



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Central Portugal
27 April – 4 May 2014

Participants

Brennan and Karin Aunger

From the Salisbury and District Natural History Society

Barbara Carter
Brenda Davis
Ailsa McKee
Gerald Nicholls

Elisabeth Richmond
Donald and Rita Scarfe
Ray Witt

Leaders

Domingos Leitão and Rob Macklin

Report by Rob Macklin

The photos in this report were all taken during the holiday,
those edged in blue by Brennan, edged green by Rob and edged orange by Karin.

Group photo below by Domingos,
where group members are making a butterfly with their hands to mark Natura 2000 Day.

Cover: Cistanche flowers on the Tejo estuary.

We stayed at the Hotel Rural Quinta da Torre www.facebook.com/quintadatorrehotel at Alpiarça,
near Santarém, and at Hotel O Poejo www.a-opoejo.com near Marvão.



As with all Honeyguide holidays, part of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case SPEA's white stork survey. Domingos Leitão, both Honeyguide leader and SPEA officer, accepted the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust cheque for €620 (£520). This year's donation brings the total given to SPEA since the first Honeyguide holiday in mainland Portugal in 2005 to £4211.

The total for conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays up to early June 2014 is £94,787.

Introduction

Honeyguide's third trip to central Portugal was blessed with superb weather and temperatures in the mid-twenties. The first part of the tour included visits to the Tejo estuary near Lisbon, a river cruise from Valada and the Natural Park of Serra de Aires and Candeeiros. Perhaps the highlight of the week was the sheer number and range of wild flowers on view, particularly at Candeeiros where there were literally thousands of naked man orchids interspersed with hordes of champagne, woodcock, man and tongue orchids – a truly amazing wildlife spectacle and unlike anything we would see in the UK. Another nearby area of grassland was covered in scores of beautiful pink butterfly orchids. Our trip out on the river at Valada enabled us to get very close to a magnificent breeding heron and egret colony – probably as many as two thousand breeding pairs of various species including cattle egrets, spoonbills, black-crowned night herons and glossy ibises. On the Tejo, wading birds were the pick of the crop with hundreds of dunlin and grey plovers interspersed with bar-tailed godwits, whimbrels, greenshanks and ringed plovers among others.

The second part of the week was near Marvão and included trips to Vila Vilha de Rodão, Serra de São Mamede Natural Park and the Elvas Plains. At Rodão we were treated to superb views of griffon vultures as they soared off the cliffs plus Egyptian vultures and Bonelli's and short-toed eagles – a real raptor-fest. A superb highlight here was a two-tailed pasha butterfly (one of 31 butterfly species on the trip) chasing off all comers, including swallowtails. The views from Marvão were as wonderful as ever and we were lucky to see blue rock thrushes at close quarters. At Mamede we had a super view of a very rare soaring black stork but this was a day of golden orioles with many birds in song and fantastic views of a male in full song below the cliffs at Galegos. Our last full day was on the Elvas plains and around the Caia Dam; on the plains we found three superb male Montagu's harriers hunting over the open fields with around 30 lesser kestrels in the same area. At the wetland area at the Caia Dam it was a time for terns with four species found here including both whiskered and black terns. An absolutely brilliant week in Central Portugal!

Daily Diary

Sunday 27 April – to Portugal and Alpiarça

Rain at Bristol was replaced by warm sunshine as we landed at Lisbon in the late afternoon. At the airport we met up with Domingos, Brennan and Karin before organising the buses, and after a short delay we made our way north to the Hotel Rural Quinta da Torre at Alpiarça, near Santarém. On the way we saw our first black kite, several white storks on nests, spotless starlings, plus many swallows and house martins. The roadsides were decked in colour including masses of bright yellow Spanish broom, crown daisies, purple galactites and dark blue fodder vetch.

At the hotel we were met by Teresa and Suzannah who allocated our rooms and we agreed to meet for dinner at 7:30. In the hotel gardens orange trees were festooned with fruit and blossom while serins and greenfinches sang from the treetops. A Cetti's warbler was in full song outside Elisabeth's window and a fan-tailed warbler (or zitting cisticola) sang from a nearby meadow. Across the fields approximately 80 cattle egrets and several white storks were following the plough looking for exposed worms and insects. After a splendid dinner we all looked forward to exploring Portugal in tomorrow's expected sunshine.

Monday 28 April – The Cabanos Valley and River Tejo at Valada

A glorious sunny morning saw 30 lesser black-backed gulls and several cattle egrets foraging for insects in the neighbouring arable fields. Among the chattering house sparrows at the hotel were singing blackcaps and a fan-tailed warbler, while a loquat tree in the grounds was absolutely laden with fruit.

After a hearty breakfast we boarded the buses for the short journey to the Cabanos valley, picking up a couple of southern grey shrikes and bee-eaters on the way. The main focus of the morning was to explore the local forest and olive groves looking for flowers. As an introduction to the flora of central Portugal, the morning could hardly be bettered as just about everything seemed to be in full bloom! The forest floor was covered in yellow Spanish broom, blue shrubby pimpernel, red field gladioli, mauve galactites, purple tassel hyacinths, wild clary and three species of cistus, all in flower.

We were searching for orchids and soon came upon hordes of yellow bee orchids, a few specimens of woodcock orchids, several bee orchids and many fresh-looking small-flowered tongue orchids. Perhaps the find of the morning was the Portuguese version of the splendid mirror orchid (*Ophrys speculum* ssp. *lusitanica*, sometimes noted as *Ophrys vernixia*) the flower of which is fringed with yellowish, not blackish, hairs. Man orchids were also plentiful in this area and we found one specimen growing under a huge giant orchid which had unfortunately just gone over. As the morning warmed up, several butterflies appeared on the wing, particularly many gaudy Spanish festoons but also little blue, Spanish marbled white, southern speckled wood, wall brown and a single grizzled skipper found by Ray.

Birds were few and far between but we did find singing coal and blue tits, a drumming great spotted woodpecker, soaring buzzards and plenty of swifts overhead. As we explored further into the forest we found yet more interesting plants and in particular a pink-flowering broad-leaved helleborine (*Epipactis tremolsii* ssp. *lusitanica*) scrambling gromwell, bladder campion and masses of mallow-leaved bindweed. As lunchtime approached most of the group strolled down to the nearby country lane while Domingos and Rob walked back up the hill to fetch the minibuses. As we drove down to rendezvous with the group we found five more bee-eaters, a southern grey shrike and the attractive flowers of dwarf bindweed. Rejoining the group we made a brief exploration of the roadside verges turning up such delights as purple *Fedia cornucopiae*, star clover, both white ramping and common fumitory plus bush and common vetch.

