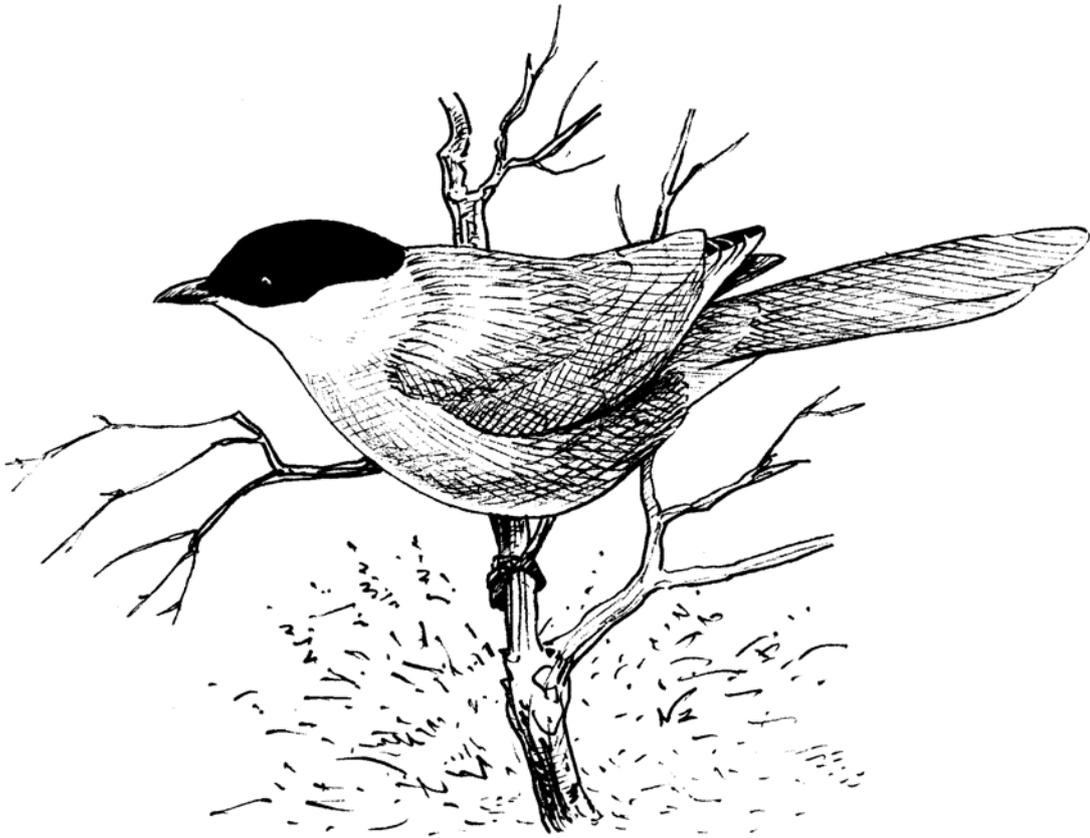


Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Algarve

Salisbury & District Natural History Society

10 – 17 April 2007

Algarve
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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 to wards 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 clifftop 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 afterwards 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.

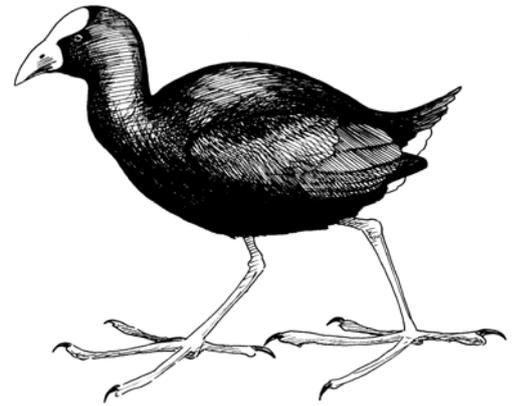
The western end of the land at Quinta do Lago beside the Formosa Natural Park is a spread of golf courses and related upmarket development, but the immediately adjacent saltmarshes of the park remains untouched and easily accessible – that is apart from a car park charge. As soon as we were out of the minibus a large psammophilus – 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.



