



# Honeyguide

**WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS**

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**Valencia**  
**8 – 15 March 2024**

### Participants

Jill Jordan  
Mark Lynton  
Ann Greenizan  
Denise Back  
Julie Durdin

### Leaders

Pau Lucio and Chris Durdin.  
Report and lists by Chris Durdin.

Photos by Chris Durdin unless noted otherwise.  
Other photos attributed by initials, all taken on the holiday.  
Cover, top: Provence orange-tip on the rare *Silene diclinis*; cattle egret (AG).  
Bottom: white-headed duck (AG).

We stayed at Hotel Casa Babel in Villalonga [www.casababel.com/en/](http://www.casababel.com/en/)



The group outside Hotel Casa Babel. Below: part of a roadside patch of *Paronychia*.

This holiday, as for every Honeyguide holiday, also puts something into conservation in our host country by way of a contribution to the wildlife that we enjoyed. The conservation contribution of £40 per person was added to by two additional donations and gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust. We gave £630 to the Grupo de Anillamiento Pit Roig (pit-roig is the robin in the local language) which runs bird ringing stations in Valencia. We met the group at Pego Marsh – see account on page 8. As at March 2024, the total for all conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 was £150,772.

*Names of places in this report are a mix of Castilian Spanish and Valenciano: signs often have both spellings, such as Calpe = Calp, Alicante = Alacant.*



## DAILY DIARY

### Friday 8 March – arrival in Valencia

It was a very civilised start for the holiday with a departure time of 11:50 for the four of us flying from Stansted, with a smooth flight to Valencia airport. Here we met Julie, who had come on the train via Nimes and Barcelona, and local leader Pau. We collected the minibus from the nearby multi-storey car park and headed south, a journey of a little over an hour to Villalonga.

After we'd settled in at Hotel Casa Babel we went for a wander, firstly climbing the steps behind the church that led eventually to a small chapel. It was clearly very dry, the legacy of a severe lack of rainfall in this eastern part of Spain during the autumn and winter. Nonetheless there was a lot of sweet alison in flower, plus bushes of kermes oak, a local buckthorn *Rhamnus lycioides*, carobs and flowering *Erica multiflora*. Birds were quiet: just a Sardinian warbler and a kestrel that landed on one of the many Italian cypresses. We then strolled into Villalonga, where a bat (pipistrelle?) flying around in the light of early evening was a surprise, and we popped into the supermarket.

Back at the hotel we gathered for a drink before dinner, and Pau joined us for a lovely dinner: shared starters (all vegan, which worked well for this group), quite a choice for main course then a selection of desserts.



View over Villalonga; *Erica multiflora*.

### Saturday 9 March – Albufera de Valencia Natural Park

We had a generous breakfast at the hotel at 8am and Pau joined us at nine o'clock to take us back towards Valencia, to the Albufera area of rice paddy fields south of the city, a drive of about an hour. The weather started cool and grey, then spots of rain turned to heavy rain just as we were ready to start birdwatching, so we sat tight in the minibus until the worst of the rain had blown over. We were there at the stage where water levels were dropping in readiness for cultivation, and there were specially adapted tractors preparing the ground for rice planting. Birds were therefore generally concentrated where it remained wet, with some in or by ditches. Little egrets were numerous and glossy ibises flew around in flocks; water and meadow pipits mixed with white wagtails on damper patches. There were three spoonbills on our right, plus a marsh harrier, and Denise picked out two great egrets on the left. We made our way towards the masses of greater flamingos. By now a big proportion of the gulls were Audouin's gulls, though mixed in with these were lesser black-backed gulls, and the occasional Mediterranean gull. Some of the black-headed gulls had a distinctly peachy tinge to their underside, which Pau considered usual though none of us could recall seeing this in the UK.



Cultivation for rice planting under way; a few of the many greater flamingos (AG).

In the main flamingo area, there were waders: black-winged stilts, a spotted redshank flew through and eventually we were close enough to agree on a wood sandpiper near some ruffs. Every now and again

there was some disturbance and hundreds of glossy ibises would take to the air. Ditch edges and roadsides had a few wild flowers in bloom, such as field marigold, ramping fumitory, purple vipers bugloss, white wall rocket and yellow flag iris. The rain started again so we retreated to the minibus. As we drove alongside a ditch a green sandpiper moved ahead of us, and farther on there were a few cattle egrets.

The rain meant we were happy to arrive in good time and have coffee before lunch at Restaurant Mateu. We were the first of many here for lunch, the restaurant soon filling with families, partly as it was Saturday though also as we had coincided with a local festival called Las Fallas (also called the Fire Festival of Valencia). In that context we should mention the splendid hair presentation of a young woman in the restaurant, recalling Princess Leia from Star Wars. The meal was more than just the paella we'd talked about, with starters of toast with aioli and tomato, then salad and potatoes prepared with aioli and paprika. The large chicken paella was supported by a smaller vegan version. Most of us had pineapple for afters, and some tried a milky-looking spirit distilled from rice. Yes, it was quite a long lunch, though that did allow time for the rain to blow over.



Treats, Spanish-style: paella for lunch, hairstyle to celebrate Las Fallas festival (AG).

Our afternoon excursion was at Estany del Pujol, a brackish lake close to the sea, now a nature reserve though originally excavated as a marina for an urbanisation. We reached this after a short walk past pines and lentisc scrub, over which there was much scrambling smilax. There were hundreds of hirundines over the water, mostly swallows and crag martins, though after a while we picked out both house and sand martins too, plus an overflying swift, probably a pallid swift. An island in the lake supports a colony of Audouin's gulls and there were hundreds of these on the island's edge or on the water. Briefly a pink-hued slender-billed gull appeared with these, then disappeared from view. There were great crested and little grebes on the water and the inevitable cormorants. Small birds in various places included white wagtails, robin, stonechat, black redstart and chiffchaff. Waders were well-represented: greenshanks, more stilts, a small flock of dunlins and, best of all, very tame little stints at the water's edge.