Our lunch stop was by the side of a quiet country road in warm sunshine. Iberian chiffchaff, firecrest, blackcap and robin were all in song here and a nuthatch called from the depths of the forest. Two male orange-tip butterflies flitted past but the real highlights here were both types of violet limodore, or bird's-nest orchid, in full flower and growing side by side, allowing everyone to get photographs.

After lunch and a quick coffee stop at Santarém we made our way south to the small riverside town of Valada for our afternoon river cruise on the Tejo. As we arrived at the quayside, a black redstart was singing from the local church tower and water figwort was growing freely on the edges of the river. We met up with Madalena, and casting off soon came upon a thickly-vegetated island which supported a mass of breeding herons and egrets. There were perhaps as many as 1500 pairs of cattle egrets, 50 pairs of spoonbills, many nests of little egrets, black-crowned night herons and grey herons plus a new phenomenon, recently arrived breeding glossy ibises. It was an absolutely amazing spectacle and we were able to get the boat in very close to get fantastic views and great photographs! Most of the nests seemed to have chicks already and the smell of guano filled the air.



Ophrys speculum ssp. *lusitanica* – the 'mirror' is less glossy and not as suffused with violet as on the main species. The side lobes are straight and obliquely divergent from the central lobe and the outer margin of the lip has a fringe of brown-to-orange hairs.



On the boat at Valada.



Cattle egrets.

Moving away from the island, we continued our exploration of the river where at least 10 black kites patrolled looking for suitable nest sites, a nightingale sang from deep cover on another island while 40 whimbrels and two cormorants were resting on a sandbar. Further downriver we came across sandbanks on the river's edge which were full of nestholes with sand martins, maybe 100 strong, going in and out and preparing for a busy breeding season; two common sandpipers quietly slipped away from the banks.

It was an utterly brilliant experience out on the river, getting so close to so many breeding herons and egrets, and was capped off on the way home by getting great pictures of breeding white storks on the local agricultural company's headquarters.

Tuesday 29 April – Tejo Estuary, Barroca Marsh and Alcochete Salt Pans

Another glorious day under cloudless skies as we drove south to explore the Tejo estuary and surrounding habitats. As the tide was well out in the morning we decided to come in from the north and work through the cork oak woodlands, locally known as 'montados'. As we drove along the first part of a long dirt road two cuckoos flew over followed by two booted eagles flying up from the ground, probably from a carcass. More raptors then appeared overhead in the shape of two black kites, a kestrel and a brief view of our first black-shouldered kite. Time to disembark from the buses and just in time to see more raptors in the sky – two buzzards, another booted eagle, a black kite and this time excellent views of a black-shouldered kite as it flew right over our heads. Domingos then found a woodchat shrike perched up in a dead tree while a nightingale and fan-tailed warbler sang from the nearby scrub. As the morning began to warm up, butterflies took to the wing, including several Spanish gatekeepers and meadow browns, bright orange clouded yellows and a rather moribund small skipper. The roadsides were festooned with flowers and we soon found lots of bright red crimson clover, the bright yellow urospermum, patches of the darker tongue orchids *Serapias lingua*, the sticky small-flowered catchfly and pink Mediterranean catchfly. Bright yellow shrubby rock-rose and the more delicate spotted rock-rose were in flower together under the oaks. More clouded yellows and western dappled white butterflies gave us all good views while Domingos made a grass snare and caught a male large psammmodromus lizard, gently released after group inspection. To cap a fine morning two little egrets flew up from a very boggy field where water forget-me-not was in flower, a flock of 25 glossy ibises flew low over the



A flower-filled meadow on the Tejo estuary.



Turnstones, with two much smaller dunlins.

neighbouring marshes, a carrion crow chased off a passing booted eagle and four red-legged partridges seemed oblivious to our presence, continuing to feed right by the buses. Lunch beckoned so we made good use of the picnic tables at Alcochete, serenaded by singing serins, where the introduced Bermuda buttercup was just coming into flower. By this time the tide was coming in fast, pushing the wading birds further up the beach and into full view. Perhaps the stars of the show were several hundred grey plovers in full summer plumage, glowing black and white in the sunshine. Other large waders included good numbers of bar-tailed godwits, up to 20 greenshanks, a few whimbrels and several knots, some already in their bright red summer plumage. Dunlin numbered in their hundreds as they scampered along the beach in the company of ringed plovers, while 40 turnstones

roosted on an open boat as the tide began to rise. We then explored the beachside vegetation finding a whole host of spectacular, bright yellow *Cistanche* broomrape, mats of purple sand-spurrey and just a few three-leaved snowflakes, most of which had already gone over. Back over the water four little terns flew by and Gerald spotted a grey wagtail among the dunes. Time for coffee and ice cream at Alcochete where many pairs of house martins were building nests on the local church. Next stop was at Barroca marshes where we found several grey herons, at least four marsh harriers quartering the fields, four splendid Iberian yellow wagtails and at least six great reed warblers in full strident song. The marshes were very dry due to a recent lack of rain and we were unable to find any purple herons. There was still time for one more stop, at the nearby Alcochete salt pans. Up to 15 very smart black-winged stilts were feeding in the shallows while intermittently noisily squabbling. We were pleasantly surprised to find an immature greater flamingo still here, the adults having long departed for their breeding grounds in France. At the far end of the pans was a roost of some 600 grey plovers and knots, two more immature flamingos, a single common sandpiper on the bridge, and the day was rounded off by a fly-past of five common and two little terns.

