



# *Honeyguide*

W I L D L I F E   H O L I D A Y S   2 0 1 1



Helping you enjoy wildlife



Helping to protect wildlife



# Honeyguide

## WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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### More information

In this brochure we can give only a flavour of the holidays on offer. You are welcome without commitment to have a pack of information about any holiday, including a previous holiday report and itinerary. Holiday reports are also on [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk)

### Honeyguide conservation programme for 2011

£40 of the price of your Honeyguide holiday goes to a conservation body, often the bird protection society of the host country, towards its current conservation work. The societies and projects we support are described under each holiday.

### HONEYGUIDE CHARITABLE TRUST

A donation to a local conservation project has been part of the holiday price since the start of Honeyguide in 1991. To date (August 2010), we have raised £66,700 for conservation projects, mostly in Europe.

The Honeyguide Wildlife Trust Limited was registered as a charity in June 2004, registered charity number 1104604. The object of the charity, in summary, is "To help conserve... the natural environment and wildlife".

The purpose, quite simply, is to claim tax from HM Customs & Revenue against the contributions from Honeyguiders. This can raise an additional 28p in the pound, and we then make the usual donations with the holidays a bit bigger for LPO, SEO, GOB, HOS, SOR and so on. This raises more than an additional £1000 each year for conservation.

Trustees of the charitable trust are Helen Crowder, Malcolm Crowder (secretary) and Chris Durdin (chairman).

We would be very grateful if everyone booking a holiday who is a UK taxpayer could complete the simple gift aid declaration on the booking form.

We also welcome additional donations or legacies through the Honeyguide charity.

We are very grateful to the Wildlife Outreach Network in Essex, which has already contributed £4,700 through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust.

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## Holidays for the year 2011

### Welcome to the 21st season of Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays.

Nature is what inspires us to take – and run – holidays, but it also threw some spanners in the works in 2010. Our Madeira group in February witnessed storms in Funchal and then at one of our busiest times in April, volcanic ash stopped flights for six days. Happily, half of the Menorca group was able to go a month later, but our fully booked Crete group was cancelled.

The Central Portugal group had the biggest adventure, travelling home overland via Madrid, Barcelona, Paris and Calais, via Castang, Honeyguide's base in the Dordogne – to which several Honeyguiders have already planned their return. Even volcanic ash clouds can have a silver lining.

Naturally Crete and Menorca will be running again, as are 2010's new holidays in Portugal and Poland. Four other holidays return, after a rest, to this coming year's programme: the Camargue in France, Istria in Croatia, the Danube Delta in Romania and South Africa's South Western Cape. The Cévennes has a group booking so drops out of the brochure and we'll be trying Madeira in the autumn, for a change.

A time of spending cutbacks elsewhere is a good time to increase what we do support nature conservation. The conservation contribution with each holiday increases this year to £40, as usual through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust. This idea, still surprisingly rarely copied, remains a simple and effective way of helping to protect the wildlife we enjoy.

Holiday details give some of the flights we use, but there are quite often other options, not all of which are clear when the brochure is printed. It's always worth asking, and seeing what's new on [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk). The website also has other ideas for travelling to see wildlife and all kinds of surprising information about nature.

I hope you can join us on a wildlife holiday in 2011.

*Chris Durdin*

Chris Durdin  
August 2010



The air holidays shown are ATOL Protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 3253. ATOL protection extends primarily to customers who book and pay in the United Kingdom.



Our logo is a greater honeyguide (*Indicator indicator*), an African bird that guides people or honey badgers to bees' nests. Those guided and the bird then enjoy the honeycomb. Honeyguide wildlife holidays also have enthusiastic leaders to guide you to nature's best.



# Your leadership team 2011

**Chris Durdin** (this year leading in **Extremadura, Crete, the Dordogne and the French Pyrenees**) is the driving force behind Honeyguide, running holidays since 1991. For many years he combined this with his work for the RSPB in Eastern England, often the Society's spokesman, but has been concentrating on Honeyguide full-time since 2009. He's also a qualified soccer coach, for one son's under eight year group. As a naturalist, Chris is an all rounder.

## Extremadura

**Martin Kelsey OBE** is our regular leader in Extremadura where he lives with his family, close to Finca Santa Marta. His background in ecology includes a three-year study on marsh warblers. After three years in the Amazon rainforest with the British Ornithologists' Union, where he met his wife Claudia, he worked for BirdLife International, before joining Save the Children.

## Central Portugal

**Domingos Leitão** works for SPEA, the Portuguese BirdLife partner, and alongside this is a holiday leader in his home country. This holiday, which Domingos set up and ran for the first time in 2010, came about when Honeyguide's Chris Durdin was a speaker at a conference promoting nature tourism, which was run by the Portugal Tourism Board with Domingos for SPEA.

**Rob Macklin** is the RSPB's area manager on the Suffolk coast, covering Minsmere and North Warren among several nature reserves. His rare appearances in the Honeyguide brochure are deceptive: he is well travelled in Europe, but as a leader often with our regular groups from the Salisbury & District Natural History Society. He was co-leader in Portugal in 2010.

## Menorca

**Chris Gibson** is a conservation officer for Natural England working in north Essex, an author of several wildlife books and has led many holidays for Honeyguide. He is an outstanding all rounder, from birds through flowers to moths, recognised as a 'naturalist of distinction' by the British Naturalists' Association.

## Istria

**Paul Tout** lives near Trieste and has led several holidays for us in north-east Italy, Slovenia and, more recently, into Istria in Croatia, all of which are based round his local knowledge, enthusiasm for birds and other wildlife – and fluent Italian.

**Tim Strudwick** is the RSPB's Site Manager for the Mid Yare nature reserves in Norfolk – Strumpshaw Fen and nearby. Naturally Tim knows his birds from his work, 40 years of birdwatching and travelling in Europe and beyond, but he's also a keen botanist and runs courses on sedges and rushes. A more recent expertise is in solitary bees and wasps, for which he is the Norfolk county recorder.

## Poland

**Artur Wiatr** is a wildlife enthusiast involved in nature protection and ecotourism development within the Biebrza River valley. He works both for the Biebrza National Park and since 1998 as a holiday leader. He's a licensed guide and is co-author of a pocket guidebook on Biebrza National Park.

## The Camargue

**Robin Hamilton** has a wide knowledge of western and central Europe and its wildlife, especially birds. He worked for many years for English Nature. **Rachel Hamilton** spent her working life teaching natural history and conservation with the Field Studies Council and at Otley College in Suffolk. She is an enthusiastic all round naturalist, though her first interest is botany. Robin and Rachel, both of whom are experienced wildlife leaders and keen linguists, are regular leaders in France.

## Bulgaria

**Assen Ignatov** is an experienced guide with an extensive knowledge of birds, butterflies and natural history. He is part of the team at Neophron – Egyptian vulture – the holiday arm of the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds, to whom any profits go. Assen is also an accomplished wildlife artist and keen photographer. Our co-leader, as on both of our previous Bulgaria holidays, is Neophron's botanist **Vlado Trifonov**.

## Danube Delta

The team of local leaders from our friends at **Ibis** was undecided when going to print. **Andrew Gregory** used to lead birdwatching holidays for Gullivers Natural History Holidays and his passion for Poland led to our new holiday there in 2010. From Ipswich, he is one of the team that runs the Suffolk Ornithologists' Group.

## Kruger National Park

**Geoff Crane** is the man behind Crane's Cape Tours & Travel, both local leaders and ground agents for Honeyguide in South Africa. An experienced guide himself, he co-leads all Honeyguide's holidays in South Africa.

**Bruce Terlien** is an all rounder when it comes to guiding. Apart from his big passions of southern African fauna and flora, his interests include architecture, anthropology, geology, history, gardens, culture, wine and the culinary arts.

## Madeira

**Catarina Fagundes** and **Hugo Romano** run Maderia Wind Birds, a small company specialising in observing the endemic and indigenous species of birds and plants on the island, and jointly lead all our groups on the island. The company embraces the principles of sustainable tourism, contributing to the conservation and interpretation of the natural heritage of Madeira's archipelago.



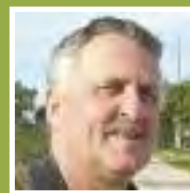
Chris Durdin



Martin Kelsey



Domingos Leitão



Rob Macklin



Chris Gibson



Artur Wiatr



Paul Tout



Tim Strudwick



Rachel Hamilton



Robin Hamilton



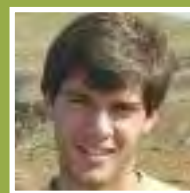
Assen Ignatov



Geoff Crane



Catarina Fagundes



Hugo Romano

Our holidays have been designed with the general naturalist in mind. Beginners are especially welcome but all holidays offer much to the more experienced naturalist. Some holidays are loosely based on 'birdwatching without blinkers'; some are a mix of birds, flowers and other wildlife. Several holidays can be good for butterflies. Local history, culture and food play a part in every holiday.

The holidays lend themselves to anyone wishing to leave the organised programme to sketch, paint, write or just potter.

