



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Northeast Portugal
15 – 22 May 2016

Holiday participants

Karin & Brennan Auger
Barbara Carter
Brenda Davis
Grace Hickman
Ailsa McKee
Rosemary & Gerald Nicholls
Elisabeth Richmond
Ray Witt

Leaders

Domingos Leitão and Rob Macklin
Report and lists by Rob Macklin

We stayed at:

Posada de Santa Catarina hotel in Miranda Do Douro for 4 nights www.hotelparadorsantacatarina.pt
Gimonde in Montesinho Natural Park for 3 nights www.amontesinho.pt/en/a-montesinho

Wildlife photos by Brennan Auger (BA), Karin Auger (KA) and Domingos Leitão (DL) or as credited.

Cover, top: scarce swallowtail (BA), large psammodromus lizards with French lavender (Barbara Carter);
bottom, flowers near the Douro Canyon (BA).

Below: the Honeyguide group at D Roberto restaurant at Montesinho.



As with all Honeyguide holidays, part of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case SPEA's little bustard survey. The donation was €1000 (£808), made up of each group member's conservation contribution supplemented by Gift Aid and some additional funds in the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust.

More information on the news release:

www.honeyguide.co.uk/documents/NewsreleaseBritishsupportforsurveyofrarebird.pdf

This year's donation brings the total given to SPEA since the first Honeyguide holiday in mainland Portugal in 2005 to £5,782. The total for conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays to June 2016 is £108,126.

INTRODUCTION

Honeyguide's first trip to northeast Portugal, with a little bit of Spain, enjoyed fantastic weather throughout the week with temperatures peaking at 27°C. For the first part of the week we were based at the Posada de Santa Catarina hotel in Miranda do Douro which allowed us to explore the Douro Internacional Natural Park. The first two days in the park were superb with a huge array of wildlife including many butterflies and carpets of flowers. Several raptors included honey buzzards, three species of kites and great views of golden eagles, singing subalpine and orphean warblers plus fantastic views of both griffon and Egyptian vultures at the nest and black storks from a boat trip along the Rio Douro from Bemposta. On the fourth day we drove into Spain to the Reserva Natural Lagunes de Villafáfila. Unlike the recce visit in the dry year of 2015, this huge area of 32,000 hectares was full of water and consequently full of birds, particularly gull-billed terns, many wader species, a black-eared wheatear but most spectacularly 77 great bustards.

In mid-week we moved on to Montesinho Natural Park near Bragança, via Spain, and on the way were treated to superb views of a singing ortolan bunting among carpets of champagne orchids. We stayed at the rural, community-based accommodation at Gimonde and spent two days exploring the Natural Park. Highlights here were superb views of rock thrush, tree pipit and red-backed shrike, more carpets of wild flowers and several species of spectacular lizards. A superb week in this new area for Honeyguide holidays, blessed with perfect weather!

DAILY DIARY

15 May – To Porto and Miranda do Douro

It was sunny and warm at Luton airport as we prepared for our two hour flight to Porto, which was 10 minutes late in leaving but arrived 15 minutes early thanks to a northerly tail wind. We met up with Domingos and Karin and Brennan, who had arrived the previous day from Munich, quickly sorted out the buses and headed northeast to Miranda do Douro. As we drove out of Porto we were heartened to see many flowers in bloom after the previous week's rain, boding well for our week in Portugal. Leaving the city behind, the hillsides were covered in yellow flowering broom with patches of foxgloves, white Spanish broom, yellow lupins, French lavender and field marigolds. We stopped at a café for drinks and refreshments just 50km from Porto, where a female great spotted woodpecker flew over the car park.



French lavender (BA)

Moving on with the afternoon sun high in the sky and temperatures up to 23°C we drove for approximately 90 minutes before stopping at a site overlooking the Rio Sabor. The hillside here was a mass of gorgeous flowers and we quickly identified horseshoe vetch, giant fennel, purple sand spurrey, Tangier pea, both white and yellow bellardia and Kohlsrauchia among others – a superb introduction to this region. Many house martins and several red-rumped swallows were hawking insects over the hillsides, four serins flitted among the scrub and we encountered our first butterfly, a brown argus.

Time to move on to Miranda do Douro and the Posada de Santa Catarina hotel and on the way we spotted our first black kite, common buzzard and white storks. We arrived at the hotel in the early evening to be greeted by house martins and swifts wheeling around the building, collared doves in the grounds and a nightingale singing in the scrub below the hotel. The views from the rooms were absolutely superb, looking out across the magnificent Douro gorge and river. After a splendid meal, time to retire and look forward with great anticipation to the coming days.

16 May – Douro Internacional Natural Park

Another glorious day in prospect as the sun rose into a cloudless sky with very little wind. Before breakfast a black kite flew lazily past the hotel, two nightingales and a golden oriole were in full song, a green woodpecker called and two jays chased each other through the holm oaks and maritime pines. Today we were exploring the area of the park north of Miranda do Douro and our first stop was at São João das Arribas overlooking the Douro gorge with fantastic views along the river. This area was alive with birds with two choughs soaring overhead, a nightingale singing from the scrub and a woodlark singing high in the sky before perching obligingly up on a large boulder. Raptors began to take centre stage as two honey buzzards soared together over the rocky outcrops, a red kite drifted along the ridge before three short-toed eagles hove into view and began to display over the gorge – magnificent! Another black kite then appeared before Domingos spotted a black stork preening on a rock way down the gorge.

While all this was going on alpine swifts, crag martins and house martins buzzed around us and our patience was rewarded when a singing subalpine warbler finally showed itself feeding in the holm oaks. The Douro gorge supports 115 pairs of Egyptian vultures and it wasn't long before two birds were in the sky before us giving us great views of these stunning birds. These were followed by our first three griffon vultures passing overhead – an amazing start to the day.



Overlooking the Douro Canyon (DL); tassel hyacinth (KA).

