French Pyrenees
13 – 20 June 2007
Holiday participants
Sandy and Marie Watt
Karin and Brennan Aunger
Lesley Scott
Suzanne Hunter
Peter and Elonwy Crook
Bob and Pam Harris
Juliet Prior
Will Warham
Derek Boughton

Leaders
Chris Gibson
Robin and Rachel Hamilton

Our hosts in the French Pyrenees: Odile and M Philipe Pujo, Hotel La Brèche de Roland,
www.gavarnie.com/hotel-la-breche

Report written by Robin and Rachel Hamilton with contributions from Chris Gibson.
Illustrations: field cricket by Maureen Gibson, pyramidal orchid by Sue Staniforth and fire salamander by
Brenda Dowsett.
Other illustrations by Rob Hume, including lammergeier on the front cover.

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
towards lammergeier protection was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable
Trust. It was combined with the contribution the group in Dordogne for the ‘Refuge LPO’ project and in the
Camargue for the lesser kestrel conservation project making a total this year of £1228 (€1780) sent to La Ligue
pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, the French Bird Protection League).

This brings the total given to LPO to £10,064 (€14,560) since 1991 and the total conservation contributions
from all Honeyguide holidays since 1991 was at £48,013 (roughly €69,619) at the end of September 2007.
Wednesday 13 June – Stansted to Pau; Pau to Gèdre; Exploring Gèdre

Our dawn rendezvous at Stansted was a very convivial affair, in spite of the hour; old friendships were renewed and new ones quickly made as we were hustled uneventfully through the airport routine. It was a bright and clear spring dawn and we had beautiful views over the Home Counties, but clouds gathered as we flew over France and when we arrived in Pau it was overcast. There was a Mediterranean warmth in the air and at Pau airport we enjoyed the opportunity to pause and savour a French breakfast, with some excellent and very welcome coffee. The bird watching took some time to get up steam: the carrion crows, house sparrows and a grey heron at the airport did not raise much excitement. But the distant frieze of the snow-capped Pyrénées along the southern horizon did excite us, and we quickly piled our stuff into the minibuses and headed for Lourdes, where Karin and Brennan, two more members of the group, were waiting at the station, en route from Germany.

After Lourdes, the journey became more interesting and the views more and more breathtaking and enticing. Swifts had been a regular sight in the lowland towns and villages along the way and black kites and buzzards had entertained us along the river valleys, but after Lourdes we started to climb steadily, with the occasional view of a red kite and groups of crag martins swooping over the river as the landscape became more rugged.

We arrived at Gèdre to find two more members of our group, Marie and Sandy – now thoroughly settled in having got there the day before – there to greet us. We were warmly and efficiently welcomed by our hosts, Odile and Philippe, and shown to our rooms, and then, the group now complete, we met on the hotel terrace for a drink and lunch.

The Hotel takes its name from Le Brèche de Roland, a huge cleft in the mountain top (about 60m deep and 100m wide) right on the Spanish border above the Cirque de Gavarnie. (Charlemagne’s nephew Roland created it while he was trying to break his magic sword in order to prevent it from falling into the wrong hands!) It dominates the view up the valley from the hotel and is a potent indicator of the weather. Today, it was a perfect view and we took in our surroundings – visual and aural. The mountains around us were sunlit and green, but not far away, bright patches of snow shone in the sunshine and reminded us of our altitude and of the delights to come. The river, Le Gave de Héas, swollen by snowmelt, thundered through the gorge below the hotel and provided soothing background music to everything. There was the constant sizzle of serins among the treetops and black redstarts sang flutily from the village roofs.

After lunch, we explored the village a little. Every sizeable area of grass is important for its hay crop and some of these little fields lie right in the heart of the village. We paused to admire the kaleidoscope of colour: crimson clover, greater yellow-rattle, dusky cranesbill, bladder campion, vetches and buttercups, amongst a bewildering array of meadow grasses. We stopped at the first bridge, high above the Héas. Peering over the parapet, we could see our first real botanical ‘alpine’, the emblematic and beautiful ramonda, clinging to the stone structure of the bridge. Then Marie called us across the road: there was more ramonda, growing picturesquely in the fork of a tree overhanging the river. There were plants of fairy foxglove too, rooted in crevices, their flowering shoots pressed against the stonework. The two big lime trees beside the river provided a perfect lesson in lime recognition: they stood side by side, both in flower, with the large-leaved lime flower clusters hanging downwards and the small-leaved lime clusters held ‘obliquely upright’, just as it says in the books!
Goldfinches and serins flitted about, enabling us to disentangle their twittering songs; swallows, house sparrows, white wagtails and black redstarts were all in evidence, sharing the village houses. We were on the constant lookout for interest high in the sky and were soon rewarded by a buzzard and a raven soaring over the hilltop and in front of the cliffs. Down by the optimistically named (by Honeyguiders) ‘Dipper Bridge’ we waited in vain for the eponymous bird. We carried on up the other side of the valley, hoping for a chance to explore a hayfield at closer quarters, but the path across it was closed to us, as the hay harvest was about to begin. We retraced our steps and were a little luckier this time at the bridge; most people caught a fleeting glimpse of a dipper as it flew quickly beneath us and then upstream and out of sight. A blackcap was singing from the top of a tree in the little gorge and we were able to watch a green woodpecker and a family of nuthatches. From the bell tower of the village church a black redstart was proclaiming his territory and we were intrigued to hear the church clock chiming not only on the hour, but again, a few minutes later. (Suzanne’s researches since our return have revealed that this is an ancient practice, still common in the Mediterranean; the first striking alerts the distant workers in the fields and the hills, the second chime enables everyone to listen carefully and count again.)

Common wall lizards were basking in the road and on the garden walls. We could hear the constant ‘chirp chirp chirp’ of a field cricket and then spotted one scuttling across the road; it allowed itself to be caught and examined and then we replaced it in a slightly safer place. Butterflies in profusion were flying over another of the village hay meadows: small blue, small tortoiseshell, large white, orange tip, swallowtail and many more.

We turned up a steep rocky track that led us above the village to the east where it was cooler and there was some shade. We admired the range of plants that had become established in these rocky and unpromising places, some of them familiar from our gardens. There were tiny ferns and stonecrops, hepatica and pulmonaria, and both green and stinking hellebores. We found a firebug and had a close look at its red and black pattern – reminiscent of the headgear of an old-style French policeman, and accounting for the French childhood name of ‘gendarme’ for the insect. We also encountered a bright, metallic green beetle. It was a specimen of *Lampra rutilans*, one of the family of flower beetles called *buprestids* or jewel beetles, that are characterised by their brightly metallic wing cases – a very striking animal.

Up at the top of the hill we realised we had been seeing a wide range of patterns in the shell of the banded snail, *Cepaea nemoralis*, a favourite food of song thrushes. Robin gave us a neat explanation of how this polymorphism may help the snails to avoid their predators. Suzanne called us over the road to look at a tiny hole at the foot of the wall, with bright eyes looking out at us; it turned out to be the home of another field cricket. We walked down the lane back towards the village and we were in the open again, with distant views. Our first short-toed eagle of the week appeared in the distance, soaring over the hill on the other side of the valley, not an ideal view.

On a sunny, rocky limestone slope there was another butterfly boom: large wall browns, heath fritillaries, Adonis blues and a bloodvein moth *Rhodostrophia calabra*. A whole new flora appeared too, of candytuft and calamint, thymes and rockroses, St. Bernard’s lily and a relative of Venus’s looking glass which turned out to be the uncommon species, *Legousia castellana*. Time was marching on, so we promised ourselves another visit to this charming hillside and headed back to the hotel. We were not in too much of a hurry to stop on the corner and listen to a family of firecrests about their talkative business and enjoy a burst of familiar blackbird song.

We met on the terrace for a drink before dinner and reviewed the day’s sightings and events. Refreshed and content, we then went in to enjoy the first taste of the hotel’s excellent cuisine: a starter of meltingly creamy trout mousse, followed by steaks, which were cooked before our very eyes on hot stones brought to the table – spectacular and delicious – and all accompanied by a plentiful supply of local wine.

**Thursday 14 June – Gave de Héas, the Barrage and Lac des Gloriettes**

It was a bright morning and a few early risers set out for a walk before breakfast. The village resident birds were up and about: house sparrows, white wagtails, black redstarts, goldfinches and serins. High around the
cliff tops we saw some griffon vultures searching for updraughts and we caught a very distant view of two short-toed eagles.