Price: £1,450 per person in twin room for nine days (Wednesday to Thursday)

Single room supplement: £200

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights  
Gatwick – Madrid

Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Martin Kelsey and Chris Durdin

16 – 24 March 2011

# Extremadura

## Wild central Spain

Extremadura is one of the few remaining truly wild areas of Spain and, indeed, Europe. The region is renowned for its amazing variety of birds of prey, especially in Monfragüe National Park, and special species such as the bustards and larks to be found on the rolling plains of the Spanish steppes.

The plains around Trujillo and Cáceres form part of the great Spanish steppes with their fascinating assemblage of birds. Here we will search for great bustards performing their incredible breeding display, if we are lucky, an astonishing ritual in which the male turns himself into the appearance of a huge white pom-pom of feathers. Other steppe birds in this area are little bustards, stone-curlews and both pin-tailed and black-bellied sandgrouse. Crested and calandra larks are also found in the plains. Another speciality is Spanish sparrow, a rather local bird in Spain despite its name.

We will explore Monfragüe National Park, some 25 miles north of Trujillo. This is one of

is famous for the wintering cranes, most of which leave in February, but here also are azure-winged magpies, that amazing, colourful bird of the east with an outpost in Spain. One theory was that they originated from birds escaped during trade with China in earlier times, but proof that it is a relict population has recently come to light with the discovery of sub-fossil bones.

We stay at the wonderful Finca Santa Marta, a granite-built olive oil mill converted into a country inn, situated in the countryside south of Trujillo.

## Flowers

Patches of white Spanish broom and the pink *Silene colorata* bring colour to fields close to Trujillo. Miniature daffodils include delicate hoop petticoat and angel's tears narcissi. Early orchids, such as conical, champagne and naked man orchids, irises and lupins are flowering.

## Birds

As well as those already mentioned, we should see a selection of the following: Montagu's harrier, red, black and black-shouldered kites, peregrine, raven, hoopoe, blue rock thrush, little owl, southern grey shrike, red-rumped swallow, woodlark, Sardinian warbler, cirl and corn buntings, spotless starling and great spotted cuckoo.

## Other wildlife

Spain is western Europe's stronghold for wild mammals, including genet, mongoose and lynx, but these are mainly secretive or nocturnal. Stripe-necked terrapins and Iberian wall lizards are more obvious.

## Itinerary

Excursions will include visits to the Monfragüe National Park, including places such as Peña Falcon and the Tiétar cliffs; the holm oak dehesa region; and exploration of the plains around Trujillo and Cáceres. We will also visit the wonderful old town of Trujillo with its striking central square and white storks and lesser kestrels.

## Conservation project

Traditional low intensity farming, especially non-irrigated arable farmland but also seasonal grazing, supports much of the special wildlife of Extremadura – and can never be protected just by nature reserves. The conservation of the Spanish steppes and 'dehesa' wood pasture is a great priority for the Sociedad Española de Ornitología (Spanish Ornithological Society / BirdLife Spain).



Lesser kestrels



Belén Plain



Iberian fritillaries

the most outstanding areas for seeing birds of prey in a country which is itself probably the best for raptors in Europe. It has the core Spanish population of black vultures, which breed here along with griffon and Egyptian vultures.

Eagles are well represented here with Spanish imperial, golden, short-toed and booted. From the various viewpoints, which make fine vantage points for raptor-watching, other species that can be seen include black stork, chough and rock bunting.

The lower valleys approaching Monfragüe hold good stands of holm oak woodland, the 'dehesa' or wood pasture that is such a distinctive feature of Extremadura. The dehesa

SUPPORTING





4 – 11 April 2011

# Central Portugal

## Cork oak country and much more

From limestone hillsides to granite outcrops, cork oak woodlands to estuaries and dry grasslands, central Portugal offers a varied landscape with a rich range of wildlife.

This two centre holiday, starting close to Lisbon, offers contrasting habitats both between and within the holiday's two bases, one in the west of Portugal, the other in the east close to Spain.

### Around Santarém

Here wildlife thrives in a mosaic of abandoned olive groves and farmland around the small and friendly Hotel Rural de Santarém. Black-shouldered kite, bee-eaters and southern grey shrikes compete for attention with orchids, including yellow bee and giant orchids and violet limodora.

Spoonbills join nesting night herons, little egrets and thousands of cattle egrets on an island in the Tejo Estuary. The estuary's mudflats supports a good mix of waders – wintering, passage and breeding – and there or on nearby lagoons and fields there may be glossy ibis, Caspian tern and large numbers of white storks. Much of the estuary is adjacent to wood pastures – *montados* – of cork oak, where nature and man have combined to create a sustainable harvest of cork on which a valuable ecosystem is based. Birds include Bonelli's and booted eagles, hoopoes (a few now overwinter here as the climate has warmed), curl buntings and woodchat shrikes.

The limestone pavements and hills of the Serra de Aires and Candeeiros Natural Park provide a complete contrast. Flowers include Iberian fritillary and orchids such as woodcock, sawfly and naked man. As well as birds seen in previous days, we should find Dartford warbler, Thekla lark and choughs.

### Northern Alentejo

After three days near Santarém, two hours' driving takes us east to near Marvão. This fortress village remains intact from the Islamic occupation in the Middle Ages and has applied to be a World Heritage site. Marvão offers stunning views from the massive quartzite outcrop on which it is set.

In this part of the Alentejo countryside, granite outcrops and the drier climate favour mixed forest cover with holm oak (rather than cork oak) and Pyrenean oak. Around and over the Mediterranean scrub and rocky outcrops special birds can include griffon & black vultures, alpine swift, crag martin, black-eared wheatear, Orphean and subalpine warblers and rock bunting.

In steppe grassland, groups of great bustards display among a carpet of wild flowers. A range of raptors includes Montagu's harriers and lesser kestrels. Other steppe birds include little bustard, stone-curlew, roller and great spotted cuckoo.



### Birds

As well as those already mentioned, other likely birds may include black stork, red-crested pochard, golden oriole, spotless starling, blue rock thrush, short-toed lark, red-rumped swallow, Spanish sparrow, Iberian chiffchaff and Bonelli's warbler.



### Flowers

Other local specialties include Iberian fritillary, one-leaved squill and Spanish bluebell. Iberian orchids include *Ophrys dyris*, conical orchid and *Orchis olbiensis*, plus many species found farther afield including narrow-leaved helleborine, small-flowered serapias and champagne orchid.

### Other wildlife

Spanish festoon is, perhaps, the most sought after early butterfly; others should include Cleopatra and swallowtail. Large psammotromus and Iberian wall lizard are the likeliest lizards; Iberian ribbed salamander and various snakes are possible.

### Itinerary

Visits include natural parks in the hills of Aires and Candeeiros in the west and São Mamede in the east. Important Bird Areas include the Tejo Estuary, the plains and grasslands of Elvas and Caia Dam IBA. Much of the interest is in the farmland, scrub, cork and holm oak wood pastures in both the east and west parts of the holiday.

### Conservation project

The Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA, BirdLife in Portugal) has a network of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) with volunteers monitoring these and acting as 'caretakers'. The Albufeira do Caia IBA has a large population of waterbirds, including collared pratincoles (100 pairs), little terns (50 pairs, the only inland colony in Portugal), gull-billed terns (an astonishing 500 pairs), red-crested pochards and other duck and egret species. SPEA is helping to manage the IBA by clearing and creating islands for terns and grebes, and runs a ringing station.



Price: £1,350 per person in twin room for a full week (Monday to Monday)

Single room supplement: £150

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights  
Gatwick – Lisbon

Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Domingos Leitão and Rob Macklin

Cork oak



Black-shouldered kite



Spanish festoon

More information visit  
[www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) 5

Price: £1,250 per person in single or twin room, for a full week (Tuesday to Tuesday)

This includes taverna evening meals, with wine and coffee but excludes lunch, for which please allow £3-4 per day, or a little more for a taverna lunch.

En suite facilities

Probably easyJet flights, Gatwick to Heraklion

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 14, with two leaders

Leaders: Chris Durdin and Rob Lucking

5 – 12 April 2011

## Crete

### Island birds and flowers in the cradle of civilisation



Crete is a magical and mysterious island. Home of Europe's earliest civilisation, influenced by many nations, yet it retains its own identity and culture of which its people are justifiably proud.

The island's position in the Mediterranean has not only played a crucial role in its history but is an important migration route for birds on their way north in spring. Crete in April is free of crowds, the days can be warm and the hillsides are full of flowers.

This, the largest and most southerly of all the Greek islands, is dominated by a backbone of mountains through which cut many deep gorges. These are as spectacular as they are rich in wildlife, be it migrant birds, nesting vultures or endemic wild flowers.

Wildlife and history are difficult to separate on Crete, with many important archeological sites also rich in both plants and birds. We shall sample Minoan ruins at Phaeston and Ayia Triada and, perhaps, spend some time in the old Venetian port of Rethymnon.

We are based at the small and friendly Sophia Hotel in the fishing village of Plakias on the south coast. It is ideally placed for local walks and excursions and has an impressive backdrop of gorges and mountains.

### Flowers

Crete's rich flora of 1600 native species includes 140 endemic to the island, such as Cretan cyclamen and Cretan ebony. In April many orchids are at their peak with Cretan bee, naked man, few-flowered, rainbow, four-spotted and bumblebee orchids among 20 or more species. Shrubs like Jerusalem sage and cistus contribute to colourful and aromatic hillsides.