We walked towards the sea, pausing to enjoy views of a confiding red-legged partridge. A small sand spit had a surprising variety of birds including a group of sanderlings, an oystercatcher (scarce here), common sandpiper, greenshank, Kentish plover and a different slender-billed gull – different as it wasn't pink. Mediterranean gulls flew over – we were alerted by their distinctive call. There was also some nice dune flora: helichrysum with wafts of curry scent, sea rocket, the leaves of sea daffodil, mournful widow (a scabious) and southern birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus creticus*).



Some of the many Audouin's gulls; a confiding little stint.

## Sunday 10 March – Monnegre Gorge and Paratje Natural Municipal del Clot de Galvany

A drier day as we headed south on the motorway, a little more than an hour later arriving at the stark, arid environment of Monnegre Gorge, sometimes described as a moon-like landscape, or perhaps like Wild West Badlands sums it up. As we travelled, we'd checked out the sounds of trumpeter finch, an African bird with a small, isolated population in SE Spain, including here. It was dry enough for our first butterflies: Bath white and wall brown, and later also long-tailed blue and both common and scarce swallowtail.

Our first good bird was Thekla lark, which sang, flew and landed on an old hunting sign. The next was black wheatear, which moved from a low ridge to replace the Thekla lark on the sign. Several serins flew around, landed and flew off again. In the meantime, we'd heard the gentle squeak, like a child's plastic trumpet, which matched the recordings we'd checked. Then the trumpeter finch appeared, on a small structure that provided water, linked to a study of the species by the University of Alicante, a study that Pau had previously stumbled across.

Despite being such an arid environment there were a few flowers, all unusual so of particular interest. These included (here and at the next stop) the unusual yellow pea *Anthyllis cytisoides*, the honesty-like crucifer *Moricandia arvensis*, *Fagonia cretica*, white rockrose, a yellow rockrose *Helianthemum marifolium*, camphor thyme and a plant smothered with the parasitic dodder.



Monnegre Gorge; dodder.

That next stop was in a different part of the gorge, where our hope was to find Bonelli's eagle. We found two, at first in and out of view around a ridge where Pau showed us an old nest, then in soaring and diving display over a hillside.

We then drove farther south, passing Alicante. Our destination was a fairly new wetland called Paratje Natural Municipal del Clot de Galvany, adjacent to a coastal development of apartments and houses. But first we stopped for coffee, then to eat our picnics at a popular park / picnic place, busy with families having a day out this Sunday lunchtime.



Marbled ducks and red-crested pochard at Clot de Galvany (both AG).

The reserve is a nicely landscaped area with paths through scrub of joint-pine, lentisc and Thymelea, provided with two hides overlooking a well-managed small lake. Three of us popped into the first hide, where we saw shoveler, teal, gadwall and a smart pair of red-crested pochards. We then caught up with the others at the second hide, with yet more duck species to find that completed the set of Mediterranean species, as they swam in and out of view, with ferruginous duck, white-headed duck – female and male – and a pair of marbled teals all showing very well indeed. Common pochard, mallard, coot, moorhen and little grebes added to the mix. Pau located a single night heron tucked into the lake's edge. Most of the terrapins were the introduced red-eared variety, though there was a single Iberian terrapin too. A cattle egret landed on a post close to the hide, ideal for photographers once we got all cameras working (see front cover). We returned via the other hide where there was an amazingly close pair of red-crested pochards. We also paused for a flock of aerial feeders, which included pallid swifts and a red-rumped swallow.

We returned to the picnic site to use the loos, then headed back. Those on the left-hand side of the bus glimpsed a pair of golden eagles over a rock beside the motorway, and on the right you couldn't miss the tower blocks of Benidorm.

### Monday 11 March – butterfly reserve and various local places

Blue skies and sunshine tempted some into shorts, though there was still a chilly breeze at our first walk, at the butterfly reserve that Pau has been involved with setting up, a partnership between butterfly conservation NGO Zerynthia and Gandia Council. It's on a formerly wooded hillside that caught fire a few years ago, with scrub returning now supplemented by planting, especially of strawberry trees to attract two-tailed pasha butterflies. But we failed to find any of their distinctive larvae, and it was too early in the year to see adults. An early surprise was a calling Iberian woodpecker, which flew over us. There was stonechat, serins and the usual Sardinian warblers. It was too windy for many butterflies, just speckled wood in the more sheltered first part.

We stopped at the education centre car park at Barx, in particular to find pebrella *Thymus piperella*, a distinctively local thyme species with a strong and attractive scent, prized for cooking. Pau feared that there would be no orchids on account of the drought, though happily we did find a couple of sombre bee orchids, *Orchis fusca*, plus some grape hyacinths. From there we went onto our regular stop for coffee, in Barx, plus a game of table football.

From there it was a very short ride to a picnic site beside a snow well. This historic structure reminds us of how the climate has changed since the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when snow was compacted to provide ice in the summer months. It's now possible to walk into the snow well, which is new since I was last here. As we ate our picnics, we saw many blackcaps and had good views of siskins feeding in mulberry trees. We found three Moorish geckos on the snow well's structure.



Group members in the snow well; Moorish geckos (AG).

We then took the track through the Serra Grossa mountains to reach a micro-reserve set up to protect one of Europe's rarest plants, *Silene diclinis*. It is sometimes right by where we parked, though this patch had been thoroughly turned over by wild boars and there was no *Silene*. A wood white butterfly fluttered past. The open areas on the other side of the track proved more productive for all kinds of wildlife, butterflies especially. Green hairstreak was the first of several species caught by Pau – he has the necessary licence to do this in Valencia Region. The green hairstreak then sat happily on Julie's finger.