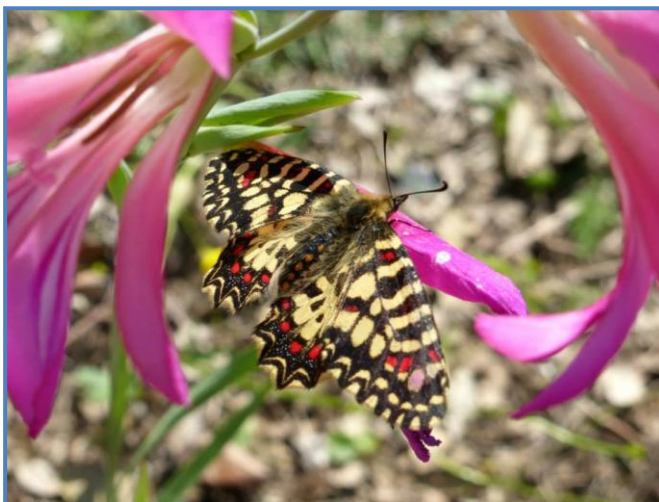
Wednesday 30 April – Natural Park of Serra Aires and Candeeiros

Another sunny morning and a fine day in prospect as we headed off to the high ground at the Natural Park of Serra Aires and Candeeiros. Our first stop was just outside the park where there was a colony of many splendid Lange's orchid, a sub-species of early purple orchid (also called *Orchis mascula* ssp. *hispanica*) only found in Portugal, Spain, France and Morocco. Spanish heath was also in full flower here along with scrambling gromwell, shrubby pimpernel and the small white flowers of narrow-leaved cistus.



Hoop petticoat narcissus, butterfly orchid, and the endemic peony *Paeonia broteri*.

As we arrived at our destination within the park, a Thekla lark was singing over the limestone plateau. But our attention was immediately captivated by the magnificent sight of many thousands of naked man orchids in full flower – a truly amazing sight! As we walked through the area, taking many photographs, we came across hordes of woodcock orchids, tongue orchids, man orchids and large patches of champagne orchids – a true orchid wonderland! A mass of other flowering plants were also on offer including more of the delicate spotted rock-rose, a brown pea *Lathyrus setifolius*, nice milkwort and a low-growing star-of-Bethlehem. Further exploration turned up perhaps the find of the day: many superbly fresh pink butterfly orchids. Domingos pointed out that some of the butterfly orchids had hybridised with champagne orchids giving the latter a large, open lower lip. Although there was a cool breeze blowing over the plateau, several butterflies were on the wing including a few gorgeous swallowtails, gaudy Spanish festoons plus the somewhat more conservative green hairstreak. As the morning wore on, Domingos caught a large yellow centipede *Scolopendra cingulata* for the group to admire and there was still time for Barbara to find a super little birthwort *Aristolochia rotunda* as two skylarks sang overhead and a short-toed eagle and raven drifted silently over. What a stunning morning on the plateau!



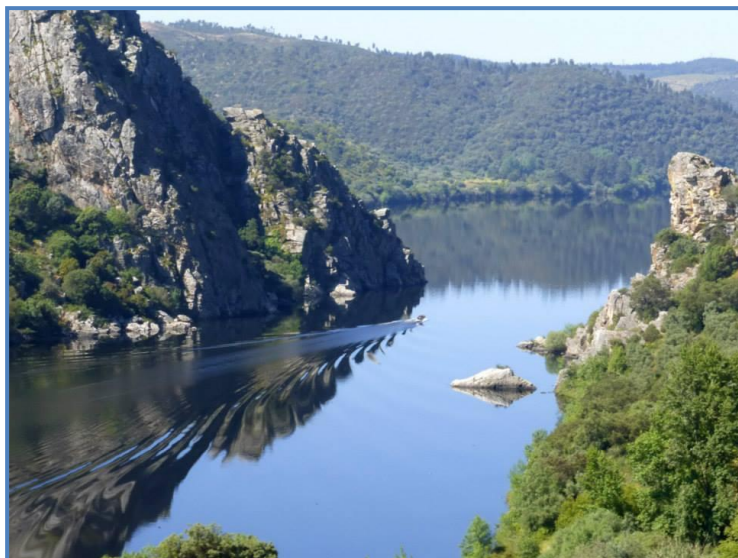
Spanish festoon.

It was time for a relaxing picnic lunch under the olive trees in a more sheltered section of the park, where a short-toed treecreeper was searching for insects on the olive trees. Several passing butterflies included our first bright yellow Cleopatra, several clouded yellows and Spanish festoons and a decidedly more sombre dingy skipper. The plants here were certainly worth investigating and we soon found blue hound's tongue, stinking hellebore, a giant orchid still in partial flower plus wall rue and rusty-backed fern growing out of the rocks. The real highlight here though was a splendid clump of the endemic Portuguese wild peonies in full, glorious flower – cameras were soon merrily clicking away. Before we left the area Domingos fished out an immature fire salamander from a small pond for everyone to admire.

Time for coffee and ice cream in Santo Antonio before heading back up into the park for an afternoon walk through flower-filled meadows. Domingos called this area “The best spot for pink butterfly orchids in Portugal” and there were scores of them in full flower here – we hoped most would escape the attention of a nearby herd of goats!

The meadows held flowering rosy garlic, yellow bee orchids, scented wild thyme, a splendid isolated clump of shepherd's needle, field eryngo yet to flower and Mediterranean kidney vetch. A large clump of a snapdragon (*Antirrhinum majus*) was flowering below one of the stone walls and our first scarce swallowtail butterfly was dancing over the flowers. Black and maidenhair spleenworts were growing out of the rocks while a composite turned out to be *Centaurea pullata*. Two dainty toadflaxes were also in full flower, a small pale purple flower *Linaria amethystea* and the delicate yellow *Linaria spartia*. As the afternoon advanced we walked through a more shrubby, sheltered area and were delighted to find early purple orchids still in full flower on the rocks and out of the effects of the full sun. A whole new range of plants was to be found in this area, including Solomon's seal, small patches of meadow saxifrage, two species of flowering gorse-like stauracanthus, wild carrot and honeysuckle. We also found just one sword-leaved helleborine still in partial flower, a large clump of flowering rosemary and just one single flower of the pink *Kohlsrauchia*, all the time being serenaded by nightingales. A fitting end to a brilliant flower-filled day.