After a leisurely breakfast, we set off in the minibuses, taking the road southeast out of Gèdre, up the valley of the Gave de Héas. We were immediately in a botanically extremely rich area and we sped frustratingly past exciting plants: banks of bloody cranesbill, fragrant orchids, butterfly orchids, sword-leaved helleborines and the bright blue of flowering butterwort. As soon as it was safe, we stopped to get a closer look at these treasures. We encountered the Pyrenean hyacinth for the first time – an amazing sapphire blue version of our bluebell, lady’s mantle, mountain clover, burnt-tip orchids and cowslips. We walked along the road a little way to a huge rock face where we saw ramonda again and our first saxifrages at close quarters: paniculate (livelong) Saxifraga paniculata and pyramidal S. cotyledon, while the slopes above produced a frustratingly distant, but flowering, St Bruno’s lily. A swallowtail butterfly was flying over the meadow as was a little, sooty black moth: the chimney sweeper, its food plant, pignut, plentiful amongst the grasses. A shout brought everyone’s attention to the sky above us and about two dozen griffon vultures were circling overhead. Then we caught the distinctive somewhat paddle-tailed silhouette of our first lammergeier, which glided across the valley close to where we stood, giving us a wonderful view. It was time to move on and Bob arrived back at the minibus with a little black weevil. Armed with Chinery he identified it as Apion pomonae, which feeds on vetches. It was not going to be short of food.

We drove on up to our destination, the Barrage des Gloriettes, but not without a hold-up for a herd of cattle being moved onto fresh grazing amongst the alpenrose. On the way up we had our first brief encounter with an alpine marmot, just beside the road. We parked below the dam and watched an ambitious dung beetle tackling a whole cowpat, and an unfortunate, crumpled lacewing whose wings had dried before they were fully expanded. Then walking up the road, we explored the wonderful floral riches of the rocky slopes, including narcissus-flowered anemone, mountain avens, black vanilla orchid and scattered bushes of the deep pink Provence rose Rosa gallica, and of alpine rose Rosa pendulina, (not to be confused with alpenrose Rhododendron ferrugineum, the dwarf rhododendron which clothed the hillsides around us).

Up at the top of the dam, it was time for our picnic lunch. We found comfortable places to perch and look at the view and the birds. We watched a black redstart singing on the rocks above and a rock bunting and a serin singing from the top of a scrubby tree below. It was strange to see them in the company of such familiar garden birds as wren, great tit, chaffinch and dunnock at an altitude of 1500 metres. Across the valley we heard two red-billed choughs calling and watched them fly over and drop down to join some ravens on the ground; a useful comparison to make. Then we were delighted by another lammergeier flying low overhead.

We locked the minibuses and set off to cross the barrage to make our way round the Lac des Gloriettes. Progress was very slow, there was so much to see: banks of the local wild angelica Angelica razulii, a rock face covered in dwarf buckthorn Rhamnus pumillus, the strikingly orange-flowered chamois ragwort and much more.

As soon as we crossed the impressive dam the path led us onto an astonishing tight turf of grasses, thyme, milkwort and mountain avens. Dwarf shrubs: bearberry, the wonderfully fragrant Daphne cneorum (which has the sickly English name ‘garland flower’), barberry, wild cotoneaster, juniper and spurge laurel all gave some structure to the sward which was also studded with the powerful magenta flowers of the alpine subspecies of broad-leaved marsh orchid as well as black vanilla orchids, yellow milk-vetch, lousewort, alpine clover and Pyrenean hyacinth to name but a few.

We could hear the piping calls of marmots, and soon we had located them beside their burrows on the hillside on the other side of the lake. We could see them well through the telescopes but the plan was to get much closer. A male wheatear was singing from the top of some rocks and a yellowhammer was singing from a bush; we could watch them both in good light and then a confrontation began between the wheatear and two black redstarts, alternately occupying strategic songposts, only to be ousted by the rival. We walked on round the lake but when a signpost indicated a way-marked footpath down to Gèdre, five of the party decided that they fancied the chance to stretch their legs. Once we were sure that they were appropriately equipped, they set off into the hills.

The weather was deteriorating as we carried on round the lake until we were able to get very good views of the marmots, and we watched their alert behaviour in the face of passing walkers. Soon it began to rain and we decided it was time to turn back, stopping to watch a paper wasp Polistes sp. at its beautiful tiny nest attached to a grass stem. As we walked back across the dam, a grey wagtail and a dipper were feeding in the stream.
We stopped on the way back beside a bridge over the Héas and went to examine a stand of the yellow pea, *Lathyrus leavigatus*, magnificent with its bright orange-brown fruits. Hidden beside the pea was another surprise, to Chris’s delight, a fine plant of leafy lousewort, its pale yellow flower spikes a foot or so tall. It was much photographed. And we added another butterfly to the day’s tally: a wood white.

We were back in good time for a break and then drinks on the terrace and the day’s review. We were glad to welcome back the five intrepid wanderers; the weather had not been kind to them and their experience had been less enjoyable than they had anticipated.

Once again, a delicious dinner appeared: cream of salsify soup followed by amazingly tasty mutton chops with haricot beans and carrots, followed by a crème caramel.

**Friday 15 June – Gavarnie**

It was another lovely fine morning, with scattered cloud. We walked up to the bridge and looked down on a pair of grey wagtails bobbing on the stones and darting after insects on the edge of the churning water. There were a buzzard and a pair of ravens about and we heard a girl bunting singing from the row of trees on the hill on our left. The powerful, distant song of a song thrush carried to us over the sound of the river and the rumble of the hydroelectric plant. Then we found him, in a splendid position on the top of a dead tree, commanding the whole village – even the whole valley!

As we turned to go back for breakfast a lammergeier appeared overhead, and was soon joined by a second bird. This was our friend from yesterday, easily recognisable by a missing flight feather. They soared together above us, giving us superb views. The final delight was the reappearance of the buzzard and ravens. This time, the ravens were giving the buzzard a very hard time.

After breakfast Philippe Serre, from the LPO (the French counterpart of the RSPB), came to give us a fascinating illustrated talk about their project for the conservation of Lammergeiers. We also took this opportunity to present Philippe with the Honeyguide donation to LPO for this and two other projects supported by Honeyguide holidays in France: lesser kestrels in the Camargue and LPO Refuges in the Dordogne.

It was perfect day for our next destination. We set off southwestwards, up the Gave de Gavarnie (they proudly use the ancient word ‘Gave’ for these western Pyrenean rivers), climbing steadily, with frequent glimpses of the river becoming more wild and turbulent as we climbed. Gavarnie is a famous tourist destination – with all that entails – but it is easy to see why. The situation, with a backdrop of the spectacular Cirque, is irresistible. We drove through the village (noting the ice-cream and other retail opportunities on the way) and parked beyond. Immediately we could hear blackcaps, great tits and a garden warbler singing, accompanied as usual by a chorus of field crickets. We donned our sunhats and shouldered our day bags, with lunch, water, sun cream, butterfly nets and books, and set off up the well-worn path.

The first botanical stop was beside another hay meadow, this one with a breathtaking display of *Viola cornuta*, familiar to many of us as a garden plant. In this meadow, the viola was accompanied by maiden pink as well as the now familiar greater yellow rattle, dusky cranesbill and alpine clover.

The track took us through a wide range of habitats: a hot, dry and open riverside trail, the river quiet now, but obviously frequently overtopping the bank which was lined with willows: *Salix elaeagnos* and *purpurea*, and herbaceous plants more typical of waste places, reflecting the additional nutrients, the silt deposits and the disturbance that result from the regular flooding. Above us, a short-toed eagle, a buzzard and a sparrowhawk appeared and, up among the trees on our left, a tree pipit sang. There were a lot of butterflies about including numerous clouded Apollos; we had a good look at a grizzled skipper and Lesley and Suzanne were delighted to get a lovely view of a Camberwell beauty.

We went on through shady beech woods, with martagon lilies, Spanish bluebells (a nuisance at home but here within their native range), bugle, wood sorrel, yellow archangel and stinking hellebore. We climbed higher, and
into the sunshine again, to see the valley open out into a great amphitheatre, surrounded by the cliffs of the Cirque, the Grande Cascade pouring down and the river meandering through tightly grazed grassland. This was a perfect setting for lunch, so we found a comfortable sunny bank and drank in the scenery.

Resisting the temptation to ‘flop’, people kept jumping up after new sightings, particularly of butterflies. A swallowtail landed on the path nearby, a bright-eyed ringlet allowed us to inspect its ringlets to check the identification, and then, for comparison, a Piedmont ringlet settled on the bank. There were blues, particularly an Adonis blue and a small blue ‘salting’ on some droppings, another skipper, this time an alpine grizzled skipper, a black-veined white and a painted lady. On cue, a fine adult lammergeier appeared over the cliffs of the Cirque and we watched it in those ideal surroundings for a considerable time. And finally, another much hoped-for species – three citril finches flew over and disappeared behind the hill.