More good butterflies followed: Provence (formerly Moroccan) orange-tip, Cleopatra, mallow skipper and swallowtail. Paperwhite narcissi were still in flower here – a clump at Barx had gone over. Then Ann found a single *Silene diclinis* in flower (a distinct upgrade on the leaves Pau has shown us). A Provence orange-tip being released from a bug box was persuaded to perch on the *Silene diclinis* long enough to allow some photographs (see cover). Invertebrates of interest included several Egyptian locusts and a green huntsman spider. There was another good view of a siskin, crested tits called and flew over, and those with well-tuned ears also heard short-toed treecreeper and firecrest.



Green hairstreak; mallow skipper; female green huntsman spider (AG).

Moving on, there was a brief roadside stop to see some sawfly orchids and Pau collected some sweet bay leaves – apparently an occasional host plant for two-tailed pasha. Two hoopoes appeared, one of which perched and sang in full view. Our last stop was at an agricultural cooperative shop, an intriguing mix of local food products, vats of wine and practical products from pruning saws to sacks of cat food. We were back in Villalonga in good time, ideal for a wander around in the evening sunshine.

### Tuesday 12 March – Santa Pola and El Fondo

As we gathered for Pau to arrive, there was a blue rock thrush on a nearby rooftop, which then flew over us. It was found again on Wednesday evening.

We drove south again past Benidorm and Alicante, arriving at the salt pans of Santa Pola. Our first roadside stop was by a square tower that was once a lookout in case of Arab pirates. The salt pans were busy with flamingos, there were herons, great egret and a slender-billed gull that fed actively. Across the road a small lagoon had a nice selection of waders: avocet, back-tailed godwit, redshank, spotted redshank, greenshank, ruff, dunlin and Kentish plover. A yellow wagtail dropped into a ditch, where it landed alongside a common sandpiper, and a crested lark perched on a bush. After a second roadside stop, we went for coffee in a coastal bar, giving Denise an opportunity to paddle in the Mediterranean. An Audouin's gull and a Mediterranean gull flew past while we were there.

Our third saltpan stop was set up for visitors to park and look at birds through gaps in fencing, all designed to keep birds undisturbed yet viewable. Again there were many flamingos, plus avocets, black-tailed godwits and nicely pink-chested slender-billed gulls. On the other side of the lagoon there was an Iberian grey shrike, though distance and haze meant poor views. We took a short walk to a hide, then back to benches where we had our picnic lunches, under a shade canopy of bamboo-like giant reed with holes in the end that attracted the attention of two violet carpenter bees, presumably looking for a nesting space. An Iberian green woodpecker flew past.

On route to El Fondo, Pau made a roadside stop for a pale phase booted eagle. There were dark-centred flowers of *Urospermum* growing here. Then approaching El Fondo reserve another stop was to cross the road then walk over a bridge over a wide ditch. By the track, then again on the path through the reeds, there were tiny African grass blue butterflies. A lesser emperor dragonfly settled here which meant we could all see its distinct blue 'saddle'; elsewhere other lesser emperors had been flying past, sometimes 'in tandem'. The other dragonfly around El Fondo today was red-veined darter. From the hide there were many black-necked grebes, plus a couple of white-headed ducks, though much more distant than at Clot de Galvany. On the reeds we found two galls, namely cigar and corkscrew galls<sup>1</sup>.

At El Fondo, the freshwater marsh right by the car park had an impressively tame group of glossy ibises. Good those these were, it was the purple swamphen, so much bigger than close-by moorhens and coots, that received most attention. Some popped around the back of the visitor centre to the loos and in the meantime the rest of us soon found a red-knobbed coot on a small lagoon. That clambered onto the bank where it fed alongside another swamp-hen, common coot and glossy ibis. A pond nearby

<sup>1</sup> Cigar galls are caused by a frit fly *Lipara lucens* and corkscrew galls by the corkscrew gall mite *Stenotarsonemus phragmitidis*.

was alive with mosquito fish and we located three Iberian water frogs on the pond's edge, two in brown and one in green.



Glossy ibises and Iberian water frog, both at El Fondo.

Back at the first lagoon we saw two snipe, before we took the boardwalk through the next lagoon. Here there were confiding flamingos and ibises, plus three more red-knobbed coots, one of which sported a neck-collar, a reminder that they are here on account of an introduction project. We completed a circuit back to the minibus, near which two zitting cisticolas buzzed overhead in their usual style. The return drive included a stop at a garage to buy ice creams, welcome on this warm day.

### Wednesday 13 March – Pego Marsh and Cabo de San Antonio

We started the day by meeting Juan and Jon from Pau's ringing group, Pit Roig, at Pego Marsh. They had set up the mist net before dawn and we were at the closing session of their regular ringing session at this 'constant effort site', with birds ready to be released. First was a male white-spotted bluethroat, a delight to see at close quarters. The second was quite a surprise: a little bittern, with Pau warning us to be careful of its beak. Passerines were released from hands, but the little bittern was put on the ground and it walked away into cover. The third and fourth made for a good comparison: a sedge warbler, a migrant on its way to northern Europe, and a moustached warbler, which are both resident and a winter visitor at Pego Marsh. We'd heard one singing as we arrived, a song midway between sedge and reed warbler. Then there was a Cetti's warbler followed by chiffchaffs that had been caught in the mist net.



Sedge (left) & moustached warblers (right) and little bittern about to be released after ringing (JD).