Thursday 1 May – to Marvão via Vila Vilha de Rodão



'Portas de Rodão'.

already on the wing including Spanish marbled whites, several long-tailed blues and a bright yellow Cleopatra. The griffon vultures were almost at eye-level here giving us all magnificent views, and these were soon joined by two black kites and a white stork. Three more raptors drifting along the skyline turned out to be our first Bonelli's eagles, two more short-toed eagles circled the castle and a black vulture drifted right over our heads – magnificent! By this time, many more butterflies were on the wing with good numbers of both swallowtail and scarce swallowtail. But the real highlight was a stunning two-tailed pasha that was defending its territory in the scrub directly below the castle, chasing off all other butterflies that ventured too near – an amazing spectacle and for many one of the highlights of the week. Brenda then spotted a bright blue emperor dragonfly hunting through the scrub while we identified yet more new plants in the shape of prickly juniper and a new pea *Lathyrus clymenum*. After all this excitement and temperatures at 28°C, we had lunch in the shade of olive trees listening to the songs of Sardinian warblers and serins

All change today as we bade farewell to Alpiarça and headed east towards Marvão. Yet another glorious day with temperatures set to hit the mid-twenties and a great opportunity to spend time at the Vila Vilha de Rodão, where a viewpoint by the castle overlooks a huge lake and the 'Portas de Rodão'. Our first stop was just below the castle where griffon vultures were soaring off the towering cliffs – it appeared we had timed it just right! We counted 22 griffons, giving us all superb views, before two Egyptian vultures appeared, one landing on the cliffs allowing telescope views, then four of the group had a brief sighting of a black stork as it flew down the valley. A short-toed eagle drifted over, several crag martins flew around the cliffs, while nightingales sang from the background scrub. Our next stop was at the castle itself which gave great views over the lake and surrounding area. Several butterflies were



Two-tailed pasha.

Time to move towards Marvão after a coffee and ice cream stop in Nisa. Here 100+ pairs of house martins were busy nesting under the eaves of the council headquarters and a white stork's nest adorned the local church. We arrived at our hotel 'O Pejo' (pennyroyal in English) in the village of Santo Antonio dos Areios in mid-afternoon, quickly checked in, then drove the short distance to Marvão. Leaving the buses at the entry to this fortified hill town we walked up through narrow streets to the castle. A pair of blue rock thrushes was very active along the ramparts and a booted eagle soared overhead. While we were taking in the magnificent views, three griffon vultures drifted over and through the hawking crag martins, house martins and swifts. Several of the group walked up to the far end of the castle where another male blue rock thrush was found together with brown argus and swallowtail butterflies. A Queen of Spain fritillary appeared, showing off its white mirrored undersides as it took nectar from the flowering pansies in the castle gardens. To complete the afternoon two red-rumped swallows flew low over the town as we made our way back to the buses and O Poejo.

Friday 2 May – Serra de São Mamede Natural Park

After a good breakfast we boarded the buses for the short drive to São Mamede Natural Park. Our first port of call was alongside the River Sever where our first birds were three golden orioles, two squabbling males and a female, but alas only fleeting views. Cuckoos were very much in evidence with at least six birds seen and heard throughout the morning, including one male perched right out in the open while singing. Two common buzzards and our first raven drifted overhead, nightingales and Cetti's warblers were in constant song in the surrounding scrub and our first woodchat shrike of the day was spotted on the overhead wires. The tracks here were awash with a whole array of wild flowers and we quickly identified masses of spotted rock-rose, the colourful yellow tolpis, several splendid specimens of bellardia and many fresh greater broomrapes. Large patches of orangey foxgloves had us puzzled and we were unable to pin them down to a species. Both woodlarks and Thekla larks were singing high in the air, our first griffon vulture of the day appeared overhead and a melodious warbler in full song finally showed itself among the scrub and holm oaks. While we were admiring the warbler, Brennan spotted a huge soaring bird. It was quickly confirmed as a scarce black stork – only 70 pairs in Portugal – and all of the group were able to see it well as it soared high in the sky, an accompanying buzzard appearing very small in comparison. Two more griffon vultures then came into view and calling raptors further down the valley turned out to be two displaying short-toed eagles right in full view – an amazing sight!

Time to leave the valley and move to higher ground, but not before we admired two red-rumped swallows on roadside telephone wires. We stopped at a small farmstead giving amazing views across the valley into Spain. Yet another short-toed eagle drifted slowly overhead with three griffon vultures, another red-rumped swallow



Brennan writes: "I was surprised when this mouse ran around my feet before jumping on a stone to pose for a photo. It was being chased by a Montpellier snake which quickly disappeared when it saw me - clever mouse!"

hawked for insects around the olive groves and three bee-eaters were finally tracked down hunting for insects over the hillside. Brennan then spotted an azure-winged magpie in the olive grove and at least three birds were seen in this vicinity, while most of the group got their first really good view of a male Sardinian warbler. While this was happening a Montpellier snake was chasing two mice, one of which hid under a huge rock to avoid the hungry reptile!

With temperatures now up to 26°C under a cloudless sky, we decided to have our picnics under the trees by the river. A male golden oriole was in full song throughout but was reluctant to show itself, while both grey and white wagtails were seen on the river. Domingos went off looking for damselflies and soon returned with a large red damselfly and a beautiful demoiselle for all of the group to admire. A male emperor dragonfly patrolled the river and a marsh fritillary put in a brief appearance over the lush stream-side vegetation.

Suitably refreshed after a gargantuan picnic lunch, we drove the short distance to the cliffs at Galegos by the border with Spain. Our telescopes soon picked up breeding griffon vultures on the ledges, including one adult who appeared to be sheltering chicks from the heat with her outstretched wings; several of the group managed to get pictures of the vultures. Our attention then turned to a singing hoopoe which most obligingly perched up in a dead tree right in front of us before being joined by, presumably, the female – what a sight! Up to five alpine swifts, several red-rumped swallows and crag martins were flying swiftly back and forth along the cliffs and an Egyptian vulture came briefly into view before disappearing over the crags. Yet another golden oriole then broke into song in a nearby garden, refusing at first to show itself, until it flew across the road and perched up in full view, continuing to sing and showing extremely well in the telescopes – for many of the group the highlight of the trip. We then had a quick look at a small stream where we found two new butterflies, a female common blue and a splendid fresh silver-washed fritillary.