It was a funny day weather-wise with warm sunshine turning to light showers and back again, but it didn't really affect the wildlife watching. Back across the bridge we walked along the shore, finding spotted rockrose and pretty three-leaved snowflakes in flower. A Caspian tern flew past and returned for all to see. A little farther along, a brackish lagoon was alive with birds, including 18 white storks, three spoonbills, black-winged stilts, two greenshanks and many little egrets. Ted plus stick came to find us and catch up on the birds and we retreated to the vehicles to collect lunches, eaten overlooking fiddler crabs on the edge of the estuary.

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 cliff-top 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 from 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 century *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 loos alongside others trying or watching surfing.



Just above Praia do Castelejo we drove to a viewpoint where the scrub is beaten low, just a few inches high, by the fierce conditions. The commonest scrub was a prostrate form of gum cistus, but this protects other flowers including the fritillary *Fritillaria lusitanica* (slightly gone over) and hoop petticoat narcissi. Brenda and Rita described a bird they'd seen well that sounded to me like a tawny pipit so we waited a while and it kindly re-appeared, gave its characteristic 'cherie' call and walked around in fine view for all to see.

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 calandra 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 *Omphalodes linifolia*.

On the other hand we were lucky enough to see Europe's largest lizard, the ocellated 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.

* * * * *

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 Rio; 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 stilt: 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 *sharpai*, 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 psammmodromus *Psammmodromus algirus*. Seen on two days.

Spiny-footed lizard *Acanthodactylus erythrurus*. Rosemary's conclusion on a lizard she saw at Sagres.

Ocelated 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

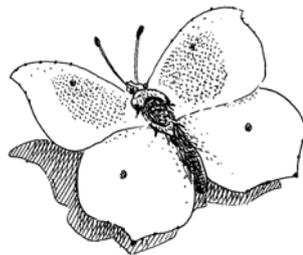
Brimstone

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	
Polypodium cambricum ssp australe	southern polypody
Selaginellaceae	
Selaginella denticulata	Mediterranean selaginella
SPERMATOPHYTA	Conifers
Araucariaceae	
Araucaria heterophylla	Norfolk island pine
Cupressaceae - Cypress family	
Cupressus sempervirens	
Juniperus phoenicea	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 sampire
Daucus carota	wild carrot
Daucus halophilus	
Eryngium maritimum	sea holly
Ferula communis	giant fennel
Foeniculum vulgare	fennel
Scandix pecten-veneris	shepherd's needles

<i>Smyrniololus</i>	alexanders
Apocynaceae - Oleander family	
<i>Nerium oleander</i>	oleander
<i>Vincetoxicum</i>	periwinkle
Araliaceae - Ivy family	
<i>Hedera helix</i>	ivy
Aristolochiaceae - Birthwort family	
<i>Aristolochia baetica</i>	
Asclepiadaceae - Milkweed family	
<i>Gomphocarpus fruticosus</i>	bristle-fruited silkweed
Asteraceae (was Compositae) - Daisy family	
<i>Andryala integrifolia</i>	
<i>Arctotheca calendula</i>	Cape daisy
<i>Artemisia campestris</i> ssp. <i>maritima</i>	
<i>Asteriscus maritimus</i>	yellow sea aster
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	daisy
<i>Bellis sylvestris</i>	southern daisy
<i>Calendula arvensis</i>	field marigold
<i>Calendula suffruticosa</i> ssp. <i>tormentosa</i>	
<i>Centaurea pullata</i>	
<i>Chrysanthemum coronarium</i>	crown daisy, entirely yellow
<i>Chrysanthemum coronarium</i> var. <i>discolor</i>	crown daisy, yellow & white
<i>Chrysanthemum segetum</i>	corn marigold
<i>Cichorium intybus</i>	chicory
<i>Cotula coronopifolia</i>	
<i>Cynara cardunculus</i>	cardoon
<i>Erigeron karvinskianus</i>	
<i>Galactites tomentosa</i>	wild artichoke
<i>Helichrysum stoechas</i>	
<i>Pallenis spinosa</i>	spiny golden star
<i>Reichardia gaditana</i>	
<i>Scolymus hispanicus</i>	Spanish oyster plant
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	common sow thistle
<i>Tolpis barbata</i>	
<i>Tragapogon hybridum</i>	
Boraginaceae - Borage family	
<i>Anchusa azurea</i>	large blue alkanet
<i>Anchusa undulata</i>	undulate alkanet
<i>Borago officinalis</i>	borage
<i>Cerinthe gymnandra</i>	
<i>Cerinthe major</i> var. <i>purpurascens</i>	honeywort
<i>Cynoglossum creticum</i>	blue hound's tongue
<i>Echium plantagineum</i>	purple viper's bugloss
<i>Lithodora diffusum</i>	
<i>Lithodora prostrata</i>	
<i>Omphalodes linifolia</i>	
Brassicaceae (Cruciferae) - Cabbage family	
<i>Biscutella viciifolia</i>	biscutella
<i>Iberis ciliata</i> ssp. <i>welwitschii</i>	
<i>Iberis procumbens</i>	
<i>Lobularia maritima</i>	sweet alison
<i>Malcolmia littorea</i>	sand stock
<i>Nasturtium officinale</i>	nasturtium
<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i>	wild radish
<i>Sinapis arvensis</i>	charlock
<i>Sisymbrium officinale</i>	hedge mustard
Cactaceae - Cactus family	
<i>Opuntia ficus-indica</i>	prickly pear

