



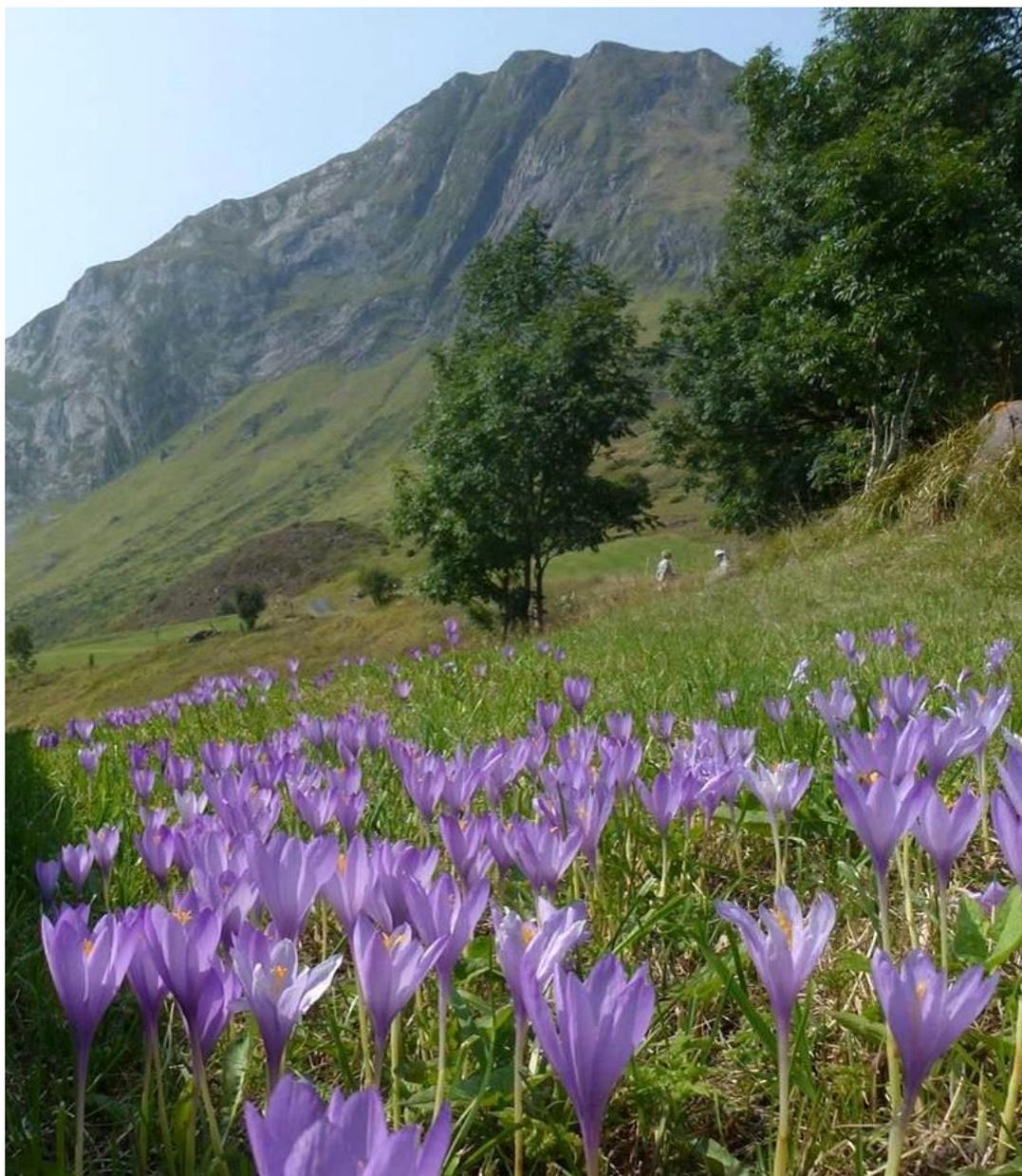
Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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

Telephone: 01603 300552

www.honeyguide.co.uk E-mail: chris@honeyguide.co.uk



**French Pyrenees
6 – 13 September 2017**

Holiday participants

Jill Jordan
Mervin Nethercoat
Malcolm and Helen Crowder
Peter and Sue Burge
Jean Dunn

Barry and Sally Hennessey
John and Ann Titchmarsh
Tim and Cheryl Hunt
Ann Stearns

Leaders

Chris Durdin and Ivan Nethercoat

Our hosts in the French Pyrenees: Odile and Philippe Pujo, Hotel La Brèche de Roland
www.pyrenees-hotel-breche.com

Report and wildlife lists by Ivan Nethercoat and Chris Durdin. Galls and fungi by Mervin Nethercoat.

Photos by leaders and group members.

Cover: *Crocus nudiflorus* in the Saugué Valley (CD).

Below: the Brèche de Roland from Gèdre-Dessus (CD) and the group at the Cirque de Troumouse (IN).



This holiday, as for every Honeyguide holiday, also puts something into conservation in our host country by way of a contribution to the wildlife that we enjoyed. The conservation contribution this year of £40 per person towards lammergeier protection was supplemented by an additional donation and gift aid, and we were able to give £1065 (about €1130) to the LPO. The LPO's Gwénaëlle Plet came to Gèdre to talk to the group on 11 September.

Including a donation earlier this year to the LPO in the Cévennes, this gives us a running total for donations to LPO of £24,898 since 1991. The total for all conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 and up to September 2017 is £118, 522.

DAILY DIARY

6 September – Lourdes to Gèdre

A respectable afternoon flight time from Stansted with Ryanair, delayed by 15 minutes, and we were soon in Lourdes at about 6.30 and on route to Gèdre. The imposing clouds hanging over 'our' mountains proved to be rather innocuous. We had a brief stop to look at rosettes of Pyrenean saxifrage and shortly after were at the Hotel Brèche du Roland, our base for the week, and sitting down for a delightful meal.

7 September – Gèdre and Barrage des Gloriettes

A misty but not too moist morning. Daylight here appears a little after 7am in early September so there was little time for pre-breakfast rambles (unless you're Jill), although a quick stroll found dippers at the bridge by the hydropower station and black redstarts singing away on the rooftops, encouraging signs for the later wander through the village. Breakfast was at eight o'clock with the usual French delights of good coffee, great bread, croissants and a mixed fare of cereals, cheese, yoghurts, fruit etc. A nice way to start the day.