The ringing apart, there was little to see at this part of the natural park, apart from a few overflying glossy ibises, little egrets standing around on dry paddy fields and hunting marsh harriers. That was down to timing: Pego Marsh was ready for cultivation, after winter flooding but before wet rice crops. So we took a very short drive to where we could follow a signposted circuit besides water courses, reeds and a small hill. Within sight of the parking area, tree sparrows on a pylon were a point of interest. It was a lovely day and a nice walk, with various points of interest for wildlife, including the sounds and glimpsed sightings of common waxbills. We passed a dummy nest on a metal gantry, an unsuccessful attempt to introduce ospreys by the Roy Dennis Foundation (and later, more of these). Two similar-sized raptors sharing an updraft were a buzzard and a pale phase booted eagle; a little later we saw a booted eagle, perhaps the same one, with two white storks, which are scarce in this part of Spain. There was a very large – and occupied – nest of paper wasps on a concrete structure. We found a smart *Oxythyrea funesta* pollen chafer on a white campion. A lizard ran across the track and stopped where it thought it was out of sight on a fallen reed, so through the telescope we were all able to see the large psammodromus. Ann saw a hummingbird hawkmoth that appeared to be egg-laying on madder. Lavender flowers here were the unusual species *Lavandula multifida* or cut-leaved lavender.



The circuit brought us back to the minibus and a picnic site under mulberry trees, so we had an earlyish lunch. Today we swapped around our usual routine by having the coffee + loo stop after lunch at a café by a roundabout, with nice lemon zest cake that Pau had dutifully checked out in advance.

From there we went to the afternoon's excursion at Cabo de San Antonio (or cap de Sant Antoni, in the Parque Natural del Montgó). The small car park was among a group of Aleppo pines, where we saw a short-toed treecreeper and had a close – if brief – view of a firecrest. Beyond the pines there was an open headland, where a black wheatear perched on a triangle of rocks. A peregrine flew over, there was a distant blue rock thrush near the cliff's edge and a black redstart for good measure. From here we walked to the lighthouse, past scrub of lentisc, Mediterranean buckthorn and dwarf fan palm, plus another lavender, this time toothed lavender *Lavandula dentata*. There were more people here, plus camper vans. A gannet flew past at sea, some tried to make out Ibiza in the haze and others marvelled at how a kestrel maintained its static position in the sky by a blustery headland.

#### Thursday 14 March – L'Albarda garden and Calpe

House martins were visiting nests in Villalonga this morning.

We started a little later than usual as our destination didn't open until 10 o'clock. The L'Albarda garden, near Dénia, was a Italianate garden now developed with Mediterranean species adapted to survive in the local climate. This exceptionally dry year it was also a bit of an oasis for wildlife among the more structured formal planting. We started by looking for willow emerald damselfly egg-laying scars, which the group had seen on oleander four years ago. Sure enough, there they were, and later also on a *Salix* (willow). One pond also had an Iberian water frog. Blackcaps showed well in a Norfolk Island pine; we heard greenfinch, serins, song thrush (surprisingly a few breed in this area) and Sardinian warbler. A hummingbird hawkmoth buzzed around, favouring some pelargoniums, and there were several violet carpenter bees, especially around a profusely flowering wisteria. Butterflies here today were large white, speckled wood, holly blue, red admiral and swallowtail. An area held a native Mediterranean mix, including toothed lavender, by far the best flowering grey-leaved cistus that we'd seen and large Mediterranean spurge. It was while we were in this area that a low-flying short-toed eagle came over, then a second, then a short-toed eagle with a pale phase booted eagle. Blue houndstongue and the blue version of scarlet pimpernel were new flowers for the week.

We stopped for coffee and carrot cake, where several chickens and a large turkey kept us company. A red squirrel that struck us as strangely dark and pale then descended from the carob tree that partially shaded us. That said, reference books stress their variability in colour (there is a distinct hint of red in Pau's photo, below, anyway) and that ear tufts are a winter feature; there is a hint of tufts visible with a close look at the photo.



Red squirrel at L'Albarda garden (PL).

We drove to the coastal resort of Calpe, discovering that it was no longer possible to park where we used to, so we gathered picnics and walked from the new barrier into the Natural Park of Penyal d'Ifac while Pau parked in a street nearby. We ate picnics in the picnic area, watched by yellow-legged gulls and collared doves. From there we walked to the clifftop through scrub that was horribly dry, with hardly a wild flower to be seen. The autumn and winter drought had plainly hit this area hard. Looking down to the rocks at the bottom of the high cliffs there were about 15 Mediterranean race shags, a scarce sub-species.

It felt unlikely that we'd find much of interest here this dry year, so we moved to the pocket nature reserve by the flamingo lagoon. This was equally dry: even lentisc bushes looked like they might in August. Where in other years there were orchids, this year the only signs of green life were sprouting

autumn squills, with big enough reserves in their large bulbs to cope with this year's conditions. As Pau remarked, the drought was to bring on eco-anxiety about the impact of climate change. The short walk took us to the boardwalk and viewing platform by the lagoon, where as well as the many greater flamingos there were shelducks, herons and a couple of black-winged stilts.



Autumnal colours at Calpe, showing the severity of the autumn/winter drought here; Font Salada.

So somewhere with water was a good plan, and we returned to Font Salada, a natural spa close to Honeyguide's former hotel of the same name. The Font was busy with people, some swimming. We walked a little further to another part of Pego Marsh and the waterway we'd been near yesterday. We found some blue-tailed damselflies, pond skaters, too many alien terrapins of two (sub)species and heard a moustached warbler.

Pau's wife Virginia and son Jaume, now 14 months old, came to see us at Casa Babel. Jaume was being fed and looking at children's nature books and seemed very content with his unexpected company and attention. Pau joined us for the final, delicious dinner. Casa Babel's food impressed us all week, with a pattern of three starters followed by a sensibly sized main course, helped by effervescent Mara and careful attention to our two vegans.