This area was literally covered in flowers after the previous week's rain and we were soon busy identifying the many plants on offer including tassel hyacinth, spotted rockrose, a beautiful yellow toadflax (*Linaria spartia*) and an amazingly impressive giant grass *Stipa gigantea*. A small green lizard darted over the wall of the nearby chapel before Rosemary encountered a huge ocellated lizard emerging from a hole on the same piece of wall. The ground was covered in yellow marigolds and white chamomile interspersed with several vetches, white valerian and a stunning yellow rockrose *Helianthemum aegyptiacum*. Gerald then spotted a female golden oriole flying overhead and as the morning warmed up butterflies began to take to the wing including brown argus, wall brown, gaudy Spanish festoons, Queen of Spain fritillaries and our first swallowtail. Time to move on but not before we found a bright male blue rock thrush, another five choughs, two more red kites and a delightful birthwort *Aristolochia pistolochia*.

Our next stop was at Paradela where the ground was again carpeted in flowers including new finds such as southern daisy, white stonecrop, pale flax and a bright blue milkwort *Polygala microphylla*. Butterflies were excellent here with both swallowtail and scarce swallowtail on the wing, several black-eyed blues, Spanish marbled whites and a single green hairstreak. Cuckoos and nightingales were providing a musical backdrop to proceedings, five more choughs came into view and a dark-phase booted eagle soared overhead.

After a picnic lunch we found a small café in a local village for coffees and a refreshment break before deciding to explore the wetter valley areas in this region. Both common blue and black-eyed blue butterflies were on the wing on our arrival and we saw the first of several bright yellow Moroccan orange-tips. The meadows here were covered in flowers with hundreds of superb tongue orchids and the bright blue squill *Scilla ramburei*. Further inspection revealed the presence of scores of champagne orchids growing among carpets of the squill and meadow saxifrage with small patches of Star of Bethlehem.

The entire afternoon was played out to a continuous backdrop of singing nightingales and at least three Bonelli's warblers, one of which gave us great views in the ash trees. Elizabeth spotted a honey buzzard over the forest giving great views as it soared overhead while several cuckoos called and a turtle dove 'purred' quietly from the cover of thick scrub. Birds just kept on coming as Brenda spotted a stunning male golden oriole then two woodchat shrikes perched up in full view atop a dead tree and Brennan caught up with a male cirl bunting back by the buses. Two huge clumps of broomrape were cautiously identified as *Orobanche crenata* while an intriguing white version of French lavender may well have been a different species altogether. We also found flowering wild peonies in two of the meadows, a psammodromus lizard quickly disappeared into cover, a marsh fritillary danced over the meadows and just before we left Rosemary found a spotted flycatcher hunting for insects among the ash trees.

With time moving on we headed back towards the hotel on a relatively rough track where we were able to make one last stop overlooking the river. Two more black kites drifted slowly overhead while butterflies were represented by two clouded yellows and another gaudy Moroccan orange-tip. New plants here included sheep's-bit scabious, a yellow toadflax and stunningly bright patches of the pink *Silene colorata* bringing to an end a fascinating day in the northern Portugal countryside.

17 May – Douro Internacional Natural Park: south section around Freixo De Espada Cinta area and Barragem de Bemposta

Yet another cloudless sky with temperatures again in the mid-twenties and a change of direction as we headed south from Miranda do Douro. Our first stop was an unscheduled one as we spotted a black-shouldered kite flying low over an area of scrub and grassland – a very unexpected find this far north in Portugal. It disappeared from view quite quickly but our attention was soon taken by a carrion crow in full pelt chasing a goshawk into a clump of trees – a very brave act on the crow's part but it was probably protecting its nest. Birds just kept on turning up as a woodlark sang in full view from overhead telephone wires and was joined in song by our first Thekla lark. Three golden orioles were singing and giving us brief views, a woodchat shrike sat atop a dead branch out in the open, a green woodpecker called, a quail sang 'wet-my-lips' from the herbage, a cuckoo flew over and our first Iberian grey shrike hunted for insects over the scrub – quite an amazing array of bird life on an ordinary patch of scrub and grassland.

We reached our first planned stop in mid-morning, still in the Natural Park, a flower-filled area by the river. As we clambered out of the buses, two Bonelli's eagles flew over but most of us missed them. Not to worry though as an immature golden eagle came into view and soared along the hillside right in front of the group showing white patches on the underwings and on the tail – a fantastic sight and more so in that this species is often seen as just a dot in the sky. The warm morning had brought out several butterflies and Domingos quickly netted a knapweed fritillary followed by a splendidly marked red-underwing skipper, while a wood white and orange-tip were also on the wing. We also found our first dragonfly of the trip, a western clubtail, while new flowers included *Tolpis barbata*, weld and the very striking narrow-leaved crimson pea.

Our next stop was a little further on but higher and overlooking the river at Ribeira do Mosteiro. Almost immediately another golden eagle appeared, this one a full adult, being mobbed by a pair of nesting kestrels, again giving us fabulous views before the earlier immature bird re-appeared. Karin then found a rock bunting singing from an open vantage point, two red-rumped swallows scythed across the sky and careful perusal of the cliff face revealed the presence of four griffon vultures, including one on a nest.

We moved on towards our lunch spot at Penedo Durão but were distracted on our way by finding at least six bee-eaters hawking for insects in the river valley giving us, yet again, superb views; several azure-winged magpies were also found here flitting among the trees before one smart individual perched out in full view. Our lunch spot was a very high point in the park overlooking Spain and we were able to look down on soaring griffon vultures and black kites with 10+ alpine swifts feeding at eye level. Best of all was a stunning male blue rock thrush literally yards away from us – brilliant! Before we left we found both scarce swallowtail and swallowtail plus a singing male black redstart.



Boat trip on the Douro River (DL); Western Clubtail (BA).

After lunch we drove back north to Barragem de Bemposta for our afternoon boat trip on the Douro river. A pair of white wagtails were nesting in the boat and had to wait patiently for our return before gaining access back to their nest. The boat trip proved to be an inspired choice as we almost immediately saw two magnificent black storks take to the air and fly down-river. We certainly had a different perspective of the Douro gorge from the river and managed to get in close to the cliffs to have great views of two Egyptian vultures on their nests in holes in the rocks but also several griffon vulture nests higher up the cliffs. Our first wrens of the trip were singing all the way along the gorge but our attention was soon taken by two more adult golden eagles drifting along the gorge very close up giving us unrivalled views yet again. Another male golden oriole flew over the river and the rock doves here included many 'pure' birds, at least not obvious feral pigeons, and the trip was completed by a superb view of an adult Bonelli's eagle standing statuesque-like on the cliffs surveying its domain – unforgettable and a great way to end another exhilarating day.