Being on the border we decided to drive into Spain and explore the woodland edge and sweet chestnut groves at Las Casinas. We parked the buses by an venerable pollarded sweet chestnut tree and immediately spotted an azure-winged magpie in the grove. As we strolled along the road at least four of the magpies came out in full view, showing off their true azure colours. Meanwhile, another golden oriole burst into song and a Sardinian warbler was seen carrying food for its hungry brood. Star-of-Bethlehem, the small field gladiolus (*illyricum*) and tassel hyacinth were all in flower, at least 23 griffon vultures soared over the nearby cliffs and the day's exploration concluded brilliantly with two male golden orioles providing us with a superb fly-past.

In the evening our tables were moved outside to the courtyard where we had a supper of local codfish 'al fresco' – a real joy to be in such balmy weather.

Saturday 3 May – The Elvas Plains and Caia Dam IBA

After an early breakfast we headed south to the Elvas plains around the village of Vila Fernando, with cloudless skies, very little wind and temperatures set to climb to the mid-twenties yet again. From the buses we spotted a green woodpecker at Portalegre, two more southern grey shrikes on telephone wires and another singing golden oriole.

Arriving on the plains, we left the main road and headed off on dirt roads into the interior. Portugal had also suffered from heavy rain throughout the winter months and this was reflected in the height of the vegetation. We drove through fields covered in masses of flowers including bellardia, galactites, bright Mediterranean catchfly, purple viper's bugloss, field eryngo, tolpis and crown daises – an amazing sight. With the height of the vegetation we were finding it hard to track down many birds but we did see a huge black vulture drifting low over the farms and a hoopoe perched up on a telegraph post. On finding a good track out of this area, Rob found a stone-curlew crouching low in nettles – apparently thinking it could not be seen, though we all got pretty good views of this usually elusive bird. Several white butterflies here, on closer inspection, turned out to be Bath whites – yet another new species.

We then explored another large area of open grassland and irrigated crops and Ailsa immediately spotted a fantastic male Montagu's harrier flying low over the area and giving us great views – another real trip highlight. Our first male lesser kestrel then put in an appearance followed by a black kite then yet another male Montagu's harrier. A couple of abandoned farmsteads here supported a lesser kestrel colony of some 30 pairs and birds could be seen going back and forth, probably feeding young. More birds then came into view as two bee-eaters perched up in full view in the olive grove and one hoopoe was joined by two more. Domingos could hear male little bustards calling from the dense vegetation but they were proving difficult to locate. We climbed up to the highest point here and finally managed to get the 'scopes on a male, partially hidden in the thick vegetation. Meanwhile a small stream here turned up another male emperor dragonfly but also a stunningly bright red scarlet darter, a '*helice*' form clouded yellow butterfly and Domingos found a rather irate yellow scorpion under yet another overturned rock.

After our picnic lunch under the olive trees we headed off to the Caia Dam IBA, but not before a somewhat hair-raising journey across the open fields. The lake itself was full to bursting after the winter rain with little wet mud for any waders. However we soon found several elegant black-winged stilts congregating and squabbling on a small island, while yet another male Montagu's harrier was hunting over neighbouring grasslands. Out on the lake, at least 10 gadwalls were feeding in the shallows and four little terns were fishing on the far side. A lorry had parked up here laden with beer, wine and food with several men and a dog making a heck of a racket, including having the radio on full blast. Ever the diplomat, Domingos managed to get them to turn the radio off while we were there although they continued to shout at each other as loud as possible. Very strange.

Two great crested grebes were spotted way out on the lake before terns really took centre stage. There is a sizeable gull-billed tern colony here and we were able to find at least 13 of these large terns fishing over the lake. A smaller, darker tern fishing on its own turned out to be a summer-plumaged whiskered tern and then almost immediately another, even darker tern came into view, a black tern – four species of terns in 10 minutes! Ray had been looking along the water's edge and had come up with an Iberian blue-tailed damselfly and a red-veined darter dragonfly. Just as we were about to leave two elegant birds came into view before flying directly overhead, two superb collared pratincoles.

Time to head for home but we still had one more surprise in store. Just as we got back onto the highway we spotted a family group of four black-shouldered kites in nearby trees, giving us all brilliant views of this delicate bird of prey. We could even see the white feather edgings on the juveniles – a fitting end to another great day.

Sunday 4 May – Castelo da Vide and Lisbon

After bidding farewell to 'O Poejo' we prepared ourselves for the long drive back to Lisbon. As the flights were not scheduled until late afternoon we managed to spend some time in the woodlands at Santa Da Penha just outside Castelo da Vide. Nightingales and a wren were in song and we also heard a chiffchaff, a north European not Iberian chiffchaff – very unusual here in May. Several butterflies were on the wing including brown argus, small copper, the obligatory Spanish festoon and only our second Queen of Spain fritillary of the trip.

The roadsides and woodland edges were adorned with flowering plants such as tassel hyacinth, a shrubby rock-rose, the bright blue narrow-leaved lupin and a beautiful toadflax *Linaria triornithophora*, also apparently known as "Three Birds Flying". While we were admiring these superb flowers, a subalpine warbler sang from the scrub and showed itself to many of the group. A pale phase booted eagle drifted over as we headed back to the buses, Lisbon and home, bidding farewell to the superb weather, flowers, birds, butterflies and a leaving temperature of 29°C.