Caprifoliaceae - Honeysuckle family*Lonicera implexa**Viburnum tinus*

laurustinus

Caryophyllaceae - Pink family*Arenaria montana* ssp *montana**Paronychia argentea**Silene colorata**Silene gallica**Silene italica**Silene vulgaris**Spergularia marina**Spergularia rubra**Spergularia purpurea*

Mediterranean catchfly

small-flowered catchfly

Italian catchfly

bladder campion

lesser sand spurrey

sand-spurrey

purple sand-spurrey

Chenopodiaceae*Beta vulgaris* ssp. *maritima**Halimus halimus*

sea beet

shrubby orache

Cistaceae - Rockrose family*Cistus albidus**Cistus crispus**Cistus ladanifer**Cistus ladanifer* ssp *sulcatus**Cistus monspeliensis**Cistus salvifolius**Halimium calcycinum**Tuberaria guttata*

grey-leaved

gum cistus

narrow-leaved cistus

sage-leaved cistus

yellow rock rose

spotted rock rose

Convolvulaceae – bindweed family*Calystegia sylvatica**Convolvulus althaeoides*

great bindweed

mallow-leaved bindweed

Crassulaceae*Sedum sediforme**Umbilicus rupestris*

navelwort

Cucurbitaceae*Bryonia cretica**Ecballium elaterium*

white bryony

squirting cucumber

Dipsacaceae*Scabiosa crenata***Ericaceae** - Heath family*Erica australis***Euphorbiaceae** - Spurge family*Euphorbia characias**Euphorbia helioscopia**Mercurialis annua**Ricinus communis*

sun spurge

annual mercury

castor oil plant

Fabiaceae was Leguminosae - Pea family*Acacia retinodes**Anthyllis tetraphylla**Anthyllis vulneraria* ssp *praepropera**Astragalus lusitanicus**Astralagus tragacantha* ssp *vincentinus**Ceratonia siliqua**Cercis siliquastrum**Coronilla valentina* ssp. *glauca**Dorycnium hirsutum**Genista hirsuta**Lathyrus aphaca**Lathyrus clymenum**Lathyrus cicera*

