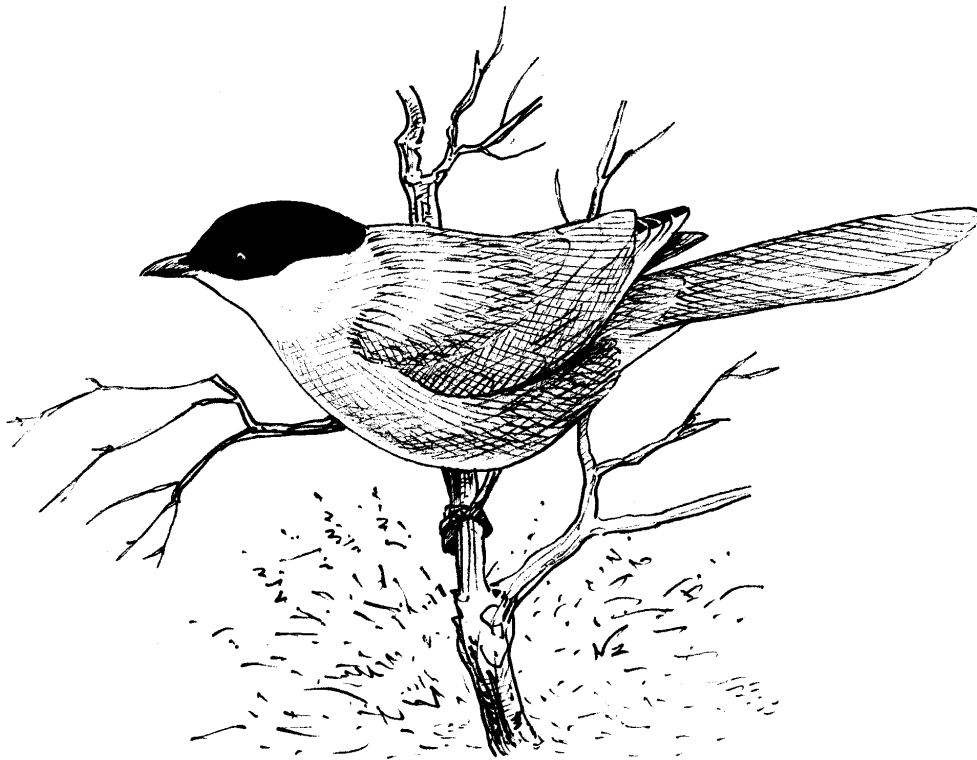


Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX
Telephone: 01603 300552 evenings & weekends
www.honeyguide.co.uk E-mail: honeyguide@tesco.net



Algarve
16 – 23 March 2005

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Holiday participants

Nicholas Armfelt	Cornwall
John Wakerley Christine Wakerley	Suffolk
Kitty Blair	Edinburgh
Mary Parrilla	Richmond, Surrey
Shevaun Mendelsohn David Nind	Cheshire
Malcolm Crowder Helen Crowder	Norfolk
Andrew Lapworth Ruth Lapworth	Kent
Roger Pawley Hazel Pawley	London

Leaders

Brian and Eileen Anderson	Rochdale
Chris Durdin	Norwich

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 new Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, leading to a total of €490 given to the Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA, BirdLife Portugal). We were very pleased to welcome Filipe Jorge from SPEA to the Hotel Belavista da Luz to receive the cheque.

This is our first donation to SPEA and follows donations totalling £33,330 between 1991 and 2004 to various conservation projects in Europe. A thank-you letter from SPEA is at the end of this holiday report, as is a copy of a photo and article that appeared in the local newspaper *barlavento* on 31 March about our meeting with Filipe Jorge of SPEA and the cheque handover. (*Attachments not in this web version of the report.*)

Algarve **16 – 23 March 2005**

Honeyguide's first Algarve holiday coincided with the region's driest winter since 1901, with no rain since November. This certainly had an impact on the landscape but probably didn't affect the range of birds we saw. As Brian Anderson's flower report notes, the botanical stars performed well, but the supporting cast was subdued. This report begins with a daily diary and concludes with various species lists.

Wednesday 16 March – Stansted to Vila da Luz

Whether saying locally or travelling this morning, it was a short night for those assembling at Stansted at 7.10 for a flight at 9.10. Actually it was slightly delayed, but a smooth flight then took us to Faro in good time. Leaders Brian and Eileen Anderson had already been in Algarve for a week finding out what was flowering where, and they and our bus driver for the week, Tony Gago, were there to meet us. Swallows on the bus journey of about an hour between Faro and Luz gave us our first glimpses of spring, plus kestrel, buzzard and cattle egrets. At the Hotel Belavista da Luz to greet us were plus Roger and Hazel Pawley who had flown in a couple of days earlier, Paulo on reception and the hotel's owner, Deric, a larger than life character with – in Brian's words – a hint of Basil Fawlty. The hotel is in a horseshoe shape facing south so all rooms have a sea view and overlook the two outdoor swimming pools – where Ruth managed to squeeze in a dip before lunch. We had an hour to settle into comfortable and spacious rooms, before a generous chicken salad lunch. The wine also was poured generously; Brian had warned us that Deric keeps filling wine glasses, and so it proved.

After lunch, we took a walk down the road to the beach to get to know Vila da Luz, including vital information like where to find the supermarket and ATMs. Outside the hotel was *Coronilla valentina*, a strongly scented yellow pea shrub, here planted but named after Cape St Vincent on the west coast. We paused to look at various planted shrubs including lantana and Peruvian pepper tree (= Peruvian mastic tree). The green shrub with white flowers was Ngaio (pronounced 'Nyo'): it comes from New Zealand where Nicholas recalled seeing it in the loose growing form that we found later on scrub up the road and elsewhere, though here it was mostly in tightly-clipped hedges.