After breakfast we gathered for a stroll down towards 'dipper bridge' to get a feel for the area. The clouds were slow to rise but it was dry and eventually sunny and warm. Black redstarts, white wagtails and migrant tree pipits, blackcaps and a garden warbler kept us company. The dippers, though, proved elusive but from the bridge area Helen picked up a very distant accipiter perched on electricity wires, giving a passable impression of a male goshawk. Kestrels were also nearby and then several griffon vultures took to the air around the nearby peak. These were soon joined by two golden eagles, flying together and talon grappling in front of the hillside. Two more accipiters got up, a male and female sparrowhawk chasing each other over the ridge. Fairy floxglove was still in flower from a crack in the bridge.



Golden eagles and dipper, bird highlights in Gèdre on the first day (JD).

As we walked back towards the café the sun was now very warm, bringing out hummingbird hawkmoths and a serin foraging in the grass of the small cemetery. The outside tables above the river at La Grotte café provided a pleasant spot to rest and refuel, and from here we could see ramonda in flower on a wall of the gorge and blackcaps, spotted flycatchers, jay and nuthatches exploring the trees. While we sat in the sun a Camberwell beauty drifted by and rested on one of the garden lights to have its picture taken.

We headed back to the hotel, picked up the lunches and drove to the nearby reservoir and dam at the Barrage des Gloriettes. This is a popular walking route and today the car park was full. The weather was glorious as we set off after our substantial picnic. Griffon vultures, ravens and a large flock of alpine choughs delayed our start, as did a short-toed eagle carrying a snake. Two honey buzzards also drifted over on their long migration south.

We walked out across the barrage where there was no sign of the wallcreepers seen so well here on our previous September visit. The path took us around the lake and into the valley that provides the river. Alongside the lake yellow and purple monkshoods and many merenderas graced the path and migrant willow warblers were flycatching on their route south. Adonis and chalkhill blues flew quickly in the sun as well as brown argus.

Beyond the lakeside the path followed the course of the river for a while where meadows had beautiful patches of leafless crocus *Crocus nudiflorus*. Ravens 'cronked' as they cruised across the cliff faces and we crossed the river to make our return route over the hillside to the buses. Alpenrose bushes were frequent and with a little searching we found a few flowers still out.

Back in Gèdre, several of us took the short walk to the confluence of the rivers Héas and Gavarnie where there were up to five dippers, plus grey wagtails, and it proved a reliable spot for these two birds all week.

8 September – Saugué and Bué

Today we left for one of the closest of our destinations, the plateau at Saugué where rolling meadows are rimmed with peaks and the view looks across to the famous Cirque du Gavarnie. The road to Saugué is a steep climb but lined with roadside verges and meadows. Our first stop in the lower stretch was not as productive as in spring but on a beautiful day such as today just a delightful place to be.

Next stop was at 'Butterfly Corner' – our nickname – where the road crosses the river and the view opens out onto the hillside. It was a brief stop here this time (we returned later for lunch) to see Queen of Spain fritillary, Adonis and chalkhill blues on flowers of small scabious, along with brown argus. Helen's keen eyes spotted distant mistle thrushes on the hillside while overhead migrant swallows and house martins continued their journey south. Grass of Parnassus and yellow mountain saxifrage flowered in damp patches.

A short drive later and the road ends on the plateau at Saugué. The meadows here were being cut and taking advantage of the insects disturbed were parties of water pipits and the occasional wheatear. Both wall browns and the *adrasta* form of large wall brown basked in the bright sun. On the craggy hummock above the parking area was Pyrenean eryngo in flower alongside large patches of eyebright. We strolled along the track toward the cirque, an almost flat route that follows the contour and provides easy walking with great views. As we set off a very low-flying short-toed eagle glided overhead, soon to be joined by another, and between these two and a third eagle they accompanied us for most of our time here, occasionally perched, flying low overhead or just circling the meadows. Some of the patches of crocus were stunning, set against the backdrop of the cirque. Yellowhammers, buzzards, goldfinch and more pipits were seen as well as butterflies such as clouded yellow and violet fritillary and the day-flying moths six-spot burnet and hummingbird hawkmoth.



Short-toed eagle (IN).

By now it was lunchtime so we took the short drive to Butterfly Corner where we were greeted by a female great green bushcricket exploring Ann S's rucksack and being very obliging for the photographers. As we sat eating, a griffon landed on a crag on the opposite hillside but today the usual birds of prey found here were not showing, apart from another short-toed eagle. A pearl-bordered type of fritillary was expertly caught by Sue and less than expertly released by Chris in attempting to move it to a see-through viewing pot to clinch an ID. The chalkhill and Adonis blues had increased in number; there were several sooty coppers, silver-spotted skipper and Essex skipper too. The star find here was a stunning copper butterfly found by Peter. Later study of photographs showed this to be a scarce copper. Whinchats caught insects on the corner of a field and the numbers of swallows and martins grew as they headed south.



Merenderas, and scarce copper on horse mint (IN).

Eventually we had our fill and took to the road for the short trip up the road to Bué. Here we explored the meadow beyond the electric fence (switched off, as it happens), where there were a few maiden pinks still in flower. A young golden eagle briefly circled the hillside along with distant griffon vultures, and marmots grazed the meadows as we took a short walk alongside the river before operating a shuttle service for the drivers as the group walked down the woodland road toward Gèdre. Blue lettuce and alpine toadflax were in flower and there were numerous rosettes of wood saxifrage. Where a bend in the road gave a view over Gèdre far below, we paused to enjoy the sunlit scene.

9 September – Col du Tourmalet and the Glère valley

We left in rain and headed to the Col du Tourmalet, the highest pass on the Tour de France. We hoped the cloud and rain would ease but after the spectacular climb things got worse at the top with a temperature of just 5 degrees and flurries of snow. Undeterred we donned the waterproofs and extra layers kept in the back of the minibuses for just such an occasion and headed off along the track to what we hoped would be an open door of the nearby café. There was little to distract us on the way except for water pipits and wheatear and a few llamas, but happily the café was indeed open and the hosts welcoming. We had to forego the spectacular view but the warmth, coffees and hot chocolates were some compensation.

Back outside, a few braved the view on the far side of the col but the cloud was low and the wind high so we left without seeing any snowfinches and headed back down to the sheltered Glère Valley and the car park at Chez Louisiette. This area is a mix of open pasture and woodland and a short walk brought us flocks of chaffinches, siskins and lots of water pipits. In the wetter pasture were round-leaved sundew, lousewort and even a flowering marsh marigold, and elsewhere Pyrenean thistle, providing some botanical highlights.