One or two people settled for a prolonged rest in the sunshine so we were able to wander off unencumbered by bags. Chris challenged us to find the tiny green frog orchid, but it was too easy – they were plentiful! The broad-leaved marsh and fragrant orchids were so abundant in places that you could hardly avoid treading on them. A garden warbler was singing persistently from a riverside bush and we eventually got a very satisfactory look at it. The grassland was studded with bright flowers and the botanists were in heaven; globeflowers, trumpet gentians, alpine bistort, alpine rockrose, field gentians, mountain tragacanth, alpine figwort, and many more. We had to tear ourselves away.

We gathered up our belongings and turned to follow the western track back down to Gavarnie. Our progress was soon brought to an abrupt halt by a smart green Spanish fly, (actually a beetle, *Lytta vesicatoria*) trying to hide by burrowing in the sandy soil on the path. There were new butterflies and moths to see: a mazarine blue, a slender Scotch burnet moth and a dingy skipper. A garden warbler treated us to a spectacular little song flight and we stopped to watch coal tits feeding young. The first bar on the route back was too tempting for most of the party, but some carried on to the village intent on finding books and maps (well, coffee and ice creams too!) The path back to the village was quite busy with tourists and the view ahead of us fairly ordinary, but if you turned round, the spectacle of the Cirque, bright sunshine glistening off the snow and intense blue sky behind, brought us to a standstill in admiration every time we turned round. The surprise buys of the week were very smart pocketed waistcoats for the bargain price of €12, ideal for carrying notebooks and field guides: about half the party bought one!

Dinner tonight was a spectacular presentation: Philipe had made a roaring fire in the dining room and roasted wonderful chunks of lamb, to order, for us over the embers. Then we were given an amazing orange-flavoured rice pudding – quite delicious. After dinner, the weather was still perfect so we decided on an evening walk in search of glow-worms. We were soon rewarded by three, shining brightly from the bottom of the wall in the lane behind the hotel. We didn’t disturb them for long and diverted down a wooded track armed with bat-detectors, soon finding at least three species, serotine and two pipistrelles.

Saturday 16 June – Barèges, Col du Tourmalet, Botanic Garden and Vallée de la Glère

The longest drive of the week took us first north, to Luz-St-Sauveur, and then east, along the cyclists’ pilgrim route to the Col de Tourmalet, famous for its role in the Tour de France.

We stopped for coffee in the little town of Barèges and it proved a useful stop for additional maps and postcards. Barèges is renowned amongst Honeyguiders for its crag martins. They are astonishingly plentiful, flying up and down the main street, dodging telegraph wires and swooping up to their nest sites under the eaves of the town houses and, famously, on the cinema.

We carried on up the increasingly steep route to the Col, weaving past the little knots of labouring cyclists. Griffon vultures flew close by the vehicles as we drove up the steep hairpins and we were charmed by the increasing quantity of the rosy-mauve Pyrenean thistle as we climbed.

It was sunny with a light haze and scattered clouds when we reached the car park at the top but when we got out of the vehicles, at 2115m up, it was noticeably chilly. There is a good viewpoint at the edge of the car park and we were able to scan the ski-lift and the grassy slopes below. A water pipit obliged us with a pretty display and song flight and we soon saw the first of our real target species. A group of snowfinches flew past in front of us; the light was good so their striking plumage stood out. Then two red-billed choughs flew over, shortly followed by two alpine choughs: an excellent opportunity for comparison. We watched a black redstart and a wheatear squabbling over the same nest hole in the ski-lift pylon.
We left the car park and scrambled up the hill above the road towards a snowbed. Here, in the damp patches around the edge where the snow was still melting we were delighted to find the real alpine icon: alpine snowbell *Soldanella alpina*. Scattered in the tough turf of mat grass *Nardus stricta* and fescue *Festuca eskia*, a Pyrenean endemic, we found other gems: Pyrenean buttercup, spring gentian, trumpet gentian, moonwort, pink rock-jasmine *Androsace carnea* and the incredibly fragrant *Daphne cneorum*. We found snow vole burrows and runs in the turf from which the snow had just retreated and, to our surprise, several viviparous lizards, catching the warmth of the sun. Up above the snowfield, a skylark was singing. The panoramic view from the top across to the Pic du Midi took our breath away (or was it just the high altitude?).

Down at car-park level again we watched a flock of alpine choughs feeding on the hillside below us with an indignant marmot vainly trying to chase them away from its burrow. They were very determined though, and there were a lot of them! Just as we were about to board the minibuses, another snowfinch flew down and, ignoring us, searched for food around our feet. Our departure was interrupted by a commotion: shouts and whistles and flag-waving, and then, struggling up the hill from the east came a procession of 2CVs! There must have been 50 or more, in every imaginable colour - a very surprising spectacle.

They stopped at the top to greet their supporters, so we overtook them and drove back down the hill to stop for lunch beside the Jardin Botanique du Tourmalet. Lunch was accompanied by the song of a mistle thrush and we watched a family of coal tits in the trees on the edge of the botanic garden.

After lunch, many of the party decided to make a quick tour of the garden. In some bushes by the entrance, two male blackcaps were arguing and chasing each other, no doubt competing for the only scrap of suitable breeding habitat in the valley. We all found the botanic garden a very attractive and helpful experience. Plants are grouped together according to their altitude and ecological requirements and the labels on plants that we had been seeing reinforced their names for us and helped to sort out several queries. It is an ambitious project, still very much under development, but a very worthwhile place to visit. And, reassured by the director that it was permissible to take plants on the flight home, several souvenirs of alpine plants, grown in their nursery, were acquired from the sales table.

For our next destination we turned off the Barèges road up a side valley into the Vallée de la Glère. We parked close to an inviting looking café, but we had work to do first, so we set off on foot through a steep pine and beech wood. Birds quickly appeared: a pair of mistle thrushes, a pair of bullfinches, a robin and a short-toed treecreeper. Peter caught sight of a crested tit, which hopped among the branches of a tree giving us tantalisingly brief but excellent views. There were some classic woodland plants: herb paris, yellow archangel, woodruff, greater stitchwort, stinking hellebore, pulmonaria and hepatica. There were lovely stands of ferns too: broad buckler fern, soft shield fern, oak fern and scaly male fern. As we listened to a firecrest singing, a tiny bird appeared: not the firecrest that still sang nearby, but a goldcrest. We heard a chiffchaff singing – but that familiar sound did not hold our attention for long. A little way along the track, a small bird flew up into an isolated tree on the edge of a clearing. We focussed our binoculars and had perfect views of a pair of citril finches.

We stopped by a pond on our way back to *Chez Louise*t, and as we watched some enormous medicinal leeches, a red squirrel ran across a clearing nearby. Coffees, beers and ice creams were very welcome and allowed a pleasantly relaxing end to a very full day but it didn’t spoil our appetites for the melt-in-your-mouth leek tart that was tonight’s starter, followed by baked fish and excellent chocolate pudding.

**Sunday 17 June – Col de Tentes and Vallée d’Ossoue**

We woke to an overcast sky with a light drizzle but undeterred, a few of us sallied forth before breakfast. We watched some spotted flycatchers at their nest by the Héas bridge and then took the upper road and crossed the Gave de Gavarnie by the high bridge over the gorge. A nuthatch was singing in the wood but by then, the rain was increasing and breakfast was very attractive.
After breakfast, despite the rain, we drove up towards Gavarnie and then turned right at the beginning of the village onto a steeply climbing road, full of hairpins, to the Col de Tentes. A glimpse of a red-backed shrike and, as usual, lots of brief marmot sightings, enlivened a damp drive. We parked at the top, where the through road ended. We were at an altitude of 2208m and some 1500m from the Port de Boucharo, the Spanish border, but sadly the views were lost in the mist and driving rain.

We waited in the minibuses for a while but the weather was deteriorating even more, so a few stalwarts decided to brave the horizontal shards of rain and took a short walk. We found some trumpet gentians and then a single, rather sad looking specimen of the delicate purple alpine coltsfoot. We watched a flock of alpine choughs swirling about in the wind and then, as we arrived back at the vehicles, we were astonished to see two ducks flying over – a pair of pintails, crossing the Pyrenees on their migration north.

A slow descent enabled us to catch a few glimpses from the minibuses of some good flowers: the Pyrenean thistle was looking lovely in spite of the weather and we could make out our first plants of moss campion, bright green mounds studded with bright pink. There were snowbells on some scree and the turf was dotted with Pyrenean buttercups.