Out to sea, several gannets were fishing, a reminder that we were looking at the Atlantic Ocean and not the Mediterranean. The first of many chiffchaffs was in bushes by the beach and common sandpiper and turnstone were found on the natural and fossil-laden sandstone at the back of the beach that makes an attractive sea defence for the town. A group of three then another four sandwich terns came past. In the meantime, Roger was scanning with his telescope and picked up a distant peregrine and three cormorants on the cliffs. As we wandered slowly east, there was a patch of flowering barbary nut irises on the rocks by the beach.

In the centre of Vila da Luz we stopped for a map shop and ice creams before turning back. Several of us strolled just a few score metres west of the road from hotel to beach, past a pleasing mixture of ruderal and planted flowers. Helen found a large toad sitting on a wall in the afternoon sun; there was method in its madness as it was catching a succession of passing ants with a lightning-quick tongue. Other highlights were violet carpenter bees and a Sardinian warbler chattering from a bare fig tree. House martins were buzzing round old nests as we returned up the hill.

That evening there was a 70th birthday party at the hotel so we ate at the distinctly un-touristy Alberto's fish restaurant in Lagos. Very good it was too, though after a long day's travelling not ideal to have the first night out. Eileen started to ferry home in Deric's minibus those flagging, with the rest following soon after by taxi.

Thursday 17 March – coastal walk to Lagos

After a long day, a civilised 9.30 start for today's walk on a warm and sunny day, though sometimes with a brisk wind. On the road going down into town, the bus was leaving for Lagos, where we were to walk to. We paused in town for some good views of yellow-legged gulls and not so good sightings of serins. Gannets were diving out to sea as we walked through town and up the hill going west along the coast. Looking back here the rate of built development was all too obvious: individually mostly attractive buildings, but on mass rather discouraging. Despite the horribly dry winter, the first orchids were beginning to appear: a patch of bumblebee orchids, a naked man orchid and, a little farther on, a

sombre bee orchid. Two pairs of stonechats perched in their usual style; five white storks appeared, migrants perhaps; and the first of several swallowtail butterflies. Then some dark thrushes buzzed around the birdwatchers at the tail of the group: the alert Nicholas recognised the call of ring ouzel and we had good, if brief, views. There were excellent views of three woodchat shrikes. The energetic and skilful Helen netted a small dappled white type butterfly from a field of wild radish, which turned out to be green-striped white. Ravens appeared to those ahead and at the tail of the now well-spread Honeyguiders, and alpine swift too for some.

We all gathered for coffee, loos and a picnic at Porto de Mós. The coastal footpath has eroded so we diverted through the village, passing to look at carob and mallow-leaved bindweed, before being gently ushered back onto the coast path by Brian and Eileen. Behind the lighthouse at Ponta da Piedade all gathered: the rock stacks have nesting egrets though there was just one little egret with the yellow-legged gulls today. Some of the pigeons looked like good wild rock doves, no doubt what was attracting the peregrines here, two of which flew close and stooped providing amazing views.

After stopping for ice cream, we then walked into Lagos, where Ruth and Shevaun bought earrings. We past the statues of Henry the Navigator and Dom Sebastian, the latter the one-time boy king of Portugal, with Eileen giving helpful potted histories of these local celebrities. Then by taxi home.

Our evening routine was to get back for five o'clock, with time for a dip or a stroll into town, with a meeting at 6.30 or 6.45 for those who wished to review wildlife checklists. Supper at 7.30 in the hotel was always excellent, with an *à la carte* selection of starters and main course and a generous pudding trolley. Wine was included too, in traditional Honeyguide style.

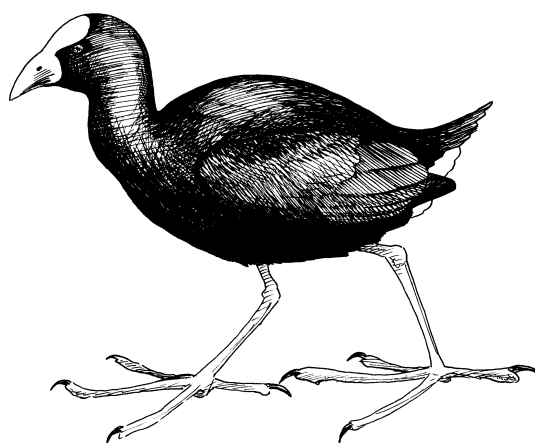
Friday 18 March – Quinta de Marim reserve, Estoi Gardens and Milreu Roman Villa

It was chilly and breezy for the pre-breakfast birdwatchers between seven and eight o'clock, searching the scrub up the road from the hotel, and azure-winged magpie was seen only poorly. Two spotless starlings and a black redstart were seen as well as the usual Sardinian warblers and chiffchaffs. The large, white pea *Astragalus lusitanicus* was noted.

Just east of Faro, little more than an hour away on the freeway (as driver Tony referred to the coastal motorway) is Quinta de Marim reserve, part of the Natural Park of Ria Formosa. In the field by the car park were 19 cattle egrets and we could immediately see a pair of white storks on a nest not in the closer umbrella pines, as those who've seen them in these in Extremadura might have expected, but in a taller maritime pine. Entry tickets were quickly sorted and we walked through the pines to the rather institution-style information centre. A group of freesias provided a bizarre and briefly puzzling botanical diversion, the scent confirming the initial ID, followed by hoop petticoat narcissi. The quickest into the info centre had already had a quick coffee by the time the tail-enders arrived, then it was out past the strawberry tree and onto the wetland reserve. Our first and only black kite of the holiday flew round at this point.

A coastal lagoon here had many redshanks, Kentish plovers and coots, and searching revealed black-tailed godwits, dunlins and greenshanks. The track leads to a restored tidal mill: the tide is trapped and the outgoing water generates power. The roof provides an excellent viewpoint – and has a tiny café serving excellent green tea and honey cake. From here, one could both look backwards over the lagoon and forward to see scores of bar-tailed godwits on the estuary, plus grey plovers, sanderling and two little stints and a whimbrel. There was a constant movement of ducks overhead, gadwalls and pintails especially.

