



# *Honeyguide*

## **WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS**

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**Algarve and Alentejo  
10 – 17 November 2023**



## Participants

Sue and Peter Burge  
Ann Stearns  
Barry and Sally Hennessey  
Mick Gold  
Tricia Williams

Gill Edden  
Ann Greenizan  
Pat Harding  
Kate Dalziel  
Everard Daniel

## Leaders

Domingos Leitão from SPEA, Chris Durdin.  
Holiday report and lists by Chris Durdin.

We stayed in the Alte Hotel for 5 nights [www.altehotel.com](http://www.altehotel.com)  
and the Hotel Mira Sagres for 2 nights [www.hotelmirasagres.com](http://www.hotelmirasagres.com)



The group at its daily stop for coffee. Below: chough mural at Sagres.

Photos by Chris Durdin or as attributed.

Cover: chameleon at Quinto do Lago; azure-winged magpie (KD), speckled wood and autumn crocus.



As with all Honeyguide holidays, part of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in Portugal nominated by SPEA / Birdlife Portugal. This year we supported the [11th Congress of Ornithology](#) in November 2023, run by SPEA, in Ponta Delgada University (Azores). The donation to SPEA from the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust was €1000 (£886), made up of each group member's conservation contribution supplemented by Gift Aid plus some funds in hand. Up to the end of 2023 the total for all conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 was £149,797. The total donated to SPEA since 2005 now totals £7,168.

## Introduction

Honeyguide's fifth trip combining the Algarve and part of Alentejo coincided with a spell of warm, sunny weather, exactly what you'd hope for during a late autumn trip. We followed our usual pattern of five nights at Alte in eastern Algarve followed by two nights in Vila do Bispo to see parts of the western part of the Algarve.

There is a Honeyguide routine to collect holiday highlights, maybe two, three or four items that will particularly stay as a memory that you might mention if chatting about the holiday to a friend or neighbour. As we reviewed everyone's highlights during our final evening meal, Sally produced a splendid long list that she had noted on her phone. It's difficult to dispute any of these – indeed, many were named by others – so here's her complete list, a concise summary of the great variety of wildlife we saw. Scolopendra; horseshoe whip snake; tree frog; chameleon; whimbrel; worm lizard; mole cricket; dog vomit slime mould; scorpions; praying mantis; bird ringing; Spanish imperial eagles; storks in an apparent housing queue; Iberian painted frog. And the most entertaining: leaping frogs catching red-veined darters. Read on to find out more about these and much more.

Rob Macklin's last report introduction said: "Yet another superb week in the Algarve and Alentejo in excellent company and with good weather." I can't put it better!

Chris Durdin

## DAILY DIARY

### Friday 10 November – to the Algarve

Honeyguide's first ever group to use Jet2 found friendly welcomes, a prompt 08:00 departure from Stansted and the rare bonus of an inflight meal, with the all-day vegetarian breakfast well-received. We even arrived early in Faro, where Everard, who'd just arrived from Gatwick, met us at baggage reclaim. Sue was a little anxious that, having left the EU without a passport stamp several months ago, this might throw up questions when coming back again, though happily all was plain sailing in that respect. Pat was there, having arrived from Paris yesterday, and we took the pedestrian underpass to Europcar's office across the road. This was all while linking up with Domingos who had his minibus nearby, and away we went for the three-quarters of an hour drive to Alte. Josette from the hotel met us and handed out keys, we settled into rooms then came down for rather more than the 'light lunch' expected: appetisers, soup, chicken, salad and chips followed by fruit salad for a few who still had room. A hummingbird hawkmoth fed on the lantana outside the dining room window.



Smilax berries; praying mantis; Moorish gecko.

We took a short drive to Rocha de Pena for an afternoon excursion on what was a surprisingly grey day, with some drizzle. The path up the hill took us through open Mediterranean scrub of mainly carob, olive and lentisc trees or scrub, with scattered holm oak, kermes oak, wild olive and terebinth. At the end of the long, dry summer, botanising was mostly leaves, rather than flowers – sea squill, narrow-leaved rue, smilax, *Verbascum sinuatum*, to name just a few. Happily, early on in our walk there was an exception: friar's cowl, just at the start of its winter flowering season. That was swiftly followed by Domingos finding and catching a praying mantis. Domingos did his trademark turning over of stones, twice finding Moorish geckos plus a mantis egg-case. Birthwort was another interesting plant in flower: later study of the book named this small flowered species as *Aristolochia longa*. There weren't many birds to see: just chaffinch and greenfinch seen well, though more to hear, including blackcap, Sardinian warbler and robin. The days are longer here than at home in November though by now it was getting gloomy, and we returned to the hotel.

We gathered for a pre-dinner drink – many accepting the white port offered by the hotel – while Domingos collected Kate from Faro from her later flight from Newquay, Cornwall. After a tasty dinner most of us were ready for bed after a long day.



## Saturday 11 November – Benémola Spring & Barranco do Velho

A mist over the countryside viewed from the hotel soon cleared and we had a bright and sunny day. Breakfast was at 7:30 and as we gathered by the minibuses at 8:30 we saw a stonechat and a black redstart by the hotel.

Our morning walk, or rather slow stroll, Honeyguide-style, was at Benémola Spring. The strawberry trees in the car parking area were the first of many searched, without luck, for larvae of two-tailed pasha butterflies, though several group members sampled ripe fruits and Ann G earns a mention in these despatches for finding a two-tailed pasha egg. We noted rustyback ferns in a wall, some unexplained lumps on kermes oak leaves and various other plants, including *Daphne gnidium* and more friar's cowl.