### Birds

The mountains and gorges of Crete are a stronghold for birds of prey, with the largest population of griffon vultures in Greece.

Lammergeier, Bonelli's and golden eagles and buzzard all breed, as do crag martin, blue rock thrush, chough and raven. The hillsides and scrub support both Sardinian and the much rarer Rüppell's warbler. At this time of year a whole range of birds passes through on migration, pausing especially at wetlands, however small; these might include red-footed falcon, alpine swift, bee-eater, squacco heron, little bittern and various waders and warblers.

### Other wildlife

Even at this time of the year there are butterflies such as swallowtail, scarce swallowtail, Cleopatra and eastern festoon. We often see freshwater crabs; reptiles can include Balkan (stripe-necked) terrapin and Balkan green lizard.

### Excursions

As well as local walks, our minibus trips this week include visits to Moni Preveli, Kourtaliotiko and Kotsiphos Gorges, Frangokastello, Spili, Ayia reservoir and, probably, the mountain plateau at Omalos.

### Conservation project

The lammergeier conservation project is run by the Hellenic Ornithological Society, BirdLife Greece. In the Balkans it occurs only in Greece, with the bulk of the population on Crete. Alongside survey and monitoring, the long-term survival of Europe's rarest vulture is being tackled by site protection, food provision and the encouragement of traditional grazing systems.

SUPPORTING



Little bittern



Orchis boryi - Spili



Freshwater crab



Plakias Bay



15 – 22 April 2011

# Discovering Menorca

A relaxed wildlife holiday on this quiet Mediterranean island



Menorca provides the perfect setting to see birds typical of the Mediterranean. A small island, a little over 30 miles long and 13 miles wide, its quiet, unhurried atmosphere complements a relaxing birdwatching holiday. All parts of the island can be reached easily and quickly so most of the holiday can be spent in the field enjoying an array of birds among masses of flowers. It all has a charm rarely equalled elsewhere in Europe today.

While small, the island holds a great variety of habitats. The rugged coasts are spectacular and off-islands provide nest sites for the scarce Audouin's gull. Any view of the surrounding sea may reveal Cory's or Mediterranean shearwaters. Lagoons and fresh water lakes hold a variety of waders including black-winged stilts, plus egrets, herons and even the occasional flamingo.

The open countryside is full of birds. Thekla and short-toed larks and hoopoes sing from dry stone walls; stone-curlews skulk in rocky fields, woodchat shrikes, ravens and tawny pipits are often seen and quail heard.

There is never a dull moment as the sky seems frequently full of birds of prey. Menorca holds concentrations of booted eagles, Egyptian vultures and red kites, the kites happily increasing after a period of decline.

In spring the island provides a stepping stone for birds migrating across the Mediterranean – so anything can turn up. Regular migrants include red-rumped swallows and golden orioles. Bee-eaters come to nest in sand quarries. Resident birds include blue rock thrushes, stonechats, moustached and Sardinian warblers.

Pastures, coastal rocks and sand dunes provide a range of attractive wild flowers such as mirror orchids and small tongue orchids can be abundant.

Other wildlife includes huge Egyptian grasshoppers and, in wetter areas, stripeless tree frogs and terrapins.

Matchani Gran, our holiday base, is a Menorcan farmhouse near Mahón delightfully converted for private guests or small groups. It has a swimming pool and terrace for outside meals, all set in 10 acres of countryside complete with hoopoes, Thekla larks and Hermann's tortoises.

## History

The island's varied history shows well in architecture and archeology. Strange stone monoliths, known locally as Torres, date from around 1000 BC. Of later origin are traditional stone huts called Talaiots.

Access to these monuments is easy and they are often good places to see wildlife.

The small cities of Ciutadella and Mahón are both fascinating. A mix of architectural design reflects the result of dominance by Romans, Moslems and British.

## Itinerary

Excursions should include Fornells harbour and the cape and lighthouse at Cavallaria; the hill of Monte Toro; Punta Prima; the old capital of Ciutadella; Algendar gorge; Mahón harbour; Son Bou reedbed and dunes; the salt pans at Mongofre Nou; the seasonal wetland at Tirant; plus various short excursions or local walks.



## Conservation project

The Grup Balear d'Ornitologia i Defensa de la Naturalesa (GOB – the Balearic Ornithological Group) is an active local organisation working to protect the Balearic Islands from over-development. Red kites were declining on Menorca, due to accidental poisoning and deaths on electricity pylons, and GOB has successfully campaigned to reverse this.



Price: £1,350 per person in twin or double room for a full week (Friday to Friday)

En suite facilities

Single room supplement: £180

Scheduled Monarch flights, Birmingham, Luton or Manchester to Mahón

Deposit: £200

Max. number: 14, with two leaders

Main leader: Chris Gibson



Above: Hermann's tortoise, left: mirror orchid



Audouin's gulls



Menorcan olive wood gates

More information visit  
[www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) 7

Price: £1,450 per person in twin room for nine days (Wednesday to Thursday)

Single room supplement: £100

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights Stansted to Trieste

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 14

Leaders: Paul Tout and Tim Strudwick



Blue rock thrush



Green-winged orchids



Mt Učka

11 – 19 May 2011

## Istria

### Nine days in peninsula Istria (Croatia)

At the crossroads of the Balkans, Central Europe and the Mediterranean, Istria has a fascinating history, geology, flora and fauna. In a relatively small area (about 4000 km<sup>2</sup>) one passes from a rocky coastline and a strip of Mediterranean scrub and woodland through areas of low-intensity agriculture rich in wild flowers and farmland birds.

Away from the coast, the land rises to 1000m or more above sea level with broad submontane grasslands, limestone gorges and splendid beechwoods. Beyond the Limski Kanal, a fjord-like inlet that separates northern and southern Istria, climatic conditions are similar to those found farther south in Greece and Southern Italy.

The limestone mountains of the interior are still wild and sparsely populated by Albanian and Romanian communities brought in as colonists by the Austrians and Venetians during the Middle Ages, following depopulation caused by outbreaks of the plague. As elsewhere in the flower-rich Karst, limestone areas are peppered with remarkable dolinas (swallow-holes) where the roofs of caves have collapsed, leaving hollows with their own micro-climate with a curious mixture of alpine, western European, Balkan and Mediterranean flowers.

#### Birds

Mediterranean birds are well represented with subalpine and Sardinian warblers, bee-eaters, hoopoes and alpine swifts. Scops owls are abundant. Black-headed bunting is near the north-western edge of its distribution, and fieldfare at its southern limit. Limestone cliffs and gorges are breeding grounds for blue rock thrush, eagle owl and several pairs of golden eagles. The forests have honey buzzards and goshawks and interesting woodpeckers: black, lesser spotted and grey-headed are at our base. Griffon vultures from nearby colonies on the island of Cres often put in an appearance. Wetlands are rather scarce and isolated, but there are a few such as Il Palù south of Rovigno, along the river Mirna close to the hotel and the large salinas at Sečovlje on the border between Slovenia and Croatia.

#### Flowers

Istria's flora is a fascinating mix of Mediterranean, Balkan, subalpine and northern communities. Mediterranean maquis dominates the coast including myrtle, various species of cistus, wild sage, evergreen oak and tree heath along with terebinth and mastic trees, though the composition of the community varies greatly with geology.

Moving away from the coast, and up in terms of altitude, average annual temperatures drop rapidly, allowing the appearance of northern, subalpine and even a few true alpine species. The grasslands of upper Istria are notable for their floral displays in April and May. Fields and verges are awash with orchids, especially green-winged

in purple swathes set among cow-wheat, rattle and occasional round-headed orchids.

#### Other wildlife

Butterflies abound throughout Istria. In May, large tortoiseshell, black-veined white and swallowtails are present, along with a range of blues and fritillaries. Mediterranean Istria has a wide range of other wildlife including Hermann's tortoise and the ophisaurus, Europe's largest lizard, not unlike a giant slow-worm. Inland, the cooler and heavily forested Upper Istria has few human inhabitants and is home to wolves, lynx and brown bear.

#### Istarska Toplice

All of this is less than ninety minutes from, for Honeyguide, our rather untypical base at the modern Hotel Mirna at the spa of Istarska Toplice. Perfectly located in central-northern Istria, in Croatia, it is close to the Slovenian border and about 40 minutes from Italy. Its extensive grounds are alongside the river Mirna oakwoods, fought over by the Venetians and Austrians for their timber and notable for their white truffle production. They are also rich in bird life and perfect for early morning walks. The large hotel pool, fitness room, sauna and massage facilities will be available to participants who fancy a swim before dinner or a day spent in the hotel just enjoying the facilities.



*Ascalaphus macaronicus*

#### Itinerary

Two or three days will be spent on local walks in the varied landscape around the hotel, mixed with a visit to the nearby coastal salinas at Sečovlje. We will also visit the extreme southern tip of Istria, Punta Prematura and Kamenjak, with its magnificent Mediterranean flora and fauna, the seas around which support the Adriatic's only known (and tiny) colony of the critically-endangered monk seal. Trips will include visits to Mt Taiano and Mt Učka for alpine flowers and birds including rock partridge and ortolan bunting.