Past the first lagoon there is a hide that overlooks another lagoon, where a Spanish yellow wagtail and avocet were new, plus an excellent and easy find – a single Caspian tern. A second hide overlooks a small freshwater pool with much lesser reedmace. The first group of Honeyguiders saw four purple gallinules here, but the keener birders, Roger excepted, saw none. Many ducks, little grebes, terrapins and sand



martins were also noted. Walking back, a pool had four black and white birds with long red legs, namely two white storks and two black-winged stilts.

Lunch was on picnic tables close to the car park, watching a hoopoe feeding energetically. Nicholas drew our attention to a Spanish festoon butterfly and Brian to its food plant, birthwort.

The gardens at Estoi must once have been grand, with fine statues and architectural features, but is now distinctly tumbledown since abandoned after the revolution in 1974. One could imagine the BBC Restoration team of Ptolemy and Marianne taking it all in – a European version, why not? For us it was a pleasant walk down an avenue, with a short-toed treecreeper, to the faded pink palace and pond. A tiny stream had bathing blackcaps, goldfinches, serin, greenfinch and house sparrow, with another treecreeper feeding on the low wall beside. Returning to the bus, we learnt that Tony was born and schooled in the village.

A quick cultural stop then at the Roman ruins at Milreu. Beyond an austere reception building, the remnants of mosaics and floor plan from the later Roman period around the third century were on show, including some excavated and visible from the cover of a seventeenth century farmhouse.

Saturday 19 March – Pico Alto

The pre-breakfast birdwatchers went down to the sea where the alert Andrew picked up on a great skua and a small flock of common scoters offshore.

Two days mostly by the coast was a reminder of how the Algarve coast is getting developed all too like a Spanish *costa*, so a day inland was a good change. It was windy, cool and overcast: unlike yesterday it didn't warm up much during the day, so Chris's shorts were a mistake! The first roadside stop on the Bensafrim to Barragem da Bravura road was for orchids on a scrubby hillside, namely naked man and sawfly orchids. The leaves and huge bulbs of the autumn flowering sea squill were abundant. At the Barragem (dammed lake) itself, the stop was mostly to see the very local squill *Scilla vincentina*.

Starting at Alte, we started our walk along the ridge at Pico Alto, which was to take exactly two hours from 11 to one o'clock. It's a limestone area, so no doubt rich in flowers in a less drought-stricken year. Despite the dry conditions, there was a sprinkling of orchids: man, mirror, sawfly, naked man and bumblebee. A sighting of green woodpecker followed a mysterious call: the two weren't necessarily the same but the green woodpecker is the mask-less Iberian subspecies *sharpei* that sounds a bit different. It was too windy for butterflies. As we descended from the trig point, a super short-toed eagle drifted past, then another (or the same one?) as we drove to the restaurant O Caixeiro (the box-maker). Deric and four guests from the hotel joined us for a truly authentic Portuguese lunch, with the restaurant busy with families on fathers' day, perhaps explaining the film *Back to the Future 2* on the TV, complete with Portuguese subtitles. Appetisers of chorizo, Palma ham (*presunto* in Portugal); starters were broad beans; the main course was rabbit or salt cod and meat we understood was pork that was half domestic, half wild boar. Fascinating though it was to eat in a genuinely local restaurant, the busy day meant it was all too slow and rather noisy, so we learn that it's best avoided on a Saturday. We didn't wait for puddings.

Our final stop of the day was an hour so in the historic town of Silves, the mediaeval capital and residence of the kings of the Moorish al-Gharb. They turned it into one of the richest cities of Europe and it remains compact and attractive. There was time enough to spot a monarch butterfly and an alpine swift and wander up cobbled streets towards the Moorish castle and *Sé* (cathedral) of Santa Marta. Birdwatching by the Roman bridge over the tidal river Arade – though it's no longer a port – revealed the expected common sandpipers on passage and the sounds of Cetti's warbler and blackcap.

There was great excitement in this evening's rugby internationals as Kitty's grandson Mike Blair was playing for Scotland; not his first cap, but his first start.

Sunday 20 March – the west coast

The early risers looked around the old orchard of olives, almonds, lemons and grapefruits, and saw scores of azure-winged magpies there and in out of gardens, carrying nesting material and as obvious as they had been elusive just two days earlier.

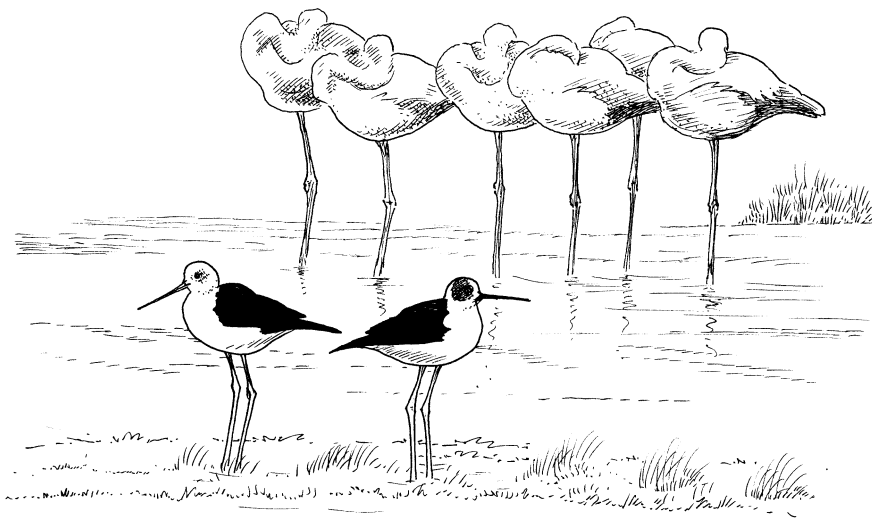
It was still and warm, though a touch overcast, so highly suitable for a trip to the protected but exposed west coast. Brian and Eileen had worked hard doing their fieldwork last week; we took several brief stops to see their finds. First stop by the back coast road from Luz to Burgau, heading west, was for *Orchis conica*, where there were also two southern grey shrikes on a wire. In a beautiful, open river valley there were sheets of gorgeous paperwhite narcissi along a streamside, our first white wagtail and a little group of lapwings. As we pulled away in the bus, a little owl popped up onto a tumbledown stone building, peering at us as we peered at it through the bus windows. A cliff top stop was mostly for the tiny yellow *Narcissus gaditanus*. Next, by a convenient car park, was some coastal scrub where we found many of the attractive fritillary *Fritillaria lusitanica*, the obscure but interesting green orchid mostly confined to this coastline called Gennaria or two-leaved scrub orchid, plus our first woodcock orchid. It was an area with promise for birds too: both Dartford and subalpine warblers were seen, but not so they performed for the group.