SPECIES LISTS

BIRDS

Great Crested Grebe	Two at Caia Dam IBA.
Cormorant	Two on the River Tejo at Valada.
Black-crowned Night Heron	At least 30 at colony at Valada.
Cattle Egret	Widespread and common.
Little Egret	Breeding colony on river Tejo at Valada.
Grey Heron	Peak of 15 on Tejo estuary.
Black Stork	One at Vila Vilha de Rodão and one at Serra de São Mamede.
White Stork	Widespread and common.
Spoonbill	40 at colony on river Tejo at Valada.
Glossy Ibis	30 at colony at Valada and 25 on Tejo estuary.
Greater Flamingo	Three at Alcochete salt pans.
Gadwall	At least 10 at Caia Dam IBA.
Mallard	Widespread and relatively common.
Black-shouldered Kite	Two at Tejo estuary and four at Caia Dam IBA.
Black Kite	Peak of 10 on river Tejo at Valada.
Egyptian Vulture	Two at Vila Vilha da Rodão and one at Galegos.
Griffon Vulture	25 at Vila Vilha da Rodão and 23 at Galegos.
Black Vulture	Singles at Vila Vilha da Rodão and Elvas Pains but two at Serra de São Mamede.
Common Buzzard	Widespread and relatively common.
Short-toed Eagle	Peak of three at Serra de São Mamede.
Marsh Harrier	Four at Tejo estuary.
Montagu's Harrier	Three males at Elvas Plains and Caia Dam IBA.
Booted Eagle	Peak of four at Tejo estuary.
Bonelli's Eagle	Three at Vila Vilha da Rodão.
Lesser Kestrel	30 at Elvas Plains.
Kestrel	Regularly noted in ones and twos.
Red-legged Partridge	Peak of four at Tejo estuary.
Coot	Only recorded at Tejo estuary.
Little Bustard	Two at Elvas Plains.
Black-winged Stilt	15 at Alcochete and 12 at Caia Dam IBA.
Stone-curlew	One at Elvas Plains.
Collared pratincole	Two at Caia Dam IBA.
Ringed Plover	40 at Tejo estuary.
Grey Plover	600 at Tejo estuary.
Knot	20 at Tejo estuary.
Dunlin	c.1000 at Tejo estuary.
Bar-tailed Godwit	40 at Tejo estuary.
Whimbrel	40 at Tejo estuary.
Redshank	One at Tejo estuary.
Greenshank	20 at Tejo estuary.
Common Sandpiper	Noted at Valada, Tejo estuary and Caia Dam IBA.
Turnstone	40 at Tejo estuary.
Black-headed Gull	Just five at Tejo estuary.
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Relatively widespread and common.
Gull-billed Tern	13 at Caia Dam IBA.
Common Tern	Five on Tejo estuary.
Little Tern	Six at Tejo estuary and five at Caia Dam IBA.
Black Tern	One at Caia Dam IBA.
Whiskered Tern	Two at Caia Dam IBA.
Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	Widespread and common.
Woodpigeon	Widespread but uncommon.
Collared Dove	Common in towns and villages.
Great Spotted Cuckoo	One at Cabanos Valley.
Cuckoo	Peak of six at Serra de São Mamede.
Swift	Widespread and common.
Alpine Swift	Six at Galegos.
Bee-eater	Peak of seven in Cabanos Valley.
Hoopoe	Peak of six at Elvas Plains.
Green Woodpecker	One on the way to Elvas Plains.

Great Spotted Woodpecker	One in Cabanos Valley.
Crested Lark	Widespread and common.
Thekla Lark	Noted at Serra Candeeiros and Serra de São Mamede.
Woodlark	Singles at Serra Candeeiros and Serra de São Mamede.
Skylark	Two at Serra Candeeiros.
Sand Martin	Peak of 100 on river Tejo at Valada.
Crag Martin	Up to 10 noted at Vila Vilha da Rodão and Serra de São Mamede.
Swallow	Widespread and common.
Red-rumped Swallow	Peak of 10 Serra de São Mamede.
House Martin	Widespread and common.
Grey Wagtail	Singles at Alcochete and Serra de São Mamede.
White Wagtail	Widespread but uncommon.
Yellow Wagtail	Five at Barroca Marsh.
Wren	One at Serra Candeeiros.
Robin	Widespread and relatively common.
Nightingale	Widespread and common.
Black Redstart	One at Valada and Marvão.
Stonechat	Widespread and fairly common.
Black-eared Wheatear	Two on Elvas Plains.
Blue Rock Thrush	Three at Marvão and one at Serra de São Mamede.
Blackbird	Widespread and common.
Mistle Thrush	One at Serra de São Mamede.
Cetti's Warbler	Widespread in wetland areas.
Fan-tailed Warbler	Widespread and fairly common.
Reed Warbler	One at Barrocha Marsh.
Great Reed Warbler	Six heard at Barrocha Marsh.
Subalpine Warbler	Male at Santa de Penha.
Sardinian Warbler	Widespread and common.
Blackcap	Widespread and fairly common.
Melodious Warbler	Two at Serra de São Mamede.
Western Bonelli's Warbler	Singing male at Tejo Estuary.
Chiffchaff	One singing at Santa da Penha
Iberian Chiffchaff	Singing male at Cabanos Valley.
Firecrest	Singing male at Cabanos Valley.
Coal Tit	Singing birds at Cabanos Valley and Serra Candeeiros.
Blue Tit	Widespread and common.
Great Tit	Widespread but uncommon.
Nuthatch	One at Cabanos Valley and Tejo Estuary.
Short-toed Treecreeper	One at Serra Candeeiros and Serra de São Mamede.
Golden Oriole	Peak of six at Serra de São Mamede including one seen well at Galegos.
Southern Grey Shrike	Occasional on phone wires.
Jay	On three days with two at Serra de São Mamede.
Azure-winged Magpie	Peak of six at Serra de São Mamede.
Magpie	Common on the Elvas plains, otherwise scarce.
Jackdaw	Two on Elvas Plains.
Carrion Crow	Only noted on Elvas Plains.
Raven	Two at Serra de Sap Mamede.
Spotless Starling	Widespread and common.
House Sparrow	Widespread and very common.
Spanish Sparrow	60 at Elvas Plains
Rock Sparrow	One at Tejo Estuary.
Common Waxbill	Noted at Alpiarça.
Chaffinch	Widespread and common.
Serin	Widespread and common.
Greenfinch	Widespread and common.
Goldfinch	Widespread and common.
Linnet	Three at Serra Candeeiros and Serra de São Mamede.
Corn Bunting	Widespread and common.