#### Conservation project

BirdLife Slovenia (DOPPS) – the northern part of Istria is in Slovenia – is working hard to protect natural areas, especially wetlands. It also runs projects for endangered species, in particular roller and the globally threatened corncrake and lesser kestrel.

SUPPORTING





12 – 19 May 2011

# Dordogne

## A taste of the good life

The department of the Dordogne in south-west France is justly famous for its pretty villages, cave paintings, elegant towns and landscapes of river valleys and quiet countryside. Less discovered is the wildlife: a charming mix of flowers, birds and butterflies.

Orchids are the most striking natural asset: up to 25 species can be found. Half of these are around our base at Castang. Birds on the doorstep include cirl bunting, melodious warbler, wryneck, honey buzzard, firecrest and black redstart.

### Castang

Castang is a hamlet close to the Dordogne river above the village of Le Coux et Bigaroque, not far from St Cyprien. Cathy and Keith Parker are our hosts; Cathy is from Montcaret, a little farther west along the Dordogne valley, and Keith is from England. The house was once a Pergordian tobacco farm of great character and charm, parts of which are thought to be more than 400 years old. The farmhouse, together



Midwife toad

with its complex of converted barns, provides comfortable accommodation around a sunny terraced courtyard. Dinner, after a leisurely aperitif, is one of Castang's great features. Five courses of the best of the region's cuisine, from soup to dessert, accompanied by local wines, are prepared and cooked by Cathy.

Castang's large meadow has many hundreds of green-winged orchids along with tongue and pyramidal orchids. Loose-flowered orchids grow where the meadow gets damper down the hill, close to where golden orioles and nightingales can be heard and, with a little luck, seen. Beyond the orchid field, the area is a mix of meadows, cropped land and woods, cut by the wide river valleys of the Vézère and Dordogne.

### Flowers

Lady, man, burnt-tip, fly, woodcock, narrow-leaved helleborine and greater butterfly are among the orchids, and two great surprises this far north are sombre bee orchid and long-lipped serapias. Meadows thick with yellow rattle, banks with meadow clary, tassel hyacinth, milkwort and a range of cranesbills, flaxes and rockroses are just a few of some 250 plant species. Shrubs include dogwood, fly honeysuckle and Montpellier maple.



### Birds

Serins, Bonelli's warblers, short-toed treecreepers and hoopoes are all found around Castang or close to home. Black kites and buzzards are the most frequently seen birds of prey; hobbies are also likely.



### Other wildlife

Butterflies on the wing in mid-May include scarce and common swallowtails, black-veined and wood whites, Cleopatra, Glanville fritillary, green hairstreak, large copper and small blue. Elegant yellow and black ascalaphids – something between a lacewing and an ant-lion – hunt over meadows. Other invertebrates include violet carpenter bee and hummingbird hawkmoth. After dark, a short walk away, midwife toads are carrying their eggs.

### Itinerary

Two days will be on walks around Castang. Three days will be gentle walks a little farther afield, combined with visits to the village of Limeuil, at the confluence of the Vézère and Dordogne rivers, and a morning on market day in the town of Le Bugue. Our cave walk includes an optional visit to the crystal cathedral cavern of the Gouffre de Proumeyssac. The sixth day includes a visit to the caves of Font de Gaume at Les Eyzies to see prehistoric paintings of bison, horse and reindeer; and to Roque St Christophe for crag martins, peregrines, woodland and meadow flowers at a site known for its cave dwellers since the days of Cro Magnon man.

### Conservation project

La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (French Bird Protection League) has set up a network of no-hunting sanctuaries throughout France. LPO is also battling French hunters to prevent an extension of the shooting season into the spring.

SUPPORTING



Price: £1,350 per person in a twin room for a full week (Thursday to Thursday)

Single room supplement (two only): £150. En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights Stansted or Liverpool to Bergerac. Flights from other UK airports may also be possible

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 12

Leader: Chris Durdin

View near Castang



Knapweed fritillary on pyramidal orchid



woodcock orchid

More information visit  
[www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) 9

Price: £1,410 per person in twin room for nine days (Saturday to Sunday)

Single room supplement: £120

En suite facilities

Scheduled Wizz Air flights  
London Luton – Warsaw

Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Artur Wiatr and Ian Barthorpe

14 – 22 May 2011

# Poland

## Biebrza Marshes and Białowieża Forest

Biebrza Marshes forms a formidable but beautiful barrier between solid land in north east Poland and Belarus. The primeval Białowieża Forest also lies along that same international border, and together they form one of Europe's greatest natural experiences.

The River Biebrza consists of some 100 miles of meanders and ox-bows within its basin of about 3,000 square miles. Winter is long lasting, while summers are short and rich. Floods of unpredictable length can last into early summer.

These produce habitats ranging from swampy, impenetrable forest, much beloved by breeding cranes and black storks, to huge grasslands, covered with millions of marsh marigolds in spring with nearby water hosting many breeding marsh terns. The area supports many of the 50,000 pairs of white storks that breed in Poland. The evening murmuring of fire-bellied toads is one of the more memorable sounds, especially if accompanied by the bugling of cranes and the rasping of corncrakes.

Białowieża too has its wetlands but is most admired for the majesty of its forest. Here, famously, several hundred European bison roam. Beavers abound – Bobra in Polish, which was the original name of the Biebrza – and are sometimes even seen from the bridge in the village of Białowieża.

One piece of the forest that once covered much of central Europe, Białowieża was originally preserved for private hunting by Polish kings and Russian Tsars. Modern protection is a National Park and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Mixed oak, lime and hornbeam is the commonest of the six main forest types in the Polish part of Białowieża; in Belarus there is more coniferous forest.



White-winged black tern



Lady's slipper orchids



Białowieża forest

Never felled, with giant trees and large amounts dead wood, both standing and fallen, this unruly wilderness seems to invite architectural similes. Cathedral-like in the more spacious parts, it is dense in others. For many the highlight of any visit is to enjoy a walk with a local expert guide in this ancient forest.



## Birds

Spring brings strutting hordes of ruffs to the marshes together with dancing brigades of white-winged and black terns. Thrush nightingale, great reed warbler and white-spotted bluethroat arrive early and sing delightfully often from exposed positions. Soon they are joined by scarlet rosefinch, red-breasted flycatcher, aquatic, river and barred warblers together with the fluting golden oriole. Raptors such as white-tailed eagle and Montagu's harrier show frequently, while penduline tits bring extra delight by building much-admired nests. Eight species of woodpecker are present in Białowieża forest, including black and white-backed. Their holes provide homes to flycatchers, starlings and pygmy owls. Other woodland birds include lesser spotted eagle, nutcracker and hazel hen; red-backed shrikes can be common in surrounding fields and meadows.

## Mammals

As everywhere, mammals can be difficult to see, though in Biebrza and Białowieża the chance of sightings are quite good. Elks can usually be seen grazing or loping in the marsh. Wild boars may be surprisingly obvious; there are many hares, but no rabbits. Pine marten is possible, as are red squirrels. Tarpan or Konik horses, now frequent inhabitants of British nature reserves, are being bred to revive a species close to the original wild horse of Europe.

## Other wildlife

Marsh, edible and green tree frogs join the fire-bellied and grey toads in suitable wetlands. Dragonflies are not numerous in May but include Siberian winter and white-legged damselflies. Among early butterflies, Camberwell beauty and large tortoiseshell are popular with British visitors.

## Plants

Biebrza holds a multitude of water-loving plants such as water soldier, sundew, yellow marsh saxifrage and a range of marsh orchids. Trees are much admired in Białowieża with certain individuals famous for their size. On the woodland floor there are hepatica, anemones, lungwort, sweet woodruff and carpets of ransoms. A curious mix of northern, alpine and eastern species can include long-leaved speedwell, bastard balm, spiked rampion and, we hope, lady's slipper orchid.

## Itinerary

Three days at Białowieża, followed by moving to Biebrza marshes for the remaining four days of the holiday. In Białowieża we will stay in the village, close to the Tsar's Palace Park. In Biebrza we stay close to Goniadz, surrounded by meadows and woods.

## Conservation Project

The Biebrza National Park runs many environmental projects in the Biebrza Marshes. Scrub management is underway to give more space for scarce lady's slipper orchids.





20 – 27 May 2011

# The Camargue

## Flamingos and more in Mediterranean France

The wild and beautiful marshes of the Camargue cover a huge area of the Rhône delta in the south of France. At the heart of the Camargue lies the Étang de Vaccarès, a vast shallow lagoon surrounded by natural marshes and sand dunes. Here, not only do we find a profusion of wildlife but also the roaming herds of 'wild' bulls and the exciting long-maned white horses so characteristic of the area.

Although the holiday industry is squeezing these marshes ever tighter, they are still of enormous international importance for their wealth of wildlife. There are sights on show at every turn: great flocks of flamingos, a host of heron and egret species, hawking bee-eaters, and ever-present marsh harriers.

Where marshland gives way to flooded rice fields, breeding colonies of black-winged stilts occur and in places we can watch collared pratincoles hawking after insects. Many black kites and the occasional short-toed eagle hunt the drier edges, breeding areas for tawny pipits and crested larks.