#### Friday 15 March – local walk and return

An afternoon flight meant that there was time for a walk to the river, past orange trees that were just starting to flower and producing that glorious scent. We added a few flowers to the list: weasel's snout (lesser snapdragon), bur-marigold (for which Virginia messaged with an ID), and the unusual labiate *Stachys ocymastrum* (photo in lists). Pau explained that the council had gone to great expense to clear giant reed by the river, by digging it out and laying plastic sheeting to suppress re-growth, though you could see that it had several footholds to return. Little egrets were conspicuous in the open, rocky river, and two saw grey wagtail and little ringed plover. Small birds included siskin (wintering), song thrush singing, chiffchaff, Cetti's warbler and the surprising find of two crossbills feeding in a plane tree. Scarce swallowtail flew past several times. There was time for a coffee in Villalonga and to take group photos before leaving at noon. It was a smooth ride to the airport and the usual tight corner to get into the multistorey car park to return the Enterprise minibus. We said farewell to Pau, ate picnics together, then left Julie to head off for her train to Barcelona and beyond.

There is always time to kill at airports, though it was much more than usual today. Everyone queued to board the plane but were turned back on account of an engineering issue. In the end what should have been a 15:50 departure was delayed into the early evening, with the flight taking off at 19:35.



We saw orchards of orange trees everywhere and they were a frequent subject of conversation as many are abandoned and uneconomic, despite producing lovely fruit, including the bag of oranges that Pau brought us daily. Right: moth plant or cruel vine, native to South America, was widespread, scrambling over fences and citrus trees.

## The best bits

At our final evening checklist meeting in the bar at Hotel Casa Babel we shared our holiday highlights, some of the best memories of the holiday.

Julie	'Mr Blue Beak' the white-headed duck; little bittern in the hand; starters at dinner.
Mark	Ringing and Pau's colleagues, especially to see moustached warbler next to sedge warbler; short-toed eagle and booted eagle together; trumpeter finch; black wheatear.
Ann	Finding <i>Silene diclinis</i> ; bird ringing especially the little bittern; glimpses of swallowtails; willow emerald egg scars.
Jill	Glossy ibis; black-winged stilt; hoopoes; very good company.
Denise	White-headed duck; hoopoe; small gentle group; galls on reeds.
Pau	Trumpeter finch; Bonelli's eagle displaying; <i>Silene diclinis</i> and many butterflies in that area.
Chris	Huge flocks of glossy ibises; first trumpeter finch in mainland Europe; four species of Mediterranean ducks together and with very close views.

## WILDLIFE LISTS

### BIRDS NP = Natural Park

Little grebe	Heard or seen in freshwater wetlands on three day
Great crested grebe	Estany del Pujol, Santa Pola
Black-necked grebe	El Fondo NP
Gannet	At sea at Cabo de San Antonio
Cormorant	At all wetlands
Shag	15 on a rock off Penyal d'Ifac NP at Calpe
Little bittern	In the hand and released at Pego Marshes.
Cattle egret	Much scarcer than little egret, seen well at Clot de Galvany
Little egret	Often large numbers in wetlands
Great white egret	Seen on three days
Grey heron	Seen on four days at various wetlands
Night heron	Single at Clot de Galvany
White stork	2, probably migrants, Cabo de San Antonio
Glossy ibis	Huge flocks at Albufera de Valencia; Pego Marsh; El Fondo.
Greater flamingo	In good numbers at Albufera de Valencia, Calpe, Santa Pola and El Fondo
Spoonbill	Albufera de Valencia, distant birds at Santa Pola
Shelduck	Seen on 3 days, often plentiful
Marbled duck	Excellent views at Clot de Galvany
Gadwall	Clot de Galvany, El Fondo
Teal	Clot de Galvany, El Fondo
Mallard	Seen on 6 days
Shoveler	Clot de Galvany
Red-crested pochard	Clot de Galvany and El Fondo
Pochard	Clot de Galvany and El Fondo
Ferruginous duck	Pair at Clot de Galvany
White-headed duck	Pair at Clot de Galvany, 2 at El Fondo
Short-toed eagle	Two over L'Albarda garden
Marsh harrier	At all main wetlands
Buzzard	Recorded on only 1 day, at Pego Marsh
Golden eagle	A pair glimpsed from the motorway
Bonelli's eagle	Monnegre Gorge
Booted eagle	Seen on 3 days, mostly light phase birds
Common kestrel	Seen almost daily
Peregrine	Cabo de San Antonio
Red-legged partridge	Recorded on 2 days, seen well at Estany del Pujol
Water rail	Heard on 2 days
Moorhen	Seen on 4 days
Purple swamp-hen	Very visible at El Fondo
Coot	Large numbers at El Fondo
Red-knobbed coot	About 4 birds El Fondo NP, including one with a neck collar
Oystercatcher	Single at Estany del Pujol, a good record in the Mediterranean
Black-winged stilt	On 3 days: Albufera de Valencia, El Fondo and Calpe
Avocet	Many at Santa Pola
Little ringed plover	Albufera de Valencia and river in Villalonga
Ringed plover	Albufera de Valencia
Kentish plover	Albufera de Valencia and El Fondo
Little stint	Very close at Estany del Pujol; Santa Pola
Dunlin	Albufera de Valencia, Estany del Pujol and Santa Pola
Sanderling	Singles at Estany del Pujol and Santa Pola
Ruff	Albufera de Valencia and Santa Pola
Snipe	El Fondo
Black-tailed godwit	Santa Pola
Spotted redshank	Estany del Pujol; Santa Pola
Redshank	Santa Pola
Greenshank	Estany del Pujol, Santa Pola