BUTTERFLIES

Dingy Skipper	Speckled Wood	Swallowtail
Scarce Swallowtail	Grizzled Skipper	Large White
Small White	Spanish Festoon	Bath White
Orange Tip	Western Dappled White	Cleopatra
Brimstone	Clouded Yellow	Painted Lady
Silver-washed Fritillary	Red Admiral	Marsh Fritillary
Two-tailed Pasha	Queen of Spain Fritillary	Brown Argus ssp. <i>cramera</i>
Common Blue	Small Blue	Small Copper
Green Hairstreak	Long-tailed Blue	Meadow Brown
Wall Brown	Spanish Marbled White	Spanish Gatekeeper
	Small Heath	

MAMMALS

Rabbit	Mouse	Mole	Iberian Hare
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REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Large Psammodromus	Green Frog	Montpellier Snake
Slowworm	Iberian Wall Lizard <i>Podarcis hispanica</i>	Common Tree Frog
	Fire Salamander	



Large Psammodromus

ODONATA

Beautiful Demoiselle	Red-veined Darter	Iberian Blue-tailed Damselfly
Emperor Dragonfly	Large Red Damselfly	Scarlet Darter
	Lesser Emperor	

NOTABLE INVERTEBRATES

Yellow Scorpion	Violet Carpenter Bee	A Centipede <i>Scolopendria singulata</i>
7-spot Ladybird		Pine Processionary Moth



Yellow Scorpion

PLANTS

PTERIDOPHYTA – Ferns and Allies

<i>Asplenium trichomanes</i>	maidenhair spleenwort
<i>Asplenium adiantum-nigrum</i>	black spleenwort
<i>Asplenium ruta-muraria</i>	wall rue
<i>Ceterach officinarum</i>	rustyback fern
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	bracken
<i>Polypodium cambricum</i> ssp. <i>australe</i>	southern polypody
<i>Selaginella denticulata</i>	Mediterranean selaginella

SPERMATOPHYTA – Conifers

Araucariaceae	
<i>Araucaria heterophylla</i>	Norfolk island pine
Pinaceae – Pines	
<i>Pinus pinaster</i>	maritime pine
<i>Pinus pinea</i>	umbrella pine
Cupressaceae – Cypress	
<i>Juniperus oxycedrus</i>	prickly juniper

ANGIOSPERMS

Aizoaceae – Aizoons	
<i>Carpobrotus edulis</i>	Hottentot fig
Anacardiaceae – Pistacios	
<i>Pistacia lentiscus</i>	mastic tree or lentisc
Apiaceae – Carrots	
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	fennel
<i>Ferula communis</i>	giant fennel
<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>	wild angelica
<i>Oenanthe crocata</i>	hemlock water-dropwort
<i>Smyrniolum olusatrum</i>	alexanders
<i>Eryngium maritimum</i>	sea holly
<i>Eryngium campestre</i>	field eryngo
<i>Scandix pecten-veneris</i>	shepherd's needle
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	hogweed
<i>Daucus carota</i>	wild carrot
Apocynaceae – Oleanders	
<i>Nerium oleander</i>	oleander
<i>Vinca difformis</i>	periwinkle
Araliaceae – Ivy family	
<i>Hedera helix</i>	ivy
Aristolochiaceae – Birthworts	
<i>Aristolochia rotunda</i>	birthwort
Asteraceae (was Compositae) – Daisies	
<i>Bellis annua</i>	annual daisy
<i>Bellis sylvestris</i>	southern daisy
<i>Calendula arvensis</i>	field marigold
<i>Chrysanthemum coronarium</i>	crown daisy, entirely yellow
<i>Chrysanthemum coronarium</i> var. <i>discolor</i>	crown daisy, yellow and white
<i>Cichorium intybus</i>	chicory
<i>Galactites tomentosa</i>	Mediterranean field thistle
<i>Silybum marianum</i>	milk thistle
<i>Carduus tenuiflorus</i>	slender thistle
<i>Crupina vulgaris</i>	
<i>Lapsana communis</i>	nipplewort
<i>Helichrysum stoechas</i>	
<i>Tragopogon hybridum</i>	small salsify
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	groundsel
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	common sow thistle
<i>Tolpis barbata</i>	tolpis
<i>Urospermum picroides</i>	urospermum
Boraginaceae – Borage	
<i>Borago officinalis</i>	borage
<i>Cynoglossum creticum</i>	blue hound's tongue
<i>Echium plantagineum</i>	purple viper's bugloss
<i>Lithodora diffusa</i>	scrambling gromwell
<i>Myosotis scorpioides</i>	water forgetmenot

Brassicaceae (Cruciferae) – Cabbages

Sinapis arvensis
Capsella bursa-pastoris

charlock
shepherd's purse

Betulaceae – Birches

Alnus glutinosa

alder

Cactaceae – Cacti

Opuntia ficus-indica

prickly pear

Caryophyllaceae – Pinks

Silene colorata
Silene gallica
Kohlrauschia velutina
Silene latifolia
Silene vulgaris
Paronychia capitata
Spergularia purpurea

Mediterranean catchfly
small-flowered catchfly
kohlrauschia
white campion
bladder campion

purple sand-spurrey

Centranthus – Valerians

Centranthus calcitrapa
Fedia cornucopiae

Portuguese valerian
fedia

Chenopodiaceae – Goosefoots

Atriplex portulacoides

sea purslane

Cistaceae – Rockroses

Cistus crispus
Cistus albidus
Cistus monspeliensis
Cistus ladanifer
Cistus salvifolius
Halimium commutatum
Tuberia guttata

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

Convolvulaceae – Bindweeds

Convolvulus althaeoides
Convolvulus tricolor

mallow-leaved bindweed

Crassulaceae – Stonecrops

Sedum album
Crassula tillaea
Umbilicus rupestris

white stonecrop
mossy stonecrop
navelwort

Cucurbitaceae – Marrows

Bronia dioica

white bryony

Dipsacaceae – Teasels

Dipsacus fullonum
Knautia integrifolia

wild teasel

Ericaceae – Heathers

Erica australis
Arbutus unedo

Spanish heath
strawberry tree

Euphorbiaceae – Spurges

Euphorbia helioscopia
Euphorbia characias

sun spurge
Mediterranean spurge

Fabiaceae (was Leguminosae) – Peas

Anthyllis vulneraria ssp praepropera
Cercis siliquastrum
Lathyrus setifolius
Lathyrus ochrus
Lathyrus clymenum
Lupinus luteus
Robinia pseudacacia
Medicago polymorpha
Medicago Arabica
Melilotus indicus
Trifolium stellatum
Trifolium repens
Trifolium incarnatum
Vicia villosa
Vicia sepium
Vicia sativa
Ulex parviflorus
Cytisus multiflorus
Spartium junceum

Mediterranean kidney vetch
Judas tree
brown vetch
winged vetchling

yellow lupin
false acacia
toothed medick
spotted medick
small melilot
star clover
white clover
crimson clover
fodder vetch
bush vetch
common vetch
small-flowered gorse
white Spanish broom
Spanish broom

