Algarve
Salisbury & District Natural History Society
10 – 17 April 2007
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Holiday participants
Rosemary and Gerald Nicholls
Audrey Lovett
Brenda Davis
Margaret Pragnell
Ted Sansby
Ailsa McKee
Donald and Rita Scarfe
Ray and Joyce Ford
Grace Hickman
Pam James
Joan Tripp
Marigold Woolley

Leaders
Brian and Eileen Anderson Rochdale
Chris Durdin Norwich

Our host: Deric Brown, Hotel Belavista da Luz, www.belavistadaluz.com

Illustrations by Rob Hume. Front cover: azure-winged magpie
Report written by Chris Durdin, with flower report by Brian Anderson.

This holiday, as for every Honeyguide holiday, also puts something into conservation in our host country by way of a contribution to the wildlife that we enjoyed. The conservation contribution this year of £25 per person was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust and £200 from Roger Jordan and friends in the Wildlife Outreach Network based in Essex, leading to a total of €955 given to the Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA, BirdLife Portugal). We were very pleased to welcome João Ministro from SPEA to the Hotel Belavista da Luz to receive the cheque.

This is our third to SPEA and follows last year’s donation of €490, so that’s €1915 (€1320) to date. The total conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 was at £47,863 (roughly €69,400) at the end of June 2007. See postscript from SPEA on final page.
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Tuesday 10 April – Salisbury to Vila da Luz
The Salisbury early risers’ club gathered safely and was smoothly transported by coach to Southampton, where we learnt that the 06.35 Flybe flight had been delayed to 08.00 for ‘operational reasons’, as the tannoy put it. But we caught up a little of the delay on a smooth flight to Faro, where a white stork was feeding among the airport grass over which a few swallows were swooping. Tony, our bus driver for the week, and Miltours rep Fátima were there to meet and greet.

Patches of colour from pink mallow-leaved bindweed, yellow and white crown daisies and white gum and sage-leaved cistuses punctuated the coastal motorway. A few cattle egrets and the occasional kestrel were noted along the way, but it was otherwise a quiet hour’s journey, birdwise.

Holiday leaders Brian and Eileen greeted us at the pink palace of the Hotel Belavista da Luz. Hotel owner Deric had a bustard feather and stories of birds from the Alentejo and put drinks in our hands faster than you could say azure-winged magpie. There was time to find rooms and unpack before a delicious spread of quiches and salads, and the short night deterred few from having a glass of local wine.

The afternoon was a leisurely stroll to the beach to see where the local shops and other facilities could be found, with a little natural history along the way. This started with a quick dip into the scrub patch by the hotel that Deric bought to stop it getting built over, like so much of the coast in general and the growing town of Vila da Luz in particular. The woodchat shrike seen from the hotel window proved elusive, but there were mirror, yellow bee and small-flowered tongue orchids plus showy large blue alkanets and other wayside flowers.

The coolish breeze at the top of the hill vanished as we walked towards the sea. Planted shrubs included the wonderfully scented Algarvian speciality *Coronilla vincentina*, ngaio and lantana bushes and Peruvian pepper trees. A family party of goldfinches – the youngsters without face pattern – moved around some cypress trees and the gulls on the fortaleza by the beach were plainly yellow-legged. It was busy with people too, being Easter school holidays. We found a painted lady on one of the many yellow clumps of *Astericus maritimus* and Gerald and Ailsa located a Moorish gecko on a wall, happily re-found on the return walk for several of us. Some popped in to see the Roman ruins and several enjoyed an ice cream or a cup of tea before climbing the hill back to the hotel.

Wednesday 11 April – coastal walk to Lagos
Considering yesterday’s early start, a turn out of four for pre-breakfast birdwatching at 7.15 was impressive. On the scrub up the road from the hotel there were many azure-winged magpies. Sardinian warblers chattered energetically and early cattle egrets were on the move. Two crested larks were on some bare ground and a red-rumped swallow flew over.

It was distinctly cool as we gathered for our 9.30 departure to walk towards Lagos, and Brian wisely checked that people had waterproofs. Ten plus leaders set off down the hill, with five opting to rendezvous later with Deric and his minibus. A single turnstone was on the foreshore. Leaving Vila da Luz, there was long list of flower sightings, including gladiolus, many pyramidal orchids and purple Jerusalem sage. Woodchat shrikes perched on lentisc and fig bushes and a few stonechats popped in and out of view. The climb up the hill to the trig point presented no problem, with a pause for the unusual plant *Cytinus ruber*, a parasite on cistus. Deric was at the top of the hill but the five with him and opted to meet the walkers at the next point. He mentioned the peregrine along the cliff top walk that we then set out on, and it was not long before one was seen flying away by two of the group and a second was clearly seen perched. Alpine swifts chattered overhead: first six, then a group of 20, which kept us company for most of the 2 kilometre walk to Porto de Mos. The sound of bee-eaters alerted us to at least three on a dead tree. Spits of rain came and went and it seemed at this point that Ailsa had been persuaded to carry the butterfly net under false pretenses, but a warmer spell brought out some fine Spanish marbled whites, one of which was caught and admired in the bugbox. At the same time so too was a large female wasp spider – in a different bug box, of course – and a paper wasp on its nest was found.
With immaculate timing, both those on foot and Deric’s group, with the picnics, arrived at Porto de Mos where it was dry enough for an outdoor picnic on a low wall above the beach. Below us growing on the edge of the beach was Cape daisy, a now well-established South African plant. A casual remark about the picnic afters led to Deric disappearing to a café and returning with a large plate of pudding with strawberries for Rosemary. A group of 17 whimbrels flew past at sea and Gerald spotted dolphins in the surf.

