on summit of M Aigoual
Euphorbiaceae: Spurge Family		
<i>Euphorbia amygdaloides</i>	Wood Spurge	f: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
<i>Euphorbia characias</i>	Mediterranean Spurge	Cantobre, probable garden escape
<i>Euphorbia cyparissias</i>	Cypress Spurge	o: in limestone grassland Causse du Larzac
<i>Euphorbia seguierana</i>	Seguier's Spurge	f: on calcareous, free-draining soils on causses
<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>	Dog's Mercury	o: in damp woodland edges, Dourbie valley; damp grassland at la Pezade
Fabaceae (Leguminosae): Pea Family, Legumes		
<i>Anthyllis montana</i>	Mountain Kidney-vetch	a: widespread in causses grassland
<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>	Common Kidney-vetch	a: widespread in causses grassland
<i>Astragalus monspessulanus</i>	Montpellier Milk-vetch	f: widespread in causses grassland
<i>Chamaecytisus hirsutus</i>	Hairy Broom	f: widespread in causses grassland
<i>Colutea arborescens</i>	Bladder Senna	By Pine Telephone Mast
<i>Coronilla emerus</i>	Scorpion Vetch or False Senna	f: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
<i>Coronilla minima</i>	Dwarf Scorpion-vetch	o: in stony causse grassland
<i>Cytisus purgans</i> (=C. oromediterraneus)	Pyrenean or Purging Broom	ld: on free-draining acid soils
<i>Dorycnium pentaphyllum</i>	Five-leaved Dorycnium, Five-fingered False Fenugreek	f: on rocky slopes
<i>Hippocrepis glauca</i>	Glaucous Horse-shoe Vetch	o: in causse grassland; Causse du Larzac below Pine mast
<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	Meadow Vetchling	R: riverside grassland beside Dourbie at Laupies
<i>Lathyrus sylvestris</i>	Everlasting Pea	o: in waysides
<i>Onobrychis supina</i>	Sainfoin	f: in grassland on clayey/calcareous soils
<i>Spartium junceum</i>	Spanish Broom	f: on embankments and in woodland edges
<i>Tetragonolobus maritimus</i>	Dragon's Teeth	o: in causse grassland; Causse du Larzac below Pine mast
<i>Trifolium alpinum</i>	Alpine Clover	f: in alpine grassland on summit of M Aigoual
<i>Trifolium rubens</i>	Red Trefoil	o: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
<i>Trifolium stellatum</i>	Starry Clover	o: stony grassland on Causse Méjean near le Bufre
<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Tufted Vetch	la: on railway line at la Gare aux Ânes
<i>Vicia onobrychoides</i>	False Sainfoin	o: in hedgerows on causses
<i>Vicia tenuifolia</i>	Fine-leaved Vetch	o: on banks and old walls on Causse Méjean
Fagaceae: Oaks, Beech and Chestnut		
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	Sweet Chestnut	ld: in woodland on acid soils on schist
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech	a: widespread in damp woodland
<i>Quercus petraea</i>	Sessile Oak	f: in woodland on heavier soils
<i>Quercus pubescens</i>	Downy Oak	a: in deciduous woodland on calcareous soils
Gentianaceae: Gentian Family		
<i>Blackstonia petiolata</i>	Yellow-wort	Causse du Larzac near radio mast above Nant
<i>Gentiana lutea</i>	Yellow Gentian	la: in meadow below summit of M Aigoual
Geraniaceae: Crane's-bills and Stork's-bills		
<i>Geranium nodosum</i>	Knotted Crane's-bill	o: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
<i>Geranium pratense</i>	Meadow Crane's-bill	Riverside grassland beside Dourbie at Laupies
<i>Geranium purpureum</i>	Little-Robin	On damp rocks beside Dourbie at Laupies

<i>Geranium pyrenaicum</i>	Hedgerow Crane's-bill	Riverside grassland beside Dourbie at Laupies
<i>Geranium sanguineum</i>	Bloody Crane's-bill	o: widespread in causses grassland
Globulariaceae: Globularias		
<i>Globularia punctata</i>	Common Globularia	o: in cause grassland throughout
Grossulariaceae: Currant Family		
<i>Ribes alpinum</i>	Mountain Currant	o: in old walls near le Buffre on Causse Méjean
<i>Ribes uva-crispa</i>	Gooseberry	o: in old walls near le Buffre on Causse Méjean
Lamiaceae (Labiatae): Deadnettle Family, Labiates		