East of the Camargue lies the stony 'desert' of la Crau, originally laid down by a former course of the Durance river. Where parts of this old flood plain have not been cleared of stones and cultivated, stony herb-rich grassland provides breeding habitat for little bustards and pin-tailed sandgrouse. The scents of herbs, hunting Montagu's harriers and the calls of stone-curlews make for a memorable experience.

Farmland to the north, with fields of wild flowers, nightingales singing, fan-tailed warblers calling and occasional rollers perched on telegraph wires, gives way to the spectacular limestone chain of hills, les Alpilles. Cirl buntings and blue rock thrushes may be found on the rocky slopes around the fortified hilltop town of Les Baux. Alpine swifts whirl overhead and walking through the fragrant scrub provides wonderful views over the Rhône delta and a chance of seeing soaring Egyptian vultures and Bonelli's eagles. The limestone hills provide much to excite and interest the botanist too, and butterflies can be bewilderingly abundant.

Above and under the arches of the spectacular Roman aqueduct, the Pont du Gard, alpine swifts and crag martins hunt for insects. Careful, if neck-aching, searching among the fine stonework might provide views of rock sparrows. Riverine forest along the banks of the Gardon River is the home of golden orioles.

To the west of the Camargue proper lies the Petite Camargue. Expanses of *Salicornia* support a small breeding population of spectacled warblers and the islands in some larger étangs hold gull-billed terns and slender-billed gulls. An enormous heronry in the heart of the reserve at Scamandre enables a memorable close encounter with these iconic birds of the marshes. Close to the town of les Saintes Maries-de-la-Mer, known for its spring gypsy festival, tracks along the beach or beside the shore of the étangs afford distant views over the sea and the lagoons.

We stay at the Hotel Robinson, a family-run hotel on the edge of the pretty medieval town of Beaucaire. Noted for its hospitality and its excellent regional food and wine, the hotel is set in 10 hectares of beautiful wooded grounds extending up the hillside behind.



Greater flamingos (Nick Upton)

### Birds

As well as those already mentioned, we should see a selection of the following: white stork, glossy ibis, red-crested pochard, Kentish plover, Mediterranean gull, whiskered tern, short-toed lark, great reed and Cetti's warblers, firecrest, hoopoe and lesser kestrel.

### Flowers

The range of habitats to be visited will provide botanists with much interest. Rare 'salt steppes', traditionally managed hay meadows, limestone hills and the stony desert of La Crau are especially rich.

### Other wildlife

Coypu are everywhere, but seeing the still widespread wild boar is difficult. Diligent searching among waterside reeds often turns up the attractive green tree frog and medicinal leeches can be common in ditches.

### Itinerary

We shall spend three days in the wetlands and marsh edge of the Camargue and Petite Camargue, and a day in each of La Crau, Les Baux and the Alpilles, and the area around the Pont du Gard.

### Conservation project

La Crau is the French stronghold for the lesser kestrel. La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, the French Bird Protection League) has installed nestboxes on the roof of sheepfolds, so reducing the level of predation observed in ground nesting lesser kestrels. Once looking likely to disappear from France, lesser kestrels have recovered steadily, in La Crau growing from 32 pairs in 1994 to 150 pairs in 2009.



Price: £1,350 per person in twin or double room for a full week (Friday to Friday).

Single room supplement: £150

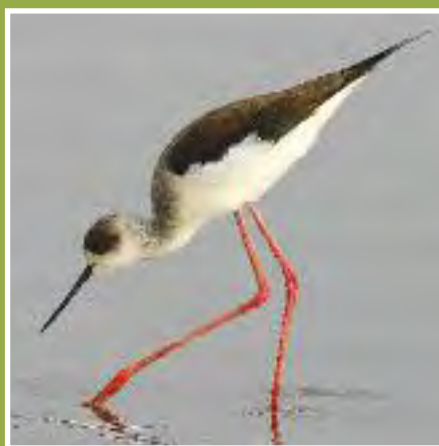
En suite facilities.

Scheduled Ryanair flights  
London Luton – Nîmes

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 14, with two leaders.

Leaders: Robin and Rachel Hamilton



Black-winged stilt



Scarlet darter

More information visit  
[www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) 11

Price: £1,460 per person in twin room for ten days (Thursday to Saturday)

Single room supplement: £200

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights,  
London Gatwick – Sofia

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 14

Leaders: Assen Ignatov and Vlado Trifonov  
from our hosts Neophron

2 – 11 June 2011

# Bulgaria

## Wallcreepers and wetlands

Few countries can rival Bulgaria's scenic splendour and diverse nature. Alpine mountains, rivers with spectacular canyons, vast meadows and forests contrast with coastal wetlands and sandy beaches.

Bulgaria's geographic position in the south-eastern corner of the Balkan peninsular and



This beautiful bird can be seen constantly flicking its crimson-and-black wings while investigating rocky nooks for food.

We can enjoy birds like peregrine, alpine swift, crag martin, red-rumped swallow, dipper, red-backed shrike and rock bunting on the crags and around mountain meadows. Elsewhere in the Western Rhodopes we search for pallid swift and nutcracker. There are many endemic plants such as *Haberlea rhodopensis*, a bellflower *Campanula orphanidea*, and the saxifrage *Saxifraga sibirnyi*. Butterflies include many Balkan species: blues, graylings, fritillaries and more.

On route to the southern Black Sea coast, the Eastern Rhodopes are a stronghold for vultures in Bulgaria. Other birds of prey include short-toed and lesser spotted eagles and long-legged buzzard, plus olive-tree warbler and calandra lark.

## Black Sea coast

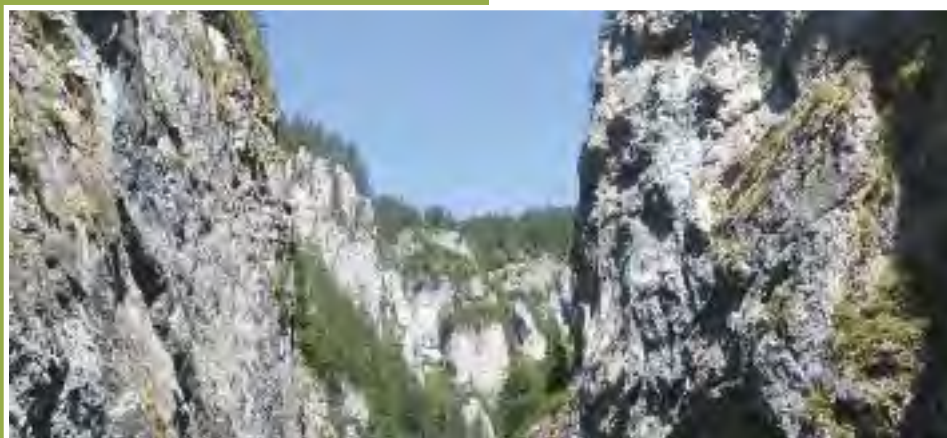
The second part of the holiday is based near the wetlands around Bourgas. Lakes, saline lagoons and salt pans support black-winged stilt, Kentish plover, slender-billed and Mediterranean gulls and gull-billed tern and a great variety of migrating waders.

The greatest lure of the Bourgas wetlands is the flocks of resident white and Dalmatian pelicans. Other birds can include all the European herons and egrets, spoonbill, little crakes and whiskered and white-winged black terns. A visit to the Poda Nature Conservation Centre is planned. We will spend an afternoon birdwatching from the terrace of the centre or walking in the nature reserve.

Past the peninsula town of Sozopol (our hotel is here) and the sand dunes of Primorsko, we come to the most south-eastern corner of Bulgaria, covered by the forests of the Strandja Mountain. A chain of gentle crests and folding wood-covered tops, the Strandja is one of the top places in Europe in terms of biological diversity. Its deciduous forests are of oriental beech with oaks *Quercus polycarpa* and Strandja Oak *Quercus hartwissiana*. Birds here can include black stork, grey-headed woodpecker, barred warbler, semi-collared flycatcher and sombre tit.

## Conservation project

The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds, the BirdLife partner in Bulgaria, manages the Poda Nature Protected Site. Close to the city of Bourgas, the coastal lagoon is a key staging ground for water birds during migration and in winter it hosts thousands of pygmy cormorants. It has a fine heronry and the only breeding colony of spoonbills along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast.



Trigrad gorge



Wallcreeper



Roller

the wide range of habitats ensure outstanding wildlife diversity. The higher plants number about 3,500 species and include more than 400 Bulgarian and Balkan endemics and nearly 70 species of orchids. Bulgaria boasts the richest dragonfly and butterfly fauna in Europe. The country's most valuable natural features are protected in three national parks, twelve nature parks and numerous wildlife and nature refuges.

With about 410 bird species, Bulgaria has something to offer birdwatchers during all seasons, 340 of these seen in the wetlands around Bourgas. Many of these are eastern species including Levant sparrowhawk, Syrian woodpecker, masked shrike and black-headed bunting. Other favourites, almost everywhere in the lowlands, are roller, bee-eater, hoopoe and ortolan bunting and many white stork nests.