The minibus ferried the group along the streets of Porto de Mos to the start of the next section of coastal walk to Lagos. Flowers along the way included Barbary nut irises, Mediterranean and small-flowered catchfly and patches of silvery paronychia. The walk goes via the lighthouse and impressive rock stacks of Pont de Piedade, where one stack had a white stork nest. After tea in a café, we followed the Stations of the Cross into Lagos. Some of the group caught a golden oriole perched briefly on a cliff top bush and a hoopoe flew through. Yellow bartsia caught the eye too.

The rain was getting steadier as we dropped into Lagos, walked through some shopping streets and, beside his statue, heard Eileen’s learned discourse on Henry the Navigator, the driving force behind the Portuguese voyages of discovery and founder of a school of navigation which is generally linked to (if not actually at) where we were later to visit at Sagres. Then it was taxis home. Following a review of wildlife checklists in the rather noisy games room, tonight’s indoor barbeque meal with sangria was much enjoyed and the young music man with nice voice and organ tempted several onto the dance floor.

Thursday 12 April – Ria Formosa Natural Park and Pêra Marsh

Over a calm sea before breakfast the gulls were following fishing boats, many hundreds of gannets were heading steadily west, four Sandwich terns flew past and a common sandpiper flicked in characteristic style over the sea and onto the shore.

Heading east towards Faro, first stop at Almancil was at the church of São Lourenço – St Lawrence – to see probably the finest tiled church in Europe. The architecture is baroque, with an elegant cupola and tiled panels set over the main entrance and to the rear of the main chapel. The interior is extraordinary, dominated by more blue and white tiles, with an altar-piece in gilded wood-work. Outside a Persian lilac (or Indian bead tree) was coming into flower.

The western end of the land at Quinta do Lago beside the Formosa Natural Park is a spread of golf courses and related upmarket development, but the immediately adjacent saltmarshes of the park remains untouched and easily accessible – that is apart from a car park charge. As soon as we were out of the minibus a large psammodromus – a long-tailed lizard – scuttled across the road. Ted went off with Tony and Eileen to retrieve his stick from the airport and the rest of us were straight into watching a very close Kentish plover on the shore, then joined by a winter plumage sanderling. Scores of bright yellow cistanches, like a broomrape, were pushing out of the saltmarsh vegetation. What someone advised was the longest wooden bridge in Europe took us over the estuary inlet sea here towards the sand bar with the sea proper beyond, our real destination being a café with loos. But movement was slow as we studied grey plovers, dunlins, ringed plovers and a fine and very close whimbrel. Outside the loos, a subalpine warbler hopped in a pile of wire supports for sunshades.

Via a loo stop in a motorway service station and a roundabout with a sculpture of dolphins, we made our way to Pêra marsh. A rich mix of birds assaulted the eyes: flamingos, scores of chattering stilts and elegant avocets, plus a sprinkling of the other wader species from this morning. We made our way to the viewing platform at the sea end from where the hoped
for purple gallinules were easy to see, plus gadwalls, little grebe and cormorants. A count found 62 greater flamingos plus one lesser flamingo, presumably an escape. A deep red broomrape, eventually named as *Orobanche foetida*, reversed clover, and button mayweed were among the flowers, plus our first common blue. We were, happily, back in the bus before the next shower of rain, though it was fine enough for swimming by the time we were back at base.

Friday 13 April – Monte Seco and monarch butterflies at Silves

The same stream of gannets and trickle of Sandwich terns were flying west before breakfast, and two little egrets fed on the rocky foreshore that makes such an impressive sea defence for Luz. Somehow early morning is always the best time for views of the local Sardinian warblers too.

It was fair enough weather for the first time to head inland to the limestone barrocal to Monte Seco. Our walk took us up a hill through olives and almonds in a delightful bit of the old Algarve. A nightingale sang and bee-eaters called, but neither was seen. Orchids soon found included woodcock, *Ophrys dyris* and several of the tall, slim Lusitanian form of the mirror orchid now classed as a separate species *Ophrys lusitanica*. There were many more of some we’d seen before too, especially lots of yellow bee orchids. The local peony *Paeonia broteroi* was still in flower in the semi-shade and a large psammodromus lizard was clambering on some wood. Gerald and Rosemary noted Spanish festoon and red admiral butterflies. But somehow a list of special species understates the attraction of this area, full of wayside flowers, so progress was reassuringly slow.