<i>Ajuga genevensis</i>	Blue Bugle	o: in dry grassland and open woodland
<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	Common Bugle	f: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
<i>Clinopodium vulgare</i>	Wild Basil	On dry, rocky path in Dourbie valley near Nant
<i>Lamium maculatum</i>	Spotted Dead-nettle	r: riverside grassland beside Dourbie at Laupies
<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	Common Lavender	On dry, rocky path near le Buffre, Causse Mejean
<i>Melittis melissophyllum</i>	Bastard Balm	f: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
<i>Mentha suaveolens</i>	Apple Mint	On dry, rocky path in Dourbie valley near Nant
<i>Origanum vulgare</i>	Wild Marjoram	On dry, rocky path in Dourbie valley near Nant
<i>Phlomis purpurea</i>	Purple Jerusalem-sage	Near le Buffre, Causse Mejean
<i>Prunella grandiflora</i>	Large-flowered Self-heal	In grassland at Lapanouse
<i>Salvia pratensis</i>	Meadow Clary	f: in dry moderately fertile grassland
<i>Sideritis hyssopifolia</i>	Sideritis, Hyssop-leaved Ironwort	o: among limestone rocks
<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	Hedge Woundwort	o: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
<i>Teucrium aureum</i>	Golden Feltly Germander	f: in cause grassland throughout
<i>Teucrium rouyanum</i>	Rouyan's Feltly Germander	o: widespread in causses grassland
<i>*Thymus nitens cebennensis</i>	Cevennes Thyme	r: on schistic rocks below M Aigoual
<i>Thymus pulegioides</i>	Larger Wild Thyme	o: widespread in causses grassland
<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>	Common Thyme	a: widespread in causses grassland throughout
Linaceae: Flaxes		
<i>Linum bienne</i>	Flax	o: on rocky hillsides
<i>Linum campanulatum</i>	Yellow Flax	f: widespread among rocks and in grassland on calcareous soils
<i>Linum narbonense</i>	Beautiful Flax	In grassland at Lapanouse
<i>Linum suffruticosum</i>	White Flax, Pyrenean Flax	f: widespread among rocks and in grassland on calcareous soils
Malvaceae: Mallows		
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	Common Mallow	o: on disturbed ground
Oleaceae: Olive Family		
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Common Ash	f: widespread component of deciduous woodland on cause
<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	Privet	f: in damp woodland understorey
<i>Phillyrea media</i>	Mock Privet	o: on rocky hillsides in the gorges
Onagraceae: Willowherb Family		
<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Rosebay Willowherb	o: on disturbed ground; in railway cutting at Gare aux Ânes
Orobanchaceae: Orobanches		
<i>Orobanche spp</i>	Broomrapes	o: in woodland and grassland
Papaveraceae: Poppy Family		
<i>Chelidonium majus</i>	Greater celandine	o: on pathside in Cantobre
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Common Poppy	a: on waysides and in arable fields
Plantaginaceae: Plantains		
<i>Plantago holosteum</i>	Grass-leaved Plantain	o: in alpine grassland on summit of M Aigoual
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain	f: in fertile grasslands and waysides
<i>Plantago media</i>	Hoary Plantain	f: in calcareous grassland throughout
<i>Plantago sempervirens</i>	Shrubby Plantain	o: on rocky hillsides
Plumbaginaceae: Plumbago, Sea Lavender and Thrifts		
<i>*Armeria girardii</i>	Gerard's Thrift	la: on Causse du Larzac near la Couvertoirade and at Jassenove; generally rare
<i>Armeria plantaginea</i>	Plantain Thrift	la: on sandy roadsides near Laupies
Polygalaceae: Milkworts		
<i>Polygala calcarea</i>	Chalk Milkwort	Among rocks near la Couvertoirade
Polygonaceae: Dock Family		
<i>Persicaria bistorta</i>	Bistort	la: in damp meadows below summit of M Aigoual; in riverside grassland beside Dourbie at Laupies
Primulaceae: Primrose Family		

<i>Primula elatior</i>	Oxlip	o: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
Pyrolaceae: Wintergreens		