The cultural heritage and traditions of the country include magnificent architecture from the 18th and 19th centuries in many towns and villages. Ancient icons, breath-taking murals and superb woodcarvings preserved in monasteries and churches, form just a part of the religious, historic and cultural wealth. Other traditions include the tasty Bulgarian cuisine and good local wines!

This natural history holiday explores two biodiversity-rich landscapes: the Rhodope Mountains and the southern Bulgarian Black Sea coast.

## The Rhodope Mountains

This range is in southern Bulgaria, close to the border with Greece. Rounded, pine-clad hills are occasionally cut by streams and rivers winding through deep gorges. The magnificent Trigrad Gorge is one: limestone cliffs known for their wallcreepers.



4 – 11 June 2011

# Danube Delta

## A week in Europe's largest wetland

There is nowhere in Europe quite like the Danube Delta. Covering 2,200 square miles, the lion's share in Romania, the rest in the Ukraine, no naturalist's lifetime should be without the experience of visiting the delta.

Immense, important, breathtaking, threatened, beautiful; almost any superlative seems to fit some aspect of the Danube Delta.

For wetland birds, it is birdwatching made easy. Most famous are the pelicans, white and the globally threatened Dalmatian. Enjoy them as your boat drifts close to a flock on a lake; another day a flight of them catches you by surprise as they glide easily overhead.

The delta is as varied as it is spectacular. One hour you may be along riverine forest, with glossy ibises, egrets and sparkling blue kingfishers either side of you. Moving into an open area there may be lily-nesting whiskered terns alongside family parties of ferruginous ducks and red-necked grebes with youngsters clambering onto their backs. Then there are little bitterns disappearing into high reeds to the deep-throated sounds of great reed warblers or the distant buzz of a Savi's warbler.



Whiskered tern

The visit is timed for a combination of good weather and wetland birds at their most abundant and obvious. As well as true wetland birds, the land and wooded areas within the wetlands are rich with rollers, bee-eaters, golden orioles and woodpeckers, the last including black and grey-headed. Dragonflies bring hobbies and red-footed falcons in pursuit, and occasionally the vast form of a white-tailed eagle drifts through.

Much of this needs to be done by boat, or rather boats. This holiday is run in collaboration with Ibis Tours who are based in Tulcea, gateway to the delta. A delightful 'pontoon' – floating hotel – is our holiday base, usually combined with a hotel in Tulcea. The food is very good. We will start in Tulcea and then be towed into the delta's core.

Some of the best areas for birds are in Dobrogea – the area round the edge of the delta. Lagoons with wildfowl and migrant waders and are best visited from here. Dry

country birds include calandra and short-toed larks; raptors include long-legged buzzard. Scrub areas hold barred warbler and ortolan bunting; the villages have white storks and Syrian woodpeckers.

Our local guides know the area and its wildlife well. But equally important is their hospitality. As the Romanian Ministry of Tourism brochure rightly says, 'Come as a tourist, leave as a friend'.



### Birds

Those above plus purple, squacco and night herons, great white and little egrets, spoonbill, pygmy cormorant, Syrian woodpecker, red-crested pochard, red-backed and lesser grey shrikes, penduline and sombre tits, icterine warbler and, with luck and perseverance, paddyfield warbler.

### Other wildlife

This is, primarily, a birdwatching holiday, but the flowers in Dobrogea are a fascinating mix of eastern and northern European and Mediterranean species. Trees include Caucasian and manna ashes, Cornelian cherry, oriental hornbeam and silver lime. Terrapins, frogs and butterflies add interest, and muskrat is a possibility in the delta.

### Itinerary

We'll spend three days in Dobrogea exploring a mix of wet and dry land. The following three days will be in the heart of the delta, much of it by boat but with walks onto dry land.

### Conservation project

The Romanian Ornithological Society is a small but active bird conservation society. Our contribution goes towards a group of young naturalists called Falco cherrug (the saker), which is run by Eugen Petrescu, who is both one of the Ibis team – quite often a leader for Honeyguide groups – and the SOR representative in the delta.



Price: £1,390 per person in twin cabin for full week (Saturday to Saturday)

En suite facilities

Single cabin supplement: £140

Scheduled Wizz Air flights, London Luton to Bucharest, possibly overnight on 3/4 June.

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 14

Optional three-day extension to the Carpathian Mountains, 11 – 15 June, including brown bear watching: £480 per person, single supplement £60.

Leaders: Ibis team, with a local guide from Ibis in the Carpathians

White pelicans



Brown bear, a highlight of the Carpathians



Spoonbills

More information visit  
[www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) 13

14 – 21 June 2011

## French Pyrenees

Stunning scenery and mountain wildlife



Price: £1,350 per person in twin room for a full week (Tuesday to Tuesday)

Single room supplement: £140

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flight, Stansted to Pau Pyrenees

Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

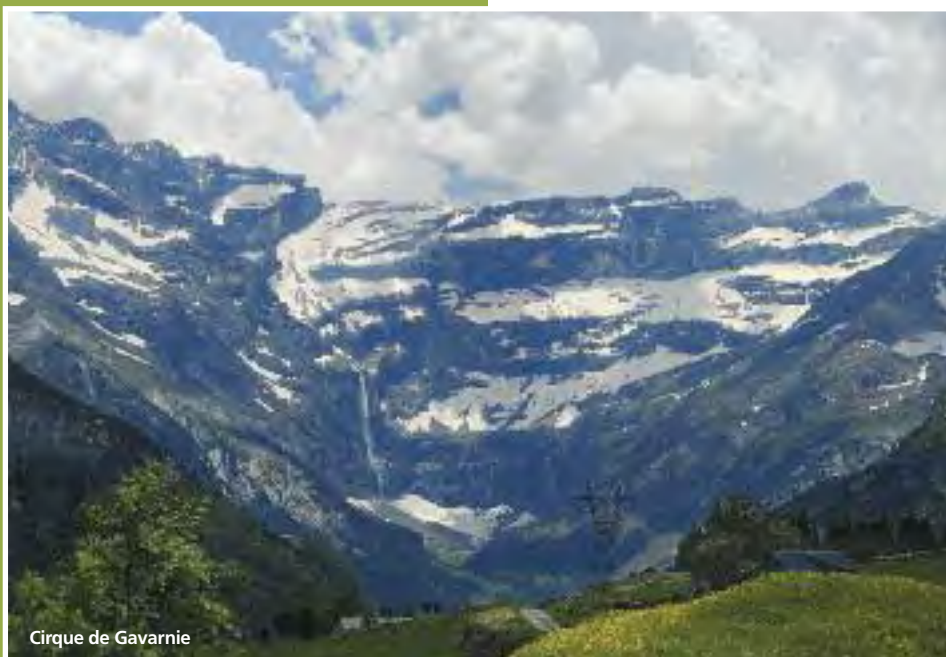
Main leader: Chris Durdin



Apollo butterfly



Lammergeier



Cirque de Gavarnie

For a combination of mountain views, flowers, butterflies and birds, the Pyrenees takes some beating. Spectacular cirques, flower-filled meadows and soaring vultures; it lends itself to our mixed natural history style.

Many Honeyguiders know the Spanish Pyrenees: the French side is lush, greener and the emphasis of this holiday much more on the high Pyrenees. Access is easy to gentle walks or pottering in mountain pastures, up there with the isard – Pyrenean chamois – and marmots.

The short turf of mountain pastures has alpine plants including snowbells, trumpet and spring gentians, garland flower and birdseye primrose. In meadows, columbines, globe flowers and St Bernard's lily delight the eye. On walls, the delicate pink of fairy foxgloves is everywhere. Fragrant and elder-flowered orchids and narrow-leaved helleborine are likely, and there's a chance of black vanilla orchid. Familiar flowers in unfamiliar forms include a red kidney vetch and sheets of broad-leaved marsh orchid *Orchis majalis* subsp. *alpestris*.

Snowfinch, both red-billed and alpine choughs, rock bunting and rock thrush are highly likely. That most thrilling of birds, the lammergeier, is as easy to see here as anywhere; other birds of prey include griffon and Egyptian vultures, golden eagles and red kites.



Moulting marmot

There are wallcreepers, though typically they are elusive. Butterflies include clouded apollo, Camberwell beauty and swallowtail, plus a wide selection of blues, fritillaries and others.

Watercourses can hold Pyrenean brook newts and Pyrenean rock lizards scuttle around on rocks in the higher pastures.

Our base is the Hotel La Brèche de Roland, of Gèdre, just north of Gavarnie. It's an attractive former 17th century family house in the village, looking out onto Brèche de Roland. The 'brèche' or breach is like a bite out of the top of the cirque, measuring 100m by 60m. Roland, nephew of Charlemagne, carved it, according to 11th century legend. He was leading the fight against the Moors and was trying to smash his magical sword Durandel to save it from enemy hands.

### Birds

Highlights, in addition to those mentioned above, could include short-toed eagle, peregrine, alpine swift, black woodpecker, woodlark, crag martin, water pipit, black-bellied dipper, crested tit, red-backed shrike and citril finch.

### Butterflies

Some of the more than 50 species seen in the area: apollo, black-veined white, Moroccan orange-tip, cleopatra, clouded & mountain clouded yellows, green hairstreak, Adonis & Escher's blues, Queen-of-Spain and pearl-bordered fritillaries, large wall brown, Piedmont ringlet, pearly heath and red-underwing skipper.