Green sandpiper	Ditch at Albufera de Valencia
Wood sandpiper	Albufera de Valencia
Common sandpiper	Singles at Albufera de Valencia and El Fondo
Black-headed gull	Common at most wetlands
Lesser black-backed gull	Albufera de Valencia
Yellow-legged gull	On territory at Penyal D'Ifac NP and numerous elsewhere
Mediterranean gull	Albufera de Valencia, Estany del Pujol and Santa Pola
Audouin's gull	Hundreds at Albufera de Valencia, on territory at Estany del Pujol
Slender-billed gull	Single at Estany del Pujol, plentiful at Santa Pola
Sandwich tern	Distant birds at Santa Pola
Feral pigeon	Recorded three days
Woodpigeon	Recorded most days; small migrant groups at Cabo de San Antonio and Calpe
Collared dove	Recorded daily
Little owl	Heard while we were driving, not far from Villalonga
Pallid swift	Probably this swift species on 9/3, certainly so at Estany del Pujol on 10/3
Kingfisher	Pau saw one at Font Salada
Hoopoe	Seen on 3 days
Iberian green woodpecker	Often an elusive species, flew past us at the butterfly reserve and at Santa Pola.
Crested lark	Only seen at Santa Pola
Thekla lark	Good view at Monnegre Gorge, 10/3.
Sand martin	In a big mixed flock of hirundines at Estany del Pujol, 10/3
Crag martin	Seen on 3 days
Barn swallow	Seen on 3 days
Red-rumped swallow	1, Estany del Pujol, 10/3
House martin	Seen 4 days, nesting in Villalonga
Meadow pipit	Seen on 2 days
Water pipit	Many on paddy fields near Valencia; El Fondo
Yellow wagtail	Santa Pola, Pego Marsh
White wagtail	Seen almost every day
Wren	Heard on two days
Robin	Seen on three days
Bluethroat	Brief view at Santa Pola; male white-spotted form in the hand at Pego Marsh
Black redstart	Seen almost daily
Stonechat	Seen on 4 days
Black wheatear	Monnegre Gorge and Cabo de San Antonio
Blackbird	Almost daily
Song thrush	Heard singing L'Albarda garden 14/3 and Villalonga, 15/3
Blue rock thrush	Males at Cabo de San Antonio and twice seen close to the hotel in Villalonga
Cetti's warbler	Heard on 4 days at various wetlands; in the hand at Pego Marsh
Zitting cisticola	El Fondo
Moustached warbler	Heard and in the hand at Pego Marsh
Sedge warbler	In the hand at Pego Marsh
Spectacled warbler	Glimpsed at Calpe, Pau heard at Clot de Galvany
Sardinian warbler	Seen or heard daily
Blackcap	Seen or heard on three days, seen best in L'Albarda garden
Chiffchaff	Seen or heard daily
Firecrest	Heard on 2 days, and seen well in the pines at Cabo de San Antonio
Long-tailed tit	Recorded on 11/3
Crested tit	At the botanical reserve
Coal tit	Recorded on 11/3
Great tit	2 days
Short-toed treecreeper	Seen or heard on 2 days
Iberian grey shrike	1, Santa Pola
Magpie	Regular sightings while travelling
Jackdaw	While travelling on 10/3, Pego Marsh 13/3
Spotless starling	Almost daily
House sparrow	Daily
Tree sparrow	Several on a pylon at Pego Marsh
Common waxbill	Glimpses at Pego Marsh
Chaffinch	2 days
Serin	Heard or seen almost daily
Greenfinch	Seen on 4 days
Siskin	Seen on 2 days
Goldfinch	Seen daily
Trumpeter finch	Monnegre Gorge
Girl bunting	On the walk by the river at Villalonga



Oystercatcher, black redstart (PL)

MAMMALS			
Red squirrel <i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	Wild boar <i>Sus scrofa</i> – rootings	Rabbit <i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	Bat sp
AMPHIBIANS, REPTILES AND FISH			
Iberian water frog <i>Pelophylax perezi</i>		Iberian wall lizard <i>Podarcis hispanica</i>	
Iberian terrapin <i>Mauremys leprosa</i>		Large psammodromus <i>Psammodromus algirus</i>	
Red-eared slider <i>Trachemys scripta elegans</i> (feral)		Mosquito fish <i>Gambusia</i> sp. (non-native)	
Pond slider <i>Trachemys scripta</i> ssp unknown (feral) <sup>2</sup>		Barbel <i>Barbus barbus</i>	
Moorish gecko <i>Tarentola mauretanic</i>		Flathead grey mullet <i>Mugil cephalus</i>	
BUTTERFLIES			
Mallow skipper	Bath white	Red admiral	Long-tailed blue
Swallowtail	Cleopatra	Southern speckled wood	African grass blue
Scarce swallowtail	Provence (Moroccan) orange-tip	Wall brown	Holly blue
Large white	Clouded yellow	Green hairstreak	
Small white	Wood white	Small copper	
OTHER INVERTEBRATES			
Willow emerald (western willow spreadwing) <i>Chalcolestes viridis</i> egg-laying scars		Green huntsman spider <i>Micrommata virescens</i> female	
Blue-tailed damselfly <i>Ischnura elegans</i>		Wasp spider egg case	
Red-veined darter <i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>		Bee-fly sp <i>Bombyliidae</i>	
Lesser emperor <i>Anax parthenope</i>		Fire bug <i>Pyrrhocoris apterus</i>	
Conehead mantis <i>Empusa pennata</i> – egg case		Pond skater, probably <i>Aquarius najas</i>	
Egyptian grasshopper/locust <i>Anacridium aegyptium</i>		A hairy flower chafer <i>Tropinota hirta</i> .	
Pine processionary moth <i>Thaumetopoea pityocampa</i> tents		Pollen chafer <i>Oxythyrea funesta</i>	
Hummingbird hawk-moth <i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>		Violet carpenter bee <i>Xylocopa violacea</i>	
Louisiana crayfish <i>Procambarus clarkia</i> remains		Honey bees <i>Apis</i> spp	
		Paper wasp <i>Polistes</i> sp probably <i>dominula</i>	
GALLS (both on reed)			
Cigar gall		Corkscrew gall	



Two sightings at Pego Marshes: large psammodromus and pollen chafer *Oxythyrea funesta* on white campion.