bladder vetch

Mediterranean kidney vetch

carob

Judas tree

dorycnium

yellow vetchling

crimson pea

red vetchling

Lathyrus ochrus	winged vetchling
Lotus creticus	southern birds foot trefoil
Lupinus angustifolius	narrow-leaved lupin
Lupinus luteus	yellow lupin
Lupinus micranthus	hairy lupin
Melilotus indicus	small melilot
Onobrychis humilis	
Ononis natrix	large yellow restharrow
Psoralea bituminosa	pitch trefoil
Scorpiurus muricatus	
Spartium junceum	Spanish broom
Stauracanthus genistoides	
Trifolium angustifolium	narrow-leaved clover
Trifolium campestre	hop trefoil
Trifolium resupinatum	reversed clover
Trifolium stellatum	star clover
Trifolium tomentosum	woolly trefoil
Vicia villosa	fodder vetch
Fagaceae - Oak family	
Quercus ilex	holm oak
Quercus coccifera	holly / prickly / kermes oak
Quercus suber	cork oak
Gentianaceae - Gentian family	
Blackstonia perfoliata	yellow-wort
Centaurium erythraea ssp grandiflora	common centaury
Centaurium maritimum	sea centaury
Geraniaceae - Geranium family	
Erodium cicutarium	common storksbill
Erodium gruinum	long-beaked storksbill
Erodium malacoides	soft storksbill
Geranium molle	dovesfoot cranesbill
Geranium purpureum	little robin
Geranium rotundifolium	round-leaved cranesbill
Lamiaceae (Labiatae) - Mint family	
Lavandula stoechas	French lavender
Phlomis purpurea	
Prasium majus	Spanish hedge nettle
Rosmarinus officinalis	rosemary
Salvia verbenaca	wild clary
Thymus camphoratus	
Thymus capitatus (Corydolithymus capitatus)	Mediterranean thyme
Linaceae - Flax family	
Linum bienne	pale flax
Malvaceae - Mallow family	
Lavatera arborea	tree mallow
Malva sylvestris	common mallow
Meliaceae - Persian Lilac family	
Melia azedarach	Persian/Indian bead tree
Moraceae - Mulberry family	
Ficus carica	fig
Myoporaceae - Myoporum family	
Myoporum tenuifolium	ngaio
Oleaceae - Olive family	
Jasminum fruticans	wild jasmine
Olea europaea	olive

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 rhoeas	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	
Rumex bucephalophorus	horned dock
Primulaceae - Primula family	
Anagallis arvensis	scarlet pimpernel
Anagallis monelli	shrubby pimpernel
Rafflesiaceae - Rafflesia family	
Cytinus ruber	
Ranunculaceae - Buttercup family	
Clematis vitalba	traveller'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 bartsia
Solanaceae - Potato family	
Brugmansia (Datura) saeoeoens	Angel's trumpets (planted)

Hyoscyamus albus	white henbane
Lycium barbarum	Duke of Argyll's teapant
Nicotiana glauca	tree tobacco

Tamaricaceae - Tamarix	
Tamarix africana	tamarix

Thymelaeaceae - Daphne family	
Daphne gnidium	

Urticaceae - Nettle family	
Parietaria judaica	pellitory of the wall
Urtica membranacea	membranous nettle

Valerianaceae - Valerian family	
Fedia cornucopiae	fedia
Valeriana tuberosa	

Verbenaceae - Verbena family	
Lantana camara	lanana

Violacea - Violet family	
Viola aborescens	shrubby violet

MONOCOTYLEDONS

Agavaceae - Agave family	
Agave americana	American agave

Amaryllidaceae - Daffodil family	
Leucojum tricophyllum	three-leaved snowflake
Narcissus bulbocodium	hoop petticoat daffodil
Pancreatum maritimum	sea daffodil (leaves)

Araceae - Arum family	
Arum italicum	large cuckoo pint

Dioscoreaceae - Yam family	
Tamis communis	black bryony

Iridaceae - Iris family	
Gladiolus illyricus	
Gladiolus italicus	cornflag
Gynandriris sisyrnchium	barbary nut
Iris albicans	
Iris germanica	
Iris pseudacorus	
Romulea bulbocodium	sand crocus

Liliaceae - Lily family	
Allium ampeloprasum	wild leek
Allium roseum	rosy garlic
Allium subvillosum	
Asparagus albus	
Asphodelus fistulosus	
Asphodelus ramosus	
Dipcadi serotinum	dipcapi, brown bells
Fritillaria lusitanica	
Muscari comosum	tassel hyacinth
Scilla monophyllos	one-leaved scilla
Scilla peruviana	
Smilax aspera	rough bindweed
Urginea maritima (=Drimia maritima)	sea squill

Orchidaceae - Orchid family	
Anacamptis pyramidalis	pyramidal orchid
Epipactus helleborine	broad-leaved helleborine
Gennaria diphylla	

Ophrys bombyliflora	bumble bee orchid
Ophrys dyris	
Ophrys speculum (O. ciliata)	mirror orchid
Ophrys (speculum) lusitanicus (O. vernixia)	
Ophrys scolopax	woodcock orchid
Ophrys lutea	yellow bee orchid
Orchis morio	green-winged orchid
Serapias cordigera	heart-flowered tongue orchid
Serapias parviflora	small-flowered tongue

Poaceae - Grass family

Arundo donax	giant reed
Briza maxima	quaking grass
Briza minima	
Lagurus ovata	hare's tail

Palmae - Palm family

Chamaerops humilis	dwarf fan palm
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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.