Henry the Navigator's fort at Sagres is a must-see for every visitor with a large compass laid out by the ground; Henry's school of navigation attracted as students Magellan and Vasco de Gama, among others. Much was destroyed in a great earthquake in 1755; recent rebuilding includes some ugly buildings holding the shop and loos. Watching the many fishermen is not for the faint-hearted: scores of them perch precariously on the cliff edge and many were successfully catching fish. We ate at the far end of the car park where there was the unusual shrubby violet growing.

Cape St Vincent, jutting out into the Atlantic, is the most south-westerly point on the Iberian peninsula. The stalls include woolly jumpers, presumably a good trade due to those coming to this exposed place rather unprepared. It was a brief visit, as it's a touristy spot, but long enough to see rock doves, yellow-legged gulls, white storks and shags on a rock-stack, though the corvids were jackdaws rather than the hoped-for choughs. And more precariously perched fishermen.

Moving on towards Vila do Bispo I spied a grey bird of prey on a roadside telegraph post and we piled out beside a busy main road to see our one and only black-shouldered kite of the holiday. At another conveniently placed car park in acres of gum cistus, there were champagne orchids, some magnificent sawfly orchids, here with deep pink sepals, one-leaved squill and more two-leaved scrub orchids. Brian and Eileen had a less touristy bit of the coast in mind, from where the scale and remoteness of the protected west coast of Portugal could really be appreciated. Wildlife highlights included a peregrine and prostrate gum cistus; Brian explained that this is described as a subspecies but one could easily take the view that it is simply growing here in a form to suit the extreme conditions.

Finally, to the attractive small cove of Praia do Castelejo. Most headed straight to the café but David and I sought out the little brown jobs and were rewarded with good views of a rock bunting. There were sheets of hoop petticoat narcissi on the slopes.



Monday 21 March – Pêra Marshes

The pre-breakfast birders went to the sea front where there was the usual fare of many passing gannets, Sandwich tern, two common scoters and a common sandpiper on the rocks.

We were met by a flock of hundreds of swallows and house martins as we arrived at the attractive, compact coastal lagoon and marshes at Pêra. It was difficult to know where to look first: waders of many species, especially dozens of black-winged stilts; ducks; flamingos; and two swifts with the hirundines that were unidentified in the not very good light, at this stage. Starting at the biggest, greater flamingos, spoonbills and grey herons were easy to pick out. The most common wildfowl were coots and shovelers, with a generous sprinkling of mallard, gadwall and teal and with some searching we found pochards and pintails. Purple gallinules were one draw: a little distant at this stage. Among the waders were the expected avocets, dunlins, redshanks and Kentish plovers; a curlew sandpiper at the water's edge was nice find, allowing for comparison with dunlins.

A short walk towards the sea took us to a viewing platform. This provided some cover against the drizzle; it was a funny day, sometimes, cool, sometimes, warm, sometimes damp. The bulk of the gallinules were here, 14 of them, plus a pair of red-crested pochards. A quartering marsh harrier caused many of the ducks to fly up. The indifferent weather led to the planned search for monarch butterflies to be postponed, so we had time to keep studying the birds, including over an early picnic lunch as the weather brightened. A little stint was picked out close by, and better light meant that we could see that the one remaining swift was a pallid swift – the first of the year in Algarve, according to Filipe Jorge from SPEA later that evening.

Tiles and ceramics are local specialities in Algarve, and there was a brief stop at a pottery near Alcantarilha. Bonuses were excellent facilities – OK, loos! – and a pale phase booted eagle overhead both as we arrived and as we left, maybe the same bird, maybe not.

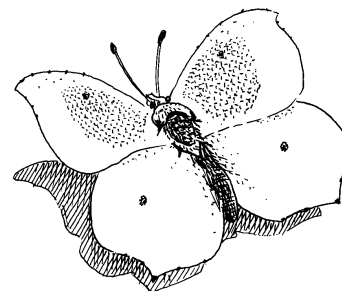
Paderne Castle had already been pointed out by Brian and Eileen from the main coast road, and now was the chance for a visit. “The atmospheric remains of a twelfth-century Moorish fort which commands great views of the surrounding countryside” is how the Rough Guide puts it. It's an attractive stroll through olive groves, and several orchids were found including the *lusitanicus* version of the mirror orchid. At the fort there were workmen installing lights, presumably to make more of a feature of the castle from the nearby motorway.

In a typical year there is also a riverside walk. This year, after the drought, it was more of a riverbed walk. Hoop petticoat and paperwhite narcissi were found, but there another narcissus was a surprise especially for a delighted Brian: *Narcissus calcicola*, a bank of this attractive small yellow daffodil very close to the bridge over the riverbed.

After the usual checklists, we were please to welcome Filipe Jorge of SPEA, BirdLife Portugal, to our evening meeting and for a meal too. He described some of the plans to resuscitate migration studies in the Protected West Coast Important Bird Area, a bit of which we'd seen yesterday. Funding for this will be helped by the usual Honeyguide donation with this holiday. The cheque for €490 was a small milestone for Honeyguide: not just the first donation cheque in euros, but also the first through the Honeyguide Charitable Trust with the added benefit for SPEA of 'gift aid', and by happy coincidence, in the presence of the new charity's three trustees, namely Malcolm and Helen Crowder and Chris Durdin.