PLANTS		
Numbers on the right refer to Blamey & Grey-Wilson, <i>Mediterranean Wild Flowers</i> . Those without numbers are a mix of species widespread in Europe and local specialities. Some are planted, marked P. NiF = not in flower. Common northern European plants are not noted; planted trees are noted when of special interest.		
Pinaceae		
<i>Pinus halepensis</i>	Aleppo pine	1
<i>Pinus pinea</i> P	Stone / umbrella pine	3
<i>Pinus pinaster</i>	Maritime pine	5
<i>Araucaria araucana</i> P	Norfolk Island pine	
Cupressaceae		
<i>Juniperus oxycedrus</i>	Prickly juniper	15
Ephedraceae		
<i>Ephedra fragilis</i>	Joint-pine	20
Fagaceae		
<i>Quercus coccifera</i>	Kermes oak	24
Moraceae		
<i>Ficus carica</i>	Fig	42
Urticaceae		
<i>Parietaria judaica</i>	Pellitory-of-the-wall	50
Caryophyllaceae		
<i>Paronychia capita</i>	Paronychia	134
<i>Silene alba</i>	White campion	158

<sup>2</sup> Field guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Europe Speybroeck et al says: "The most widely reported species is *Trachemys scripta elegans*, but after a European import ban, a myriad of other terrapins have been also been imported and may appear in the wild in Europe ... the species as a whole is known as pond slider."

<i>Silene diclinis</i>	(endemic to Spain)	
<b>Aizoaceae</b>		
<i>Carpobrotus edulis</i> NiF	Hottentot fig	115
<b>Papaveraceae</b>		
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Common poppy	283
<b>Ranunculaceae</b>		
<i>Ranunculus</i> sp.	Water crowfoot sp.	
<i>Ranunculus sceleratus</i>	Celery-leaved buttercup	251
<b>Fumariaceae</b>		
<i>Fumaria capreolata</i>	White ramping-fumitory	303
<b>Cruciferae</b>		
<i>Biscutella</i> sp ( <i>didyma</i> ?)	Buckler mustard	c.341
<i>Diplotaxis erucoides</i>	White wall rocket	
<i>Lobularia maritima</i>	Sweet alison	338
<i>Cardaria draba</i>	Hoary cress	353
<i>Moricandia arvensis</i>		354
<i>Cakile maritima</i>	Sea rocket	363
<i>Nasturtium officinale</i>	Watercress	
<i>Siapsis arvensis</i>	Charlock	
<b>Resedaceae</b>		
<i>Reseda alba</i>	White mignonette	375
<b>Crassulaceae</b>		
<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i> NiF	Navelwort	396
<i>Bryophyllum (=Kalanchoe) daigremontianum</i> P	Devil's backbone, mother of thousands, alligator plant, Mexican hat plant	Native to Madagascar
<b>Rosaceae</b>		
<i>Prunus dulcis</i>	Almond	421
<i>Eriobotrya japonica</i> P	Loquat	
<b>Fabaceae / Leguminosae</b>		
<i>Acacia dealbata</i> P	'Mimosa' or Silver wattle	432
<i>Anthyllis cytisoides</i>	a shrub kidney-vetch	688
<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i> P	Judas tree	430
<i>Ceratonia siliqua</i>	Carob	431
<i>Lygos monosperma</i>	Retama	480
<i>Medicago arborea</i> P	Tree medick	
<i>Psoralea bituminosa</i>	Pitch trefoil	508
<i>Ulex parviflorus</i>	Small flowered gorse	473
<i>Vicia sativa</i>	Common vetch	531
<b>Oxalidaceae</b>		
<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i>	Bermuda buttercup	735
<b>Geraniaceae</b>		
<i>Geranium rotundifolium</i>	Round-leaved cranesbill	743
<i>Geranium purpureum</i>	Little robin	748
<i>Erodium malacoides</i>	Mallow-leaved storksbill	752
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	Common storksbill	761
<b>Zygophyllaceae</b>		
<i>Fagona cretica</i>		766
<b>Linaceae</b>		
<i>Linum narbonense</i>	Beautiful flax	775
<b>Euphorbiaceae</b>		
<i>Euphorbia helioscopia</i>	Sun spurge	799
<i>Euphorbia characias</i>	Large Mediterranean spurge	799
<i>Euphorbia serrata</i>	Saw-leaved spurge	817
<i>Mercurialis annua</i>	Annual mercury	820
<i>Ricinus communis</i>	Castor oil plant	824
<b>Meliaceae</b>		
<i>Melia azedarach</i> P	Indian bead tree or Persian lilac	843
<b>Polygalaceae</b>		
<i>Polygala × dalmatisiana</i> P	Sweet pea shrub	
<b>Anacardiaceae</b>		
<i>Pistacia lentiscus</i>	Mastic tree or lentisc	865
<b>Rhamnaceae</b>		
<i>Rhamnus alaternus</i>	Mediterranean buckthorn	885
<i>Rhamnus lycioides</i> NiF		887
<b>Thymelaeaceae</b>		
<i>Daphne gnidium</i> NiF	Daphne	936