18 May – To Spain and the Reserva Natural Lagunes de Villafáfila



Great bustard (KA)

Another hot and sunny day with temperatures climbing to 24°C by late afternoon on the Spanish plains. Our whole day was spent in and around the 32,000 hectare reserve at Villafáfila, near Zamora, which apparently hosts a population of approximately 3000 great bustards. It did not take us long to find some of these imposing birds as we spotted six large males out in the open fields – an amazing way to start the day. We stopped off at an observation point at Villarrín de Campos overlooking a large lake and soon spotted several brilliant-white gull-billed terns, hundreds of which nest in the park, loafing on the water's edge, our first black-winged stilts and lapwings plus great views of a male Iberian yellow wagtail.

Brennan then spotted a harrier quartering the nearby fields and close inspection revealed it to be a hen harrier, very scarce here with only four pairs nesting in the entire park. A passing booted eagle was immediately mobbed by two lesser kestrels and at least three marsh harriers were hunting over the fields where the hen harrier had landed but there was no defensive response from the latter – what a raptor-fuelled way to begin the day's explorations.

We moved on to the deserted village of Otero de Saregos where lesser kestrels were nesting in the abandoned buildings and we were fortunate enough to get splendid views of these delightful little falcons. Several bee-eaters were hawking for insects and occasionally perching up on the telephone wires while rock sparrows chattered away endlessly on the roofs. A commotion over the neighbouring meadow turned out to be a female marsh harrier being mobbed by over 100 breeding black-winged stilts and lapwings although, strangely, a passing booted eagle did not elicit the same response. When things had quietened down we spotted two shelducks and 13 pochards on the open water pools on the marshes, Gerald found a silver Y moth among the thistles and Domingos caught a small dark skipper which we finally identified as a mallow skipper. Mammals had been hard to come by so we were delighted to see an Iberian brown hare out on the grassland. Our first damselfly of the trip was finally identified as an Iberian bluetail and as we were about to leave a male black redstart put in an appearance on the farm roof.

We had organised a visit to the information centre of the Lagunos de Villafáfila where Pepe gave us an introduction to the reserve, ably translated where necessary by Domingos.



Villafáfila (BA)

After this introduction we strolled around the lagoons to a picnic area to enjoy our picnic lunches and on the way found two more dragonflies, several red-veined darters and two freshly-emerged black-tailed skimmers, while Domingos found a large mole cricket. Out on the water-filled lagoons we soon found several tufted ducks and pochards, a single little grebe and over 50 greylag geese, many with large young. Many black-winged stilts were feeding in the shallows with 18 smart looking avocets, both of these species nesting on the specially constructed islands. More birds included a single little ringed plover on the edge of the lagoon, two turtle doves made a brief appearance and a stunning male Montagu's harrier soared over the area in full view.

A real treat was in store as Pepe called us over to one of the observation hides where we were able to get amazing close-up views of two pairs of great bustards in an enclosure, part of the captive breeding programme when eggs and chicks are rescued from farming operations and reared by these two pairs! The majority of the natural park is farmed so occasionally there will be a conflict with great bustards, hence the breeding programme. While we were watching these magnificent birds, two booted eagles, a black kite and three lesser kestrels were in the air together over the compound. We returned to the centre, purchasing a few cards and maps before bidding farewell to Pepe and moving on to another nearby observation area on this huge reserve. On the way to this point we spotted another 17 great bustards out on the grasslands, 40 cattle egrets taking flight at the approach of a shepherd, another male Montagu's harrier and a northern wheatear.

We arrived at Revellinos de Campos where the lagoons were full of breeding gull-billed terns plus good numbers of shoveler, gadwall and pochard, a single grey heron and 10 redshanks among the ubiquitous black-winged stilts and lapwings. Brennan then spotted a wheatear species on a post which on closer inspection turned out to be a black-eared wheatear, a very special find. We drove on down a narrow lane across the grasslands and were amazed to find 54 great bustards on the nearby slopes, including several displaying males shamelessly showing off: 77 great bustards seen in one day, an amazing total. There was just time for coffee in a neighbouring village where six white stork nests on the church all had young before we headed back to Portugal and our last night at the Posada de Santa Catarina hotel in Miranda do Douro.

19 May – To Gimonde via Cercio: Moveros (Spain), Quintanilha, Deilão

Another glorious day in prospect as we moved hotels today and headed for our new base in the small village of Gimonde near Bragança. Our first stop of the morning was an open area of grass and scrubland at Cercio, near Miranda, and as we arrived 30 griffon vultures were soaring overhead but quickly gained height and were temporarily lost to view. A hoopoe called and was seen briefly, a pale-phase booted eagle passed overhead but a real treat was a singing male orphee warbler perched up in the open and giving us all superb views of this usually very elusive warbler. More birds appeared as a Bonelli's warbler was 'trilling' away, serins flew back and forth, we had yet more excellent views, this time of a woodchat shrike perched right out in the open and a calling hawfinch was seen briefly as it flew quickly through the trees.

As the morning warmed up, butterflies began to appear. These included painted lady, brown argus and wall brown but more unexpectedly pale clouded yellow spotted by Gerald and both Glanville and marsh fritillaries expertly caught by Domingos for the group to get close-up views. Domingos began to turn over rocks and soon came up with a yellow scorpion for everyone to see in the holding jar. The patches of open grassland were full of colourful flowers including several champagne orchids, purple viper's bugloss and yellow tolpiis. As we made our way back to the buses a red kite circled overhead, a nuthatch obligingly sat out in the open and a male ciril bunting also burst into song atop a maritime pine tree. To cap an excellent start to the day Rob then spotted a male subalpine warbler flitting through



Scorpion (KA); champagne orchid (BA).

the scrub and two male golden orioles chased each other through the trees – presumably a territorial dispute.