It might have been a morning with very few birds, but our luck was in as tucked away in a sheltered spot a bird ringing session was underway. Domingos knew Antonio, who was in charge of a team, and we were invited to watch and hear about their work at what, in the UK, would be called a 'constant effort site'. We saw blackcaps and chiffchaffs weighed, measured and ringed, though the birds of the morning were undoubtedly bullfinches. The ringers already had two of these for 'processing' and we saw them take an additional four bullfinches from the mist nets. Under very careful supervision, group members released birds and three were able to put a ring on a bird.



Two bullfinches about to be released: the group watches the expert ringers at work.

We moved on to the spring itself, where we found several willow emerald damselflies, individuals, pairs in tandem and egg-laying scars on oleander twigs overhanging the water. There were also egg-laying darters, too far and fast to be certain of the species, and a migrant hawk. Domingos caught an Iberian water frog. Near here, red admiral and speckled wood were our first butterflies, then bright flashes of yellow as both brimstone and Cleopatra flew around. A blue-winged grasshopper gave entertainment as it showed flashes of colour when it jumped.

We ate our picnics back at the minibuses, then went to nearby Querença to find a café for coffee and proper loos. It was distinctly warm as we sat outside in the sunshine. Walking back to the parked minibuses we found a different birthwort, *Aristolochia baetica* in flower (and with dry seed pods), and two large bushes of apple-of-Sodom with a few purple flowers and many yellow fruits.



*Aristolochia baetica* and apple-of Sodom, flowers and fruits.



For the afternoon, we drove to Barranco do Velho, a hillside with scattered maritime pines and heathy scrub, the latter including several *Cistus* species (not in flower) and the pink-flowered Spanish heath *Erica australis*. Here we enjoyed Domingos's great skill in finding interesting animals, often by overturning rocks. The first was a feisty horseshoe whip snake, persuaded to be calm by being given Domingos's hat to hide under. The next was a fearsome and poisonous Mediterranean banded centipede or Scolopendra, which eventually we could see when caught in a bug box, though that took some doing because of its mobility and size. The third was a scorpion, almost as scary as the Scolopendra. Along the way we found a few fungi, as always tricky to identify, a single merendera and two flowers of autumn snowflake.

Back at the minibuses, spotless starlings were perching on a mast and a church, and a small flock of crag martins flew around the mast.



Scolopendra or Mediterranean banded centipede; horseshoe whip snake, both found by Domingos.

### Sunday 12 November – Castro Marim

Today started brightly and it stayed warm and sunny all day, and a small copper in ivy at the hotel was a nice start to the morning. We sped down the motorway to the 2000-hectare reserve of Castro Marim on the Guadiana estuary and the border with Spain, stopping for fuel for Domingos's minibus that had come all the way from Lisbon. An AdBlue warning light had come on to say more of this fuel additive was needed to control vehicle emissions, so that was topped up, too, though the warning light stayed on. At Castro Marim we parked not far from the main road. The group watched a zitting cisticola (fan-tailed warbler) that was showing well in a low bush while Domingos phoned Guerin, the hire company, to discuss next steps to reset the minibus's systems.

We walked along a track with an open area of salt water on one side and scrub then by a carob plantation on the other, from time to time making way for cyclists. On the water were yellow-legged gulls, several little grebes and a few great crested grebes and coots. Then a flight of 19 spoonbills came over. We found a dead marsh harrier by the track, for reasons unknown. On one of the low bunds there was a Caspian tern with an Audouin's gull adjacent to it, mingled with many other gulls.

The main birdwatching area was at the far end of the track with a white mountain of salt in view over the far side of the salt pans. Here were many flamingos, which have started to nest at Castro Marim in recent years, the only place in Portugal where this happens. There were plenty of black-winged stilts and various other waders, though generally these were a bit distant and we were looking against the light, so more on these (with better views) later. Everard alerted us all to a barn swallow. Shovelers had been flying around and there was a large flock at rest on a bank. Probably the best birds here were black-necked grebes: there was a group of about 20 in one area and Domingos scanned and estimated about 80 in all. A dragonfly stayed still enough to confirm an ID of red-veined darter.



Black-winged stilt (PB).

We turned around and retraced our steps. Three slender-billed gulls flew past, as did another Caspian tern. The light was a little better now and that helped with looking at a Mediterranean gull standing next to a black-headed gull for easy comparison. A colourful flower in the field led to scratched heads: it looked



like a *Solanum* and Barry's conclusion was a mandrake, usually a scruffy-looking plant but here, perhaps helped by the timing of our visit, looking quite smart. Later we discovered that the distribution map shows no mandrakes this far east in Portugal, so this is a good record. We also found a bloom of the large thistle *Atractylis gummifera*: previously (and elsewhere this morning) these were just dried remains. Two of us at the back of the group were lucky enough to see a hoopoe fly over.



Mandrake in flower in a sea of Bermuda buttercup leaves, and a distribution map with our record added, for illustration.

Next stop was a café where we saw a crimson speckled moth next to where we'd parked. From here we drove to the nature reserve centre, the road taking us past small lagoons right by the road. These were excellent for good views of waders from the minibus: greenshank, common sandpiper, redshank, spotted redshank and black-winged stilts, plus an Iberian grey shrike on a ruined building. We had our packed lunches at the picnic tables provided here, during which a thermal of 35 white storks moved slowly through. An impressive flock of woodpigeons also flew over; this morning, others had been feeding on carobs.