### Flowers

These are some of the most typical or striking of a long list: livelong saxifrage, mountain avens, entire-leaved primrose, rock-jasmine, ramonda, mountain thrift, large-flowered butterwort, Pyrenean rampion, spreading bellflower, alpine aster, Pyrenean snakeshead, Tofield's asphodel, St Bernard's lily, Pyrenean hyacinth and butterfly orchids.

### Itinerary

The cirque of Gavarnie is rightly famous; it can be busy but that takes little away from its magnificence and wildlife interest. Other sites to be visited include the Barrage des Gloriettes, Saugué valley, Ossoue valley, Col de Tentes, Col du Tourmalet and Cirque de Troumouse.

### Conservation project

The lammergeier, or bearded vulture, is Europe's scarcest bird of prey. Though never common, their decline prompted a partnership to tackle their protection and, as a result, numbers are now on the up. La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, the French Bird Protection League) is active here, with careful monitoring of local population of the casseur d'os (bonebreaker), including tracking birds with radio transmitters; site protection in collaboration with other mountain users, such as climbers; and food provision in the breeding season.

SUPPORTING





9 – 16 November 2011

# Madeira

## Pearl of the Atlantic

Madeira's scenic contrast between sea and mountains, tropical gardens and equable year-round temperatures – around 17°C in winter – make it a tempting holiday destination, especially in the British winter. For naturalists, the isolation of this Portuguese archipelago, some 500 kilometres west of the African coast, brings special wildlife including many species found only here.

The scenery is immediately striking, with cliffs and mountains rising to more than 1800 metres squeezed into an island of only 741 km<sup>2</sup>. Old irrigation channels, known as levadas, with their side paths are excellent – and fairly flat – ways to get to know Madeira and its cultural and natural heritage, like the laurel forest. The green forest contrasts with the blue ocean – where there is a chance to observe some cetaceans.

The rural hotel where we stay, Quinta do Furão, is in Santana in the north of the island, a peaceful and traditional setting away from the main tourist areas around Funchal. From here one can admire the rocky cliffs from the sea and the top of the mountains touching the clouds.

### Flora

The main focus of this trip for flora will be the laurel forest, a UNESCO World Heritage site, with its endemic trees, shrubs, ferns, mosses and lichens. This forest is so named due to the dominance of trees from the laurel family, such as bay laurel, fetid laurel, Madeira mahogany and the Canary laurel. A few native flowers should be flowering in November, including Madeira and anemone-leaved storksills. Away from the laurel forest, the range of flowers from around the world is very striking, such as bird-of-paradise, agapanthus and king protea – these all from South Africa – among many exotic trees and shrubs.

### Birds

Two birds occur only on Madeira, trocax pigeon and Madeira firecrest, and we aim to find these. Local subspecies around at the time we are in Madeira include Berthelot's pipit *Anthus bertelotti madeirensis*, Madeira chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs madeirensis*, grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea schmitzi* and rock sparrow *Petronia petronia madeirensis*. Other birds include plain swift, canary, spectacled warbler, waxbills and migrants such as waders. Bird density is low in Madeira and local knowledge to find these specialities is essential.

### Other wildlife

A morning sea trip offers the chance to see bottle-nosed and spotted dolphins, the possibility of seeing sperm and short-finned pilot whales and, with luck, Fea's petrels coming close to the coast.



Butterflies are also interesting and easy to see with endemic species as Madeira grayling *Hipparchia madeirensis* and Madeiran speckled wood *Pararge xiphia*, plus sub-species like Madeira small copper *Lycaena phlaeas phlaeoides*. Indian red admiral, long-tailed blue and the beautiful monarch butterfly also breed on the island.

### Itinerary

Our days out, all starting on the north coast of the island, visit a range of landscapes and protected areas throughout Madeira. Some days combine gentle walking with bird and flora watching; others will be mainly by minibus stopping at hot spots. A sea trip on the eastern side of the island shows us Madeira from the sea and its maritime species. There will also be a free day with an opportunity to visit the celebrated tropical gardens in Funchal.

### Conservation Project

Europe's rarest breeding seabird and once thought to be extinct, the Zino's Petrel or freira is endemic to Madeira. The Freira Conservation Project (FCP), founded in 1986, is a group of people and institutions working on the conservation of Zino's petrels, especially by controlling its main predator, the rat. The FCP has overseen a steady increase in numbers nesting in the central massif of Madeira. We will not see them as they can only be seen between April and August. Frank Zino, the son of Alec Zino who rediscovered the bird and named it as a separate species, is the FCP's president and will meet us for a brief talk about Zino's petrels.

Price: £1,390 per person in twin room for a full week (Wednesday to Wednesday)

Single room supplement: £160

En suite facilities.

Scheduled easyJet flights, Stansted, Gatwick or Bristol to Funchal

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 7, minimum 4

Leaders: Catarina Fagundes and Hugo Romano



Monarch on pride-of-Madeira



Madeira firecrest



Laurel forest

30 September – 15 October 2011

## South Western Cape

Unique birds, a profusion of flowers and spectacular scenery  
...not to mention the mammals, reptiles, insects and amphibians!



Price: £3,700 per person in twin room for 14 days in South Africa, plus two overnight travel days (Friday to Saturday)

£3,600 for bookings received during 2010

Single room supplement: £400

En suite facilities.

Scheduled flights, London to Cape Town

Deposit: £400

Number: minimum of 3, maximum 14

Leaders: Geoff Crane and Bruce Terlien



Orange-breasted sunbird



King protea



Cape mountain zebra

From the moment you arrive at Cape Town by air, the sheer beauty of the Cape strikes you. The spectacular Table Mountain and its adjacent hills dominate the landscape. Numerous bays and shallow lagoons add to this idyllic scene.

Spring in the South Western Cape offers the visiting naturalist the spectacle of masses of flowers of a bewildering variety – Cape daisies, proteas, heathers and many more – collectively known as the Cape Floral Kingdom. It's the breeding season for local birds, which are joined by 'wintering' birds from the north. Around the coast, southern right whales gather in favoured bays, joining Cape fur seals and seabirds.

The holiday is based on two centres, the Cape Town area (eight nights) and Hermanus (five nights).

### Cape Town area

Coastal species should include Cape gannet, kelp gull, swift tern, Cape, white-breasted and crowned cormorants, African black oystercatcher and white-fronted plover. Troops of chacma baboons are often encountered on roadsides and bontebok, Cape mountain zebra, eland and red hartebeest can be found at the Cape of Good Hope.

At Boulders we will visit the African penguin colony for an eyeball-to-eyeball encounter with this threatened species. Coastal fynbos scrub holds malachite and orange-breasted sunbirds, fiscal flycatcher and Cape siskin. Other frequent birds might include Cape robin-chat, Karoo prinia, grey-backed cisticola and southern boubou.

Kirstenbosch botanical gardens is one of the best-known gardens in the world. Situated on the slopes of the spectacular Table Mountain, it specialises in the indigenous flora of South Africa. Sunbirds abound and Cape sugarbirds can be seen. Cape francolin and helmeted guineafowl are often found among the colourful flowerbeds.

The plateau on Table Mountain affords amazing views when the 'table cloth' of cloud is not down. Rock hyraxes, small mammals related to elephants, can be seen here, while rock agamas, Cape crag lizards and Cape girdled lizards sun themselves on the rocks.

The West Coast National Park to the north of Cape Town is noted for its large coastal lagoon, holding many thousands of wading birds including large numbers of little stints, curlew and marsh sandpipers, Kittlitz's, white-fronted and chestnut-banded plovers. Greater flamingos may be mixed with South African shelducks. Birds of prey can include African marsh harrier, African fish eagle, black-shouldered kite and the handsome black harrier, a speciality of the park. Strandfontein sewage works, Rietvlei and Rondevlei nature reserves offer excellent opportunities to get to grips with waterbirds,

including black-necked grebes, various ducks, purple gallinules and pied kingfishers. Reedbed and pools at Rondevlei have African sedge warblers, several heron and egret species, sacred ibis, African darter, reed cormorant and malachite kingfisher.

Set in the heart of the Cape Winelands, Paarl Mountain Reserve and Paarl Bird Sanctuary offers a mixture of wetland and mountain birdwatching. Higher ground and scrub hold interesting species such as ground woodpecker, jackal buzzard and protea canary. Wetlands hold little bittern, African spoonbill, black-crowned night heron, water dikkop, black crane and white-backed duck, along with red bishops and white-throated swallows.

### The Hermanus area

Hermanus is one of the best places in the world to watch whales close to land, southern right whales especially. At Cape Agulhas, the southern most tip of Africa, seabirds could include the tiny Damara tern.

Harold Porter Botanical Garden may turn up new bird species such as black eagle and the stunning paradise flycatcher. Scrub holds



Whale watching at Hermanus

Victorin's warbler, a speciality of the area. Like many of our stops on this holiday, Harold Porter boasts an excellent tearoom. Nearby, we will stop to look for the enigmatic Cape rockjumper.