Reaching the top of the hill, passing under a large carob tree and past some cheerful villagers, we were in Monte Seco village which, surprisingly, boasts two small cafés. One of these is combined with the village shop, barbershop and postal depot, but its coffee machine was broken so only those fancying soft drinks went in there while others took coffee outside the other café watching house martins squabble over their cluster of nests.

Brian had carefully drawn a triangle in the earth to explain the local layout of tracks, but to save a little time going round the other two sides of the triangle Tony came in the bus to fetch us from Monte Seco while Brian & Eileen hot-footed back to the starting place and their car. There we briefly popped down the lane to admire some superb *Scilla peruviana*.

The lunchtime rendez-vous with Deric, his wife Kate and some guests from the Hotel Belavista was a Portuguese restaurant on the outskirts of Silves called Recanto dos Mouros – remember the Moors (who once held sway in these parts). The meal was a stream of local delights, starting with horse mackerel, then fried eels, then a mixture of meats including black pig. Delicious and very filling.

Just up the road from here is one of the best places in Europe to see the monarch butterfly, now well-established as a breeding species on this side of the Atlantic despite what it says in the books. They were flying round the restaurant and numbers were higher still round their foodplants, the bristle-fruited milkweed, which is why they are here. Two pairs at least were mating and there must have been 20 or 30 adult butterflies and the odd remains of cocoons, but despite a careful search none of the distinctive yellow, black and white caterpillars could be found; we were just a little too late in the year. Then it was back to back for a swim for several during which Donald found a pair of glasses on the floor of the pool, then worked out they were his own. With an appetite restored, time for yet more food, plus an expert display of ballroom dancing by the 82-year old couple who come here every Friday night.

Saturday 14 April – Sagres, Cape Vincent and the west coast

On our little local wander before breakfast we heard our first blackcap and saw many azure-winged magpies active in the early morning sunshine and cool breeze.

Today was our day on the ‘Parque Natural do Sudoueste’ or ‘protected west coast’, as SPEA puts it, with a selection of stops and wildlife highlights. We took the old coast road, here and there not made up, past Burgau, stopping in the Boca do Rio. Some waxbills buzzed off as we arrived but a bright male stonechat
allowed good views. Beside the river were the leaves of many paperwhite narcissi. Farther away, a southern grey shrike perched on a bush and we moved nearer, in the bus, for much better views. On some ruined buildings was a little owl, the bus making a hide for this always shy bird. A flock of some 30 bee-eaters came through and many settled, bright and beautiful, on a fig tree.

Sagres fort is where Henry the Navigator’s School of Navigation attracted Magellan and Vasco de Gama as students. Here clifftop fishermen were perched precariously on the cliff top: seriously scary for anyone with a hint of vertigo. We did a quick tour inside the fort. A black redstart was singing, pigeons that mostly looked like real rock doves were flying around and a stream of gannets came past at sea. The limestone pavement type of habitat was rich in colourful flowers: bright blue pimpernel *Anagallis monelli*, pink thrift *Armeria pungens*, yellow *Astericus maritimus* and the white hedgehog pea *Astragalus echinatus*. Our first clouded yellow flew past. We then popped down to the main car park to see shrubby violet *Viola aborescens*.

Cape St Vincent, jutting out into the Atlantic, is the most south-westerly point on the Iberian peninsula. It was a brief stop here where there were more fishermen and stalls sell woolly hats and tops for those who forget in can be windy out here, and a range of other goodies. Three red-billed choughs tumbled in the wind and joined a group of jackdaws to feed on the ground.

Half a mile away form the crowds was a flower-rich area of low scrub. Two types of candytuft, brown bells (*Dipcapi*) and a yellow rockrose *Halimium calcycinum* were among the new plants.

A conveniently placed picnic site, complete with a slide and swings, was ideal for lunch. New flowers among the pines and coastal scrub was a patch of two-leaved scrub orchids *Gennaria* just finished flowering, a couple of long-lipped serapias, a yellow centuary *Centaurium maritimum* and our first *Cistus crispus*, pink with curly leaves.

Turning at Vila do Bispo, we dropped into the sheltered bay of Praia do Castelejo. Putting aside the colourful slopes of native flora and not so native hanging Hottentot fig in both pink and yellow, the café was ideal for a drink and loo alongside others trying or watching surfing.

The route back took us inland through Barao de São Miguel and Barao de São João towards Bensafrim to see some of the pretty countryside away from the built up coast.

Two journeys squeezed into Deric’s minibus and we were in Lagos for our meal out at Alberto’s fish restaurant. And very good it was too, with a splendid Marty Feldman look-alike serving us.

**Sunday 15 April – Alentejo**

Deric had been trying for two years to persuade us to take a day trip north-west to Alentejo, and today he succeeded, with the group split between his minibus and the bus with Tony. It’s a fair old haul, the latter stages through wood pasture or *montados* (the equivalent of *dehesa* in Spain). This took us to Castro Verde and a coffee stop at a supermarket where a pale phase booted eagle flew over. Moving into steppe country, good birds came quickly, including black-eared wheatear, southern grey shrikes, short-toed eagle and our first and only black and white magpie.