The rain was obviously here to stay for a while, so everybody leapt at the idea of sitting it out over a cup of coffee in Gavarnie. After about an hour, it was clear that it was not going to stop in the foreseeable future so, warmed, dried and refreshed, we boarded the buses again for the Vallée d’Ossoue. The buses splashed along the rough track, pausing to admire a beautiful show of ramonda and some saxifrages, including the impressive Pyrenean saxifrage in glorious flower, on an overhanging rock.

The weather was not improving so we drove up the valley and ate our lunch in the buses, peering out at the sodden view. It was much more sheltered down there than it had been on the top so a range of choices were selected: some people stayed in their bus to see what turned up, others decided to slosh about and look at flowers and Robin drove another group on up the track to explore some more of the valley. The walkers enjoyed an astonishing spectacle of masses of the magenta broad-leaved marsh orchid; further along the track, Robin’s group got fine views of water pipits. We decided to call it a day and just paused a couple of times before we left the valley, once for some sweetly fragrant Pyrenean honeysuckle and once for a very attractive scabious, the cream form of *Knautia longifolia*.

We gave ourselves time to dry out and relax and then met in the bar to review the day and to discuss our plans for tomorrow. Dinner was as wonderful as ever: a fish terrine followed by tender and succulent roast duck with tomatoes and noodles and lemon flan.

**Monday 18 June – Pont and Plateau de Saugué and Vallée de Bué**

The early risers were rewarded with fine sunshine and only a few scattered clouds. Some of the raptors must have had a hungry day yesterday. A black kite and a buzzard were out early, and a griffon vulture soared high overhead, but we watched an Egyptian vulture flapping heavily along the cliffs, vainly searching for an updraught.

We decided to walk down through the village today and join the river near the confluence of the Gavarnie and the Héas. Both rivers were swollen by yesterday’s rain, but the water coming down the larger Gave de Gavarnie was much more turbid and the two streams of water remained clearly separate at least until the river went out of our sight downstream. Grey wagtails and a dipper were feeding busily and long-tailed tits and a firecrest called from the woods on the far shore. A newly emerged stonefly was resting on a rock and there were several fine leopard slugs enjoying the cool wet grass and rocks. We turned back towards the hotel and saw two great spotted woodpeckers on the trunk of a larch tree. They were searching for food by pulling bits of bark off and tossing them to the ground.

The weather became even sunnier as we set off up the hill to the west of Gèdre. We soon came to a halt where the variety and profusion of roadside flowers could no longer be ignored! The bank was thick with pyramidal orchids, toadflax, basil thyme and milkwort. Quaking grass nodded prettily in the breeze and the glittering flowers of golden oat grass shone in the sunlight. We were distracted from the flowers when two golden eagles, both adult birds, soared along the hillside, and circled just above us, giving unbelievably clear views. As we watched, a buzzard appeared and began to mob
one of the eagles, clearly demonstrating the disparity in size.

Turning our attention back to the meadow, we looked at some of the other sorts of wildlife. Adonis blues, black-veined whites, orange tips, green hairstreaks, pearl-bordered fritillaries, meadow browns and the day-flying moths: chimney sweepers, six-spot burnets and a cream-spot tiger, flashing its fiery orange-yellow hindwings as it flew, all dazzled us in their profusion, and represented potential prey to the dozens of Ascalaphids that were also buzzing about. On a telegraph pole we found a wall lizard that had lost its tail in a narrow escape from a predator and, to complete the picture, a woodlark sang on the hillside above.

As we drove on up the hill, we were surprised to see several griffon vultures fly past us, only a few feet off the ground and looking up, we could see others gathering above. We stopped at the bridge where we could get a good view up the valley. Some 150m away there was the fresh carcase of a cow, perhaps a victim of yesterday’s storms, with a large group of griffon vultures beginning the task of devouring it. One picked out an eye, then turned its attention to the tongue, while another tackled other potential points of entry. More vultures tussled for access to the carcase in a flurry of wings and feet and angry beaks and others, further down the peck order, waited solemnly in line on a wall nearby for their turn. All the time, more and more were gather and circling above and then dropping down, craning their long scrawny necks downwards for a good view. After a while, some had had their fill and waddled away, quite unable to take off, to join the waiting group on the wall. And they still kept coming, until 50 or more had gathered – a truly memorable sight. Both red-billed and alpine choughs watched with interest but did not challenge the vultures. Smaller scavengers like them would have to wait their turn.

Eventually, we tore ourselves away, confident that this drama had hours, or even days, to run, and made our way up to the top and onto the Plateau de Saugué. There were breathtaking views of the Cirque de Gavarnie with a magical, flower-strewn hillock in the foreground. A quail was calling from a hay meadow, a tree pipit sang, two argumentative wheatears shouted at one another and a pair of whinchats companionably flew about, looking for food.

The hill was a kaleidoscope of colour: the blue, yellow and white of Viola cornuta, buttercups and pignut covered a huge area where the soil was deep and damp, but on the rockier outcrops, carpets of thyme, alpine aster and alpine clover took over. The white-flowered ciliate rock-jasmine Androsace chamaejasme and the dainty yellow hoary rockrose clung to rocks and a little houseleek poked out of crevices. The most memorable display was probably that of the Pyrenean hyacinth whose sapphire blue flowers exactly matched the colour of the sky behind. They were much photographed, with the Cirque de Gavarnie beyond or with Chris doing ‘Sound of Music’ impressions in the background.

Some went in the minibuses back down to the bridge for lunch and others walked. The walkers were rewarded with some lovely displays of a tree pipit doing repeated song flights from the top of a pine tree. A stream tumbled off the hillside into a little boggy bit with large lady’s smock, butterwort and twayblade and the damp verge down to the bridge was magenta with broad-leaved marsh orchids.

It was time for lunch when we reached the bridge and the vultures were still trying to get through the cow’s tough hide. Some people chose to eat their lunch close to a telescope trained on the gruesome scene while others firmly planted themselves in the shelter of the parapet or on the grassy bank out of sight of the drama. Beside the bridge, on a damp patch of ground, an altogether different drama was developing. An immense crowd of butterflies were sipping salts from the soil: many grizzled skippers, large grizzled skippers and small blues, and smaller numbers of green-veined whites, dingy skippers, Adonis blues, orange tips, wood whites, heath and false heath fritillaries and a carpet moth. They were all packed close together on the muddy remains of a tiny puddle and it was impossible to count them. It was a truly beautiful sight. While all this was going on, a red-backed shrike, always lovely to see, was producing a little sideshow for us, perched on a tree a little way off on the hillside. How he would have liked to visit our puddle of butterflies!
After lunch we retraced our route down the hill, stopping to draw one bus’s attention to a large clump of deadly nightshade that they had missed on the way up. Just before Gèdre, instead of turning downhill, we continued northwards up a long unmade road into the wooded Vallée de Bué. We parked the minibuses and immediately noticed a small group of Adonis, small and common blues all ‘salting’ on some mud in the car park. These mineral licks must have resulted from yesterday’s heavy rains. As we strolled down the track, pearl-bordered fritillaries and clouded Apollos fluttered by, and some of us glimpsed a red squirrel. The plants again were vastly abundant, quite different, and everywhere vigorous and lush. Statuesque marsh thistle, wild angelica and wood cranesbill grew in the damp ditches with two valerians: *Valeriana montana* and *V. pyrenaica* contrasting nicely with one another. There were magnificent stands of *Lathyrus laevigatus*, with its startling orange-brown pods. The English name, yellow pea, is totally inadequate for this striking plant. Chris and Robin walked back for the minibuses and the rest of the group straggled on down the hill, following their own particular interests. Juliet and Lesley lingered with Rachel over the flowers and were lucky enough to find a beautiful group of flowering spikes of wintergreen *Pyrola minor*, on the bank. That was a real treat.

Back at Gèdre, a few keen botanists drove up the hill above the village to look again at the rocky bank that we had encountered on the first day. Just before we arrived, we had a nice view of a rock bunting on the cliff and we were rewarded with some charming flowers, the best probably being the display of orlaya *Orlaya grandiflora* and the little brown ‘bluebell’, *Dipcadi serotinum*.

It was still fine and warm after dinner so we decided to try out the bat detectors again, this time down by the river. We were met with silence. Then, through the village, where insects were drawn to the street lamps we could see bats swirling round and we managed to pick up the calls of three species, pipistrelle, serotine, then finally Daubenton’s.