<i>Moneses uniflora</i>	One-flowered Wintergreen	On the edge of a pine wood near le Buffre, Causse Méjean
<i>Orthilia secunda</i>	Nodding Wintergreen	Under pines, St Jean des Balmes, Causse Noir
<i>Pyrola chlorantha</i>	Green Wintergreen	Under pines, St Jean des Balmes, Causse Noir
Ranunculaceae: Buttercup Family		
<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>	Wood Anemone	o: in alpine grassland on summit of M Aigoual
<i>Clematis vitalba</i>	Traveller's Joy, Old Man's Beard	f: woodland and hedgerows on calcareous soils
<i>Consolida ajacis</i>	Common Larkspur	In arable field near Drigas on Causse Méjean
<i>Helleborus foetidus</i>	Stinking Hellebore	o: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre; among rocks on Causse Méjean
<i>Helleborus viridis</i>	Green Hellebore	r: among rocks near Hûres on Causse Méjean
<i>Hepatica nobilis</i>	Hepatica, Liverleaf	o: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
<i>Pulsatilla vulgaris</i>	Pasque flower	o: widespread in causses grassland
<i>Ranunculus aconitifolius</i>	Aconite-leaved Buttercup	Beside bridge over the Dourbie at Laupies
<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>	Bulbous Buttercup	f: in grazed grassland at Jassenove
<i>Ranunculus gramineus</i>	Grass-leaved Buttercup	o: widespread in causses grassland
Resedaceae: Mignonettes		
<i>Reseda lutea</i>	Wild Mignonette	o: among rocks and in grassland on calcareous soils
Rhamnaceae: Buckthorns		
<i>Rhamnus alaternus</i>	Mediterranean Buckthorn	f: component of causse scrub
<i>Rhamnus catharticus</i>	Purging Buckthorn	f: in hedgerows and in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
Rosaceae: Rose Family		
<i>Alchemilla alpina</i>	Alpine Lady's-mantle	ld: in alpine grassland on summit of M Aigoual
<i>Amelanchier ovalis</i>	Snowy Mespilus	f: component of causse scrub
<i>Filipendula vulgaris</i>	Dropwort	o: in grassland on deeper soils near radio mast Causse du Larzac
<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	Wild Strawberry	f: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn	f: component of causse scrub; hedges; along railway line at la Gare aux Ânes
<i>Rosa arvensis</i>	Field Rose	Beside Dourbie near Laupies
<i>Rosa pimpinellifolia</i>	Burnet Rose	o: component of causse scrub; Lapanouse
<i>Rubus spp.</i>	Bramble (several species)	f: widespread on waysides, in woodland edges and in causse scrub
<i>Sorbaria sorbifolia</i>	False Spiraea	Beside river Vis in the Cirque de Navacelle. Introduced
<i>Sorbus aria</i>	Whitebeam	o: in deciduous woodland on calcareous soils and component of causse scrub
<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>	Salad burnet	o: damp grassland on alkaline soils
Rubiaceae: Bedstraws		
<i>Asperula cynanchica</i>	Squinancywort	o: widespread in causses grassland
<i>Cruciata laevipes</i>	Crosswort	In riverside grassland beside Dourbie at Laupies
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Goosegrass	f: in waysides and waste places
<i>Galium mollugo</i>	Hedge Bedstraw	f: in waysides and hedgerows
<i>Galium verum</i>	Lady's Bedstraw	In grassland at Lapanouse
<i>Rubia peregrina</i>	Wild Madder	f: causse scrub and in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
Santalaceae: Bastard Toadflax and Sandalwood Family		
<i>Thesium divaricatum</i>	Bastard Toadflax	o: widespread among rocks and in grassland on calcareous soils
Saxifragaceae: Saxifrages		
<i>Chrysosplenium oppositifolium</i>	Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage	o: among rocks beside Dourbie at Laupies
<i>Saxifraga granulata</i>	Meadow Saxifrage	o: in meadow below summit of M Aigoual
Scrophulariaceae: Foxgloves, Toadflaxes and Speedwells		
<i>Chaenorrhinum origanifolium</i>	Malling Toadflax	o: roadsides; driveway at la Gare aux Ânes
<i>Digitalis lutea</i>	Yellow Foxglove	o: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	Foxglove	f: roadsides and woodland edges acid soils
<i>Erinus alpinus</i>	Fairy Foxglove	o: shady rock crevices and walls: beside railway at Lapanouse