Behind the nature reserve's rather plain building we overlooked a freshwater marsh, which had shovelers, teals and mallards. Another Caspian tern flew past us. From here, a stone's throw away, an area of open land was rich for bulbs: autumn daffodils *Narcissus serotinus* (and probably thousands more seed heads of the same), a few merenderas and several autumn squills – a few weeks earlier and there would have been many more of all of these. From this area we overlooked more lagoons, with more waders: lots of stilts, black-tailed godwits, dunlins, little stint and avocets. A stone-curlew flew in and landed on a bund in the distance.



Three autumn bulbs at Castro Marim: merendera, autumn narcissus and autumn squill.

An osprey flew over and, as we followed its flight, it joined a second bird in the sky, the latter bird holding a fish. Looking over an open area towards Spain, we saw a white wagtail, a red-legged partridge and another shrike. In a lagoon in a different direction there was a flock of some 70 avocets, plus a few stilts, with four white storks on a bund that were joined by a spoonbill that flew in. About five waxbills landed briefly on some vegetation, then moved swiftly on.

We drove 'home' to Alte Hotel into the setting sun, arriving around 5:45. We followed our now usual routine of drinks and wildlife checklists at 7pm, followed by dinner at around 7:30. After dinner, a few of us looked through the telescope at Jupiter and three moons and the nearby Pleiades (Seven Sisters) star cluster.



### Monday 13 November – Quinto do Lago and Salgados Lagoon

Now here's something I don't write very often: most of the group came into the hotel's garden after breakfast to see a slime mould, namely dog sick slime mould *Mucilago crustacea*.



Dog sick slime mould *Mucilago crustacea* at Alte Hotel being studied by group members.

By the time we'd driven to Quinto do Lago, through upmarket coastal development close to Faro, the AdBlue warning light in Domingos's minibus had gone off and the need to get the vehicle checked at the airport hire car base had gone. Some walked across the bridge over the thin strip of estuary to find loos by the closed café; others settled down to scan the mudflats. There was plenty to see by way of waders: whimbrel, grey and ringed plovers, turnstone, dunlin, redshank, greenshank and oystercatcher, plus a small group of spoonbills with an attendant little egret and a distant flying osprey.

We walked east along the wide boardwalk that runs between the estuary and a mixture of scrub and golf course. It was easy for walking, watching, jogging or cycling, though far from crowded. By the boardwalk there were the pinky-purple flowers of limoniastrum, like a bushy sea lavender that grows in salty Mediterranean areas.

On the mudflats – the tide was out – there were countless fiddler crabs. On the landward side of the boardwalk we saw stonechats, chiffchaffs, Sardinian warbler and some waxbills that were static enough to allow telescope views.



Spoonbills with an egret on the estuary; Spanish terrapins tucked in behind a mallard on the lake.

This led us to a freshwater lake with fringing reeds, bulrushes and rushes. Almost immediately we had an excellent view of a purple swamp-hen. There were many ducks: shoveler, teal, wigeon, pochard and mallards, with a good sprinkling of moorhens and coots. Every now and again, groups of azure-winged magpies flew through, plus a hoopoe. Three glossy ibises flew past, landed and were joined on their reedy spit by another purple swamp-hen. In many places on the water's edge there were Spanish (stripe-necked) terrapins, and while we were by the tower hide we found a single red-eared slider: non-native though not, apparently, taking over here. Two kingfishers landed on the opposite side of the water: they appeared to be two males jostling for authority.

In the meantime, Domingos was searching the lentisc scrub behind us. Firstly, he found a stripeless tree frog. Secondly, he found a lovely chameleon, and both were much admired and photographed. We then took the short walk back to the minibuses and ate our picnics overlooking the estuary. After that it was a very short drive to find a café.



Two distant kingfishers and a much closer stripeless tree frog, Quinta do Lago.

The afternoon visit was to Salgados Lagoons at Pêra. Domingos explained that there is a long-running battle to safeguard this rare undeveloped area on the Algarve coast, combining the voices of locals and conservationists, including support from overseas groups such as Honeyguide. So far this has been successful, though long-term prospects remain uncertain. A cattle egret on a boardwalk was a surprise – and there was a flock of these close to the road a short distance after leaving the site.

We stopped by a large puddle, with my butterfly net pressed into service to investigate a wriggling movement. Soon we had a bug box of small fish, one of the non-native ‘mosquito fish’ species once brought in to eat mosquito larvae, and a tiny Louisiana crayfish.

The freshwater marsh had a good range of wetland birds including stilts, spoonbills, swamp-hen and marsh harrier, with new species for us being snipe, lapwing and a group of pintails. There were several stonechats using tamarisks as perches. The star bird though was bluethroat, two birds that mostly were skulking along the edge of the marsh though happily a male was seen well, if briefly, as it perched in a small, thin tamarisk.

## Tuesday 14 November – Castro Verde

It was another warm and sunny day for the motorway drive that took us to Castro Verde. The first stop was a supermarket for shopping and loos. We looked at *Pallenis spinosa* – sometimes called spiny goldenstar – by where we’d parked.



Spanish imperial eagle on a hilltop marker (PB).

We then moved into the steppe and dry grasslands of the Castro Verde SPA (Special Protection Area). At our first stop a ‘swishing’ sound drew our attention to calandra larks, and we saw them well on the wing. Very soon after, it was Kate who spotted the large raptor on a concrete structure marking a hilltop: through telescopes we confirmed it was an adult Spanish imperial eagle, with white shoulders clearly visible despite looking against the light. Then we found another adult bird in the same direction – presumably a pair – and an immature Spanish imperial eagle in the other direction. Three individuals of Europe’s rarest raptor, with just a handful of pairs in Portugal, was a very good start for what Domingos



called the 'big five' – with a flying black vulture the second. Our luck was in as a flock of little bustards flew around, then two flocks, in the air looking rather like giant snow buntings. These stars had a supporting cast that included red kites, a marsh harrier, buzzard, lapwing flocks and ravens.