Tuesday 22 March – Rocha da Pena

Saving the best until last is admirable principle if you can manage it, and Brian and Eileen had a delight of a walk tucked up their sleeve for the last morning. Tucked away in the limestone *barrocal*, the walk at Rocha da Pena was along part of an established '*circuito pedestra*' near Loulé. It is essentially open woodland, perhaps old orchards, tucked under a limestone ridge – along which blue rock thrushes moved to and fro all morning. The botanical stars here are wild peonies. In warm sunshine the butterflies were pretty good too: Cleopatra, Spanish festoon and black-eyed blue, the last two nimbly caught by Helen. Ruth saw a blue tit and both great spotted and green woodpeckers were present. The wide track curved right under the



ridge and leads to an orchid-rich patch at the top of the hill, notably *Orchis (masculus) olbiensis*, in effect a southern version of the early purple orchid. We re-traced our steps for lunch under the olive trees, with the sound of singing short-toed treecreeper. There is even a very convenient café at the start of this walk.

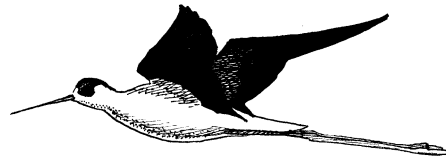
Driving towards Silves, there was a cattle egret that appeared to be following a JCB.

It was a return to Silves to walk into the Ilha do Rosario, a regular site for monarch butterfly. It isn't strictly an island, but does have water on three sides, through none this year in the concrete channel along which we walked. That may be why a terrapin appeared to be stuck there in the dry; placed on the bank where it crawl towards the river, it had indeed disappeared by the time returned. It's quite a view at the confluence of the rivers Odelouca and Arade. They are tidal here, and a large floodplain lagoon on the other side of the river had several spoonbills, herons and two Caspian terns. Six greenshanks landed on mudflats, and the yellow spikes of *Cistanche* broomrapes were seen by the riverside.

Brian eventually found the dried remains of bristle-fruited silkweed, the introduced alien that is the food plant for the now well-established monarch. It didn't bode well, but we did find a slightly tatty adult feeding on some crucifers and even managed to catch it for a brief closer view in a butterfly pot. Twenty-nine azure-winged magpies went past as we boarded the bus for the final journey back to the hotel.

Wednesday 23 March - return

Breakfast at 7.15 and Tony was there with his bus prompt at 7.45 for a smooth trip back to Faro airport.



Highlights of the holiday, as nominated by group members

Malcolm: black-shouldered kite, Spanish festoon, Pêra marsh

Mary: black-shouldered kite, good flowers especially the narcissi

Kitty: black-winged stilts, Spanish festoon, Pêra marsh

Shevaun: purple gallinule, honey cake on the tide mill, orchids

David: *Narcissus gaditanus*, rock bunting, being kissed on the head by Deric!

Ruth: walking in the countryside, hirundines at Pêra, swimming in the pool

John: peregrines

Christine: sawfly orchid

Helen: Spanish festoon, hirundines at Pêra, range of flowers

Nicholas: yellow bee and sawfly orchids

Roger: wonderful wild places

Hazel: Pêra marsh, Spanish festoon

Andrew: Spanish festoon, Pêra marsh, peregrine, orchids

Brian: *Narcissus calcicola*

Eileen: the company

Chris: green-striped white, Rocha da Pena, Caspian tern and honey cake

Fascinating facts

According to Ruth's pedometer, our total distance walked was 31.4 miles, an average of 5.2 miles a day.

Wildlife lists

Reptiles and amphibians

Common toad

Iberian wall lizard *Podarcis hispanica*. The only wall lizard in this area.

Gecko sp. Both Moorish and Turkish gecko occur here.

Ladder snake

European pond terrapin

Skink sp. Under a rock where we lunched at by the car park at Sagres, Roger discovered was what looked like a tiny slow-worm, but it then ran away on tiny legs, rather than slithered. It was therefore a skink, of which there are two species here; it was probably three-toed skink but possibly Bedragia's skink.

Mammal

Rabbit

Butterflies (with thanks to the catching skills of Helen and the identification skills of Nicholas)

Swallowtail

Scarce swallowtail

Spanish festoon

Large white

Small white

Green-striped white

Clouded yellow

Cleopatra

Red admiral

Painted lady

Monarch

Common blue

Lorquin's blue

Black-eyed blue

Small copper

Green hairstreak

Small heath

Speckled wood



Other notable insects

Violet carpenter bee

Pine processionary moth caterpillars

A locust, presumably Egyptian locust

Hummingbird hawk-moth

Paper wasp *Polistes* sp

Birds

Little grebe: 2 on 18th at Quinta de Marim reserve

Gannet: whenever we scanned the sea there were a few, a reminder that this is the Atlantic and not the Mediterranean.

Shag: on a rock-stack at Cape St Vincent on 20th.

Cormorant: seen daily except on the day we saw shags on the rugged west coast

Cattle egret: seen daily as we travelled wherever there were livestock and following a JCB on 22nd; 18 as we arrived at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th

Little egret: seen daily

Grey heron: seen on four days including 5 at Pêra marshes on 21st

Squacco heron: 1 at Pêra marshes on 21st

White stork: seen daily and on a nest in a maritime pine at Quinta de Marim reserve.