To get to Gimonde it was necessary to cross into Spain for a more direct route and this brought its own attractions. We stopped at an area of scrubby oaks and grassland near the village of Moveros. Here three bee-eaters were spotted overhead before Domingos picked up a singing ortolan bunting in one of the oaks allowing us all to get brilliant views of this rare bunting – a great find! Ray then spotted a three-toed skink which Domingos quickly caught and transferred to the holding jar. This area was covered in flowers with well over 1000 champagne orchids plus tassel hyacinths, the tall southern daisies, sheep's-bit scabious and pale lupins which in turn attracted butterflies in the shape of clouded yellow, Granville fritillary and small copper.

Our lunch spot was back over the border in Portugal near the small village of Quintanilha. On our arrival Bonelli's warbler, blackcap and Iberian chiffchaff were all singing from the trees as we opened up our picnics on the tables provided.

The vegetation here was much different to that we had already encountered and we soon identified new plants such as crosswort, the striking large blue alkanet, ramping fumitory and a new birthwort *Aristolochia paucinervis*. Butterflies included bright yellow brimstones, southern speckled wood and new species in the shape of Provençal fritillary and southern white admiral while Rosemary found the only large tortoiseshell of the trip.

We decided to explore along the river where a grey wagtail was feeding along the weir with a white wagtail and we found our only sword-leaved helleborine of the trip and as well as a flowering wild peony – very unexpected in this area. Yet another butterfly was caught and put in the holding jar, this one identified as green-underside blue. We then encountered a magnificent flowering winged pea with huge flowers and a purplish-black centre. A turtle dove was purring from the surrounding scrub and both nightingale and song thrush were in full song, even early in the afternoon. Time to head up into the village for coffee but not before Domingos teased out a singing firecrest right above the buses and in full view. By the bar in the village we noticed a scallop shell on a wall, indicating that Quintanilha was on the Camino Portugues (The Portuguese Way) to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia.

Our last excursion of the day was up relatively high in the Montesinho Natural Park; we had only just disembarked from the buses when a park ranger turned up and was concerned about Domingos's butterfly net – he soon resolved the situation! This area was covered in flowering tree heath among the flowers with both Spanish festoon and marsh fritillary butterflies on the wing. A rock bunting was singing in full view and yet another Bonelli's warbler could be heard trilling in the treetops. The afternoon was moving swiftly on so we headed to our new hotel at Gimonde, a community-based business in this small village and we were based in two of the well appointed houses. Four of us, Barbara, Grace, Ray and Rob, were billeted some 400 metres away from the main part of the accommodation entailing a longish walk down to dinner; luckily the evenings were warm. The restaurant upstairs was very traditional and welcoming and we looked forward to our evening exploration of Portuguese food.

20 May – Montesinho Natural Park

A glorious day in prospect as we assembled in the village square with temperatures forecasted to reach 27°C. In the village, white storks were active at their nest over the river, scores of frogs were very active on the river's edge and a superb male redstart sang from a TV aerial right out in the open. Today we headed up into the higher reaches of the natural park. Our first stop was full of smaller birds including several singing rock buntings, with one in full view, plus singing nightingale, whitethroat, blackcap, a cuckoo overhead and a male Dartford warbler calling out in full view.

Moving further on along the very passable dirt road we encountered a tree pipit singing in full view from the tops of Pyrenean oaks, a somewhat unexpected find, and a booted eagle drifted overhead. Further along the track Domingos spotted what for many was the bird of the day, a superb male rock thrush perched up on a rock and soon joined by the duller female. A male red-backed shrike then gave us excellent views in the surrounding scrub, stonechats and whitethroats called and the rock bunting count soon reached double figures. Gerald was off searching the scrub and soon came back with reports of holly blue and small tortoiseshell butterflies plus several angel's tears narcissi in flower on the trackside. Cuckoos seemed relatively common across these higher areas, two dunnocks appeared in the scrub and we found yet another new bird in the shape of a tawny pipit performing its song flight high in the air. Meanwhile the drivers backtracked to collect the buses and we all met up again at the dam, the Barragem de Serra Serrada. The lake was fairly quiet although we did spot two great-crested grebes and several skylarks singing overhead. Another tree pipit was singing in this area and careful searching of the grassland turned up flowering hoop-petticoat narcissus, several yellow and white rock-roses as well as lousewort and purple toadflax.

We drove on to our lunch spot by the headquarters of the natural park where we were joined by singing skylarks, tree pipit, great tit and chaffinch. The scrub at the back of the deserted buildings turned up a tawny pipit perched up in full view on a rock, another cracking male red-backed shrike and, best of all, a crested tit singing in full view right over our heads. Coffee beckoned so we drove into Montesinho, the highest village in the park, where a golden oriole was singing and field pansy grew out of the village walls.

Our last stop of the day was at the Rio Sabor right on the Spanish border which allowed us to walk alongside the river. Butterflies were very much in evidence and we soon spotted at least 10 Provençal fritillaries, several wood whites, scarce swallowtail, dingy skipper as well as more common species such as small copper and brown argus. Both coal tit and firecrest were in song and we were able to get good views of the latter. A Cetti's warbler sang softly from the riverine scrub while overhead were soaring peregrine, griffon vulture and black kite. Several new plants were added to the list including a glorious blue aquilegia, water figwort and smooth tare and Gerald found a clouded yellow *helice* form along the banks. Before we concluded our explorations for the day we noticed several tracks in the soft mud on the bridge and closer inspection revealed roe deer in the front followed by wild boar and most spectacularly of all, wolf tracks!! What an end to the day!

21 May – Montesinho Natural Park and Bragança

The male redstart was in full song again at Gimonde as we prepared to leave for the west of the park. A turtle dove and a nightingale were also in song but we were surprised to see a melodious warbler out in full view in the riverine scrub. As we left the village we saw two bee-eaters on telephone wires. Our first stop was at the Ribeiro da Granja and as we climbed out of the buses a Bonelli's warbler was singing in the adjacent woodland. Wrens and robins were calling in the woods, a green woodpecker 'yaffled' in the distance and we saw at least six turtle doves including two displaying – great to see this now scarce UK bird doing so well here. This area was full of flowers including several excellent specimens of corn cockle, bladder campion, early purple orchids, blue hound's-tongue and a large yellow salsify. We stopped briefly higher up to look for raptors but only encountered a single buzzard but we did see Dartford warbler, cuckoo and rock bunting while the ever resourceful Gerald caught a Queen of Spain fritillary. We made another brief stop by a river where we found two grey wagtails but not the hoped for dipper. Crag martins were hawking for insects over the trees. The highlight here was Domingos catching an Iberian worm lizard, a most amazing worm-like creature.