Farther on there were more views of a tawny-coloured immature Spanish imperial eagle, our fourth of the morning, which moved around various low perches or the ground while being hassled by corvids. As we walked to a small patch of gum cistus, with the occasional flower, several stones that were overturned proved to have scorpions underneath.

Our lunch spot was the hilltop church of Senhora de Aracelis at 276 metres above sea level, providing panoramic views across Portugal and into Spain. Behind the loo a 3D spider web hosted a cage web spider. Two nature wardens scanned for cranes without success as we ate picnics. We heard that the cranes had not yet arrived in Alentejo; presumably a mild autumn meant they were still farther north. Sue saw a swallowtail butterfly fly past, there was red admiral, small copper and a white butterfly with green on the underside (perhaps Bath white) that was too mobile to clinch a definite ID. We then adjourned for coffee in a nearby village where most sat outside, choosing shade this sunny day, after which we looked at a black redstart on some ruderal land a stone's throw away.



The hilltop church of Nossa Senhora de Aracelis; gum cistus (ED).

For the afternoon the hunt was on for great bustards. The first area, past the white stork nests on poles, proved fruitless for bustards, though there was a thermal with a small group of griffon vultures. Then from the main road we found a flock of 16 great bustards in the middle distance, very good views indeed of a bachelor flock of males with blue-grey neck coloration.

We moved on, searching more fields for steppe birds. This led to a seven- or nine-point turn on a narrow road to look again at what turned out to be a group of black-bellied sandgrouse in a field. These took to the air as soon as we left the minibuses, two flying in one direction and the main party of about 22 birds going in a big loop, eventually coming back more or less over us. A distant blob on a rock turned out to be a hoopoe.

The last stop was by a dam that had created a small lake. Here there were many white wagtails, several chiffchaffs flitting around and a brief view of two green sandpipers flying through. Domingos turned more stones, coming up with a mole cricket and perhaps one of the trickiest reptiles in Europe to see: a worm lizard, a legless lizard superficially like a small slow-worm. A later check of the 'herptile' guide reveals a recent taxonomic split: in the southern part of the Iberian Peninsula, including where we were today, the local species is Maria's worm lizard. It was time to return to Alte.

### **Wednesday 15 November – Monchique and to Vila do Bispo**

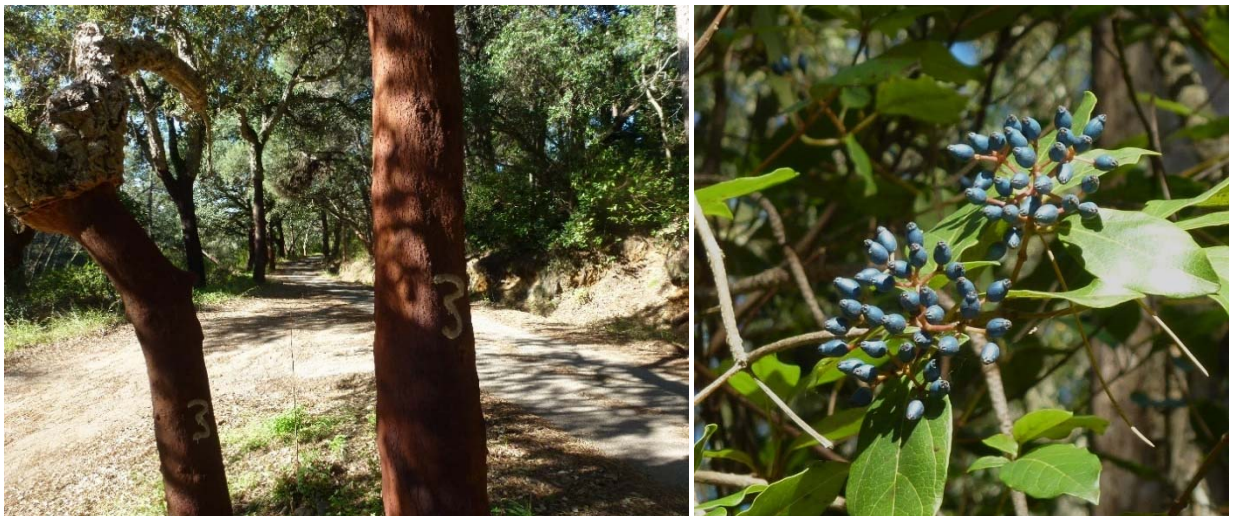
I don't think I was the only one who had become attached to Alte Hotel and was sad to leave. But today was the day, and an extra half hour was plenty of time to pack and load up before we headed west.

A highlight on the way to Monchique mountain was an area with scores of white storks, including dozens of nests. The biggest group of storks was simply standing in a field. Nests were scattered on poles and trees, including some very low trees and on a Norfolk Island pine. We heard bill-clapping, a display associated with pair-bonding and breeding, so surprising to hear in November. The concentration of storks here dates from when there was a rubbish tip at which they fed, now closed, though the storks have stayed.



White storks.