Spoonbill: 7 at Pêra marshes on 21st and 7 again on the floodplain wetland at Silves at Ilha do Rosario on 22nd

Greater flamingo: 87 at Pêra marshes on 21st

Gadwall: 100+ on 18th at Quinta de Marim reserve and many at Pêra marshes on 21st

Mallard: about 20 on 18th at Quinta de Marim reserve and seen on four other days too

Pintail: about 20 on 18th at Quinta de Marim reserve and seen at Pêra marshes on 21st

Shoveler: about 20 on 18th at Quinta de Marim reserve and the commonest duck at Pêra marshes on 21st

Teal: 2 on 18th at Quinta de Marim reserve and seen at Pêra marshes on 21st

Pochard: Pêra marshes on 21st

Red-crested pochard: a pair at Pêra marshes on 21st

Common scoter: 10 out at sea on the early morning birdwatch at Luz on 19th and again 2 on 21st

Black-shouldered kite: 1 near Vila do Bispo on 20th

Black kite: 1 on 18th at Quinta de Marim reserve

Buzzard: 4 counted as we travelled from Faro to Vila da Luz on 16th and seen on two other days

Short-toed eagle: 2 seen very well, or possibly the same bird twice, at Pico Alto on 19th

Marsh harrier: 2 at Pêra marshes on 21st

Booted eagle: a pale phase bird as we went into and as we left the pottery near Alcantarilha

Kestrel: seen daily

Peregrine: the soaring and stooping of 2 round the offshore rock stacks behind the lighthouse at Ponta da Piedade near Lagos was one of the highlights of the holiday

Red-legged partridge: pairs seen on 19th and 22nd and heard on 20th

Moorhen: seen on three days

Purple gallinule: 4 seen by some from the hide on the freshwater pool at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th; 16 at Pêra marshes on 21st

Coot: seen at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th; 100+ at Pêra marshes on 21st

Oystercatcher: 2 at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th

Black-winged stilt: only 2 at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th, 60+ at Pêra marshes on 21st and ones and twos on 20th and 22nd

Avocet: only 1 at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th, 10 at Pêra marshes on 21st

Ringed plover: present at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th

Kentish plover: 50 at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th and recorded on 20th and 21st

Grey plover: 5 at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th

Lapwing: 7 on 20th west of Luz

Turnstone: recorded in ones and twos on five days, including on the foreshore at Luz

Sanderling: recorded on 3 days

Little stint: 2 at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th and 1 seen very close at Pêra marshes on 21st

Curlew sandpiper: 1 seen very close at Pêra marshes on 21st

Dunlin: several at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th and 3 at Pêra marshes on 21st

Ruff: 2 at Pêra marshes on 21st

Snipe: 2 at Pêra marshes on 21st

Black-tailed godwit: 2 at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th on the lagoon inside the seawall and 1 at Pêra marshes on 21st

Bar-tailed godwit: 100 at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th outside the seawall

Whimbrel: 1 at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th; heard on 20th

Redshank: recorded on four days

Greenshank: 1 at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th, 6 on the floodplain wetland at Silves at Ilha do Rosario on 22nd

Green sandpiper: 1 shot out of a pond as we drive away from Paderne Castle on 21st

Common sandpiper: seen almost daily in small numbers including at Luz foreshore

Great skua: 1 out to sea off Luz early on 19th

Yellow-legged gull: common and seen daily

Lesser black-backed gull: less common than yellow-legged gull, seen on four days

Sandwich tern: 7 offshore at Luz on the first day's walk to the beach and small numbers offshore at just about all times thereafter

Caspian tern: 1 at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th, 1 at Pêra marshes on 21st and 2 on the floodplain wetland at Silves at Ilha do Rosario on 22nd

Rock dove/feral pigeon: birds that looked like real rock doves were at the offshore rock stacks behind the lighthouse at Ponta da Piedade near Lagos and in the Cape S Vincent area

Collared dove: seen daily

Pallid swift: there were 2 swifts as we arrived at Pêra marshes on 21st but in poor light were not identified, but later one, maybe one of the two, was confirmed as pallid swift.

Alpine swift: 3 during the walk to Lagos on 17th; 2 at Silves on 19th

Little owl: 1 on an old building west of Luz on 20th

Hoopoe: seen on five days

Green woodpecker: one seen at Pico Alto on 19th and heard at Rocha da Pena on 22nd. The Iberian subspecies is *sharpei*, which lacks a black mask.

Great spotted woodpecker: Rocha da Pena on 22nd

Crested lark: seen daily

Sand martin: recorded at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th and at Pêra marshes on 21st

Swallow: seen daily, including 100s in a flock at Pêra marshes on 21st

Red-rumped swallow: 1 flashed through at Luz early on 22nd

House martin: seen daily and actively nest building in Luz when we arrived on 16th. 100s in a flock at Pêra marshes on 21st

Meadow pipit: small numbers of this winter visitor on four days and 10+ on the west coast on 20th

Grey wagtail: recorded on three days

White wagtail: just 1 with the lapwings west of Luz on 20th

Yellow wagtail: 1 only at Quinta de Marim reserve on 18th and at Pêra marshes on 21st. The first of these was a male Spanish wagtail *Motacilla flava iberiae*, as might be expected.

Wren: heard or seen on four days

Robin: heard or seen on five days

Black redstart: seen on the first three days, including around Luz. 7 pairs and much singing at Sagres fort on 20th

Stonechat: 2 pairs just east of Luz on 17th and seen on three other days

Northern wheatear: 3 east of Luz on 17th, also recorded on 20th

Blue rock thrush: a pair at Rocha da Pena on 22nd

Ring ouzel: 3 migrants just east of Luz on 17th

Blackbird: recorded every day

Song thrush: 1 winter visitor just east of Luz on 17th, 1 on 19th

Cetti's warbler: heard on four days

Fan-tailed warbler: heard on five days but only seen just outside Lagos on 17th

Dartford warbler: 1 in the scrub at the fritillary *Fritillaria lusitanica* site west of Luz on 20th

Subalpine warbler: 1 male in the scrub at the fritillary *Fritillaria lusitanica* site west of Luz on 20th