<i>Thymelea hirsuta</i>		942
<b>Cistaceae</b>		
<i>Cistus albidus</i>	Grey-leaved cistus	961
<i>Cistus salvifolius</i>	Sage-leaved cistus	965
<i>Cistus monspeliensis</i> NiF	Narrow-leaved cistus	966
<i>Helianthemum appeninum</i>	White rockrose	993
<i>Fumana thymifolia</i>		
<b>Cactaceae</b>		
<i>Opuntia maxima = ficus-indica</i>	Prickly pear	1040
<b>Araliaceae</b>		
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy	
<b>Myrtaceae</b>		
<i>Myrtus communis</i> P	Myrtle	1052
<b>Punicaceae</b>		
<i>Punica granatum</i> P	Pomegranate	1064
<b>Umbelliferae/Apiaceae</b>		
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Wild carrot	1168
<i>Ferula communis</i> NiF	Giant fennel	1141
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> NiF	Fennel	1108
<b>Ericaceae</b>		
<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	Strawberry tree	1176
<i>Erica multiflora</i>		1186
<b>Primulaceae</b>		
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	Scarlet pimpernel	1198
<b>Oleaceae</b>		
<i>Phillyrea angustifolia</i>	Phillyrea, false olive or mock privet	1246
<i>Olea europaea</i> P	Olive	1248
<i>Olea europaea</i> spp <i>oleaster</i>	Wild olive	1248a
<b>Apocynaceae</b>		
<i>Araujia sericifera</i> F	Moth plant or cruel vine (scrambling over fences)	Native to South America
<b>Rubiaceae</b>		
<i>Rubia peregrina</i>	Wild madder	1305
<b>Convolvulaceae</b>		
<i>Cuscuta epithymum</i>	Dodder	1311
<i>Ipomoea purpurea</i>	Morning glory	1319
<b>Boraginaceae</b>		
<i>Echium plantagineum</i>	Purple viper's bugloss	1383
<i>Lithodora fruticosa</i>	Shrubby gromwell	1355
<i>Cynoglossum creticum</i>	Blue houndstongue	1402
<b>Verbenaceae</b>		
<i>Lantana camara</i>	Lantana	1417
<b>Labiatae</b>		
<i>Marrubium vulgare</i> NiF	White horehound	1445
<i>Mentha rotundifolia</i> NiF	Apple mint	1523
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Rosemary	1526
<i>Lavandula stoechas</i>	French lavender	1528
<i>Lavandula dentata</i>	Toothed lavender	1530
<i>Lavandula multifida</i>	Cut-leaved lavender	1531
<i>Salvia verbeneca</i>	Wild clary	1545
<i>Stachys ocymastrum</i>	Italian hedge-nettle	
<i>Satureja</i> sp probably <i>obovata</i> NiF	Savory	
<i>Thymus piperella</i> NiF	<i>Pebrella</i>	
<i>Thymus camphoratus</i> NiF	Camphor thyme	
<b>Solanaceae</b>		
<i>Nicotiana glauca</i>	Shrub tobacco	1582
<b>Scrophulariaceae/Antirrhinaceae</b>		
<i>Paulownia tomentosa</i>	Foxglove tree, planted in groves for timber	1585
<i>Scrophularia auriculata</i>	Water figwort	
<i>Scrophularia canina</i>	French figwort	1589
<i>Verbascum sinuatum</i> NiF		1601
<i>Misopates orontium</i>	Lesser snapdragon / weasel's snout	1611
<b>Globulariaceae</b>		
<i>Globularia alypum</i>	Shrubby globularia	1677
<b>Plantaginaceae</b>		
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain	

<b>Caprifoliaceae</b>		
<i>Viburnum tinus</i>	Laurestinus	1711
<b>Valerianaceae/ Dipsacaceae</b>		
<i>Centranthus ruber</i>	Red valerian	1723
<i>Scabiosa atropurpurea</i>	Mournful widow	1749
<b>Compositae / Asteracea</b>		
<i>Anthemis arvensis</i>	Corn mayweed	1858
<i>Asteriscus maritimus</i>		1848
<i>Bidens aurea</i>	Bur-marigold	1850
<i>Calendula arvensis</i>	Field marigold	1908
<i>Chrysanthemum coronarium</i>	Crown daisy	1895
<i>Dittricia (Inula) viscosa</i> NiF	Stink aster	1842
<i>Helichrysum stoechas</i>	Curry plant	1824
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Smooth sow-thistle	
<i>Sonchus tenerrimus</i>	Slender sow-thistle	2073
<i>Urospermum dalechampii</i>	Urospermum	2029
<b>Liliaceae</b>		
<i>Asphodelus fistulosus</i>	Hollow-leaved asphodel	2087
<i>Asphodelus aestivus</i>	Asphodel	2089
<i>Urginea maritima</i>	Sea squill, leaves/bulbs	2163
<i>Smilax aspera</i>	berries	2222
<i>Muscari neglectum</i>	Grape hyacinth	2206
<i>Asparagus horridus</i>		
<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i> NiF	Butcher's broom	2219
<b>Amaryllidaceae</b>		
<i>Pancratium maritimum</i> NiF	Sea daffodil	2270
<i>Narcissus papyraceus</i>	Paperwhite narcissus	2278
<b>Iridaceae</b>		
<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	Yellow flag	2290
<i>Arisarum</i> sp leaves only	Friar's cowl	2377
<b>Palmae</b>		
<i>Chamaerops humilis</i>	Dwarf fan palm	2357
<b>Gramineae/Poaceae</b>		
<i>Arundo donax</i>	Giant reed	2494
<i>Cortaderia selloana</i>	Pampas grass, invasive non-native	
<i>Typha angustifolia</i>	Lesser reedmace	
<i>Phragmites australis</i>	Reed	
<b>Cyperaceae</b>		
<i>Juncus acutus</i>	Sharp rush	
<b>Nymphaeaceae</b>		
<i>Nymphaea alba</i>	White water-lily	
<b>FERNS PTERIDOPHYTA</b>		
<i>Adiantum capitis-veneris</i>	Maidenhair fern	2522
<b>ORCHIDS</b>		
<i>Ophrys fusca</i>	Sombre bee orchid	2424
<i>Ophrys tenthredinifera</i>	Sawfly orchid	2442



*Stachys ocymastrum*, Italian hedgenettle, which isn't in the books; berries and the distinctive leaves of *Smilax aspera* (AG); shrubby globularia.