**Tuesday 19 June – Cirque de Troumouse**

Blue sky with scattered clouds greeted the early risers. There was little wind down in the village but birds flying around the cliff tops were apparently finding some turbulence. A large group of griffon vultures were out early, perhaps going back to yesterday’s carcase. We watched a dipper busily carrying food to its nest above the bridge over the Héas and a spotted flycatcher collecting nesting material for its nest nearby. The song thrush was still declaiming from his strategically placed dead tree. We carried straight on and over the high bridge across the Gave de Gavarnie and then we made our way up a narrow, rough pathway and found ourselves in a minute hay meadow. There was burnet rose there, broad-leaved helleborine and the little creeping St John’s wort, *Hypericum nummularium*. Goldfinches sang their tinkling little song above our heads as we realised we would have to hurry back for breakfast.

After breakfast, the weather was looking fine and settled, with some blue sky as we set off on our final day’s excursion. Would it turn out to be an appropriate finale? The massif of the Pyrénées above Gèdre forms a series of huge cirques along the Spanish border. The Cirque de Gavarnie is much the most accessible and so the most exploited. Some are seriously inaccessible, but our plan was to drive up to the Cirque de Troumouse, a happy compromise.

The road follows the Gave de Héas and we passed the turning to Gloriettes. It winds on, climbing steadily and then enters the fully protected part of the National Park. An entrance fee is charged and we were provided with some information leaflets about the Park and the protection that it is afforded. We then pressed on. The hillside was covered in the beautiful alpenrose and marmots popped in and out of their burrows as we drove by. The road snakes and hairpins and rises steeply up above the tree line to the first stop – a restaurant with a surprisingly large car park! We stopped briefly there to get our bearings, promising to take fuller advantage of it on our way down. A lammergeier glided across the hillside above us and then settled on the ground so that we could have an excellent look at it with binoculars and telescopes. Then, for contrast, a griffon vulture perched on the cliff top beyond. There were wheatears among the rocks and we found a common frog and several froglets in the damp grass and under a bush of *Daphne mezereum*.

It was time to move on and the last climb up to the top. There were more hairpins, wonderful views and slow progress, for the sake of the buses. Finally, we reached the car park at the top and prepared for a walk.

The whole spectacle is mind-blowing, commanding vast views in one direction and the majestic sight of huge vertical cliffs and high peaks disappearing into the cloud in the other. There was a silence there, broken by the song of water pipits and the occasional thunder of avalanches among the cliffs of the Cirque behind.
We set off along the well-made track across the plateau. There were snowfields up on our right and soon we spotted a herd of about twenty Pyrenean chamois, or isard, grazing on the high pasture and moving across the snowfields. Through telescopes we could see that they had young with them, already skipping about and nimbly negotiating the boulder-strewn hillside. We crossed a slow stream meandering through the peaty soil; peering into the water we found not only a common frog but also Pyrenean brook newts skulking about. There were several together showing all their colour forms, pale or dark, with or without a yellow stripe down their back. We found alpine catchfly, bird’s eye primrose, mountain everlasting, spring, trumpet and alpine gentians, rock-jasmine and garland flower – all just in a small area. It was a botanical paradise!

We had lunch beside a little peaty lake and Chris set off, determined to find an alpine accentor for us. A skylark and a dunnock were singing, and a shout from Chris sent some of the group puffing and panting up a little hill – too late, it had flown off! Karin and Brennan persisted and managed to spot the alpine accentor but the rest of us had to content ourselves with the related dunnock and with lots of water pipits and a black redstart.

After lunch we explored a little, the botanists in heaven. There were little cinquefoils, violets and alchemillas in the grass and moss campion, musky saxifrage and paronychia on the rocks. We were charmed by a sapphire blue milkwort and the inelegantly named ‘entire-leaved’ primrose and ‘narcissus-flowered’ anemone. It was time to turn back and we took the track at a steady pace, on the lookout all the time for new sights. The isard were still grazing on their scree slope and we had another brief look through the telescopes – showing them too to some interested passers by, one of whom, remarkably, knew Chris, having previously booked him to give a talk for the Suffolk Wildlife Trust!

We had a very pleasant refreshment stop at the halfway house, which has a curious Tibetan feel about the décor and a huge sundial made of mountain ‘objets trouvés’, sticks and stones, bones and skulls bits of plants and odd artefacts. A final farewell fly past from a lammergeier signalled our departure.

There was one more stop. Near the péage at the entrance to the Park, we left the buses and went exploring the river, riverbank and hillside. The alpenrose was wonderful and it was the first time we had got really close to it. But the excitement arose when we were admiring a stand of adenostyles, a large member of the daisy family, (a bit esoteric as it was showing no sign of flower!) when we discovered a beautiful group of enormous spikes of leafy lousewort – far finer than the specimens we had got excited about earlier in the week. The cameras got to work at once.

We returned to the hotel in time to pack, to have our final drink on the terrace and review our holiday.

**Wednesday 20 June – Pau, then home**

In spite of our protestations that it was not necessary, Odile was up at 4.30, with our packed lunches prepared, to give us breakfast. The fine, cloudless sky was a poor consolation as we crammed our luggage into the minibuses to head north again. For various reasons, we left five of our number behind. Peter was cycling home (yes!), over the Col du Tourmalet the next day, then on to Castang, the Honeyguide destination in the Dordogne, where he was to join other cycling friends to explore that area before returning home. Sandy and Marie were continuing their campervan holiday for several more weeks and Karin and Brennan were staying a few more days in Gèdre before flying home to Munich. So we had a little send-off party as we drove away. There were no more vultures as we dropped down out of the mountains but there were lots of black kites beside the wooded lower reaches of the rivers.

Pau was as painless as an airport can be and there were no problems with the little pots of alpine plants bought at the botanic garden. We said goodbye to the distant, but now familiar, line of snow-clad peaks on the horizon as we took off. Greeted by welcome sunshine at Stansted, we went our separate ways after a thrilling and memorable holiday. Thank you all for making it such fun.
**Highlights** (A bird, a flower and a place…..)

**Bob:** All the marmots, doing so many things; the Pyrenean hyacinth; the golden eagle in brilliant light; the Cirque de Gavarnie.

**Brennan:** Monday morning’s raptors – Egyptian vultures, golden eagles and griffon vultures; the Grande Cascade at Gavarnie; the alpine aster.

**Derek:** The Cirque de Troumouse - like Gavarnie but without the tat; seeing the sheep being driven through the village led by the little boy with the red flag; the griffon vulture feast – to see it happening naturally; the scent of the Daphne.

**Elonwy:** The marmots; the golden eagles; the Pyrenean violets; the blue water in the river in the Cirque de Gavarnie.

**Juliet:** The Col du Tentes – with the pintails; the wintergreen.

**Karin:** Egyptian vultures and golden eagles; the vultures at the feast; the magenta of the broad-leaved marsh orchids everywhere; the Cirque de Troumouse.

**Lesley:** the wintergreen; the picnic place at Gavarnie; the frogs at Troumouse.

**Marie:** the dramatic views of griffons at the feast; Ramonda, all through the week and in so many different places; the Cirque de Gavarnie; the welcoming hotel and the wonderful food.

**Pam:** Pyrenean thistle; the crested tits; the Cirque de Troumouse.

**Peter:** choughs, always a favourite, especially the flocks of alpine chough and the alpine chough chasing a marmot; the amazing trumpet gentians; the wild strawberries. The worst moment was the walk back from Gloriettes!

**Sandy:** the lammergeiers; the frogs and tadpoles; the pH anomalies – limestone rocks and acid peat in close proximity; the irises in the hotel garden!

**Suzanne:** the Cirque de Gavarnie; the lammergeier and isard at Troumouse; the blue of the gentians.

**Will:** the lammergeier and the golden eagles (NOT the griffon vulture feast. That was the stuff of nightmares!); the isard, and the Cirque de Troumouse altogether; evidence of transhumance in practice.

**Chris:** yesterday’s magnificent leafy lousewort – photographs live for ever; the Pyrenean brook newts; the Plateau de Saugué, with Gavarnie in the background.

**Rachel:** the scent of the *Daphne cneorum* and the colour-mixture with the gentians; the real griffon vulture feast; the Plateau de Saugué, apparent wilderness with the Cirque de Gavarnie as a backdrop; the parade of 2CVs.