Pyrenean germander in seed (CD); round-leaved sundew (SB); red squirrel (JD).

It was just warm and dry enough to eat our picnics outside, followed by a drink in the café. Underneath beech trees a red squirrel and a jay were gathering beech mast, the first of several sightings of red squirrel here. There were treecreepers, nuthatches, goldcrest and calling black woodpeckers during our short walk through the woodland.

While the list for today is short, the day turned out to be very pleasant and we left in good spirits having explored a very different part of the Pyrenees.

10 September – Gavarnie and the Ossoue valley

A damp start that got wetter, with overnight rain continuing into the morning. We set off for Gavarnie and the walk to the famous cirque, delayed slightly in the hotel car park by a hobby and a distant lammergeier and birding conversations with the American birders during their quest for nuthatch. We chose this day partly as the village offers respite should the weather turn really bad but we were promised sunshine at noon by Philippe at the hotel so off we set,

The route was easy walking alongside the river that starts its life in the cirque at the base of the tallest waterfall in Europe. Griffon vultures were with us most of the way, flying along the crags and at cloud-base level, appearing and disappearing in the cloud. Occasionally golden eagles joined them, first a youngster and then an adult, while lower down kestrels tried to carry on as normal despite the expanse of wings around them. A large flock of alpine choughs showed several times above the distant skyline. A few round-headed rampions were in flower and there were many more crocuses and merenderas. Rocks were near-covered by the prostrate *Paronychia polygonifolia* but there was more interest shown in the unusual fern forked spleenwort, named by Ann S as pronged wall fern, which describes it well. There were several black redstarts and a



Walking to the cirque in less than perfect weather (IN).

whinchat on fence posts in a meadow but the weather slowly got worse so we headed back to an enticing café by the river. As we approached the sun came out at 11:58! Sadly it had disappeared again by the time we emerged. While we gathered by the minibuses a lammergeier drifted overhead but the rain continued to pour so we headed back to the hotel in Gèdre to eat lunch in the dry and warmth.

Somewhat refreshed we set off for the Ossoue valley, close to Gavarnie and again a short drive from the hotel. At the start of the valley is a large cliff face, often very good for birds of prey. We parked so the minibuses provided a bit of shelter from the fierce wind and soon some griffon vultures appeared, followed by a golden eagle. More flyovers and then towards the end of the cliff face a superb adult lammergeier came into view, flew a few circuits and then landed on a ledge, mostly obscured by a large rock but revealing parts of itself as it moved. More griffons appeared, then another lammergeier and more golden eagles.

We headed up the narrow valley road to see what else might be about. The road changed from tarmac to stone track as the valley opened out to a wide area of pasture. We stopped by a shepherd's hut and got out to scan the hillside for marmots. Chris called "Wallcreeper!" and sure enough, flying over us was the distinctive, broad-winged silhouette, crossing the wide valley to a small, bare cliff, opposite us beyond the river. In the telescope it gave good though distant views as it climbed the low crag and flicked its red wings while hunting for invertebrates.



Scanning the cliff face in the Ossoue valley (JD).

Not long afterwards another lammergeier flew over and along the ridge to join a few more griffon vultures. Red-billed choughs called noisily, and then a loud crack followed by a prolonged rumble alerted us to a rock avalanche happening close by but out of sight. Behind us stonechat, whinchat and marmot were added to the list, and all while we stayed standing by the buses.

Before dinner some of us watched a short film called *Like a butterfly – the incredible life of the wallcreeper* by Frank Neveu and filmed in the Alps, which was appropriate after our lucky encounter today.

11 September – Col de Tentes and Ossoue valley

It was warmer and clear just before breakfast, cloudy and wet as we left. The Col de Tentes is a high peak close to the hotel, just above Gavarnie. It's a ski station in winter and popular walking destination in summer. As we drove up the winding road, water pipits, wheatears and marmots gave regular views but the cloud showed no sign of clearing. At the top visibility was very poor, but undeterred we set off along the newly refurbished path – for the first part wheelchair/buggy friendly – which leads to the Spanish border. The track had crumbling rock on the right and steep slopes on the left as we walked along the contour. Tucked into the rocks were pygmy hawksbeard, cushion bedstraw, alpine toadflax and many rosettes of cardabelles, a reference to our altitude of 2200+ metres. Another indicator was a very obliging alpine accentor feeding just off the path and close enough to give very good views despite the cloud, which showed no sign of dispersing, so we headed back to the vehicles and descended for a coffee in Gavarnie.

Lower down, the cloud had lifted and vultures were on the wing. After coffee and a chance to shop we took advantage of the improvement in visibility and took lunch at 'Eagle Rock', our favoured stopping place at the start of the Ossoue valley. Sure enough, golden eagles, lammergeiers and griffons appeared along with red-billed and alpine choughs and the regular kestrels. This is often a site for rock bunting and that was true again today, with a brief view of a male just up the slope from where we had parked.

On the high peaks the cloud hung on but on the road we were in sunshine so we took a stroll down the valley toward the river. Hawkeye Helen spotted a young golden eagle, soon followed by an adult and then, a few yards further on, our first swallowtail caterpillar of the day, then a second. The Norfolk contingent is used to seeing these on milk parsley in the Broads: here they were on two different umbellifer species, namely a sermountain *Laserpitium siler* and Pyrenean pignut *Conopodium pyrenaicum*.

Flowering dodder twined around a rockrose caused some momentary confusion but was soon rectified, while the commonest plants in flower included winter savory and spignel. As the leaders collected the vehicles to pick up the rest of the group, now walking back down to Gèdre, another lammergeier drifted over.



Eyebright (CD); alpine toadflax (JD); swallowtail caterpillar (IN).

We returned in good time as Gwénaëlle Plet of the LPO came to talk to us about the challenges of protecting lammergeiers and other raptors in the Pyrenees over many years, which the Honeyguide donation from this holiday supports. Here are a few nuggets of information from her talk. Gwénaëlle told us it takes 360kg of food to raise one lammergeier chick, the equivalent of between 50 and 55 carcasses of wild or domestic ungulates. One pair's territory is about 350km². Birds are 7 years old before mating and can live to 30. The reproduction cycle takes nine months; on average a pair raises one young every three years. They are sensitive to noisy activities, such as helicopters, up to 2000m around the nest site. There were 39 pairs of lammergeiers in the French Pyrenees in 2014 (compared with 17 in 1994) plus 130 pairs in Spain, the only population to be naturally increasing. Much of this is down to the seventeen conventions that have been signed for 'durable cohabitation' between man and *gypaète barbu*, part of a huge partnership programme for conservation and awareness-raising across several regions in France, Spain and Andorra. Introductions are underway in the Alps and Massif Central.