We branched off into a cork oak woodland. Blue-grey berries of laurustinus *Viburnum tinus* shone in the sunshine and a speckled wood sunned itself and allowed photos. Above us a crested tit trilled and, although it was always on the move, most of us managed to see it quite well. Other birds included the sight or sounds of a great spotted woodpecker, blackcaps, robins, nuthatch, chaffinch, blue tit and great tit. Everard noticed a nibbled strawberry tree leaf and found a bright green caterpillar. We hoped it might be a two-tailed pasha butterfly, despite lacking 'horns'; however, Everard sensibly sent a photo to Honeyguider leader Chris Gibson who advises that it was one of the green hairstreak species. There was a good range of fungi, some in roughly familiar forms, like Russulas and Amanitas, though pinning down IDs is another matter. Some butcher's broom had plump red berries. A bright yellow brimstone flew around and Barry had a brief view of a short-toed tree creeper that had just called.



Cork oak; *Viburnum tinus* berries.

We continued to the open mountain top of Monchique, a popular visitor spot with a mixture of grazed grassland, low scrub and rocky outcrops. We were immediately in luck with views of a Dartford warbler on some low sage-leaved cistus bushes. Tricia pointed out a large lizard on a rock: an immature ocellated lizard. Dozens of crag martins flew around the many masts up here. We had coffee, did some souvenir shopping then had our packed lunches while sitting on the low wall from where we'd seen the warbler and lizard.

We then took a gentle stroll around the mountain top. There seemed to be stonechats everywhere, plus meadow pipits, a black redstart and goldfinches. Then, on the tallest mast, a blue rock thrush landed on one of the large, metal satellite discs, and it stayed there long enough for all of us to see it through telescopes.

We left around 3pm and drove to our second hotel, Hotel Mira Sagres in Vila do Bispo, arriving at the same time as mothers and pre-school children who'd come for a swimming session. We had a quiet



couple of hours to unpack, chill or explore Vila do Bispo. Ann G and Tricia went out to see the International Space Station cross the sky. We met to take the very short walk to 'O Palheiro' fish restaurant, run by two Brazilian women, for our delicious evening meal.



Stonechat, Monchique (PB); red-veined darter, a distinctive individual, other late-season females were less easy to identify.

#### Thursday 16 November – Sagres

Our first stop, just a short drive away, was Cape St Vincent (Cabo de Sao Vicente). In the early morning it was breezy and colder than we'd experienced all week. There were gannets moving past the cape, stonechat, black redstart and many yellow-legged gulls, but we didn't linger.

We moved a short distance to look at a section of coastal habitat. An interesting shrub with white berries – edible, we learnt – was *Corema album*. There was large snapdragon in flower and large yellow restharrow. Much of our attention was on confiding and photogenic red-veined darters, including a male showing the red veins on its wings that give the species its name, and females with distinctive blue undersides to the eyes. We were to see hundreds more throughout the day, in increasing numbers as the day warmed. We'd already seen one pale phase booted eagle as we drove, and now there was another and a dark phase bird: visible migration in action.

Our main stop of the morning was another short distance away, with scattered pines and scrub. Here there were large numbers of *Crocus serotinus*, autumn crocus. Strangely there was a bird feeder on which some managed to see a Spanish sparrow and a female linnet. Nearby was a rise that acts as the main migration watchpoint. From here there were several more booted eagles, short-toed eagles, including two together, and two buzzards, the last perhaps residents. Looking in both directions we picked up flocks of choughs, the first very distant, the second much closer. We were not alone: a young Portuguese woman and an Englishman, Nigel, were also checking bird of prey migration. We learnt that there is a system in place to get wind turbines turned off if birds of prey are coming through and at risk of hitting the blades: this can be triggered by a single vulture on the move.

Most of the group went down to a pond by the bird feeder where entertainment was provided by frogs leaping out of the water trying – and often succeeding – to catch red-veined darters flying low above the water or dipping down to lay eggs. Domingos had gone down the slope in the opposite direction and had found a caterpillar of death's-head hawkmoth on one of the many apple-of-Sodom bushes. We all came to see it and photograph it. There were other moth caterpillars on sage-leaved cistus: southern lappet and green drab (see wildlife lists and photos). Late Kate found another death's-head hawkmoth caterpillar in a different colour variant – a bit like seeing both pale- and dark-phase booted eagles.

We ate our picnics by the minibuses, then went for coffee in Sagres. Here there were bird murals (see page 2), linked to past migration festival events run here by SPEA. Sagres was alive with red-veined darters.

Our afternoon walk was at Budens Marsh, a helpfully shady track overlooking a damp valley with a lot of reed. Ann G found a swallowtail caterpillar, a late instar that was so static that it may have been on the point of becoming a chrysalis. Domingos was swift to catch a small Iberian painted frog in some damp grass. There was an entertaining moment when it leapt from my bug box and Domingos caught it again in the bug box. There was no sign of the hoped-for black-winged kite, though almost as good was a hen harrier in a thermal with many crag martins, its white rump catching the light as it soared. We were a little

spread out as we returned on the same path, with the leading group enjoying a fine view of an osprey overhead, and those farther back appreciating the subtle, twisted shape of an autumn lady's tresses that had finished flowering and was turning to seed. This was the second orchid of the day not in flower: this morning, Domingos had shown us the leaves of two-leaved gennaria, tucked away under some scrub.



Caterpillars of death's-head hawkmoth in two forms: left as found by Domingos, right as found by Kate.

We finished the day in the field by trying, without success, to see an eagle owl on some cliffs, neither roosting nor emerging at dusk. There was a black redstart and a blue rock thrush on the cliff, and a lot of late evening movement of blackbirds. As it got darker a mole cricket churred, rather like a nightjar, and there was a nice moment when a man emerged from a car that had trundled down the track to see if we'd seen any lady's shoes, retrieving the colourful pair of flip-flops that had puzzled us, neatly paired upon the rough road.