**Robin:** The Cirque de Troumouse – at all scales – so unspoilt; the vultures doing their own thing – plucking out the eye etc, altogether a once in a lifetime sight; alpine aster with the Cirque de Gavarnie behind; the isard
KEY TO LOCALITIES

Ge – Gèdre  Day 1
Gl – Barrage and Lac des Gloriettes  Day 2
Ga – Cirque de Gavarnie  Day 3
To – Col du Tournmalet  Day 4
Gle – Vallée de la Glère  Day 4
Te – Col de Tentes  Day 5
O – Vallée d’Ossoue  Day 5
S – Pont and Plateau de Sagué  Day 6
B – Vallée de Bué  Day 6
Tr – Cirque de Troumouse  Day 7
H – Héas valley  Day 2 & 7
J – Journeys, Pau to Gèdre  Day 1 & 8

FLOWERING PLANTS
(Incomplete – a number of widespread and familiar species are omitted)

**Dicotyledons**

**Aceraceae**

*Acer campestre*  Field maple  Ge
*A. pseudoplatanus*  Sycamore  Ge, Ga

**Apiaceae**

*Angelica razulii*  Wild angelica  O, B
*A. sylvestris*  Sycamore  Gl
*Astrantia major*  Masterwort, Mountain sanicle  S
*Bupleurum falcatum*  Sickle-leaved Hare’s-ear  Ge
*Chaerophyllum aureum*  Golden chervil  Ge, Ga, O, B
*C. hirsutum*  Hairy chervil  Gl
*Conopodium majus*  Pignut  Gl, O, S, H
*Eryngium bourgattii*  Pyrenean eryngo  Gl, S
*Heracleum sphondylium ssp. montanum*  Hogweed  Ga, B
*Laserpitium siler*  Sermountain  Ge, O
*Ligusticum lucidum*  Spignel  Te
*Meum athamanticum*  Orlaya grandiflora  Orlaya  Ge
*Myrrhis odorata*  Sweet cicely  Gle
*Peucedanum ostruthium*  Masterwort  Ge
*Pimpinella major*  Great burnet-saxifrage  Ga
*Sanicula europaea*  Sanicle  Ga
*Tordylium apulum*  Mediterranean hartwort  Ge

**Asclepiadaceae**

*Vincetoxicum hirundinaria*  Swallow-wort  Gl, Ga, B, Tr

**Asteraceae**

*Achillea millefolia*  Yarrow  Ge, Gl, H
*Adenostyles alliariae*  Adenostyles  H
*Antennaria dioica*  Cat’s-foot  Ga, Tr
*Aster alpinus*  Alpine aster  O, S
*Bellis perennis*  Daisy  Ge
*B. sylvestris*  Wood daisy  B
*Carduus carlinoides*  Pyrenean thistle  Te, To
*Carlina acaulis*  Stemless carline thistle  Gl, Ga
*C. acanthifolia*  Cardabelle  Tr
*Centaurea jacea*  Brown knapweed  Ge
*C. montana*  Perennial cornflower  Ga
*Cirsium eroiphorum*  Woolly thistle  To
*C. palustre*  Marsh thistle  S, B
*Crepis pygmaea*
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<th>Common Name</th>
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<td>Hieracium alpinum agg.</td>
<td>Alpine hawkweed</td>
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<td>H. pilosella</td>
<td>Mouse-eared hawkweed</td>
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<td>Homogyne alpina</td>
<td>Purple colt’s-foot</td>
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<td>Tussilago farfara</td>
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<td>Urospermum dalechampii</td>
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**Berberidaceae**

*Berberis vulgaris* | Barberry | Gl |

**Betulaceae**

*Betula pendula* | Silver birch | Tr |

**Boraginaceae**

*Echium vulgare* | Viper’s-bugloss | Ge, S, Tr |
| *Myosotis alpina* | Alpine forget-me-not | Te, To, S, Tr |
| *M. sylvatica* | Wood forget-me-not | Tr |
| *Pulmonaria longifolia* | Long-leaved lungwort | Gl, Gle, B |

**Brassicaceae**

*Arabis turrita* | Towercress | Ge |
| *Cardamine raphanifolia* | Radish-leaved bittercress | S, B, Tr, To |
| *Draba aizoides* | Yellow whitlow-grass | To |
| *Fibigia clypeata* | Chamois cress | Ga, Te, To, Tr |
| *Hutchinsia alpina* | Candytuft | Ge, B |
| *Iberis amara* | Austrian rocket | H |

**Buxaceae**

*Buxus sempervirens* | Box | Ge |

**Campanulaceae**

*Campanula patula* | Spreading bellflower | S |
| *C. trachelium* | Nettle-leaved bellflower | S |
| *Jasione montana* | Sheep’s-bit | To, Te |
| *Legouzia castellana* | A Venus’s-looking-glass | Ge |
| *Phyteuma orbiculare* | Round-headed rampion | Ge, Gl, S |
| *P. pyrenaicum* | Spiked rampion | Ge, Ga, S |

**Caprifoliaceae**

*Lonicera periclymenum* | Honeysuckle | H |
| *L. pyrenaicum* | Pyrenean honeysuckle | Ga, O |
| *Sambucus ebulus* | Dwarf elder | Gl, O |
| *S. racemosa* | Alpine elder | Gl, Ga, Tr |

**Caryophyllaceae**

*Arenaria grandiflora* | | |
| *Cerastium alpinum* | | |
| *C. arvense* | Field mouse-ear | Ge |
| *Dianthus carthusianorum* | Carthusian pink | Ga |
| *D. deltoides* | Maiden pink | Ga, To, S, Tr |
| *Gypsophila repens* | Alpine gypsophila | Gl, Ga |
| *Herniaia glabra* | Rupturewort | Gl |
| *Lychnis alpina* | Alpine catchfly | Tr |
| *L. flos-cuculi* | Ragged-robin | Ge |
| *Paronychia capitata* | | |
| *P. polygonifolia* | | |


Scleranthus annuus  Annual knawel  Gle
S. perennis  Perennial knawel  Gl, To
Silene acaulis  Moss campion  Te, Tr
S. dioica  Red campion  B
S. nutans  Nottingham catchfly  Ge, S, H
S. rupestris  Bladder campion  Ge, Ga
S. vulgaris  Greater stitchwort  Gl, Gl
Stellaria holostea

Chenopodiaceae
Chenopodium bonus-henricus  Good King Henry  Gl, To, S, Tr

Cistaceae
Fumana ericoides  Ge
Helianthemum apenninum  White rock-rose  Ge
H. canum  Hoary rock-rose  Ge, S, Tr
H. nummularium  Common rock-rose  Ge, Tr
H. n. grandiflorum  Alpine rock-rose  Ga
H. oelandicum

Clusiaceae
Hypericum nummularium  Ge

Corylaceae
Corylus avellana  Hazel  Gl, Ga, B, H

Crassulaceae
Sedum acre  Biting stonecrop  Ge
S. album  White stonecrop  Ge
S. dasyphyllum  Thick-leaved stonecrop  Ge, Gl, Ga, S
S. rupestre  Rock stonecrop  Ge
Sempervivum montanum  Mountain houseleek  O, S, B
S. tectorum  Navelwort  Ge

Cuscutaceae
Cuscuta epithymum  Dodder  Gl, Tr
C. europaea  Greater dodder  Tr

Dipsacaceae
Knautia dipsacifolia  Wood scabious  Ga, O, H
K. longifolia  O
Scabiosa columbaria  Small scabious  Ge, Ga

Ericaceae
Arctostaphylos uva-ursi  Bearberry  Gl
Calluna vulgaris  Heather  To
Rhododendron ferrugineum  Alpenrose  Gl, To, Tr, H
Vaccinium myrtillus  Bilberry  Gl, To, Tr
V. vitis-idaea  Cowberry

Euphorbiaceae
Euphorbia amygdaloides  Wood spurge  Ga, B
E. characias  Large Mediterranean spurge  Ge
E. cyparissias  Cypress spurge  O
E. hyberna  Irish spurge  Ga, B