First main stop was by a river, in which Spanish terrapins were hauled out of rocks and Iberian water frogs called. A pair of Spanish sparrows sat by a scruffy nest and a few bee-eaters buzzed around. Then we entered the Natural Park through a gate and negotiated our way through a sheep flock. The route is along a track from which one isn’t supposed to deviate, nor get out the buses due to the sensitive wildlife
– which proved quite right as in next to no time there were great bustards close on the left and away to our right. From close to the bus a little bustard lifted up and flew away. At lunch on the steppe we were surrounded by singing calendula larks, several harriers were quartering and a quail called.

Birdwatching aside, the colour in the landscape was often extraordinary, with fields of brick red sorrel, the white of mayweed, purple vipers bugloss, yellow lupin and pinky-purple sand spurrey.

Out through the gate at the other end and past villages painted blue and yellow, our destination was a brief visit to the ancient city of Mértola. Batteries were recharged with tea or ice cream by a high bridge, looking back towards the medieval Moorish castle. The bridge, over a distinctly pongy River Guadiana, had probably 200 house martins buzzing round and nesting. We then returned to a point below the castle, which protects the confluence of the Guadiana and the Oeiras rivers, to see lesser kestrels by another bridge. Joan and Ray picked out a blue rock thrush on the other side of the gorge. Then it was back via Almodoras and down the A2 motoway and home by 6.40 (so rather later than usual 5 pm).

João Ministro is a board member of SPEA, the Portuguese BirdLife partner, and he kindly came from his home in Loulé to tell us something of SPEA’s work, accept our donation and join us for dinner. Monitoring Important Bird Areas included an ongoing study of autumn migration of raptors through the protected west coast IBA, and we learned that Pêra Marsh, also an IBA, had had a visit from an RSPB ecologist to advise on management. A current area of work is an input in regional government’s long-term strategy for the Algarve: there are major sustainability issues such as water resources, but some increasing awareness of not developing the best areas, but still a hangover of existing old planning permissions many of which are in the wrong place.

Monday 16 April – Monchique

As just Ailsa and I had seen some 10 red-rumped swallows over the local scrub patch yesterday, a slightly later start of 7.30 tempted several to try for them this morning, with success. Four bee-eaters were hunting there too and the usual suspects – azure-winged mappies, Sardinian warblers, fan-tailed warblers, spotless starlings and serins were there too.

First stop was a return visit to the monarch butterflies at Silves to catch them earlier in the day when more static for photos. In Silves town there was the remarkable sight of a new storks’ nest on a crane – a construction crane that is. Following a coffee/loo stop at a supermarket, we headed for the Monchique area. We walked down to an old mill at Caldas de Monchique where many of the birds were reminiscent of farther north: blue tit, robin, cuckoo, cirl bunting, chaffinch and great spotted woodpecker. João had mentioned this as a site for the local Schrieber’s green lizard, but it didn’t show. Several brimstones were seen and forget-me-not-like annual omphaloides Omphalides linifolia.

On the other hand we were lucky enough to see Europe’s largest lizard, the occelated lizard. This was sitting still on top of rock at the top of Foia, the 902 metres high Monchique mountain, which was warm and cloud free, albeit with a breeze. After lunch and a cup of tea, a botanical excursion located many sand crocuses and one-leaved squill. There were several red-rumped swallows, including one nest building, a buzzard, many stonechats and two woodlarks on the ground seen well by all.

Returning cross-country via Marmalete, the Baragem da Baravura and Bensafrim we paused in Espiche, just across the road from Luz, by the site of a bee-eater colony, but they weren’t there. Perhaps they were still in Luz like this morning.

Tuesday 17 April – Faro and home

Breakfast was at 6.20 and we away soon after 7 p.m. for an uneventful return journey to Faro and home.

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Highlights of the holiday – collected on the return journey to Faro

Joyce: bustards and little owl on the Alentejo plains; cliffs on the rugged west coast; monarch butterflies; Deric’s information during the Alentejo drive.

Brenda: surprise of the golden oriole; ever-changing landscape.

Audrey: Alentejo plains and bustards; excellent service at the hotel and by Tony. Lowlight: walking in the rain into Lagos, but offset by following the Stations of the Cross, which showed progress.

Grace: the blue of the pimpernel *Anagallis monelli*; Pêra marsh birds; views from the mountain at Monchique.

Pam: fields of flowers on the steppes e.g. yellow lupins; *Scilla peruviana*; dancing.

Ted: cliffs on the SW coast; flowers among the litter at the Sagres stop.

Joan: cliffs; wild flowers; man on a donkey doing dressage.

Marigold: mountain drive at Monchique.

Donald: the toast machine; little bustard; description of the ‘sodding great shrike’ (southern grey shrike); finding his spectacles at the bottom of the swimming pool.

Rita: carpets of colour; yellow bee orchids; little owl; colour of the toast Donald prepared for her every morning.

Ray: cliffs and bustards.

Rosemary: colour of flowers; smell of orange blossom and of pepper trees, the latter bringing back early memories.

Gerald: yellow cistanche; the blue of *Anagallis monelli*, clifftop fishermen at Sagres.

Ailsa: profusion of colours; bee-eaters at Boca do Río; hospitality of Deric; the two meals out; the swimming pool.