The Overberg farmlands and adjacent coastal areas are the haunt of South Africa's national bird, the blue crane, as well as being good country for raptors, such as jackal buzzard, martial eagle and secretary bird, and bustards. Indigenous forest at Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve is dominated by ironwood, with much stinkwood and yellowwood; it has forest birds such as forest canary, blue-mantled flycatcher, yellow-throated woodland warbler and perhaps even lesser or greater honeyguide!

### Conservation project

The second South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2) is one of the most intensive monitoring programmes ever undertaken in South Africa. Huge areas are difficult to access but critically need atlas work and ongoing monitoring work for BirdLife South Africa to understand the bird conservation challenges in these remote sites.





## *More pictures from South Africa's South Western Cape*



Hout Bay



African penguins



Pin-tailed whydah

### Our holidays

- are all round natural history holidays, tailored to get the best out of the wildlife of each area
- go at a relaxed pace
- usually stay at one place
- include good, local food
- use the best of leaders, with extensive conservation knowledge, natural history skills, good experience of the local area and the right personal skills
- are designed to benefit you, wildlife and the local people whose services we use
- include a £40 contribution from each participant to wildlife conservation

Holidays for natural history societies, RSPB local groups or other groups can be arranged.

Visit: [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) for holiday reports, photos and more.



More information visit  
[www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) 17

# Honeyguide booking form



Please use BLOCK CAPITALS and make cheques payable to Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays.

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ place(s) on your holiday to \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose \_\_\_\_\_ deposit(s) at £200 (£400 for South Africa) totalling: £ \_\_\_\_\_

Single room supplement(s): please book \_\_\_\_\_ single room(s) at \_\_\_\_\_ extra each

I understand that the balance will become payable eight weeks (12 weeks for South Africa) before departure.

Holiday insurance company and policy number (details can be sent later, if you prefer): \_\_\_\_\_

Passport number(s), issue and expiry dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Title	Forenames*	Surnames	Date of birth
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

\*As written on your passport. Please note or underline what you like to be known as, if different from the first name

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Next of kin/home contact point in case of emergency (name & tel. no.) \_\_\_\_\_

Any special requirements (eg dietary) \_\_\_\_\_ Non-smoker ☐ Smoker ☐

\_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

For couples, do you prefer twin beds ☐ a double bed ☐ or don't mind ☐

The price of all Honeyguide holidays includes £40 earmarked for a local conservation project. We would be very grateful if everyone booking could complete the following conservation contribution consent and gift aid declaration.

Please complete sections 1 and 2

## 1. CONSENT FOR CONSERVATION CONTRIBUTION

We agree that Honeyguide Wildlife Trust Ltd (registered charity no. 1104606) may apply £40 from the cost of this holiday on behalf of each person named on the booking form, to be donated to a wildlife conservation project in the country to be visited.

PLEASE TICK BOX ☐

Complete (a) or (b)

(a) Please print the name of each person on the booking form who qualifies to gift aid their contribution.

.....

.....

.....

Date .....

(b) If **nobody** on the booking form qualifies to gift aid their contribution, please tick this box. ☐

## 2. GIFT AID DECLARATION

If you pay UK income tax or capital gains tax, Honeyguide Wildlife Trust Ltd can reclaim from HM Revenue & Customs an extra 28p on every £1 donated, helping your conservation contribution go further. To qualify you must pay at least as much UK tax for the year in which you donate as the amount we are able to reclaim on your donation – currently £11.20 on each £40 contribution.

If you are a UK taxpayer, please give us the opportunity of increasing your donation in this way.

*giftaid it*

Thank you

Please return to: Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays, 36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX



# Honeyguide booking details



**How to book:** a booking is made when the completed booking form (a photocopy or emailed scan is fine) plus deposit have been received and accepted by us. We are very happy to take telephone or email bookings, to be confirmed with the form plus deposit during the week following your call / email.

**Deposit and payment:** £200 per person (£400 for South Africa) deposit is payable by cheque or bank transfer with the booking, with the remainder due eight weeks before departure (12 weeks for South Africa). Payments by credit, debit or charge cards cannot be taken.

**Cancellation by you:** if you have to cancel, please telephone as soon as possible and confirm in writing. The cancellation will take effect from when it is received in writing. The scale of cancellation charges below is calculated by the time period before departure.

More than eight weeks	deposit only
5-8 weeks	30% of total price
2-5 weeks	60% of total price
1-14 days; on or after departure date	100% of total price

Travel insurance should cover you (less any excess) for cancellation charges if circumstances are beyond your control, such as ill health, and more than simply a change of mind. Insurance premiums are not refundable.

**Cancellation by us:** in the unlikely event of this happening your money will be refunded in full. A decision to cancel would normally be made at the time of reminders for the remainder of payment, i.e. eight weeks before departure.

**Single rooms and supplements:** we don't like single room supplements but sometimes they can't be avoided, and we pass on only the extra the single room costs us. If you are willing to share but we don't find someone to share with you, you pay only half of any single supplement. Because we have often chosen small, community-based accommodation, single rooms may not always be available. It often helps to talk it through with us at an early stage.



**Honeyguide enamel badges** free from the Honeyguide office.

**Information:** including detailed itinerary, information on books, maps, shopping, weather etc will be supplied as part of the package for enquirers or will be sent after booking. Previous holiday reports are available for most holidays.

**Flights:** flights noted in the holiday details were the likeliest when the brochure went to print. However many summer schedules were not then out. Which airlines fly to where, and on what days, are increasingly prone to change; this may affect the flights and occasionally the dates for some holidays. Flights from other UK airports are sometimes possible: please contact the Honeyguide office. Tickets or booking references will be sent 1-2 weeks before departure.

We use scheduled services and cannot be held responsible for any departure delays. We are not in a position to state the aircraft type to be used.

**Changes to the programme:** should circumstances beyond our control make significant changes to the programme necessary we will consult you to see if these are acceptable to you.

**Holiday leaders:** we do our best to keep the leader named for the holiday, but we reserve the right to replace him or her in the event of illness or some other reason. When two leaders are listed, one may not accompany the holiday if there are not enough participants.

**Group size:** very occasionally if there is one place available on a holiday and a couple wishes to book we may go over the group size stated. The minimum is usually four.

**Overnight accommodation and parking near the airport:** we often cannot avoid flights that mean an overnight stay for many participants. We may be able to advise on a hotel and/or parking. If staying overnight, please consider if you wish to have an extra day on your travel insurance.

**Extending your holiday:** for some holidays it is possible to arrive early or stay on. Please contact the Honeyguide office for details.

**Passport:** a valid full passport is essential.

**Brochure:** a spare brochure (more if you wish) will be sent with every booking.

**Our price commitment:** the prices of our holidays are fixed – there are no surcharges.

**What the price includes:** flights, airport taxes, carbon offsets, all travel and excursions, services of your holiday leader(s) and your conservation contribution are included in the holiday price. Also included are accommodation and meals - breakfast, packed lunch and evening meal, normally inclusive of wine - except for picnic lunches in Crete.

**What the price excludes:** insurance and personal spending.

**Smokers etiquette:** heavy smokers are discouraged from booking with Honeyguide. Light smokers are requested not to smoke when this may affect non-smokers, for example at meals or in transport.

**Tips and gratuities:** all services in the itinerary are covered. You may wish to leave a 'thank-you' for room or restaurant staff at the end of your stay. We may organise a collection if service has been particularly good.

## Carbon offsets

Realistically, most of our travellers will fly. Air travel makes up only a small fraction of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions at present, but that fraction is growing. We're serious about our responsibility to tackle global climate change so we have chosen Carbon Clear to offset our carbon emissions from holiday flights. Carbon Clear invests in projects that remove carbon dioxide from the air by replacing polluting technologies with clean ones, and planting native trees.

Honeyguide has been including carbon offsets in the price of our holidays since 2007 and was one of the first travel companies to do so. Some Honeyguiders travel to our holiday destinations by public transport, and their holiday price is reduced by the cost of flights plus carbon offsets. For more information see [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk)



## TRAVEL INSURANCE

Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays acts as an Introducer Appointed Representative for the purposes of your travel insurance, appointed by Global Travel Insurance Services Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority and whose status can be checked on the FSA Register by visiting [www.fsa.gov.uk/register](http://www.fsa.gov.uk/register) or by contacting the FSA on 0845 606 1234.

**Contact details:**  
**Global Travel Insurance Services Ltd**  
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**Fax: 01903 211106**  
**Email: [enquiries@globaltravelinsurance.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@globaltravelinsurance.co.uk)**  
**Web: [www.globaltravelinsurance.co.uk](http://www.globaltravelinsurance.co.uk)**

You can go to our website where you can obtain a quotation and arrange the insurance online, or download an application form. If preferred, we can send you an application form on booking enabling you to arrange this insurance.

Beyond providing this information, we are not allowed to assist you in any way in the arrangement of your travel insurance or give any advice.

# *Honeyguide wildlife holidays*



Cover picture: golden oriole in a white mulberry tree by Steve Fletcher  
Back cover montage: violet carpenter bee (Extremadura),  
trumpet gentians (French Pyrenees) and meadow fritillary (Dordogne),  
photos by Chris Durdin.

## Other photos by:

Geoff Crane  
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Chris Durdin  
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Dimitar Georgiev (Neophron)  
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