Sardinian warbler: seen daily, especially outside the hotel in Luz

Blackcap: seen daily, including around Luz

Chiffchaff: seen daily and quite common in Luz

Goldcrest: 1 in Estoi Gardens on 18th

Blue tit: heard or seen on three days

Great tit: heard or seen on four days

Long-tailed tit: in Pico Alto village on 19th

Short-toed treecreeper: 2 in Estoi Gardens on 18th; singing at Rocha da Pena on 22nd

Southern grey shrike: 1 by the first roadside stop for orchids in the scrub on the Bensafrim to Barragem da Bravura road; 2 west of Luz on 20th

Woodchat shrike: first were 3 on the walk to Lagos on 17th; then 6 on 20th and 2 on 22nd

Jay: seen from the bus on three days

Azure-winged magpie: seen daily, including in the scrub, gardens and old orchards by the hotel. Once your eye was in, quite easy to see regularly as we drove. 29 counted at Silves on 22nd

Jackdaw: a group of 15 on the Lagos walk on 17th and recorded two other days

Raven: 2 on the Lagos walk on 17th and recorded on the rocky west coast

Spotless starling: recorded on four days, including in Luz.

Golden oriole: a remarkable sighting of a male on a rock at Sagres must have been a tired migrant

House sparrow: seen daily, and kept swimmers company at the hotel

Common waxbill: 10+ at Silves on 22nd

Serin: seen daily

Greenfinch: seen daily including a flock of 120 on the walk to Lagos on 17th

Goldfinch: seen daily

Linnet: recorded on five days

Corn bunting: seen or heard on five days

Rock bunting: heard and seen at the small cove of Praia do Castelejo on 20th

Algarve flower report, March 2005

As is often the case these days, spring in Algarve was unusual. Extremely dry weather, said to be the driest winter since 1901, seriously delayed the development of the flowers. The annuals were most seriously affected and many species are likely to miss this season and lay dormant until next spring. The bulbous plants seemed to be less affected although many were coming into flower later than normal and the early flowering species remaining in good form much longer than in a more normal season.

These unique conditions allowed us to find all four species of narcissus known to grow in Algarve still in flower. The Iberian Peninsula is the epicentre of this genus from which the species have spread into Morocco and Europe. Portugal and Spain contain the highest number of species but only four are known from Algarve. *Narcissus calcicola* is uncommon anywhere and little known from Algarve with only sporadic sightings reported in the past but we were extremely fortunate in finding a relatively large colony. The diminutive *N. gaditanus* seems to be smaller here than in other areas and there was an attempt by Willkom to have this recognised as a separate species, *N. minutiflorus*, but the distinction proved untenable.

Again, this unusual season gave another bonus in the orchid flora. There were fewer species on view but all the region's specialities were there to see. *Orchis conica*, the western relative of the milky orchid, *O. lactea*, was still in flower as was *Gennaria diphylla* but only just. The early flowering *Orchis olbiensis* conveniently delayed its flower until our visit. This orchid was believed to be absent from Portugal until it was 'discovered' by Daniel Tyteca in early March 1996. He was conducting an orchid survey for OPTIMA, an organisation dedicated to mapping the distribution of Mediterranean orchids. He found this species exactly where we found it and five years after us!

In spite of a spring season reluctant to get underway, we did manage to catch more of the region's specialities than could have been expected and the quality of our finds more than made up for the lack of quantity.

Araucariaceae

Araucaria heterophylla Norfolk island pine

Cupressaceae

Cupressus sempervirens
Juniperus phoenicea Phoenician juniper

Ephedraceae

Ephedra fragilis joint-pine

Pinaceae

Pinus pinaster maritime pine
Pinus pinea umbrella pine

Aizoaceae

Carpobrotus edulis Hottentot fig

Anacardiaceae

Pistacia lentiscus mastic tree
Schinus molle Peruvian pepper tree

Apiaceae (carrot family)

Cachrys trifida
Crithmum maritimum rock sampire
Ferula communis giant fennel
Smyrniolum olusatrum alexanders

Apocynaceae

Nerium oleander oleander
Vinca difformis periwinkle

Aristolochiaceae

Aristolochia baetica a birthwort

Asteraceae (was Compositae)

Arctotheca calendula Cape daisy
Asteriscus maritimus yellow sea aster
Bellis annua annual daisy
Bellis syvestris southern daisy
Calendula arvensis field marigold
Calendula suffruticosa
Centaurea pullata
Chrysanthemum coronarium var. *discolor* crown daisy
Conyza canadensis Canadian fleabane
Cotula coronopifolia
Erigeron karvinskianus
Galactites tomentosa
Reichardia gaditana

Boraginaceae

Anchusa azurea large blue alkanet
Borago officinalis borage
Cerinthe gymnandra
Cerinthe major var. *purpurascens* honeywort
Cynoglossum creticum blue hound's tongue
Echium plantagineum purple viper's bugloss
Lithodora prostrata

Brassicaceae (Cruciferae)

Cakile maritima ssp. *aegyptiaca* sea rocket
Lobularia maritima sweet alison
Malcolmia littorea sand stock
Raphanus raphanistrum wild radish
Sinapis arvensis charlock

Cactaceae

Opuntia ficus-indica prickly pear

Caprifoliaceae

Lonicera implexa honeysuckle
Viburnum tinus laurustinus

Caryophyllaceae

Paronychia argentea
Silene colorata Mediterranean catchfly
Spergularia purpurea purple sand spurrey

Chenopodiaceae

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

Cistaceae

Cistus albidus grey-leaved cistus
Cistus ladanifer gum cistus
Cistus ladanifer ssp. *sulcatus*
Cistus libanotis
Cistus monspeliensis narrow-leaved cistus
Cistus salvifolius sage-leaved cistus
Helianthemum organifolium
Tuberaria guttata spotted rockrose