Chris: Caspian tern; waterbirds at Pêra marsh; flowers and landscape at Monte Seco.

By general acclaim: care and attention from Brian and Eileen and the thought they’d put into the itinerary.

### Birds

**Little grebe**: recorded on two days, including at Pêra marshes

**Gannet**: recorded on three days. Not always out at sea – e.g. none on the first day’s coastal walk – but hundreds before breakfast on the 12th and at Sagres. A reminder that this is the Atlantic and not the Mediterranean.

**Cormorant**: seen two days

**Cattle egret**: seen daily as we travelled, especially where there were livestock, and once following a tractor

**Little egret**: seen on three days, including on the foreshore at Luz on 13th

**Grey heron**: seen on three days

**White stork**: seen daily including 18 on the lagoon at Quinta do Lago and a nest on a crane in Silves.

**Spoonbill**: 3 on the lagoon at Quinta do Lago on 12th

**Greater flamingo**: 62 at Pêra marshes on 12th

*Lesser flamingo*: 1 at Pêra marshes on 12th believed to be an escape from a wildlife park.

**Gadwall**: several pairs at Pêra marshes on 12th

**Mallard**: recorded on three days

**Black kite**: just 1 on the Alentejo journey on 15th

**Buzzard**: seen on two days

**Short-toed eagle**: 1 in the Alentejo on 15th

**Hen harrier**: we thought most of the 10 or so harriers in the Alentejo on 15th were this species…

**Montagu’s harrier**: except for one male Montagu’s

**Booted eagle**: one pale phase bird over the supermarket at Castro Verde in Alentejo on 15th

**Lesser kestrel**: several in Mértola and hovering over the plains of Alentejo on 15th

**Kestrel**: seen almost daily

**Red-legged partridge**: seen on two days, namely lots in Alentejo on 15th, but also on the scrub up the hill from the hotel on 16th

**Quail**: calling in Alentejo on 15th

**Moorhen**: seen on three days

**Purple gallinule**: at least 4 at Pêra marshes on 12th

**Coot**: 2 at Pêra marshes on 12th

**Little bustard**: one exploded away from the vehicles in the Alentejo Natural Park on 15th

**Great bustard**: groups of 5 and 7 in the Alentejo Natural Park on 15th

**Black-winged stil**: lots but not counted at Quinta do Lago and Pêra marshes on 12th
Avocet: lots but not counted at Pêra marshes on 12th
Stone-curlew: one flew across in the Alentejo Natural Park on 15th
Ringed plover: at both Quinta do Lago and Pêra marshes on 12th
Kentish plover: excellent close views at Quinta do Lago on 12th
Grey plover: at both Quinta do Lago and Pêra marshes on 12th
Turnstone: recorded on two days, 1 on the foreshore at Luz on 11th and at Quinta do Lago marshes on 12th
Sanderling: groups still in winter plumage at both Quinta do Lago and Pêra marshes on 12th
Dunlin: groups gaining summer plumage at both Quinta do Lago and Pêra marshes on 12th
Whimbrel: 17 flew past at sea as we ate our picnic at Porto de Mos on 11th and at both Quinta do Lago and Pêra marshes on 12th
Redshank: recorded at both Quinta do Lago and Pêra marshes on 12th
Greenshank: 2 recorded at Quinta do Lago and 1 at Pêra marshes on 12th
Common sandpiper: a single on Luz foreshore on 12th
Black-headed gull: at Pêra on 12th
Yellow-legged gull: common and seen daily
Lesser black-backed gull: three or more during our coastal walk on 11th
Sandwich tern: recorded on two days including offshore at Luz
Caspian tern: 1 sub-adult bird gave fine views at Quinta do Lago on 12th
Rock dove/feral pigeon: birds that looked like real rock doves were in the Cape St Vincent area but elsewhere, including those at the offshore rock stacks behind the lighthouse at Ponta da Piedade, they were all feral pigeons
Collared dove: seen daily
Cuckoo: heard and seen on the final two days
Swift: seen daily
Alpine swift: about 20 during our coastal walk on 11th
Bee-eater: seen or heard on five days including about 30 at Boca do Rio on 14th and on pre-breakfast walks.
Hoopoe: seen or heard on six days
Green woodpecker: heard only at Monte Seco on 13th. The Iberian subspecies is sharpei, which lacks a black mask.
Great spotted woodpecker: recorded at Caldas de Monchique on 16th
Calandra lark: common in the Alentejo Natural Park on 15th
Crested lark: seen almost daily
Woodlark: 2 on the ground on top of the mountain at Monchique on 16th
Swallow: seen daily
Red-rumped swallow: seen on three days, always at Luz before breakfast
House martin: seen daily. Nests on the café at Monte Seco and perhaps 200 round the bridge at Mértola.
Tawny pipit: 1 on 11th and especially good views on the west coast on 14th
Meadow pipit: this winter visitor was recorded twice on 13th
White wagtail: one flew past on the Alentejo journey on 15th
Grey wagtail: recorded on 15th and 16th
Wren: heard on two days
Nightingale: heard on the last four days, notably at Monte Seco on 13th and Castelejo on 14th
Black redstart: 2 or 3 singing at Sagres fort on 14th
Stonechat: just east of Luz on 11th and seen on three other days
Robin: heard at Caldas de Monchique on 16th
Black-eared wheatear: a male in Alentejo journey on 15th
Blue rock thrush: at Mértola on 15th
Blackbird: recorded every day
Cetti’s warbler: heard on four days, seen by the river in Alentejo on 15th
Fan-tailed warbler: seen or heard daily
Sardinian warbler: seen daily, especially outside the hotel in Luz
Subalpine warbler: 1 male at Quinta do Lago on 12th
Blackcap: heard on two days, including at Luz
Chiffchaff: 1 very late winter bird by the hotel swimming pool on 14th
Blue tit: heard at Caldas de Monchique on 16th
Great tit: seen on two days
Short-toed treecreeper: heard at Monte Seco
Southern grey shrike: seen on two days, notably several in Alentejo on 15th
Woodchat shrike: seen on al bar one day including about 10 on the coastal walk on 11th and outside the hotel.
Azure-winged magpie: seen daily, including in the scrub, gardens and old orchards by the hotel.
Magpie: 1 in Alentejo on 15th
Chough: 5 at Sagres on the west coast on 14th
Jackdaw: also 5 at Sagres on the west coast on 14th
Raven: two distant birds on the Lagos walk on 11th; in Alentejo on 15th
Spotless starling: recorded on five days, including in Luz.
Golden oriole: one male on the Lagos walk on 11th
House sparrow: seen daily, especially at the hotel
Spanish sparrow: a pair on a nest by the river in Alentejo on 15th
Common waxbill: not seen by anyone in the group apart from Chris but noted here as they are around; two quick views of birds flying away at Silves and Boca do Rio on 13th and 14th
Chaffinch: recorded at Caldas de Monchique on 16th
Serin: seen daily
Greenfinch: seen daily
Goldfinch: seen daily
Linnet: recorded on four days
Cirl bunting: at Caldas de Monchique on 16th
Corn bunting: seen or heard on four days; abundant in Alentejo