<i>Linaria chalapensis</i>	White Toadflax	o: meadows on light soils and as an arable weed
<i>Linaria repens</i>	Pale Toadflax, Striped Toadflax	o: rocky hillsides on alkaline soils
<i>Linaria supina</i>	Prostrate or Pyrenean Toadflax	r: sandy dolomitic soils at Jassenove
<i>Melampyrum pratense</i>	Field Cow-wheat	r: sandy dolomitic soils at Jassenove
<i>Rhinanthus mediterraneus</i>	Mediterranean Yellow-rattle	la: in grassland on deeper soils
<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>	Lesser Yellow-rattle	o: in grassland on deeper soils
<i>Scrophularia canina</i>	French Figwort	o: in grassland near le Buffre on Causse Méjean
<i>Verbascum lychnitis</i>	White Mullein (yellow-flowered form)	On roadside below summit of M Aigoual
<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>	Aaron's Rod	o: waysides and disturbed ground

<i>Veronica spicata</i>	Spiked speedwell	o: in grassland on deeper soils near radio mast on Causse du Larzac
Thymeliaceae: Daphne Family		
<i>Daphne alpina</i>	Alpine Mezereon	Among rocks near la Couvertoirade
<i>Daphne laureola</i>	Spurge Laurel	o: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
Ulmaceae: Elm Family		
<i>Ulmus glabra</i>	Wych Elm	Lapanouse
<i>Ulmus minor</i>	Small-leaved Elm	f: in hedgerows
Urticaceae: Nettle Family		
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Stinging Nettle	a: waysides, hedgerows and disturbed ground
<i>Parietaria judaica</i>	Pellitory-of-the-Wall	o: old walls and rocks
Valerianaceae: Valerian Family		
<i>Centranthus calcitrapae</i>	A Valerian	r: on dolomitic rocks at Jassenove
<i>Centranthus lecoqii</i>	Lecoque's Red Valerian	f: on cliffs and among rocks in the gorges
<i>Valeriana dioica</i>	Marsh Valerian	In riverside grassland beside Dourbie at Laupies
Violaceae: Violets and Pansies		
<i>Viola riviniana</i>	Common Dog Violet	f: in alpine grassland on summit of M Aigoual
<i>Viola tricolor</i>	Wild Pansy	f: in riverside grassland beside Dourbie at Laupies
Vitaceae: Vines		
<i>Vitis vinifera</i>	Vine	o: in scrub and on walls in sheltered gorges
MONOCOTYLEDONS		
Cyperaceae: Sedge Family		
<i>Carex flacca</i>	Glaucous sedge	f: in calcareous grassland on deeper soils; la Pezade
Dioscoreaceae: Black Bryony		
<i>Tamus communis</i>	Black Bryony	o: in hedgerows; beside track between woodland and campsite in Dourbie valley
Iridaceae: Iris Family		
<i>Gladiolus italicus</i>	Field Gladiolus	o: in cornfield near Nant
Juncaceae: Rush Family		
<i>Luzula nivea</i>	Snowy Wood-rush	o: in riverside grassland beside Dourbie at Laupies
Liliaceae: Lily Family		
<i>Anthericum liliago</i>	St. Bernard's Lily	o: among rocks and bushes in grassland on calcareous soils
<i>Aphyllanthes monspeliensis</i>	Blue Aphyllanthes	ld: steep banks and rocky hillsides on calcareous soils
<i>Asphodelus albus</i>	White Asphodel	o: in rocky grassland on causses
<i>Muscari comosum</i>	Tassel Hyacinth	f: widespread in causses grassland
<i>Narcissus poeticus</i>	Pheasant's-eye Daffodil	f: in meadow below summit of M Aigoual
<i>Ornithogalum pyrenaicum</i>	Bath Asparagus	o: in damp ditches and waysides; along railway line near la Gare aux Ânes
<i>Ornithogalum umbellatum</i>	Star-of-Bethlehem	o: widespread among rocks and in grassland on calcareous soils
<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i>	Butcher's Broom	o: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
<i>Tulipa sylvestris ssp australis</i>	Wild Tulip	o: in roadside grassland below summit of M Aigoual
<i>Veratrum album</i>	White False-helleborine	In riverside grassland beside Dourbie at Laupies
Orchidaceae: Orchids		
<i>Aceras anthropophorum</i>	Man Orchid	la: widespread in causses grassland on deeper soils; a: at la Pezade
<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>	Pyramidal Orchid	la: widespread in causses grassland, becoming more evident during the month