We returned and had another tasty meal at O Palheiro restaurant, where I collected the holiday highlights noted below.

### Friday 17 November – home

We left promptly at 7:45, a departure time slightly too early for breakfast at the hotel, so they provided a packed meal for a quick bite or to eat along the way. The journey to Faro Airport went well and we dropped everyone outside the terminal, bidding fond farewells to Domingos. Pat went into Faro for an additional night before returning to Paris, Kate waited for her later flight to Cornwall and I returned the Europcar minibus before catching up with the rest of the group for a smooth flight back to Stansted.

### Holiday highlights

Barry	Mandrake, first record in that area; great bustard & Spanish imperial eagle.
Sally	See list in report's introduction!
Mick	Spanish imperial eagle and Caspian tern overhead.
Tricia	Purple swamp-hen; ocellated lizard, 'especially as I found it'.
Gill	Spanish imperial eagle, crested tit, autumn crocuses.
Sue	<i>Narcissus serotinus</i> ; Domingos's ability to find things under rocks; death's-head hawkmoth caterpillar; bullfinches.
Ann G	Invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians, including two-tailed pasha egg, swallowtail caterpillar; 'worm-lizard that bit me'.
Ann S	Azure-winged magpie, Spanish imperial eagle; chameleon.
Pat	Waxbill, Scolopendra; storks in the field; Spanish imperial eagle; mole cricket.
Kate	'Back to Honeyguiding'; Spanish imperial eagles; cornucopia of larvae; 'the greatest Iberian turnstone' [Domingos].
Everard	Spanish imperial eagles; bird ringing; black-necked grebes.
Peter	Worm-lizard; <i>Narcissus serotinus</i> .
Domingos	4 Spanish imperial eagles, 24 black-bellied sandgrouse; chameleon and stripeless tree frog; catching a frog in mid-air.
Chris	Chameleon; Iberian painted frog caught in mid-air by Domingos; Maria's worm-lizard.



## WILDLIFE LISTS

### BIRDS

Little grebe	Good numbers at Castro Marim & at Quinto do Lago.
Black-necked grebe	Up to 80, Castro Marim.
Great crested grebe	Six at Castro Marim.
Gannet	A steady trickle at sea at Cape St Vincent.
Cormorant	Lots of Castro Marim and at Quinto do Lago.
Cattle egret	A single bird at Salgados lagoon, then we drove past a flock.
Little egret	Seen on both coastal days, at Castro Marim & Quinto do Lago.
Great white egret	Single birds at Castro Marim.
Grey heron	Recorded on four days.
Glossy ibis	Three at Quinto do Lago.
White stork	25 in a thermal, Castro Marim, nesting colony on our way to Monchique.
Spoonbill	Peak counts were 19 at Castro Marim & good numbers at Quinto do Lago.
Greater flamingo	Large numbers at Castro Marim.
Shelduck	2 at Castro Marim.
Wigeon	Quinto do Lago.
Gadwall	Quinto do Lago.
Mallard	Recorded on the two wetland days in small numbers.
Pintail	Small group at Salgados Lagoons.
Shoveler	Big flock at Castro Marim, also at Salgados Lagoons and Quinto do Lago.
Teal	Small numbers both wetland days.
Pochard	Quinto do Lago.
Red kite	Castro Verde.
Griffon vulture	Castro Verde.
Black vulture	Castro Verde.
Osprey	2 at Castro Marim, singles at Quinto do Lago & Budens Marsh.
Buzzard	Recorded on four days.
Short-toed eagle	At least 3 at Cape St Vincent.
Marsh harrier	Record on three days, two at wetlands, also Castro Verde.
Hen harrier	Ringtail at Budens Marsh.
Booted eagle	At least 20 over Cape St Vincent.
Spanish imperial eagle	Four at Castro Verde.
Common kestrel	Recorded on 4 days.
Red-legged partridge	Two days, including at Castro Verde.
Moorhen	Quinto do Lago.
Purple swamp-hen	Four at Quinto do Lago.
Coot	Castro Marim and Quinto do Lago.
Little bustard	60 at Castro Verde.
Great bustard	16 + 14 + 2 at Castro Verde.



Great bustards (ED).

Oystercatcher	Quinto do Lago.
Black-winged stilt	Castro Marim & Salgados Lagoons.
Avocet	Castro Marim.
Stone-curlew	Single at Castro Marim.
Ringed plover	Castro Marim and Quinto do Lago.
Golden plover	A small group over Cape St Vincent.
Grey plover	Castro Marim & many at Quinto do Lago.
Lapwing	Salgados lagoon and small flocks at Castro Verde.
Turnstone	Castro Marim & Quinto do Lago
Sanderling	Salgados Lagoons
Little stint	One at Castro Marim.
Dunlin	Castro Marim and Quinto do Lago.