Names of mammals, reptiles and amphibians follow those in Chris Gibson’s *Dorling Kindesley's Pocket Nature: Wild Animals*.

**REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS**

Spanish terrapin *Mauremys leprosa*. A stripe-necked speices,. in the river in Alentejo.
Moorish gecko *Tarentola mauritanica*. In a wall at Luz.
Large psammodromus *Psammodromus algirus*. Seen on two days.
Spiny-footed lizard *Acanthodactylus erythrurus*. Rosemary’s conclusion on a lizard she saw at Sagres.
Occelated lizard *Timon lepidus*. In fine view on the Monchique mountain top.
Iberian wall lizard *Podarcis hispanica*
Iberian water frog *Rana perezi*. In the river in Alentejo.

**MAMMALS**

Iberian hare *Lepus granatensis*
Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*
Western hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* (dead)

**BUTTERFLIES**

Swallowtail
Spanish festoon
Large white
Small white
Dappled white
Clouded yellow
Cleopatra
Brimstone
Red admiral
Painted lady
Monarch
Common blue

Spanish marbled white
Meadow brown
Speckled wood

**OTHER NOTABLE INVERTEBRATES**

Fiddler crab
Egyptian locust
Violet carpenter bee
Paper wasp *Polistes* sp
Pine processionary moth (nest)
Gorse shield bug
Oil beetle sp.
Wasp spider
Flower report by Brian Anderson

Whilst the UK was basking in an early spring and all the talk was about the drift to warmer springs and hotter summers, it was so much cooler 1,000 miles or so due south in Algarve.

This year daytime temperatures in Algarve throughout spring rarely left single figures, well below seasonal average. Thanks to near constant cold wind, the real feel was often as low as 4 degrees. There was no talk there about global warming.

It all worked in favour of the group, especially since it had started to feel warmer by early April. In a normal season spring is early and peaks around the last week in March, as far as the orchid flora is concerned. In this respect, the spring of 2007 was different and many of the orchids remained in full flower and in excellent condition for the whole duration of our tour. One or two early species, the sawfly orchid and the naked man orchid had gone through, but most others were there to enjoy. The general flora produced an interesting mix with some early species holding back and later species appearing on cue. Spring has a habit of catching up with itself eventually and we visited at a very opportune time on this occasion.