Convolvulaceae Convolvulus althaeoides	mallow-leaved bweed
Crassulaceae Sedum sediforme	
Cucurbitaceae Bryonia cretica	white bryony
Ericaceae Arbutus unedo Calluna vulgaris Erica aborea	strawberry tree common heather tree heather
Euphorbiaceae Euphorbia helioscopia Euphorbia peplus Mercurialis annua Ricinus communis	sun spurge petty spurge annual mercury castor oil plant
Fabiaceae (was Leguminosae) Astragalus lusitanicus Astragalus tragacantha ssp vincentinus Ceratonja siliqua Cercis siliquastrum Coronilla valentina ssp. glauca Lathyrus clymenum Lathyrus cicera Lathyrus ochrus Lotus creticus Lupinus angustifolius Lupinus luteus Lupinus micranthus Lygos (Retama) monosperma Medicago minima Medicago orbicularis Melilotus indicus Ononis natrix Psoralea bituminosa Ulex parviflorus	carob Judas tree crimson pea red vetchling winged vetchling southern bird's foot trefoil narrow-leaved lupin yellow lupin hairy lupin bur medick large disk medick small melilot large yellow restharrow pitch trefoil small-flowered gorse
Fagaceae Quercus ilex Quercus coccifera Quercus suber	holm oak prickly / kermes / holly oak cork oak
Gentianaceae Centaurium erythraea ssp grandiflora	common centauray
Geraniaceae Erodium cicutarium Erodium moschatum Geranium dissectum Geranium molle Geranium purpureum Geranium rotundifolium	common storksbill musky storksbill cut-leaved cranesbill dovesfoot cranesbill little robin round-leaved cranesbill
Guttiferae Hypericum perforatum	St John's wort

Lamiaceae (Labiatae)	
Lavandula stoechas	French lavender
Marrubium vulgare	white horehound
Phlomis purpurea (not in flower)	
Rosmarinus officinalis	rosemary
Salvia verbenaca	wild clary
Thymus camphoratus	
Thymus capitatus (Corydothymus capitatus)	Mediterranean thyme
Linaceae	
Linum bienne	pale flax
Malvaceae	
Malva parviflora	least mallow
Malva sylvestris	common mallow
Meliaceae	
Melia azedarach	Persian bead tree
Moraceae	
Ficus carica	fig
Myrtaceae	
Myrtus communis	myrtle
Oleaceae	
Jasminum fruticans	wild jasmine
Olea europaea	olive
Orobanchaceae	
Cistanche phelypaea	
Oxalidaceae	
Oxalis pes-caprae	Bermuda buttercup
Paeoniacea	
Paeonia broteroi	peony
Papaveraceae	
Fumaria capreolata	ramping fumitory
Fumaria officinalis	common fumitory
Papaver rhoeas	common poppy
Plantaginaceae plantain family	
Plantago coronopus	buck's horn plantain
Platanaceae	
Platanus orientalis	oriental plane
Plumbaginaceae	
Armeria pungens	
Primulaceae	
Anagallis arvensis	scarlet pimpernel
Anagallis monelli	shrubby pimpernel
Ranunculaceae	
Anemone palmata	yellow anemone
Ranunculus ficaria ssp ficariiformis	lesser celandine
Ranunculus macrophyllus	

Resedaceae

Reseda media corn mignonette

Rosaceae

Cydonia oblonga quince
 Prunus armeniaca apricot
 Prunus dulcis almond
 Pyrus amygdaliformis almond-leaved pear
 Sanguisorba minor fodder burnet

Rubiaceae

Rubia peregriana wild madder

Rutaceae

Ruta montana

Santalaceae

Osyris quadripartita osyris

Scrophulariaceae

Antirrhinum majus ssp. cirrhigerum snapdragon
 Linaria algarviana spotted/purple & white
 Scrophularia sambucifolia
 Verbascum sinuatum wavy-leaved mullein
 Veronica anagallis-aquatica blue water speedwell

Solanaceae

Hyoscyamus albus white henbane

Tamaricaceae

Tamarix africana tamarix

Thymelaeaceae

Daphne gnidium

Urticaceae

Parietaria judaica pelitory of the wall
 Urtica dioica stinging nettle

Valerianaceae

Centranthus calcitrapae pink valerian
 Fedia cornucopiae fedia

Verbenaceae

Lantana camara lantana

Violacea violet family

Viola aborescens shrubby violet

MONOCOTYLEDONS**Agavaceae**

Agave americana American agave

Amaryllidaceae

Leucojum tricophyllum three-leaved snowflake
 Narcissus bulbocodium hooped petticoat daffodil
 Narcissus calcicola
 Narcissus papyraceus ssp. panizzianus paperwhite
 Narcissus gaditanus

Araceae

Arisarum vulgare friar's cowl

Iridaceae

Gladiolus italicus cornflag
Gynandriris sisyrnchium barbary nut
Iris albicans
Romulea bulbocodium sand crocus

Liliaceae

Allium subvillosum
Asphodelus fistulosus
Asphodelus ramosus .
Fritillaria lusitanica
Hyacinthoides hispanica
Muscari neglectum grape hyacinth
Ornithogalum umbellatum star of Bethlehem
Ruscus aculeatus butcher's broom
Scilla vincentina (=italica?)
Scilla monophyllos one-leaved scilla
Scilla odorata
Scilla peruviana
Smilax aspera rough bindweed
Tulipa sylvestris ssp. australis
Urginea maritima (=Drimia maritima) sea squill

Orchidaceae

Aceras anthropophorum man orchid
Gennaria diphylla two-leaved scrub orchid
Ophrys bombyliflora bumble bee orchid
Ophrys speculum (O. ciliata) mirror orchid
Ophrys speculum ssp. lusitanicus (O. vernixia)
Ophrys scolopax woodcock orchid
Ophrys tenthredinifera saw-fly orchid
Ophrys fusca sombre bee orchid
Ophrys lutea yellow bee orchid
Orchis conica
Orchis (masculus) olbiensis early purple orchid, southern Europe form
Orchis morio ssp. champagneuxii champagne orchid
Orchis italica naked man orchid

Poaceae Grass family

Arundo donax giant reed
Briza maxima quaking grass

Palmae

Chamaerops humilis dwarf fan palm