12 September – Barrage des Gloriettes, Gèdre and Cirque de Troumouse

Today was the day of the promised excellent weather. It rained. Or rather it rained during breakfast, and as we left the rain became cloud, thickening as we drove higher. We stopped at the barrage to scan the dam walls and valley but in reality we saw nothing apart from a griffon vulture gliding through the mist, most definitely not riding a thermal. There was little point in going on to Troumouse in this cloud, so back down we went to explore the village again. As we left the dam the cloud was clearly rising so we remained hopeful.

At Gèdre the sun was shining and we strolled to 'dipper bridge', which this time had a dipper. As before, the golden eagles appeared at about 11am and put on a great display in front of the cliff. The usual griffons were on patrol but from slightly higher up the road Helen and Mervin also saw a lammergeier cruising the ridge, a young golden eagle and a short-toed eagle. We paid a second visit to La Grotte for coffee and then moved on up to Troumouse, this time in sunshine. A brief stop outside the Auberge du Maillet produced a relatively close isard – the Pyrenean chamois – on a sloping pasture above the road, and a more typical view of a distant group higher up. Griffon vultures circled in the valley, red-billed choughs strode purposefully on the short turf and the regular water pipits flitted around us. Up in the cirque the weather was excellent; full sun, blue sky with just a few clouds and a very light and pleasantly cool breeze. We had our picnics by the car park and then set ourselves some time to explore.

Not far onto the plateau the first of the streams crosses the path and here we looked for the 'near endangered' Pyrenean brook newt. They can be tricky to find but today we were fortunate and quickly found one in the shadows at the edge of the stream, though it soon disappeared. More searching in the same area revealed the head of a newt appearing from the mud. As we watched it became clear there were two newts, so still that some questioned if they were alive. When they moved slightly and the mud cleared we could see that one of them had wrapped itself around the other. They remained like this for some time with much speculation from us as to what they were doing. A bit of internet research found that they were mating, a process that can last for up to 30 hours before the female lays eggs on the underside of rocks in the stream.

We strolled on across the plateau, past bigger streams crossing the meadows where cows and their young calves grazed and pipits and wagtails fed. Blue monkshood grows in large clumps around the edges of boulders here but this year most of their flowers had gone over. *Crocus nudiflorus* and occasional alpine gentians were however in fine form and the backdrop they had was truly spectacular. Barry found moss campion in flower and there was a single pink flower of entire-leaved primrose near the newts, which were still in the same place, before our 4pm rendezvous at the minibuses.



In perfect weather at the Cirque de Troumouse (JD).

We descended to the Auberge du Maillet, this time stopping for drinks at what must be Europe's most spectacular site for a café. We did wonder if that meant there was no need for the man on duty to smile, but he seemed to melt when presented with a list of drinks in Chris's notebook, perhaps as it saved him the slow task of understanding a group of foreigners.

After our evening meal, as it was fine outside, several went out with bat detectors. By the confluence of the two rivers there were common pipistrelles (45kHz on the detectors) and another unidentified species at around 25kHz.

13 September – departure day

Our flight was not until early evening so we had a morning to fill and, in the nature of departure days, the weather was fabulous right from the start. Some chose to do a local walk and others wanted to see the Col de Tentes without any cloud in the way.

The bus with Ivan and six of the group choosing the high road set off to explore the high peaks above Gavarnie. Twenty minutes later we were climbing in glorious sunshine and a cloudless sky. The start of the climb brings us to a bend overlooking the 'eagle rock' in the Ossoue valley. As we were just one bus we could easily stop here and take in the true scale of this huge feature that soaks up the morning sun. The orientation of the cliff is no doubt partly why birds of prey find it attractive, and this morning they had made full use of the early warmth and already left so we carried on up to the Col.

Pipits and marmots watched us drive past but we were far from the first travellers up the mountain and when we got to the top we struggled to find space to park. However, as usual here, the vehicles' passengers had long dispersed to walk and the area was fairly quiet and had lost none of its atmosphere. The plants were the same as seen previously but now they had butterflies with them – clouded yellows, large whites and ringlets, the last surprisingly iridescent at the right angle, pointing to an ID of common brassy ringlet.



Alpine marmot and common brassy ringlet (JD).

A kestrel hunted in the valley, alpine choughs fed in the grass above the path and Jean and Jill found basking Pyrenean rock lizards on the sun-drenched stones by the path. This visit was, though, as much about the sense of place. Time presses on and after trying to capture the grandeur on small camera sensors we headed back down, stopping briefly to view 'eagle rock' again as we saw a brief shadow of a lammergeier but missed the bird.

Chris with the rest of the group walked to Gèdre-Dessus (upper Gèdre), taking the fork from the square in Gèdre past the nettle-leaved bellflowers. The dry slopes here have vegetation recalling *causses* at lower altitudes, albeit less in flower in September than June – mostly spignel and winter savory, plus a seedhead of cone knapweed for those who climbed higher up the slope. Holly blue and speckled wood were new butterflies for the week and a rather faded silver-washed fritillary showed well by the steps leading down to Gèdre that most of us later used. A violet carpenter bee buzzed around some flowers and a stonking cricket on the road was *Ephippiger provincialis*, as the name suggests a species of southern France. With time on our side we walked further than usual, reaching three restored watermills that were once used to process locally-harvested corn. We chatted here with some American visitors before turning back, enjoying close views of a whinchat on overhead wires and finding our first adult swallowtail butterfly of the holiday.

Back at the hotel, a patch of lucerne in the field by the car park was attracting butterflies, including mallow skipper, long-tailed blue and sooty copper, while in the sky above golden eagle and griffon vulture cruised the hillside.

Our light lunch was on the terrace outside the hotel where hummingbird hawkmoths fed on pelargoniums. Then it was time to say farewell to Gèdre, stopping only to top up with fuel on the Lourdes bypass as we returned to the airport. Tim and Cheryl left us for their extended stay in France and the rest of returned without incident to Stansted.



Hummingbird hawkmoth on pelargonium (MN).