Fagaceae – Oaks

Quercus ilex
Quercus coccifera
Quercus suber
Quercus faginea
Quercus pyrenaica
Castanea sativa

holm oak
holly / prickly / kermes oak
cork oak
Portuguese oak
Pyrenean oak
sweet chestnut

Gentianaceae – Gentians

Centarium erythraea
Blackstonia perfoliata

common centaury
yellow-wort

Geraniaceae – Geraniums

Erodium cicutarium
Geranium molle
Geranium rotundifolium
Geranium robertianum

common storksbill
dovesfoot cranesbill
round-leaved cranesbill
herb robert

Hippocastanaceae – Horse Chestnuts

Aesculus hippocastanum

horse chestnut

Lamiaceae – Mints

Clinopodium vulgare
Lamium amplexicaule
Lavandula stoechas
Rosmarinus officinalis
Salvia verbenaca
Sideritis romana
Thymus polytrichus
Teucrium scorodonia
Memtha aquatica
Rhinanthus minor

wild basil
henbit dead-nettle
French lavender
rosemary
wild clary

wild thyme
wood sage
water mint
yellow rattle

Linaceae – Flaxes

Linum bienne

pale flax

Linaria – Toadflaxes

Cymbalaria muralis
Linaria amethystea
Linaria spartia

ivy-leaved toadflax

Veronica – Speedwells

Bellardia trixago

bellardia

Malvaceae – Mallows

Lavatera arborea
Malva sylvestris
Malva neglecta

tree mallow
common mallow
dwarf mallow

Moraceae – Mulberries

Ficus carica

fig

Oleaceae – Olives

Olea europaea

olive

Orobanchaceae – Broomrapes

Cistanche phelypaea
Orobanche minor
Orobanche rapum-genistae

cistanche
common broomrape
greater broomrape

Oxalidaceae – Sorrels

Oxalis pes-caprae
Oxalis articulata

Bermuda buttercup
pink oxalis

Paeoniaceae – Peonies

Paeonia broteri

peony

Papaveraceae – Poppies

Fumaria capreolata
Fumaria officinalis
Papaver rhoeas
Chelidonium majus

ramping fumitory
common fumitory
common poppy
greater celandine

Plantaginaceae – Plantains

Plantago coronopus
Plantago lanceolata

buck's horn plantain
ribwort plantain

Platanaceae – Plane trees

Platanus hybrida

a plane

Plumbaginaceae – Thrift

Armeria maritima

thrift

Polygonaceae – Docks and Sorrels*Rumex acetosa*

common sorrel

Primulaceae – Primulas*Anagallis arvensis*

scarlet pimpernel

Anagallis monelli

shrubby pimpernel

Ranunculaceae – Buttercups*Ranunculus bulbosus* ssp. *aleae*

bulbous buttercup

Ranunculus sceleratus

celery-leaved buttercup

Helleborus foetidus

stinking hellebore

Anemone palmata

yellow anemone

Resedaceae – Mignonettes*Reseda lutea*

wild mignonette

Rosaceae – Roses*Prunus dulcis*

almond

Rubus ulmifolius (*R. sanctus*)

bramble

Sanguisorba minor ssp. *magnolii*

Mediterranean salad burnet

Crataegus monogyna

hawthorn

Rubiaceae – Bedstraws*Galium aparine*

goosegrass

Galium odoratum

woodruff

Saxifragaceae – Saxifrages*Saxifraga granulata*

meadow saxifrage

Scrophulariaceae – Figworts*Antirrhinum majus* ssp. *cirrigherum*

large snapdragon

Misopates orontium

lesser snapdragon / weasel's snout

*Scrophularia sambucifolia**Scrophularia nodosa*

common figwort

Scrophularia auriculata

water figwort

Tamaricaceae – Tamarix*Tamarix africana*

tamarix

Thymelaeaceae – Daphnes*Daphne gnidium***Urticaceae – Nettles***Parietaria judaica*

pellitory of the wall

Verbascum – Mulleins*Verbascum thapsus*

great mullein

MONOCOTYLEDONS**Agavaceae – Agave family***Agave americana*

American agave

Amaryllidaceae – Daffodils*Leucojum tricophyllum*

three-leaved snowflake

Narcissus bulbocodium

hoop petticoat narcissus

Orthinogalum angustifolium

star of Bethlehem

Ornithogalum pyrenaicum

spiked star of Bethlehem

Polygonatum multiflorum

Solomon's-seal

Ruscus aculeatus

Butcher's broom

Araceae – Arums*Arum italicum*

large cuckoo pint

Dioscoreaceae – Yams*Tamias communis*

black bryony

Iridaceae – Irises*Gladiolus italicus*

field gladiolus

*Gladiolus illyricus**Gynandris sisyrinchium*

barbary nut

Iris pseudacorus

yellow flag

Iris xiphium

Spanish iris

Liliaceae – Lilies*Allium roseum*

rosy garlic

Asphodelus aestivus

common asphodel

Muscari comosum

tassel hyacinth

Scilla monophyllos

one-leaved squill

Urginea maritima

sea squill

Scilla hispanica

Spanish bluebell

Smilax aspera

rough bindweed

Orchidaceae – Orchids

Cephalanthera longifolia
Epipactis helleborine ssp. *lusitanica*
Limodorum abortivum
Limodorum abortivum ssp. *trabutianum*
Aceras anthropopohorum
Ophrys speculum ssp. *lusitanica*
Ophrys scolopax
Ophrys lutea
Ophrys apifera
Orchis papilionacea
Orchis champagnouxii
Orchis italica
Orchis mascula ssp. *olbiensis*
Orchis langei
Himantoglossum longibracteatum (= *Barlia robertiana*)
Anacamptis pyramidalis
Serapias lingua
Serapias parviflora
Poaceae – Grasses
Arundo donax
Phragmites australis
Briza maxima

narrow-leaved (sword-leaved) helleborine
broad-leaved helleborine
violet bird's nest orchid
short spurred violet bird's nest orchid
man orchid
mirror orchid
woodcock orchid
yellow bee orchid
bee orchid
pink butterfly orchid
champagne orchid
Italian man orchid
early purple orchid
Lange's orchid
giant orchid
pyramidal orchid
tongue orchid
small-flowered tongue orchid

giant reed
common reed
quaking grass



Tolpis



Spotted rock-rose



Spanish iris



Gum cistus