Our lunch spot was by the river at Moimenta and as soon as we turned up we spotted a Schreiber's lizard, endemic to the Iberian peninsula. Unbelievably we then found two more of these spectacular lizards in the meadow and many cameras were soon clicking away. A new species was soon added to the list in the shape of tree sparrow, a golden oriole was chasing a magpie away from its nest while singing birds included coal tit, Bonelli's warbler, Iberian chiffchaff and, of course, nightingale. More new plants included some familiar to the group, namely black spleenwort, thyme-leaved speedwell and hemlock water dropwort, and Ailsa identified a new fern in the shape of hard fern.

After a coffee in the local village, where we saw our only Iberian wall lizard of the trip, we headed off to explore the old town of Bragança, the capital of the region. We parked high up in the city and walked down through the old town, stopping off to visit the cathedral while admiring the large castle up ahead. The old town itself was in a bad state and could do with some major renovations. We had a bit of a rumpus as we brought the buses down to pick up the group where a car parked on a corner caused Rob's minibus to get stuck. The driver of the car appeared and began shouting, picking up a huge rock in the process, which Gerald thought he was going to throw through the windscreen but Domingos appeared and soon sorted it all out. The local onlookers thought it was hilarious but agreed the car driver had parked in the wrong place!



Schreiber's lizard (KA)

Our last evening at Gimonde and after the daily log check Honeyguide presented 1,000 euros to Domingos, in his SPEA capacity; this money was going towards the Iberian little bustard survey and each member of the group had contributed to this worthwhile project by coming on this trip.

22 May – To Porto and home

Before we bade our farewells to Gimonde we posed for a group photograph in front of the restaurant. White storks and a booted eagle drifted overhead and our redstart was again in full song on the neighbouring house. An uneventful drive to Porto was enlivened by a bee-eater just outside Gimonde, a hoopoe flying across the motorway and three black kites hunting over the fields. We arrived at the airport in good time and said goodbye to Domingos, Karin and Brennan before boarding our flight back to Luton and home.

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

Brennan	The first immature golden eagle.
Gerald	All of the lizards.
Rosemary	Hillsides covered in broom and French lavender.
Ailsa	Bee-eaters.
Karin	All four golden eagles.
Elizabeth	Seeing Domingos appear from behind a rock with more reptiles.
Brenda	Male rock thrush.
Barbara	Vulture nests.
Grace	Seeing bee-eater close-up – shame it was dead!
Ray	The boat trip.
Domingos	Tree pipits singing and displaying.
Rob	Male rock thrush.

SPECIES LISTS

BIRDS – 130 species	
Little Grebe	Two at Villafáfila.
Great Crested Grebe	One at Barragem de Serra Serrada.
Cormorant	One on River Douro on boat trip from Bemposta.
Cattle Egret	40 at Villafáfila.
Grey Heron	One at Paradena & two at Villafáfila.
Black Stork	Three on the River Douro.
White Stork	Peak of 30 in Villafáfila area.
Greylag Goose	50+ with young at Villafáfila.
Shelduck	Four at Villafáfila.
Gadwall	Minimum of 10 at Villafáfila.
Mallard	Common at Villafáfila.
Shoveler	At least 10 at Villafila plus pair with brood.
Pochard	Minimum of 20 at Villafáfila.
Tufted Duck	Four at Villafáfila.
Honey Buzzard	Two at Sao Jao das Arribas and one at Paradela area.
Black-winged Kite	One near Freixo de Espada o Cinta.
Black Kite	Widespread and common, peak of 30 at Villafáfila.
Red Kite	Peak of four in Douro Natural Park.
Egyptian Vulture	Five in Douro Natural Park inc.two on nests.
Griffon Vulture	Peaks of 20 at Douro Natural Park & 30 at Cercio.
Short-toed Eagle	Peak of three at Sao Jao das Arribas.
Marsh Harrier	Four at Villafáfila.
Hen Harrier	One at Villaria de Campos at Villafáfila.
Montagu's Harrier	Peak of four at Villafáfila.
Goshawk	One at Freixo de Espada o Cinta.
Buzzard	Peak of four at Villafáfila.
Booted Eagle	Seen on five days peak of four at Villafáfila.
Golden Eagle	Four in Douro Natural Park.
Bonelli's Eagle	Two in south of Douro Natural Park and one at Bemposta on river.
Lesser Kestrel	Minimum of 40 at Villafáfila.
Kestrel	Peak of three at Villafáfila.
Peregrine	One overhead by Rio Sabor.
Red-legged Partridge	Peak of three in area of Freixo de Espada o Cinta.
Quail	One calling in area of Freixo de Espada o Cinta.
Coot	Common at Villafáfila.
Great Bustard	A count of 77 at Villafáfila.
Black-winged Stilt	Minimum of 100 at Villafáfila.
Avocet	40 at Villafáfila.
Little Ringed Plover	One at Villafáfila.
Lapwing	Minimum of 50 at Villafáfila.
Redshank	At least 10 at Villafáfila.
Black-headed Gull	Common at Villafáfila.
Gull-billed Tern	Minimum of 100 at Villafáfila.
Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	Widespread & common with almost pure birds at Bemposta.
Woodpigeon	Widespread but not particularly common.
Turtle Dove	Widespread peaking at six in Montesinho Natural Park.
Collared Dove	Widespread & common.
Cuckoo	Widespread peaking at five in Douro Natural Park.
Swift	Widespread & common.
Alpine Swift	Peak of 10 at Penedo Durao.
Little Owl	One at Miranda do Douro.
Bee-eater	Peak of eight at Villafáfila and six near Penedo Durao.
Hoopoe	Peak of just two in Douro Natural Park.
Green Woodpecker	Occasionally heard from four locations.
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Two on way from Porto to Miranda do Douro.
Kingfisher	One heard at Quintanilha.
Short-toed Lark	One singing male at Villafáfila.
Crested Lark	Peak of three in Douro Natural Park.
Thekla Lark	One singing near Freixo De Espada a Cinta.
Woodlark	Singing males in Douro & Montesinho Natural Parks.
Skylark	Minimum of 10 singing males at Montesinho Natural Park.
Crag Martin	Peak of 10 at Douro Natural Park.
Swallow	Widespread & common.
Red-rumped Swallow	Peak of six in Douro Natural Park.