The best bits

At lunch on the final day we collected holiday highlights, and here they are:

Mervin	Wallcreeper, lammergeier, the gall <i>Mikiola fagi</i> on beech.
Sally	Lammergeier and the talk about lammergeiers.
Barry	Sheets of crocus, the lammergeier talk.
Ann T	All the wildlife in the garden of La Grotte café on the first visit.
John T	Butterfly corner, the sun shining on the blues and more.
Tim	Lammergeiers in the mist.
Cheryl	Lammergeier, wallcreeper, red squirrel, snow in September.
Sue	Sundew, wallcreeper, scarce copper butterfly.
Peter	Red squirrel and scarce copper.
Ann S	Ivan, red-winged grasshopper, lizard shedding skin, lammergeier talk.
Jill	Crocuses, golden eagle, scenery.
Jean	Scenery, two species of chough, the worlds of galls.
Helen	Chris identifying the wallcreeper in flight and then it landing where we could see it; first-winter golden eagle; lammergeiers; Gwénaëlle.
Malcolm	Two pairs of golden eagles, lammergeiers, alpine accentor, rivers.
Ivan	Wallcreeper, good views of eagles, high tops.
Chris	Dippers, crocus, the group.

WILDLIFE LISTS

BIRDS

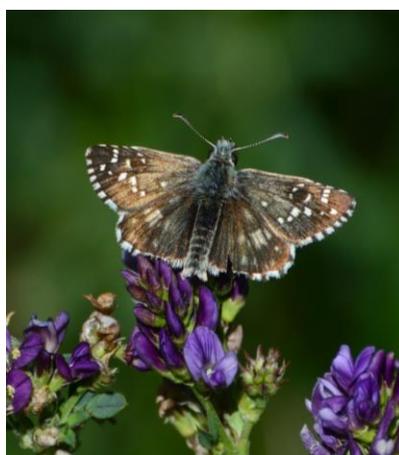
Honey buzzard	Two from car park at Barrage des Gloriettes .
Black kite	Seen on route from the airport to Gèdre.
Red kite	On return to the airport.
Lammergeier	Seen mainly in the Ossoue valley but also high over Gèdre.
Griffon vulture	Seen each day.
Short-toed eagle	Three at Saugué, one at Gèdre from the hotel.
Goshawk	One adult male on wires at Gèdre.
Sparrowhawk	Gèdre.
Golden eagle	Adult and young in the Gavarnie valley, also seen at Gèdre, Bué and 2 adults and a juvenile in the Ossoue Valley.
Common buzzard	Seen on the way to Gèdre and occasionally over Gèdre.
Kestrel	One pair on the road to Saugué, pair in Ossoue.
Hobby	One from hotel car park on two days.
Peregrine	One sighting in the Ossoue Valley.
Collared dove	Gèdre and Gavarnie, seen more often than previously.
Tawny owl	Heard and seen from the hotel.
Green woodpecker	Seen and heard in Gèdre.
Black woodpecker	Heard in the Glère Valley.
Great spotted woodpecker	Heard at Gèdre-Dessus.
Swallow	Small parties migrating.
House martin	Small numbers, often with crag martins.
Crag martin	Individuals seen daily.
Tree pipit	Saugué.
Water pipit	Many at all the higher altitude stops.
Grey wagtail	Gèdre, Gavarnie, Glère Valley.
White wagtail	Seen daily, and regular in Gèdre.
Yellow wagtail	Migrants in Saugué and Ossoue valleys.
Dipper	Gèdre; Glère Valley, river on the way to Héas.
Wren	Heard on several days.
Duncock	Around Gèdre, Barrage des Gloriettes car park and walk.
Alpine accentor	One by the path at a very cloudy Col de Tentes.
Robin	Heard or seen on most days.
Black redstart	Daily in Gèdre and at most locations.
Whinchat	Fields beside Gavarnie path, Ossoue, Gèdre-Dessus.
Stonechat	Ossoue.
Northern wheatear	At all the high altitude stops.
Blackbird	Daily in Gèdre.
Mistle thrush	20+ birds above Gèdre.
Garden warbler	On fruit trees in Gèdre.
Blackcap	On fruit trees in Gèdre.
Northern chiffchaff	Bué.
Willow warbler	Gèdre.
Goldcrest	Glère Valley.
Spotted flycatcher	Gèdre.
Pied flycatcher	Glère Valley.
Great tit	Recorded almost every day.
Blue tit	Gèdre.
Coal tit	In pine or fir trees on 4 days.
Nuthatch	Especially at Gèdre and Glère Valley.
Wallcreeper	One flew across the meadows by the refuge in Ossoue and landed on a crag across the valley.
Treecreeper sp.	Glère Valley.
Jackdaw	Gavarnie, Saugué road.
Jay	Very frequent.
Magpie	Individuals on odd days, more frequent than in spring.
Raven	Col de Tentes and at Ossoue, not seen often.
Carrion crow	Recorded every day.
Red-billed chough	At Saugué and Gavarnie, Col de Tentes road.
Alpine chough	Flocks at Saugué, Col de Tentes and from the Ossoue valley.
Starling	On route to the hotel, Gèdre.
Chaffinch	Seen daily.
Greenfinch	Bué road, Gavarnie.
Goldfinch	Saugué.
Linnet	Col de Tentes.
Serin	Gèdre and Glère Valley.
House sparrow	Seen daily.
Yellowhammer	Saugué.
Rock bunting	Ossoue and Gèdre.

MAMMALS				
Roe deer	Isard	Wild boar (rootings)		
Alpine marmot	Red squirrel	Pipistrelle		
AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES				
Common frog	Pyrenean brook newt	Common wall lizard	Pyrenean rock lizard	
MOTHS				
Hummingbird hawkmoth	6-spot burnet	Yellow shell	Gothic	
BUTTERFLIES				
Oberthür's grizzled skipper	Small white	Pearl-bordered fritillary sp.	Wall brown	Holly blue
Mallow skipper	Clouded yellow	Violet (=weaver's) fritillary	Small heath	Brown argus
Essex skipper	Red admiral	Rock grayling*	Small copper	Chalkhill blue
Silver-spotted skipper	Camberwell beauty	Common brassy ringlet	Scarce copper	Adonis blue
Swallowtail	Silver-washed fritillary	Speckled wood	Sooty copper	Common blue
Large white	Queen-of-Spain fritillary	Large wall brown**	Long-tailed blue	
* Rock grayling is difficult to separate in the field from woodland grayling, but habitat and altitude makes rock grayling the likelier species. ** The more orangey form <i>adrasta</i> .				
OTHER INVERTEBRATES				
<i>Gryllus capestris</i>	field cricket	<i>Lygaeus saxitalis</i>	a ground bug	
<i>Ephippiger provincialis</i>	a cricket	<i>Formica rufa</i>	wood ant	
<i>Tettigonia viridissima</i>	great green bush-cricket	<i>Gerris</i> sp. (probably)	pond skater	
<i>Oedipoda germanica</i>	red-winged grasshopper	(species unknown)	water boatman	
<i>Cordulegaster boltonii</i>	golden-ringed dragonfly (common goldenring)	<i>Polistes</i> sp.	paper wasp	
<i>Pyrrhocoris apterus</i>	fire-bug	<i>Bombus pascuorum</i>	common carder bee	
<i>Graphosoma italicum</i>	Italian shield bug	<i>Xylocopa violacea</i>	violet carpenter bee	



Above: Large wall brown of the form *adrasta*; chalkhill blue; violet (weaver's) fritillary on small scabious (MN).