<i>Cephalanthera damasonium</i>	White Helleborine	r: single specimen on Causse du Larzac in pinewood near radio mast above Nant
<i>Cephalanthera longifolia</i>	Narrow-leaved Helleborine, Sword-leaved Helleborine	o: under pines on Causse Noir
<i>Cephalanthera rubra</i>	Red Helleborine	o: under pines on Causse du Larzac and Causse Noir
<i>Coeloglossum viride</i>	Frog Orchid	lf: at la Pezade; o: in grassland elsewhere
<i>Dactylorhiza maculata</i>	Heath Spotted Orchid	r: streamside below summit of Mont Aigoual
<i>Dactylorhiza sambucina</i>	Elder-flowered Orchid	lf: in roadside grassland below summit of M Aigoual
<i>Epipactis atrorubens</i>	Dark-red Helleborine	r: single specimen at la Pezade
<i>Epipactis helleborine</i>	Broad-leaved Helleborine	r: single specimen on cause near la Couvertoirade; near <i>toit-citerne</i> on Causse Noir
<i>Gymnadenia conopsea</i>	Fragrant Orchid	lf: at la Pezade; in ditches on Causse Noir
<i>Himantoglossum hircinum</i>	Lizard Orchid	f: widespread in grassland and waysides on calcareous soils
<i>Limodorum arbortivum</i>	Violet Bird's-nest Orchid, Violet Limodore	o: on Causse du Larzac near radio mast above Nant and

<i>Listera ovata</i>	Common Twayblade	occasionally elsewhere
<i>Neottia nidus-avis</i>	Bird's-nest Orchid	o: scattered in grassland at la Pezade; near <i>toit-citerne</i>
<i>Ophrys apifera</i>	Bee Orchid	o: under pines near <i>toit-citerne</i> and near radio mast on Causse du Larzac
<i>Ophrys aranifera</i>	Early Spider Orchid	r: single plant at la Pezade; single plant on roadside below Cantobre
<i>Ophrys aveyronensis</i>	Aveyron Orchid	r: single plant at la Pezade
<i>Ophrys aymoninii</i>	Aymonin's Orchid	r: a few specimens remaining in shelter of bushes at Lapanouse station
<i>Ophrys insectifera</i>	Fly Orchid	r: mixed stand with <i>O. insectifera</i> near le Buffre, Causse Méjean; few specimens near <i>toit-citerne</i>
<i>Ophrys scolopax</i>	Woodcock Orchid	r: mixed stand with <i>O. aymoninii</i> near le Buffre, Causse Méjean; few specimens near <i>toit-citerne</i>
<i>Ophrys sphegodes</i>	Early Spider Orchid	r: single individual near radio mast above Nant
<i>Orchis coriophora</i>	Bug Orchid	r: single individuals near radio mast above Nant and on causse opposite la Gare aux Ânes
<i>Orchis mascula</i>	Early Purple Orchid	r: single specimen near la Couvertoirade
<i>Orchis militaris</i>	Military Orchid	o: several at la Pezade
<i>Orchis purpurea</i>	Lady Orchid	lf: a few specimens still recognisable on Causse du Larzac near radio mast above Nant and at Lapanouse
<i>Orchis simia</i>	Monkey Orchid	o: a few specimens still recognisable on Causse du Larzac at la Pezade, near radio mast above Nant and at Lapanouse
<i>Orchis ustulata</i>	Burnt Orchid, Burnt-tip Orchid	o: a few specimens still recognisable on Causse du Larzac near radio mast above Nant and at Lapanouse
<i>Platanthera bifolia</i>	Lesser Butterfly Orchid	lf: at Lapanouse; o: on Causse du Larzac near radio mast above Nant
<i>Platanthera chlorantha</i>	Greater Butterfly Orchid	lf: on Causse du Larzac: near la Couvertoirade, near radio mast above Nant and at Lapanouse
Poaceae (Gramineae): Grasses		
<i>Aira caryophylla</i>	Silver Hair Grass	In meadow below summit of M Aigoual
<i>Brachypodium pinnatum</i>	Tor-grass	ld: patch-forming in causses grassland
<i>Briza media</i>	Quaking Grass	f: widespread in causses grassland
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's Foot	f: on waysides and in rough grassland
<i>Festuca marginata</i>	Timbal's Fescue	In riverside grassland beside Dourbie at Laupies
<i>Melica uniflora</i>	Wood Melick	o: in woodland beside River Dourbie between Nant and Cantobre
<i>Nardus stricta</i>	Matt Grass	ld: in alpine grassland on summit of M Aigoual
<i>Trisetum flavescens</i>	Golden Oat Grass	a: meadows at la Pezade
<i>Stipa pennata</i>	Feather Grass, Angel's Hair, <i>Cheveu d'Ange</i>	ld: widespread in causses grassland



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