Snipe	Salgados Lagoons.
Black-tailed godwit	Castro Marim.
Whimbrel	Scattered over the mudflats at Quinto do Lago.
Redshank	Castro Marim and Quinto do Lago.
Spotted redshank	One at Castro Marim.
Greenshank	Castro Marim and Quinto do Lago.
Green sandpiper	Castro Marim, Castro Verde and Budens Marsh.
Common sandpiper	Castro Marim.
Mediterranean gull	Castro Marim.
Black-headed gull	Widespread & common at coastal sites.
Slender-billed gull	Three at Castro Marim.
Audouin's gull	A few at Castro Marim.
Yellow-legged gull	Widespread & common.
Lesser black-backed gull	Castro Marim.
Sandwich tern	One flying at Quinto do Lago.
Caspian tern	Seven at Castro Marim; also at Quinto do Lago.
Feral pigeon	Widespread & common.
Woodpigeon	An impressive flock at Castro Marim.
Collared dove	Widespread, seen at Alte Hotel.
Little owl	One heard one evening at Alte Hotel.
Tawny owl	Heard several nights by group members at Alte Hotel.
Kingfisher	Single at Benémola Spring, 2, Quinto do Lago, 2 by the dam in Castro Verde.
Hoopoe	1-2 recorded on three days.
Great spotted woodpecker	Rocha da Pena, cork oak/pine woodland below Monchique.
Calandra lark	Seen at Castro Verde.
Crested lark	Seen on three days.
Thekla lark	Common at Castro Verde & Sagres.
Skylark	Recorded at Castro Verde.
Crag martin	Five days, often in medium-sized groups e.g. at Monchique.
Barn swallow	One at Castro Marim.
Meadow pipit	Widespread & common.
White wagtail	Four days, c.10 at small lake at Castro Verde.
Wren	Heard or seen on three days.
Robin	Heard on five days.
Bluethroat	Two at Salgados Lagoon.
Black redstart	Seen on four days, including at Alte Hotel, Monchique and in Sagres area.
Stonechat	Widespread and reasonably common.
Whinchat	Single bird reported at Castro Verde.
Blue rock thrush	Monchique and eagle owl site.
Blackbird	Widespread and reasonably common.
Song thrush	Noted on four days in small numbers.
Cetti's warbler	Heard at Quinto do Lago.
Zitting cisticola (Fan-tailed warbler)	Castro Marim and Quinto do Lago / Salgados day.
Dartford warbler	One at Monchique.
Sardinian warbler	Widespread & common.
Blackcap	Seen or heard every day.
Chiffchaff	Widespread & common.
Blue tit	Recorded on three days.
Great tit	Recorded on two days.
Crested tit	Cork oak/pine woodland below Monchique.
Long-tailed tit	Cork oak/pine woodland below Monchique.
Nuthatch	Benémola Spring, cork oak/pine woodland below Monchique.
Short-toed treecreeper	Cork oak/pine woodland below Monchique.
Iberian grey shrike	2, Castro Marim.
Jay	Woodland below Monchique.
Magpie	Widespread and common.
Azure-winged magpie	Widespread and common, often small flocks in flight. Seen well at Quinto do Lago.
Carrion crow	Castro Verde.
Raven	Castro Verde and two other days.
Spotless starling	Widespread & common.
House sparrow	Widespread & common.
Spanish sparrow	Single bird on a feeder at Sagres area.
Common waxbill	5 at Castro Marim, several at Quinto do Lago.
Chaffinch	Recorded on four days.
Greenfinch	Recorded on two days, small numbers.
Goldfinch	Widespread & common.
Siskin	Recorded on three days e.g. heard overhead at Sagres.
Linnet	Recorded on two days; bird on a feeder at Sagres area.
Corn bunting	Two days, including Castro Verde, but not common.



Whimbrel, Quinto do Lago (PB).



**Mammal**

Brown rat

**Reptiles**

Spanish (stripe-necked) terrapin

Red-eared slider (escape)

Moorish gecko

Large psammodromus

Ocellated lizard

Iberian wall lizard

Maria's worm lizard

European chameleon

Horseshoe whip snake

**Amphibians**

Stripeless tree frog

Iberian painted frog

Iberian water frog

**Fish** Grey mullet

Mosquito fish sp



Iberian painted frog; Maria's worm lizard.

**Butterflies**

Swallowtail (and caterpillar)

Two-tailed pasha – egg

Small white

Clouded yellow

Cleopatra

Brimstone

Red admiral

Painted lady

Long-tailed blue

Small copper

Southern speckled wood

**Moths**

Pine processionary moth, caterpillars

Hummingbird hawk-moth

Death's-head hawkmoth, caterpillars

Silver-Y

Crimson speckled

Green drab *Ophiura tirhaca*  
caterpillarSouthern lappet *Psilogaster loti*  
caterpillar**Odonata**

Western willow spreadwing

Red-veined darter

**Other notable invertebrates**

Fiddler crab

Green crab

Louisiana crayfish

Yellow scorpion

Mediterranean banded centipede

*Scolopendra cingulata*

Praying mantis

Mole cricket

Blue-winged grasshopper

Violet carpenter bee

White-banded mining-bee

*Amegilla quadrifasciata*Paper wasp *Polistes* sp

Rosemary beetle

Oil beetle sp.

Dung beetle sp.

Fire bug

Ground bug *Spilostethus pandurus*

Cage web spider

Common yellow scorpion *Buthus occitanus*, (MG); mole cricket (AG),  
white-banded mining-bee *Amegilla quadrifasciata* on lantana (AG).Caterpillars: southern lappet moth *Psilogaster loti* and green drab *Ophiura tirhaca* (KD) on sage-leaved cistus;  
swallowtail on fennel.

## PLANTS

Numbers on the right refer to Blamey & Grey-Wilson, *Mediterranean Wild Flowers*. Nif – not in flower  
The other main reference is *Wild Flowers of the Algarve* – Thorogood & Hiscock. A few planted trees [P] are included when of special interest.