Below: Clouded yellow on hawksbeard (MN); Oberthür's grizzled skipper on lucerne (IN); holly blue on orpine (CD).



PLANTS

Some widespread and familiar species are omitted. nif = not in flower, mostly for distinctive leaves.

DICOTYLEDONS		Caryophyllaceae	
Aceraceae		<i>Dianthus deltoides</i>	Maiden pink
<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field maple	<i>Dianthus monspessulanus</i>	Fringed pink
Amaranthaceae		<i>Gypsophila repens</i>	Alpine gypsophila
<i>Amaranthus hybridus</i>	Green amaranth	<i>Paronychia polygonifolia</i>	
Apiaceae		<i>Silene alba</i>	White campion
<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>	Angelica	<i>Silene acaulis</i>	Moss campion
<i>Astrantia major</i>	Great masterwort	<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red campion
<i>Bupleurum falcatum</i>	Sickle-leaved hare's-ear	<i>Silene vulgaris</i>	Bladder campion
<i>Conopodium pyrenaicum</i>	Pyrenean pignut	<i>Saponaria officinalis</i>	Soapwort
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Wild carrot	<i>Spergularia arvensis</i>	Corn spurrey
<i>Eryngium bourgatii</i>	Pyrenean eryngo	Chenopodiaceae	
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed nif	<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Fat hen
<i>ssp. pyrenaicum</i>		<i>Chenopodium bonus-henricus</i>	Good King Henry
<i>Laserpitium siler</i>	a sermountain nif	Cistaceae	
<i>Meum athamanticum</i>	Spignel	<i>Helianthemum appeninum</i>	White rock-rose
<i>Myrrhis odorata</i>	Sweet cicely nif	<i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>	Common rock-rose
<i>Pastinaca sativa</i>	Wild parsnip	Clusiaceae (Hypericaceae)	
Asclepiadaceae		<i>Hypericum nummularium</i>	Western St. John's-wort
<i>Vincetoxicum hirundinaria</i>	Swallow-wort nif	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	Perforate St. John's-wort
Asteraceae		Convulvulaceae	
<i>Achilla millefolia</i>	Yarrow	<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	Hedge bindweed
<i>Adenostyles alliariae</i>	Adenostyles	<i>Cuscuta epithimum</i>	Common dodder
<i>Carduus carlinoides</i>	Pyrenean thistle	Corylaceae	
<i>Carlina acanthifolia</i>	Cardabelle (= acanthus-leaved carline thistle)	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Black knapweed	Crassulaceae	
<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>	Greater knapweed	<i>Sedum telephium</i>	Orpine
<i>Cirsium acaule</i>	Dwarf or stemless thistle	<i>Sempervivum tectorum</i>	Common houseleek
<i>Cirsium eriophorum</i>	Woolly thistle	Dipsacaceae	
<i>Crepis capillaris</i>	Smooth hawksbeard	<i>Scabiosa columbaria</i>	Small scabious
<i>Crepis pygmaea</i>	Pygmy hawksbeard	<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	Devilsbit scabious
<i>Erigeron acer</i>	Blue fleabane	Droseraceae	
<i>Eupatorium cannabinum</i>	Hemp agrimony	<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>	Round-leaved sundew
<i>Galinsoga ciliata</i>	Shaggy soldier	Ericaceae	
<i>Hieracium lanatum</i>	Woolly hawkweed nif	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	Bearberry in fruit
<i>Hieracium pilosella</i>	Mouse-ear hawkweed	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Heather
<i>Lactuca perennis</i>	Blue (or Mountain) lettuce	<i>Rhododendron ferrugineum</i>	Alpenrose
<i>Lapsana communis</i>	Nipplewort	<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>	Bilberry in fruit
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Ox-eye daisy	Euphorbiaceae	
<i>Leuzea conifera</i>	Cone knapweed nif (Gèdre-Dessus)	<i>Euphorbia characias</i>	Large Mediterranean spurge
<i>Mycelis muralis</i>	Wall lettuce	<i>Euphorbia cyparissias</i>	Cypress spurge
<i>Petasites albus</i>	White butterbur nif	<i>Euphorbia helioscopia</i>	Sun spurge
<i>Picris hieraceoides</i>	Hawkweed ox-tongue	Fabaceae	
<i>Solidago virgaurea</i>	Golden-rod	<i>Astragalus monspessulanus</i>	Montpelier milk-vetch
<i>Tragopogon pratensis</i>	Goat's-beard	<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>	Kidney Vetch
<i>Tussilago farfara</i>	Colt's-foot nif	<i>ssp. pyrenaica</i>	
Betulaceae		<i>Hippocrepis comosa</i>	Horseshoe vetch
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Silver birch	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Bird's-foot-trefoil
Boraginaceae		<i>Medicago sativa</i>	Lucerne (=alfalfa)
<i>Echium vulgare</i>	Viper's-bugloss	<i>Melilotus alba</i>	White melilot
<i>Pulmonaria sp.</i>	Lungwort nif	<i>Ononis natrix</i>	Large yellow rest-harrow
Brassicaceae		<i>Ononis repens</i>	Rest-harrow
<i>Arabis turrata</i>	Towercress seedpods	<i>Ononis pusilla</i>	A yellow rest-harrow
<i>Fibigia clypeata</i>	Yellow, v. silvery hairy, big oval pods, Gèdre-Dessus	<i>Trifolium arvense</i>	Haresfoot clover
Buxaceae		<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red clover
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	Box	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White clover
Campanulaceae		<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Tufted vetch
<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	Harebell	<i>Vicia sepium</i>	Bush vetch
<i>Campanula patula</i>	Spreading bellflower	Fagaceae	
<i>Campanula trachelium</i>	Nettle-leaved bellflower	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech
<i>Phyteuma orbiculare</i>	Round-headed rampion	<i>Quercus pubescens</i>	Downy/white oak
Caprifoliaceae			
<i>Lonicera pyrenaica</i>	Pyrenean honeysuckle in fruit		
<i>Sambucus ebulus</i>	Dwarf elder in fruit		
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder in fruit		
<i>Sambucus racemosa</i>	Alpine elder in fruit		