PTERIDOPHYTA  Ferns & Allies

Adiantaceae
Andiantum capillus-veneris  maidenhair fern

Aspleniaceae
Ceterach officinarum  rustyback fern

Hypolepidaceae
Pteridium aquilinum  bracken

Polypodiaceae
Polyodium cambricum ssp australis  southern polypody

Selaginellaceae
Selaginella denticulata  Mediterranean selaginella

SPERMATOPHYTA  Conifers

Araucariaceae
Araucaria heterophylla  Norfolk island pine

Cupressaceae - Cypress family
Cupressus sempervirens  Phoenician juniper

Ephedraceae - Joint pine family
Ephedra fragilis

Pinaceae - Pine family
Pinus pinaster  maritime pine
Pinus pinea  umbrella pine

ANGIOSPERMS

Acanthaceae - Acanthus family
Acanthus mollis  bear’s breeches

Aizoaceae - Aizoon family
Carpobrotus edulis  Hottentot fig

Anacardiaceae - Pistacio family
Pistacia lentiscus  mastic tree
Schinus molle  Peruvian pepper tree

Apiaceae - Carrot family
Cachrys trifida = Prangos trifida  cachrys
Crithmum maritimum  rock samphire
Daucus carota  wild carrot
Daucus halophilus
Eryngium maritimum  sea holly
Ferula communis  giant fennel
Foeniculum vulgare  fennel
Scandix pecten-veneris  shepherd’s needles
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apocynaceae</td>
<td>Oleander family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nerium oleander</td>
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<td>Vinca difformis</td>
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<td>Araliaceae</td>
<td>Ivy family</td>
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<td>Hedera helix</td>
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<td>Aristolochiaceae</td>
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<td>Daisy family</td>
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<td>Andryala integrifolia</td>
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<td>Artemisia campestris ssp. maritima</td>
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<td>Bellis sylvestris</td>
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<td>Calendula suffruticosa ssp tormentosa</td>
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<td>Centaurea pullata</td>
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<td>Chrysanthemum coronarium</td>
<td>crown daisy, entirely yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chrysanthemum coronarium var. discol</td>
<td>crown daisy, yellow &amp; white</td>
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<td>Raphanus raphanistrum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opuntia ficus-indica</td>
<td>prickly pear</td>
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</table>
**Caprifoliaceae** - Honeysuckle family
Lonicer a imp lex a
Viburnum tinus laurustinus

**Caryophyllaceae** - Pink family
Arenaria montana ssp montana
Paronychia argentea
Silene colorata Mediterranean catchfly
Silene gallica small-flowered catchfly
Silene italic a Italian catchfly
Silene vulgaris bladder campion
Spergularia marina lesser sand spurrey
Spergularia rubra sand-spurrey
Spergularia purpurea purple sand-spurrey

**Chenopodiaceae**
Beta vulgaris ssp. maritima sea beet
Halimus halimus shrubby orache

**Cistaceae** - Rockrose family
Cistus albidus grey-leaved
Cistus crispus
Cistus ladanifer gum cistus
Cistus ladanifer ssp sulcatus
Cistus monspeliensis narrow-leaved cistus
Cistus salvifolius sage-leaved cistus
Halimium calcycinum yellow rock rose
Tuberaria guttata spotted rock rose

**Convolvulaceae** – bindweed family
Calystegia sylvatica great bindweed
Convolvulus althaeoides mallow-leaved bindweed

**Crassulaceae**
Sedum sediforme
Umbilicus rupestris navelwort

**Cucurbitaceae**
Bryony cretica white bryony
Ecballium elaterium squirting cucumber

**Dipsacaceae**
Scabiosa crenata

**Ericaceae** - Heath family
Erica australis

**Euphorbiaceae** - Spurge family
Euphorbia characias sun spurge
Mercurialis annua annual mercury
Ricinus communis castor oil plant

**Fabaceae** was Leguminosae - Pea family
Acacia retinodes
Anthyllis tetraphylla bladder vetch
Anthemis vulneraria ssp praepropera Mediterranean kidney vetch
Astragalus lusitanicus
Astragalus tragacantha ssp vincentinus
Ceratonia siliqu a carob
Cercis siliquastrum Judas tree
Coronilla valentina ssp glauca
Dorycnium hirsutum dorycnium
Genista hisuta
Lathyrus a phaca yellow vetchling
Lathyrus clymenum crimson pea
Lathyrus cicera red vetchling
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<th>Latin Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lathyrus ochrus</td>
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<td>Lupinus micranthus</td>
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<td>Ononis natrix</td>
<td>pitch trefoil</td>
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<td>Psoralea bituminosa</td>
<td>trabucular yellow trefoil</td>
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<td>Spartium junceum</td>
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<td>Stauracanthus genistoides</td>
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<td>Trifolium angustofolium</td>
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<td>Trifolium resupinatum</td>
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<td>Trifolium tomentosum</td>
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<td>Vicia villosa</td>
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<td>Quercus ilex</td>
<td>holm oak</td>
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<td>Quercus cocifera</td>
<td>holly / prickly / kermes oak</td>
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<td>Quercus suber</td>
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<td>Centaurium maritimum</td>
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<td>Geranium molle</td>
<td>dovesfoot cranesbill</td>
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<td>Geranium purpureum</td>
<td>little robin</td>
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<td>Geranium rotundifolium</td>
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<td><strong>Lamiaceae (Labiatae) - Mint family</strong></td>
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<td>Lavandula stoechas</td>
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<td>Salvia verbenaca</td>
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<td>Thymus camphoratus</td>
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<td>Thymus capitatus (Corydothymus capitatus)</td>
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<td><strong>Linaceae - Flax family</strong></td>
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<td>Linum bienne</td>
<td>pale flax</td>
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<td><strong>Malvaceae - Mallow family</strong></td>
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<td>Lavatera arborea</td>
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<td>Malva sylvestris</td>
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<td><strong>Meliaceae - Persian Lilac family</strong></td>
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<td>Melia azedarach</td>
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<td><strong>Moraceae - Mulberry family</strong></td>
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<td>Ficus carica</td>
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<td>Myoporum tenuifolium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jasminum fruticans</td>
<td>wild jasmine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Olea europaea</td>
<td>olive</td>
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</table>
Orobanchaceae - Broomrape family
Cistanche phelypaea
Orobanche foetida