Fabaceae
Astragalus alpinus  Alpine milk-vetch  Ga, H
A. monspessulanus  Montpelier milk-vetch  Ge, Gl, S
A. sempervirens  Mountain tragacanth  Ga
Anthyllis montanum  Mountain kidney-vetch  Gs, Tr
A. vulneraria  Kidney vetch
sspp. forondae, pyrenaica and vulnerarioides  Ge
Hippocrepis comosa  Horseshoe vetch  Ge
Lathyrus aphaca  Yellow vetchling  Ge
L. laevigatus  Yellow pea  B, H
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<td>Gl</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Trifolium alpinum</em></td>
<td>Alpine clover</td>
<td>Gl, Ga, S</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>T. campestre</em></td>
<td>Hop trefoil</td>
<td>Ge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>T. incarnatum</em></td>
<td>Crimson clover</td>
<td>Ge</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>T. montanum</em></td>
<td>Mountain clover</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>T. ochroleucon</em></td>
<td>Sulphur clover</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>T. pratense</em></td>
<td>Red clover</td>
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</tr>
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<td><em>T. repens</em></td>
<td>White clover</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Vicia cracca</em></td>
<td>Tufted vetch</td>
<td>Ge, S</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>V. pyrenaica</em></td>
<td>Pyreanean vetch</td>
<td>Gl, Ga, H</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>V. sativa</em></td>
<td>Common vetch</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>V. sepium</em></td>
<td>Bush vetch</td>
<td>Ge, S</td>
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<td><strong>Fagaceae</strong></td>
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<td><em>Castanea sativa</em></td>
<td>Sweet chestnut</td>
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<td><em>Fagus sylvatica</em></td>
<td>Beech</td>
<td>Gle</td>
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<td><em>Quercus faginea</em></td>
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<td><em>Q. petraea</em></td>
<td>Sessile oak</td>
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<td><em>Q. pyrenaica</em></td>
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<td><strong>Fumariaceae</strong></td>
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<td><em>Corydalis solida</em></td>
<td>Tuberous corydalis</td>
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<td><strong>Gentianaceae</strong></td>
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<td><em>Gentiana acaulis</em></td>
<td>Trumpet gentian</td>
<td>Ga, To, Te, Tr</td>
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<td><em>G. alpina</em></td>
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<td><em>G. lutea</em></td>
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<td><em>G. verna</em></td>
<td>Spring gentian</td>
<td>To, S, Tr</td>
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<td><em>Geranium cinerereum</em></td>
<td>Ashy crane’s-bill</td>
<td>Ga Te</td>
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<td><em>G. phaeum</em></td>
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<td><em>G. pyrenaicum</em></td>
<td>Pyreanean crane’s-bill</td>
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<td><em>G. sanguineum</em></td>
<td>Bloody crane’s-bill</td>
<td>Gi, B</td>
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<td><em>G. sylvaticum</em></td>
<td>Wood crane’s-bill</td>
<td>Gi, B</td>
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<td><strong>Gesneriaceae</strong></td>
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<td><em>Globularia nudicaulis</em></td>
<td>Leafless-stemmed globularia</td>
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<td><em>G. repens</em></td>
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<td><em>Ribes petraeum</em></td>
<td>Rock currant</td>
<td>Gi, S</td>
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<td><em>Clinopodium vulgare</em></td>
<td>Wild basil</td>
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<td><em>Lamiastraum galaeobdolon</em></td>
<td>Yellow archangel</td>
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<td>Genus, Species</td>
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<td>Teucrium chamaedrys</td>
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<td>P. maritima ssp. serpentina</td>
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<td>Androsace carnea</td>
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<td>Soldanella alpina</td>
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<td>Pyrola minor</td>
<td>Lesser wintergreen</td>
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<td>Anemone narcissiflora</td>
<td>Narcissus-flowered anemone</td>
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<td>A. nemorosa</td>
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<td>Aquilegia vulgaris</td>
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<td>Clematis vitalba</td>
<td>Traveller’s-joy</td>
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<td>Helleborus foetidus</td>
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<td>H. viridis</td>
<td>Green hellebore</td>
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<td>Hepatica nobilis</td>
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<td>Ranunculus acris</td>
<td>Meadow buttercup</td>
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R. bulbosus  
R. pyrenaicus  
R. repens  
Thalictrum aquilegifolium  
Trollius europaeus  

R. pyrenaeus  
R. repens  

Resedaceae  
Reseda glauca  

Rhamnaceae  
Rhamnus alpinus  
R. catharticus  
R. pumilus  

Rosaceae  
Alchemilla alpina  
A. splendens  
A. vulgaris  
Amelanchier ovalis  
Cotoneaster integerrimus  
Crataegus monogyna  
Dryas octopetala  
Fragaria vesca  
Geum montanum  
G. urbanum  
G. pyrenaicum  
Potentilla alchemilloides  
P. montana  
P. rupestris  
P. tabernaemontani  
Rosa canina  
R. gallica  
R. glauca  
R. pendulina  
R. pimpinellifolia  
Rubus fruticosus  
R. idaeus  
Sanguisorba minor  
Sorbus aria  
S. aucuparia  

Rubiaceae  
Asperula cynanchica  
A. hirta  
Cruciata laevipes  
Galium aparine  
G. caespitosum  
G. mollugo  
G. odoratum  
G. verum  

Salicaceae  
Populus tremula  
Salix elaeagnos  
S. pentandra  
S. pyrenaica  
S. purpurea  

Santalaceae  
Theesium pyrenaicum  

Saxifragaceae  
Saxifraga aizoides  
S. cotyledon  
S. granulata  
S. harriottii  
S. longifolia  

Species:  
Bulbous buttercup  
Pyrenean buttercup  
Creeping buttercup  
Great meadow-rue  
Globe-flower  
Pyrenean mignonette  
Alpine buckthorn  
Purging buckthorn  
Dwarf buckthorn  
Alpine lady’s-mantle  
Intermediate lady’s-mantle  
Lady’s mantle  
Snowy mespilus  
Wild cotoneaster  
Hawthorn  
Mountain avens  
Wild strawberry  
Alpine avens  
Wood avens  
Pyrenean avens  
Rock cinquefoil  
Spring cinquefoil  
Dog rose  
Provence rose  
Blue-leaved rose  
Alpine rose  
Burnet rose  
Blackberry  
Raspberry  
Salad-burnet  
Whitebeam  
Rowan  
Squinancywort  
Crosswort  
Goosegrass  
Hedge bedstraw  
Woodruff  
Lady’s-bedstraw  
Saxifrage  
Pyramidal saxifrage  
Meadow saxifrage  
Pyrenean saxifrage  
Ge  
Ge  
To  
Gl, To, B  
GlGl, Ga, S  
Gl  
Ga, Tr  
Ge  
Gl  
Ga, To, Tr, H  
Gl  
Ga, To, Tr, H  
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Ge, S  
Ga  
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To  
Gl  
Ga  
Ge  
Ge, B  
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Ge, S, S  
Gl  
Ge, S, S  
Gl
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<th>Plant Name</th>
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<th>Location(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>S. moschata</td>
<td>Musky saxifrage</td>
<td>To, Tr</td>
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<td>S. oppositifolia</td>
<td>Purple saxifrage</td>
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<td>S. paniculata</td>
<td>Livelong saxifrage</td>
<td>Gl, Ga, B, H</td>
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<td>S. pubescens</td>
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<td>S. rotundifolia</td>
<td>Round-leaved saxifrage</td>
<td>Ge, Gl</td>
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<td>S. umbrosa</td>
<td>Wood saxifrage</td>
<td>Gl, S, B</td>
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</table>