House Martin	Widespread & common.
Tree Pipit	Two singing males in area of Barragem de Serra Serrada.
Tawny Pipit	Two at the Barragem de Serra Serrada.
Grey Wagtail	One at Quintanilha & two at Montesinho Natural Park.
White Wagtail	Widespread & common.
Yellow Wagtail	Three at Villafáfila.
Wren	At least eight singing males in Douro gorge at Bemposta.
Dunnock	Two on track to Barragem de Serra Serrada.
Robin	Widespread but uncommon.
Nightingale	Widespread and common.
Redstart	One at Gimonde and one by the Rio Sabor.
Black Redstart	Widespread, seen every day.
Stonechat	Widespread and common.
Northern Wheatear	Two at Villafáfila.
Black-eared Wheatear	One at Revellinos de Campos at Villafáfila.
Rock Thrush	2 males and a female on track to Barragem de Serra Serrada.
Blue Rock Thrush	Peak of three in Douro Natural Park.
Blackbird	Widespread & common.
Mistle Thrush	Peak of 2 in Montesinho Natueal Park.
Song Thrush	Singing male at Gimonde & Quintanilha.
Cetti's Warbler	Singing male in scrub by Rio Sabor.
Fan-tailed Warbler	One at Revellinos de Campos at Villafáfila.
Reed Warbler	Two at Otero de Sariegos at Villafáfila.
Dartford Warbler	Two on track to Barragem de Serra Serrada.
Subalpine Warbler	Singing males at Cercio & Sao Joao das Arribas.
Sardinian Warbler	Only in Douro Natural Park.
Orphean Warbler	Singing male at Cercio.
Blackcap	Peak of three in Montesinho Natural Park.
Whitethroat	Peak of five on track to Barragem de Serra Serrada.
Melodious Warbler	Singing males at Douro Natural Park and Gimonde.
Bonelli's Warbler	Peak of three in Douro Natural Park.
Iberian Chiffchaff	Singing males at Quintanilha & Montesinho Natural Park.
Firecrest	Singing male at Quintanilha.
Spotted Flycatcher	One in Douro Natural Park.
Coal Tit	Only at Montesinho Natural Park.
Blue Tit	Widespread and relatively common.
Great Tit	Widespread but uncommon.
Crested Tit	Two sightings in Montesinho Natural Park.
Long-tailed Tit	One at Sao Joao das Arribas.
Nuthatch	One at Cercio.
Short-toed Treecreeper	One at Cercio.
Iberian Grey Shrike	Peak of just two at Villafáfila.
Woodchat Shrike	Peak of three in Douro Natural Park.
Red-backed Shrike	Three on track to Barragem de Serra Serrada.
Jay	Widespread and common.
Azure-winged Magpie	Peak of 20 in Douro Natural Park.
Magpie	Widespread and relatively common.
Red-billed Chough	Peak of 10 in Douro Natural Park.
Jackdaw	Ten at Villafáfila.
Carrion Crow	Widespread & common.
Raven	Peak of four at Villafáfila.
Spotless Starling	Widespread and very common.
Golden Oriole	Peak of four in Douro Natural Park.
House Sparrow	Widespread and very common.
Tree Sparrow	At least one at Quintanilha.
Rock Sparrow	Peak of 10 at Otero de Sariegos at Villafáfila.
Chaffinch	Widespread and common.
Serin	Widespread and common.
Greenfinch	Noted at Gimonde.
Goldfinch	Widespread and relatively common.
Linnet	Peak of 10 in Douro Natural Park.
Hawfinch	One at Cercio.
Girl Bunting	Peak of two in Douro Natural Park.
Rock Bunting	Peak of 12 in Montesinho Natural Park.
Ortolan Bunting	Singing male at Moveros.
Corn Bunting	Widespread & common.

MAMMALS – 9 species		
Western Hedgehog – dead on road outside Porto	Iberian Brown Hare	Otter – scat only
Northern Mole – hills only	Wolf – tracks only	Wild Boar – tracks only
Rabbit	Red Fox – scat only	Roe Deer

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS – 10 species			
Large Psammodromus	Schreiber's Lizard	Iberian Water Frog	Common Midwife toad
Ocellated Lizard	Iberian Wall Lizard	Iberian Frog	
Three-toed Skink	Iberian Worm Lizard	Common Toad	

ODONATA – 5 species				
Iberian Bluetail	Large Red Damselfly	Black-tailed Skimmer	Western Clubtail	Red-veined Darter

BUTTERFLIES – 34 species			
Swallowtail	Pale Clouded Yellow	Common Blue	Spanish Marbled White
Scarce Swallowtail	Brimstone	Southern White Admiral	Small Heath
Spanish Festoon	Wood White	Small Tortoiseshell	Southern Speckled Wood
Large White	Green Hairstreak	Large Tortoiseshell	Wall Brown
Small White	Small Copper	Painted Lady	Red Underwing Skipper
Western Dappled White	Holly Blue	Queen of Spain Fritillary	Mallow Skipper
Orange Tip	Green-underside Blue	Glanville Fritillary	Dingy Skipper
Moroccan Orange Tip	Black-eyed Blue	Knapweed Fritillary	
Clouded Yellow	Brown Argus	Provençal Fritillary	

MOTHS – 3 species		
Pine Processionary Moth – tents only	Mother Shipton	Silver Y moth

OTHER INVERTEBRATES - 4 species	
Violet Carpenter Bee <i>Xylocopa violacea</i>	Red-striped Oil Beetle <i>Berberomeloe majalis</i>
Yellow Scorpion <i>Buthus occitanus</i>	Mole Cricket <i>Gryllotalpidae</i> sp.