Oxalidaceae - Sorrel family
Oxalis pes-caprae
Bermuda buttercup

Paeoniaceae - Peony family
Paeonia broteroi
Peony

Papaveraceae - Poppy family
Fumaria capreolata
Ramping fumitory
Fumaria officinalis
Common fumitory
Papaver dubium
Long-headed poppy
Papaver hybridum
Rough poppy
Papaver rhoes
Common poppy
Papaver somniferum
Opium poppy

Plantaginaceae - Plantain family
Plantago coronopus
Buck’s horn plantain

Platanaceae - Plane tree family
Platanus orientalis
Oriental plane

Plumbaginaceae - Thrift family
Armeria pungens
Limoniastrum monopetalum
Limoniastrum

Polygonaceae - Dock family
Emex spinosa
Horlick dock
Rumex bucephalophorus
Horned dock

Primulaceae - Primula family
Anagallis arvensis
Scarlet pimpernel
Anagallis monelli
Shrubby pimpernel

Rafflesiaceae - Rafflesia family
Cyntus ruber

Ranunculaceae - Buttercup family
Clematis vitalba
Traveler’s joy
Nigella damascena
Love-in-a-mist

Resedaceae - Mignonette family
Reseda lutea
Wild mignonette

Rosaceae - Rose family
Prunus dulcis
Almond
Rubus ulmifolius (R. sanctus)
Bramble
Sanguisorba minor
Fodder burnet

Rubiaceae - Bedstraw family
Galium aparine
Goosegrass
Putoria calabrica
Putoria
Rubia peregrina
Wild madder

Rutaceae - Rue family
Ruta chalepensis
Fringed rue

Scrophulariaceae - Figwort family
Bellardia trixago
Bellardia
Linaria algarviana
Spotted/purple&white
Misopates orontium
Lesser snapdragon
Parentucellia viscosa
Yellow bartia

Solanaceae - Potato family
Brugmansia (Datura) saeveoens
Angel’s trumpets (planted)
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<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Genus</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hyoscyamus albus</strong></td>
<td>white henbane</td>
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<td><strong>Lycium barbarum</strong></td>
<td>Duke of Argyll’s teaplant</td>
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<td>hoop petticoat daffodil</td>
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<td>sea daffodil (leaves)</td>
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<td>cornflag</td>
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<td><strong>Gynandriris sisyrinchium</strong></td>
<td>barbary nut</td>
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<td><strong>Romulea bulbocodium</strong></td>
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<td>rosy garlic</td>
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<td><strong>Allium subvillosum</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Asphodelus fistulosus</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Asphodelus ramosus</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dipcadi serotinum</strong></td>
<td>dipcapi, brown bells</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fritillaria lusitanica</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Muscaria comosum</strong></td>
<td>tassel hyacinth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scilla monophyllos</strong></td>
<td>one-leaved scilla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scilla peruviana</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Smilax aspera</strong></td>
<td>rough bindweed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urginea maritima (=Drimia maritima)</strong></td>
<td>sea squill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orchidaceae</strong></td>
<td>Orchid family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anacamptis pyramidalis</strong></td>
<td>pyramidal orchid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epipactus helleborine</strong></td>
<td>broad-leaved helleborine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gennaria diphylla</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ophrys bombyliflora - bumble bee orchid
Ophrys dyris - mirror orchid
Ophrys speculum (O. ciliata) - mirror orchid
Ophrys (speculum) lusitanicus (O. vernixia) - mirror orchid
Ophrys scolopax - woodcock orchid
Ophrys lutea - yellow bee orchid
Orchis morio - green-winged orchid
Serapis cordigera - heart-flowered tongue orchid
Serapis parviflora - small-flowered tongue orchid

**Poaceae** - Grass family
Arundo donax - giant reed
Briza maxima - quaking grass
Briza minima - hare’s tail
Lagurus ovata - hare’s tail

**Palmae** - Palm family
Chamaerops humilis - dwarf fan palm

**Postscript**
The following is an extract from an e-newsletter from SPEA, the Portuguese BirdLife Partner.

**9) British birdwatchers make a donation to SPEA**
As last year, the ecotourism company “Honeyguide” has made a donation of ca. 1000€ to SPEA, as a way of supporting projects on the conservation of birds and their habitats in Portugal. This generous donation reflects the philosophy of the company, which aims to contribute to the conservation of species in the countries where they travel. Their donations are given only to NGOs, and especially BirdLife partners.
This support resulted from the wildlife watching trip that this group recently made to the Algarve. SPEA thanks “Honeyguide” for their support.