**Scrophulariaceae**

- *Antirrhinum majus*  
  Snapdragon  
  Ge

- *Bartsia alpina*  
  Alpine bartsia  
  Gl

- *Chaenorhinum origanifolium*  
  Fairy foxglove  
  Ge, Gl, Ga, To, S, Tr, H

- *Erinus alpinus*  
  Fairy foxglove  
  S, O

- *Euphrasia alpina*  
  Eyebright  
  Gl, Ga, O

- *Linaria alpina*  
  Alpine toadflax  
  Gl, Ga, O

- *L. supina*  
  Alpine toadflax  
  Gl

- *Melampyrum pratense*  
  Leafy toadflax  
  Ge, Ga, Ge

- *Pedicularis foliosa*  
  Marsh toadflax  
  Ga

- *P. palustris*  
  Marsh toadflax  
  Ga

- *P. pyrenaica*  
  Pyrenean toadflax  
  Gl, Ga, O

- *Scrophularia alpestris*  
  Alpine figwort  
  Ga, S

- *S. canina*  
  Alpine figwort  
  Ga, S

- *S. nodosa*  
  Common figwort  
  Ga, Gl, B

- *S. pyrenaica*  
  Pyrenean figwort  
  Ga

- *Rhinanthus angustifolius*  
  Greater yellow-rattle  
  Ge, Gl, Ga, S, Tr

- *Verbascum nigrum*  
  Dark mullein  
  Ge, S

- *V. thapsus*  
  Mullein  
  Ge

- *Veronica alpina*  
  Alpine speedwell  
  To, Te, Tr

- *V. beccabunga*  
  Brooklime  
  To

- *V. fruticans*  
  Rock speedwell  
  Gl, To

- *V. nummularia*  
  Pyrenean speedwell  
  Gl, Tr

- *V. ponae*  
  Pyrenean spiked speedwell  
  Gl, Ga, S

- *V. serpyllifolia*  
  Thyme-leaved speedwell  
  To

**Solanaceae**

- *Atropa belladonna*  
  Deadly nightshade  
  S

**Thymelaeaceae**

- *Daphne cneorum*  
  Garland flower  
  Ge, To, Tr

- *D. laureola*  
  Spurge-laurel  
  Ge, To, Tr

- *D. laureola ssp. philippii*  
  Spurge-laurel  
  Te To

- *D. mezereum*  
  Mezereon  
  Tr

**Tiliaceae**

- *Tilia platyphyllos*  
  Large-leaved lime  
  Ge, Ga, H

- *T. cordata*  
  Small-leaved lime  
  Ge

**Ulmaceae**

- *Ulmus glabra*  
  Wych elm  
  Ge, Ga, B, H

**Valerianaceae**

- *Valeriana montana*  
  B

- *V. officinalis*  
  Valerian  
  Tr

- *V. pyrenaica*  
  Pyrenean violet  
  Ge, G, To, B

- *V. tripteris*  
  Pyrenean violet  
  Gl, B

- *Valerianella locusta*  
  Lamb’s lettuce  
  Ge

**Violaceae**

- *Viola biflora*  
  Yellow wood violet  
  Tr

- *V. cornuta*  
  Horned violet  
  Ga, S, Ge

- *V. lutea*  
  Mountain pansy  
  S

- *V. palustris*  
  Bog violet  
  Tr

- *V. pyrenaica*  
  Pyrenean violet  
  Te, To, Tr

- *V. riviniana*  
  Common dog-violet  
  Ge

- *V. tricolor*  
  Heartsease  
  S
Monocotyledons

Cyperaceae
Carex caryophyllea  Spring sedge  Tr
C. sylvatica  Wood sedge  B
Eriophorum angustifolium  Cotton-grass  H

Dioscoreaceae
Tamus communis  Black bryony  Ge

Iridaceae
Iris latifolia  To

Juncaceae
Luzula sylvatica  Great woodrush  B

Liliaceae
Allium senescens  Mountain onion  Ge
Anthericum liliago  St Bernard’s lily  Ge
Asphodelus albus  Asphodel  Gl
Convallaria majalis  Lily-of-the-valley  Gl
Dipcadi serotinum  Dipcadi  Ge
Fritillaria pyrenaica  Pyrenean snake’s-head  Gl
Hyacinthoides hispanica  Spanish bluebell  Ga
Hyacinthus amethystinus  Pyreanean hyacinth  Ga, S, H
Lilium martagon  Martagon lily  Ga
Paradisea liliastrium  St. Bruno’s lily  H
Paris quadrifolia  Herb paris  Gle
Ruscus aculeatus  Butcher’s-broom  Gle
Scilla liliohyacinthus  Pyreanean squill  Gle
S. verna  Spring squill  Gl
Tofieldia calyculata  Tofield’s asphodel  Gl
Veratrum album  White false helleborine  Tr, Gl

Orchidaceae
Anacamptis pyramidalis  Pyramidal orchid  Ge, S
Cephalanthera longifolia  Narrow-leaved helleborine  Ga, B, H
Coeloglossum viride  Frog orchid  Ga, S
Dactylorhiza fuchsii  Common spotted-orchid  Gl, Ga
D. incarnata  Early marsh-orchid  S
D. majalis ssp. alpestris  Broad-leaved marsh-orchid  Gl, Ga, S
D. sambucina  Elder-flowered orchid  Gl, Ga
Epipactis helleborine  Broad-leaved helleborine  Ge, Gl
Gymnadenia conopsea  Fragrant orchid  Gl, Ga, B, H
Listera ovata  Common twayblade  Gl, Ga, S
Nigritella nigra  Black vanilla orchid  Gl
Orchis mascula  Early purple orchid  H
O. ustulata  Burnt-tip orchid  Ga, S, H
Platanthera chlorantha  Greater butterfly-orchid  B, H

Poaceae (very incomplete)
Anthoxanthum odoratum  Sweet vernal grass  Gl
Brachypodium pinnatum  Heath false brome  S
B. sylvaticum  Wood false brome  S
Briza media  Quaking-grass  S
Dactylis glomerata  Cocksfoot  Ge
Festuca eskia  Crested hair grass  Ge, S
Koeleria cristata  Crested hair grass  Ge, S
Melica ciliata  Mountain melick  S
M. nutans  Wood melick  Ge
Molinia caerulea  Purple moor grass  Gl
Nardus stricta  Mat-grass  Gl, To, Te, Tr
Trisetum flavescent  Golden oat grass  Ge
CONIFERS

*Abies alba*  Silver fir  Gle
*Pinus nigra ssp. salzmannii*  Pyrenean black pine  Gle
*P. sylvestris*  Scots pine  Gle
*Juniperus communis*  Juniper  Ge, Gl, Ga
*Taxus baccata*  Yew  Ge, Ga

FERNS

*Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*  Black spleenwort  Ge
*A. ruta-muraria*  Wall-rue  Ge
*A. septentrionale*  Forking spleenwort  Gl
*A. trichomanes*  Maidenhair spleenwort  Ge
*A. viride*  Green spleenwort  Tr
*Athyrium alpina*  Alpine lady fern  Gl
*Botrychium lunaria*  Moonwort  Te, To
*Ceterach officinalis*  Rusty-back fern  Ge
*Cryptogramma crispa*  Parsley fern  Gl
*Dryopteris affinis*  Scaly male fern  Gle
*D. diautata*  Broad buckler-fern  Gle
*D. filix-mas*  Male fern  Gle
*Gymnocarpium dryopteris*  Oak fern  Gl, Gle
*Phegopteris connectilis*  Beech fern  Gle
*Polystichum lonchitis*  Holly fern  Tr
*P. setiferum*  Soft shield-fern  Gle

*B. variegatum*  Variegated horsetail  O
*Huperzia selago*  Clubmoss  Gl

BUTTERFLIES
Large grizzled skipper
Grizzled skipper
Alpine grizzled skipper
Dingy skipper
Small skipper
Large skipper
Swallowtail
Apollo
Clouded Apollo
Camberwell beauty
Small tortoiseshell
Painted lady
Red Admiral
Queen-of-Spain fritillary
Pearl-bordered fritillary
Small pearl-bordered fritillary
Heath fritillary
False heath fritillary
Queen of Spain fritillary
Meadow brown
Wall brown
Large wall brown
Bright-eyed ringlet
Piedmont ringlet
Marbled white
Large white
Small white
Green-veined white
Wood white
Orange tip
Black-veined white
Brimstone
Clouded yellow
Common blue
Adonis blue
Mazarine blue
Small blue
Green hairstreak

**MOTHS**

*Nemophora degeerella*
*Metaxmeste phrygialis*
Slender scotch burnet
Six-spotted burnet
Lackey
*Rhodostaphia calabra*
Carpet sp.
Brimstone moth
Yellow shell
Speckled yellow
Chimney sweeper
Hummingbird hawk-moth
Cream-spot tiger
Tawny marbled minor
Burnet companion

**OTHER INVERTEBRATES**

*Hirudo medicinalis*  Medicinal leech
*Arion ater*  a large black slug
*Limax maximus*  Leopard slug
*Cepaea nemoralis*  Banded snail
*Helix aspersa*  Garden snail
*Salticus scenicus*  a jumping spider
*Gryllus campestris*  Field cricket
*Calopteryx splendens*  Banded demoiselle
*Graphosoma italicum*  Milwall bug
*Pyrrhocoris apterus*  Fire-bug
*Libelloides coecatus*  an ascalaphid
*Cetonia aeruginosa*  a rose chafer
*Eysarcoris oleraceus*  a shield bug
*Phyllopertha horticola*  a chafer
*Oxythrips funesta*  a flower chafer
*Lampyris noctiluca*  Glow-worm
*Cicindela campestris*  Green Tiger-beetle
*Calosoma sycophanta*  a metallic ground beetle
*Ocypus olens*  Devil’s coach-horse
*Adalia bipunctata*  2-spot ladybird
*Scarabaeus sp*  a dung beetle
*Aphodius rufipes*  a small dung beetle
*Dorcadion scopolii*  a longhorn beetle
*Lytta vesicatoria*  Spanish-fly
*Lampra rutilans*  a jewel beetle
*Apion pomonae*  a weevil
*Polistes sp.*  a paper wasp
*Vespa crabro*  Hornet
*Formica rufa*  Wood ant

**AMPHIBIANS**

![Amphibian Image]
Common frog
Pyrenean brook newt
Fire salamander (dead)

**REPTILES**
Viviparous lizard
Common wall lizard
Green lizard
Slow worm (dead)
Southern smooth snake

**MAMMALS**
Alpine marmot
Red squirrel
Snow vole (runs)
Mole (hills)
Pipistrelle
Soprano pipistrelle
Daubenton’s bat
Serotine
Fox
Isard (Pyrenean chamois)
Wild boar (rootings)
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| **Total:** 77 species |