Above: Domingos with the worm lizard; Red-veined Darter.

Below: wolf footprints; gum cistus (all BA).



PLANTS

PTERIDOPHYTA Ferns & Allies		Caprifoliaceae Honeysuckles	
<i>Blechnum spicant</i>	hard fern	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	elder
<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	male fern	Caryophyllaceae Pinks	
<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i>	lady fern	<i>Silene gallica</i>	small-flowered catchfly
<i>Asplenium adiantum-nigrum</i>	black spleenwort	<i>Kohlruschia velutina</i>	kohlruschia
<i>Polypodium interjectum</i>	western polypody	<i>Silene latifolia</i>	white campion
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	bracken	<i>Silene vulgaris</i>	bladder campion
SPERMATOPHYTA Conifers		<i>Silene colorata</i>	
Pinaceae Pines		<i>Dianthus lacrifolius</i>	endemic to the Iberian peninsula
<i>Pinus pinaster</i>	maritime pine	<i>Paronychia</i> sp.	
<i>Pinus pinea</i>	umbrella pine	<i>Spergularia purpurea</i>	purple sand-spurrey
Cupressaceae Cypress		Cistaceae Rockroses	
<i>Juniperus oxycedrus</i>	prickly juniper	<i>Cistus albidus</i>	grey-leaved cistus
ANGIOSPERMS		<i>Cistus monspeliensis</i>	narrow-leaved cistus
Anacardiaceae Pistacios		<i>Cistus ladanifer</i>	gum cistus
<i>Pistacia terebintus</i>	turpentine tree	<i>Cistus salvifolius</i>	sage-leaved cistus
Apiaceae Carrots		<i>Halimium ocymoides</i>	
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	fennel	<i>Halimium lasianthum</i>	woolly rock rose
<i>Ferula communis</i>	giant fennel	<i>Halimium umbellatum</i>	white thyme
<i>Eryngium campestre</i>	field eryngo	<i>Helianthemum aegyptiacum</i>	
<i>Conium maculatum</i>	hemlock	<i>Tuberia guttata</i>	spotted rock-rose
<i>Daucus carota</i>	wild carrot	Clusiaceae St. John's Worts	
Aristolochiaceae Birthworts		<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	perforate St. John's wort
<i>Aristolochia paucinervis</i>		<i>Hypericum pulchrum</i>	slender St. John's wort
<i>Aristolochia pistolochia</i>		Cornaceae Dogwoods	
Asparagaceae Asparagus		<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	dogwood
<i>Agave Americana</i>	sentry plant	Crassulaceae Stonecrops	
Asteraceae Daisies		<i>Sedum forsterianum</i>	rock stonecrop
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	daisy	<i>Sedum album</i>	white stonecrop
<i>Bellis sylvestris</i>	southern daisy	<i>Crassula tillaea</i>	mossy stonecrop
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	yarrow	<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	navelwort
<i>Anthemis arvensis</i>	corn chamomile	Cucurbitaceae Marrows	
<i>Calendula arvensis</i>	field Marigold	<i>Bryonia dioica</i>	climbing white bryony
<i>Chrysanthemum segetum</i>	corn marigold	Dipsacaceae Teasels	
<i>Matricaria discoidea</i>	pineappleweed	<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	wild teasel
<i>Silybum marianum</i>	milk thistle	Ericaceae Heathers	
<i>Onopordum acanthium</i>	cotton thistle	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	ling
<i>Carduus tenuiflorus</i>	slender thistle	<i>Erica australis</i>	Spanish heath
<i>Galactites tomentosa</i>	galactites	<i>Erica arborea</i>	tree heath
<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	cornflower	Euphorbiaceae Spurges	
<i>Tragopogon crocifolius</i>	yellow salsify	<i>Euphorbia oxyphylla</i>	endemic Iberian peninsula
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	dandelion	<i>Euphorbia amygdaloides</i>	wood spurge
<i>Hieracium pilosella</i>	mouse-ear hawkweed	Fabiaceae Peas	
<i>Tragopogon dubius</i>	western goatsbeard	<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>	kidney vetch
Boraginaceae Borage		<i>Vicia sativa</i>	common vetch
<i>Anchusa azurea</i>	large blue alkanet	<i>Cytisus multiflorus</i>	white Spanish broom
<i>Echium plantagineum</i>	purple viper's bugloss	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	broom
<i>Lithospermum purpureoeruleum</i>	purple gromwell	<i>Spartium junceum</i>	Spanish broom
<i>Cynoglossum creticum</i>	blue hound's-tongue	<i>Echinopartum ibericum</i>	
<i>Borago officinalis</i>	borage	<i>Genista tridentata</i> ssp. <i>tridentata</i>	
<i>Myosotis discolor</i>	changing forgetmenot	<i>Lathyrus tingitanus</i>	Tangier pea
<i>Myosotis scorpioides</i>	water forgetmenot	<i>Pisum sativum</i>	wild pea
Brassicaceae Cabbages		<i>Lathyrus setifolius</i>	
<i>Erysimum linifolium</i>		<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	bird's-foot trefoil
<i>Hesperis laciniatus</i>	cut leaved dame's violet	<i>Lupinus luteus</i>	yellow lupin
<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i>	wild radish	<i>Lupinus gredensis</i>	bean wolf
<i>Cardaria draba</i>	hoary cress	<i>Lupinus angustifolius</i>	narrow-leaved lupin
Betulaceae Birches		<i>Lupinus hispanicus</i>	
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	alder	<i>Robinia pseudacacia</i>	false acacia
<i>Betula pendula</i>	silver birch	<i>Medicago arabica</i>	spotted medick
Cactaceae Cactus		<i>Trifolium stellatum</i>	star clover
<i>Opuntia ficus-indica</i>	prickly pear	<i>Trifolium angustifolium</i>	narrow-leaved crimson pea
Campanulaceae Bellflowers		<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	red clover
<i>Jasione montana</i>	sheep's-bit scabious		
<i>Campanula lusitanica</i> ssp. <i>lusitanica</i>			