Gentianaceae	
<i>Gentiana alpina</i>	Southern gentian
<i>Gentiana verna</i>	Spring gentian
<i>Gentianella campestris</i>	Field gentian
Geraniaceae	
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	Common storksbill
<i>Geranium pyrenaicum</i>	Pyrenean cranesbill
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb Robert
<i>Geranium rotundifolium</i>	Round-leaved cranesbill
<i>Geranium sylvaticum</i>	Wood cranesbill
<i>Geranium versicolor</i>	Pencilled cranesbill
Gesneriaceae	
<i>Ramonda myconi</i>	Ramonda
Globulariaceae	
<i>Globularia nudicalis</i>	Leafless-stemmed globularia nif
<i>Globularia repens</i>	Creeping globularia nif
Lamiaceae	
<i>Acinos arvensis</i>	Basil-thyme
<i>Galeopsis pyrenaica</i>	Pyrenean hemp-nettle
<i>Mentha longifolia</i>	Horse mint
<i>Origanum vulgare</i>	Marjorum
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Self-heal
<i>Salvia verbenaca</i>	Wild clary
<i>Satureja montana</i>	Winter savory
<i>Sideritis hyssopifolia</i>	Sideritis
<i>Teucrium chamaedrys</i>	Wall germander
<i>Teucrium pyrenaicum</i>	Pyrenean germander nif
<i>Thymus serpyllum</i>	Wild thyme
Lentibulariaceae	
<i>Pinguicula grandiflora</i>	Large-flowered butterwort nif
Loranthaceae	
<i>Viscum album</i>	Mistletoe
Malvaceae	
<i>Malva moschata</i>	Musk mallow
<i>Malva neglecta</i>	Dwarf mallow
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	Common mallow
Oleaceae	
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
Onagraceae	
<i>Oenothera sp.</i>	Evening primrose
Papaveraceae	
<i>Chelidonium majus</i>	Greater celandine
<i>Meconopsis cambrica</i>	Welsh poppy
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Common poppy
Parnassiaceae	
<i>Parnassia palustris</i>	Grass of Parnassus
Plantaginaceae	
<i>Plantago media</i>	Hoary plantain
Polygonaceae	
<i>Rumex scutatus</i>	French sorrel (= Rubble dock)
Polygalaceae	
<i>Polygala vulgaris</i>	Common milkwort
Primulaceae	
<i>Primula integrifolia</i>	Entire-leaved primrose
Ranunculaceae	
<i>Aconitum anthora</i>	Yellow monkshood
<i>Aconitum napellus</i>	Monkshood
<i>Aquilegia vulgaris</i>	Columbine nif
<i>Caltha palustris</i>	Marsh marigold
<i>Clematis vitalba</i>	Traveller's-joy nif
<i>Helleborus foetidus</i>	Stinking hellebore nif
<i>Hepatica nobilis</i>	Hepatica nif
<i>Prunus mahaleb</i>	St. Lucie's cherry nif
Resedaceae	
<i>Reseda lutea</i>	Wild mignonette
Rhamnaceae	
<i>Rhamnus pumilus</i>	Dwarf buckthorn
Rosaceae	
<i>Alchemilla alpina</i>	Alpine lady's-mantle
<i>Cotoneaster integerrimus</i>	Wild cotoneaster in fruit
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	Tormentil
<i>Prunus mahaleb</i>	St Lucie's cherry nif

<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn in fruit
<i>Rosa glauca</i>	Blue-leaved rose in fruit
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Blackberry/bramble
<i>Rubus idaeus</i>	Raspberry in fruit
<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>	Salad-burnet nif
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Rowan in fruit
Rubiaceae	
<i>Asperula cynanchica</i>	Squinancywort
<i>Galium album</i>	Upright bedstraw
<i>Galium pyrenaicum</i>	a cushion bedstraw
<i>Galium odoratum</i>	Woodruff nif
<i>Galium verum</i>	Lady's-bedstraw
Saxifragaceae	
<i>Saxifraga aizoides</i>	Yellow mountain saxifrage
<i>Saxifraga longifolia</i>	Pyrenean saxifrage nif
<i>Saxifraga umbrosa</i>	Wood saxifrage nif
Scrophulariaceae	
<i>Erinus alpinus</i>	Fairy foxglove
<i>Euphrasia alpina</i>	Alpine eyebright
<i>Euphrasia sp.</i>	Eyebright
<i>Linaria alpina</i>	Alpine toadflax
<i>Linaria supina</i>	Pyrenean toadflax
<i>Pedicularis palustris</i>	Marsh lousewort or red rattle
<i>Scrophularia canina</i>	Alpine (= French) figwort
<i>Scrophularia nodosa</i>	Common figwort
<i>Verbascum densiflorum</i>	a mullein
<i>Verbascum nigrum</i>	Dark mullein
<i>Veronica beccabunga</i>	Brooklime nif
Sparganiaceae	
<i>Sparganium angustifolium</i>	Floating bur-reed
Thymelaeaceae	
<i>Daphne laureola</i>	Spurge-laurel nif
<i>ssp. philippii</i>	
<i>Daphne mezereum</i>	Mezereon in fruit
<i>Thymelaea tinctoria</i>	Twisted thymelaea
Verbenaceae	
<i>Verbena officinalis</i>	Vervain
Violaceae	
<i>Viola cornuta</i>	Horned violet
<i>Viola riviniana</i>	Common dog-violet
MONOCOTYLEDONS	
Iridaceae	
<i>Iris latifolia</i>	English iris nif
Liliaceae	
<i>Allium sphaerocephalon</i>	Round-headed leek nif
<i>Asphodelus albus</i>	Asphodel nif
<i>Crocus nudiflorus</i>	
<i>Merendera pyrenaica</i>	Merendera
Orchidaceae	
<i>Epipactis helleborine</i>	Broad-leaved helleborine nif
Poaceae (very incomplete)	
<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	Bermuda grass
<i>Nardus stricta</i>	Mat-grass
Conifers	
<i>Abies alba</i>	Silver fir
<i>Larix decidua</i>	European larch
<i>Pinus nigra</i>	Pyrenean black pine
<i>ssp. salzmannii</i>	
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Juniper
Ferns	
<i>Asplenium adiantum-nigrum</i>	Black spleenwort
<i>Asplenium ruta-muraria</i>	Wall-rue
<i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>	Hart's tongue
<i>Asplenium septentrionale</i>	Forked spleenwort
<i>Asplenium trichomanes</i>	Maidenhair spleenwort
<i>Blechnum spican</i>	Hard fern
<i>Ceterach officinarum</i>	Rusty-back fern
<i>Dryopteris affinis</i>	Scaly male fern
<i>Polypodium vulgare</i>	Common polypody
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken

FUNGI

<i>Coprinopsis nivea</i>	Ink cap	<i>Pluteus</i> sp.	Shield fungus
<i>Crucibulum laeve</i>	White-egg bird's nest	<i>Rhytisma acerinum</i>	Tar spot
<i>Entoloma clypeatum</i>	Shield pinkgill	<i>Scleroderma</i> cf. <i>cepa</i>	
<i>Lycoperdon perlatum</i>	Common puffball	<i>Stropharia coronilla</i>	Garland roundhead
<i>Lycoperdon</i> cf. <i>marginatum</i>	Puffball (not in UK)	<i>Stropharia pseudocyanea</i>	Peppery roundhead
<i>Macrolepiota procera</i>	Parasol mushroom	<i>Suillus</i> cf. <i>mediterraneensis</i>	
<i>Paneolus</i> sp.	Mottlegill	<i>Trametes versicolor</i>	Turkey tails



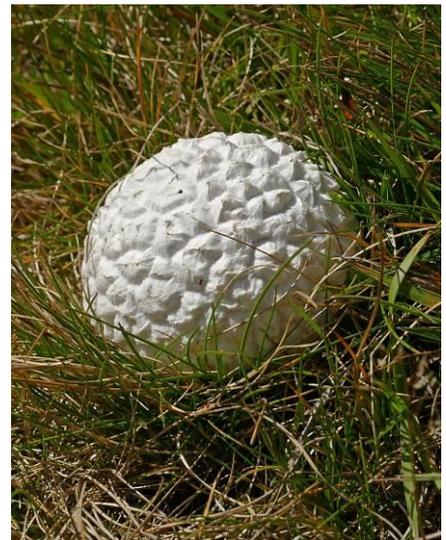
Parasol mushrooms

Although not a formal fungus foray, a few species were noted as we walked. While getting ready for the walk around the reservoir at the Barrage des Gloriettes, some donkey herders returned with the animals and two large baskets of parasol mushrooms, presumably for eating, some of which they gave away.

The most productive area was on the wet walk to the Cirque de Gavarnie. Here the first specimen seen, under pine, was the bolete *Suillus pos mediterraneensis*, the rain making the cap more slimy than usual. Farther along the trail we entered a beech wood and just by the path were a few beautiful specimens of *Stropharia pseudocyanea* still with the cap brightly coloured before being dissolved by the rain. Some indeterminate *Lactarius/Russulas* were close by.

The star of the show, however, was the white-egg bird's nest fungus found under beech when we stopped at Chez Louisiette in the Glère valley. Not many of the group had seen this before and the colony had immature cups (still with orange cap), cups with the 'eggs' still in place and empty ones from which the spore clusters had been ejected. In this area, too, we found mottlegills, shields and puffballs.

On a later walk down towards Gavarnie, on the high bank next to the road, was a fine specimen of *Cortinarius*, a notoriously difficult genus with over 360 species and one where microscopic examination is essential.



Above, left to right: the little blue-green *Stropharia pseudocyanea* (peppery roundhead), which smells of freshly ground pepper hence its common name; *Coprinopsis nivea*, a delicate ink cap associated with herbivore dung; *Lycoperdon marginatum*, a chunky puffball which peels with age, found on the plateau at the Cirque de Troumouse.

Below: white-egg bird's nest fungus growing on decaying wood, and a close up of the fruiting bodies which resemble tiny egg-filled nests (all photos by MN except the last by JD).



GALLS			
Host plant	Gall inducer	Type of organism	Comments
Salix	<i>Bactericera (albiventris)</i>	Psyllid bug	Found in the airport car park.
Rosa	<i>Diplolepis rosae</i>	Hymenoptera wasp	Robin's pincushion or bedeguar gall.
Tilia	<i>Eriophyes tiliae</i>	Mite	Lime nail gall.
Ulmus	<i>Eriosoma ulmi</i>	Aphid	Leaf-roll gall on wych elm in Gèdre.
Sorbus	<i>Gymnosporangium (cornutum)</i>	Rust fungus	The primary host is juniper.
Betula	<i>Lampronia fuscata</i>	Micro-moth	The moth's common name is scarce bright.
Fagus	<i>Mikiola fagi</i>	Midge	Probably extinct in the UK.
Quercus	<i>Neuroterus anthracinus</i>	Wasp	Oyster gall.
Rhamnus	<i>Trioza (rhamni)</i>	Psyllid bug	On dwarf buckthorn, Cirque de Troumouse

Generally, galls were not numerous but the first one was found on a birch tree at the overheated minibus stop on the way to the hotel. Here, the swollen node indicated the presence of *Lampronia fuscata*, a small moth with a wingspan less than 2 cm. In Britain, the moth would have pupated between May and June leaving only the swollen node.

In Gèdre, our first walk down to the river produced galls on maple, ash, lime, wych elm and rose but, unfortunately, this abundance did not extend to the rest of the week. It may be that the gall causers are not present at higher altitudes or that they are unable to synchronise egg laying with the early growth of the specific part of the plant where the gall would have been formed. This synchronicity is crucial to the formation of galls for when the buds, leaves etc. have been formed, galls cannot be produced.

One gall which was widespread and obvious on wild roses was the Robin's pincushion, also known as the bedeguar gall, caused by a tiny wasp. The term 'bedeguar' derives from the Persian word for 'wind-brought' and the name Robin refers to the woodland sprite of English folklore, Robin Goodfellow, aka Puck. In addition, where sorbus was present, we often saw the second stage of the rust fungus *Gymnosporangium cornutum* (no common name I'm afraid) which starts life on junipers and then proceeds to infect stone-bearing fruit trees, when damage to commercial orchards can be serious. To complete its life-cycle the spores must go on to infect a primary host.



More information on plants galls is on www.britishplantgallsociety.org/



Nail galls on lime.



Mikiola fagi on beech.

Gymnosporangium cornutum on sorbus.



Oyster gall on oak.