Fabiaceae Peas (cont'd)		Ranunculaceae Buttercups (cont'd)	
<i>Trifolium arvense</i>	haresfoot clover	<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>	lesser celandine
<i>Trifolium glomeratum</i>	clustered clover	<i>Ranunculus</i> sp. <i>peltatus?</i>	water crowfoot
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	white clover	<i>Aquilegia vulgaris</i>	common columbine
<i>Vicia villosa</i>	fodder vetch	Resedaceae Mignonettes	
<i>Vicia narbonensis</i>	Narbonne vetch	<i>Reseda luteola</i>	weld
<i>Vicia lutea</i>	yellow vetch	Rosaceae Roses	
<i>Bituminaria bituminosa</i>	pitch trefoil	<i>Rubus ulmifolius</i>	bramble
Fagaceae Oaks		<i>Rosa canina</i>	dog rose
<i>Quercus rotundifolia</i>	holm oak	<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	tormentil
<i>Quercus coccifera</i>	kermes oak	<i>Geum urbanum</i>	wood avens
<i>Quercus suber</i>	cork oak	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	rowan
<i>Quercus faginea</i>	Portuguese oak	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	hawthorn
<i>Quercus pyrenaica</i>	Pyrenean oak	Rubiaceae Bedstraws	
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	sweet chestnut	<i>Galium aparine</i>	cleavers
Geraniaceae Geraniums		Salicaceae Willows	
<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	cut-leaved cranesbill	<i>Populus alba</i>	white poplar
<i>Geranium columbinum</i>	long-stalked cranesbill	Scrophulariaceae Figworts	
<i>Geranium lucidum</i>	shining cranesbill	<i>Bellardia trixago</i>	bellardia
<i>Geranium molle</i>	dove's-foot cranesbill	<i>Cymbalaria muralis</i>	ivy-leaved toadflax
<i>Geranium rotundifolium</i>	round-leaved cranesbill	<i>Linaria spartia</i>	
<i>Geranium purpureum</i>	little robin	<i>Linaria aeruginosa</i>	endemic to Iberian peninsula
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	common storksbill	<i>Linaria elegans</i>	
Lamiaceae Mints		<i>Digitalis thapsis</i>	Spanish foxglove
<i>Galeopsis tetrahit</i>	common hemp-nettle	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	foxglove
<i>Salvia verbenaca</i>	wild clary	<i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i>	lousewort
<i>Lavandula stoechas</i>	French lavender	ssp. <i>lusitanica</i>	
<i>Mentha rotundifolia</i>	apple mint	<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>	yellow rattle
<i>Mentha aquatic</i>	water mint	<i>Scrophularia auriculata</i>	water figwort
Malvaceae Mallops		<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>	great mullein
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	common mallow	<i>Veronica persica</i>	common field speedwell
<i>Malva neglecta</i>	dwarf mallow	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	germander speedwell
<i>Lavatera arborea</i>	tree mallow	<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>	thyme-leaved speedwell
Olivaceae Olives		Tamaricaceae Tamarix	
<i>Olea europaea</i>	olive	<i>Tamarix</i> sp.	tamarisk
Orobanchaceae Broomrapes		Thymelaeaceae Daphnes	
<i>Orobanche crenata</i>		<i>Daphne gnidium</i>	
<i>Parentucellia latifolia</i>	red bartsia	Urticaceae Nettles	
Oxalidaceae Wood Sorrels		<i>Urtica dioica</i>	stinging nettle
<i>Oxalis crassipes</i>	pink oxalis	Valerianaceae Valerians	
Paeoniaceae Peonies		<i>Valeriana officinalis</i>	common valerian
<i>Paeonia broteri</i>	wild peony – endemic to Iberian peninsula	<i>Centranthus ruber</i>	red valerian
Papaveraceae Poppies		Violaceae Violets	
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	common poppy	<i>Viola riviniana</i>	common dog violet
<i>Papaver dubium</i>	long-headed poppy	<i>Viola arvensis</i>	field pansy
<i>Fumaria capreolata</i>	ramping fumitory	MONOCOTYLEDONS	
<i>Fumaria agrarian</i>	purple ramping fumitory	Amarylilidaceae Daffodils	
<i>Chelidonium majus</i>	greater celandine	<i>Narcissus bulbocodium</i>	hoop petticoat narcissus
Plantaginaceae Plantains		<i>Narcissus triandrus</i>	angel's tears
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	ribwort plantain	<i>Ornithogalum concinnum</i>	a star of Bethlehem
<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	buck's horn plantain	<i>Ornithogalum angustifolium</i>	star of Bethlehem
Platanaceae Planes		Liliaceae Lilies	
<i>Platanus orientalis</i>	oriental plane	<i>Asphodelus aestivus</i>	common asphodel
Plumbaginaceae Thrift		<i>Muscari comosum</i>	tassel hyacinth
<i>Armeria transmontana</i>	endemic to the Iberian peninsula	<i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i>	Spanish bluebell
<i>Scilla ramburei</i>		Orchidaceae Orchids	
Polygalaceae Milkworts		<i>Cephalanthera longifolia</i>	sword-leaved helleborine
<i>Polygala microphylla</i>		<i>Orchis mascula</i>	early purple orchid
Polygonaceae Docks & Sorrels		<i>Orchis champagneuxii</i>	champagne orchid
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	common sorrel	<i>Serapias lingua</i>	tongue orchid
<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	sheep's sorrel	Poaceae Grasses	
Primulaceae Primulas		<i>Stipa gigantea</i>	
<i>Primula vulgaris</i>	primrose	<i>Briza maxima</i>	quaking grass
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	scarlet pimpernel	<i>Hordeum murinum</i>	wall barley
<i>Anagallis monelli</i>	shrubby pimpernel	Cyperaceae Rushes	
Rafflesiaceae		<i>Bolboschoenus maritimus</i>	sea club rush
<i>Cytinus hypocistis</i>			
Ranunculaceae Buttercups			
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	creeping buttercup		
<i>Ranunculus sceleratus</i>	celery-leaved buttercup		