### SPERMATOPHYTA

#### Conifers

#### Araucariaceae

*Araucaria heterophylla*

Norfolk island pine

P

#### Pinaceae – Pine family

*Pinus pinea*

stone / umbrella pine

3

*Pinus pinaster*

maritime pine

5

#### Cupressaceae – Cypress family

*Juniperus phoenicea*

Phoenician juniper

17

### ANGIOSPERMS

#### Moraceae - Mulberry family

*Ficus carica*

fig

42

#### Fagaceae – Oaks

*Quercus coccifera*

holly / prickly / kermes oak

24

*Quercus rotundifolia*

Holm oak

26

*Quercus suber*

Cork oak

27

*Quercus faginea*

Portuguese oak

30

#### Aristolochiaceae – Birthwort family

*Aristolochia baetica*

58

*Aristolochia (paucinervis) longa*

62

#### Chenopodiaceae – Goosefoot family

*Arthrocnemum macrostachya*

a perennial glasswort

84

*Halimione vulgaris*

sea purslane

100

#### Aizoaceae – Aizoon family

*Carpobrotus edulis*

Hottentot fig

NiF

115

#### Caryophyllaceae – Pink family

*Corrigiola litoralis*

strapwort

*Paronychia capita*

paronychia

134

#### Brassicaceae (Cruciferae) – Cabbage family

*Sisymbrium altissimum*

tall rocket

*Matthiola incana*

hoary stock

327

*Lobularia maritima*

sweet Alison

336

#### Crassulaceae

*Umbilicus rupestris*

navelwort NiF

396

#### Rosaceae – Rose family

*Eriobotrya japonica*

Japanese loquat

P

429

#### Fabiaceae was Leguminosae – Pea family

*Ceratonia siliqua*

carob

431

*Ulex parviflorus*

small-flowered gorse

473

*Psoralea bituminosa*

pitch trefoil

NiF

508

*Ononis natrix*

large yellow restharrow

556

#### Oxalidaceae

*Oxalis pes-caprae*

Bermuda buttercup

735

#### Rutaceae – Rue family

*Ruta angustifolia*

narrow-leaved rue

828

#### Anacardiaceae – Pistacio family

*Pistacia terebinthus*

turpentine tree, terebinth

861

*Pistacia lentiscus*

mastic tree or lentisc

865

#### Thymelaeaceae – Daphne family

*Daphne gnidium*

daphne

936

#### Cistaceae – Rockrose family

*Cistus albidus*

grey-leaved cistus

NiF

961

*Cistus salviifolius*

sage-leaved cistus

NiF

965

*Cistus monspeliensis*

narrow-leaved cistus

NiF

966

*Cistus ladanifer*

gum cistus

971

*Cistus populifolius*

poplar-leaved cistus

NiF

973

#### Tamaricaceae - Tamarix

*Tamarix africana*

tamarix

1016

#### Cactaceae – Cactus family

*Opuntia maxima* (= *ficus-indica*)

prickly pear

1040

#### Myrtaceae – Myrtle family

*Myrtus communis*

common myrtle

1052

#### Punicaceae - Pomegranate family

*Punica granatum*

pomegranate

1064

#### Umbelliferae/ Apiaceae – Carrot family

*Foeniculum vulgare*

fennel

NiF

1108

*Daucus carota*

wild carrot

NiF

1168



<b>Ericaceae – Heath family</b>			
<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	strawberry tree		1176
<i>Erica arborea</i>	tree heather	NiF	1178
<i>Erica australis</i>	Spanish heath		1181
<i>Corema album</i>		fruit	
<b>Araliaceae – Ivy family</b>			
<i>Hedera helix</i>	ivy		
<b>Plumbaginaceae – Thrift family</b>			
<i>Limoniastrum monopetalum</i>	limoniastrum		1234
<b>Oleaceae</b>			
<i>Olea europaea</i>	olive		1248
<i>Olea europaea</i> spp <i>oleaster</i>	wild olive		1248a
<b>Gentianaceae – Gentian family</b>			
<i>Centaurium erythraea</i>	common centaury		1251
<b>Apocynaceae – Oleander family</b>			
<i>Nerium oleander</i>	oleander		1256
<b>Rubiaceae – bedstraw family</b>			
<i>Rubia perigrina</i>	wild madder		1305
<b>Convolvulaceae – bindweed family</b>			
<i>Ipomoea purpurea</i>	common morning glory		1319
<b>Boraginaceae – Borage family</b>			
<i>Echium plantagineum</i>	purple viper's bugloss		1383
<b>Lamiaceae (Labiatae) – Mint family</b>			
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	rosemary		1526
<i>Salvia verbenaca</i>	wild clary		1545
<i>Calamintha nepeta</i>	lesser calamint		1499
<b>Solanaceae – Potato family</b>			
<i>Solanum nigrum</i>	black nightshade		1563
<i>Solanum sodomium</i>	apple of Sodom		1565
<i>Mandragora autumnalis</i>	mandrake		1573
<b>Scrophulariaceae</b>			
<i>Verbascum sinuatum</i>			1601
<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>	snapdragon		1609
<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	foxglove	NiF	
<b>Plantaginaceae – Plantain family</b>			
<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	buck's-horn plantain		1696
<b>Caprifoliaceae / Dipsacaceae – Honeysuckle and teasel families</b>			
<i>Viburnum tinus</i>	Laurustinus		1711
<i>Lonicera implexa</i>	A honeysuckle		1713
<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	wild teasel	NiF	1732
<i>Scabiosa atropurpurea</i> ( <i>S. maritima</i> )	mournful widow		1749
<b>Asteraceae (was Compositae) – Daisy family</b>			
<i>Anthemis arvensis</i>	mayweed		
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	perennial daisy		1792
<i>Helichrysum stoechas</i>	curry plant	NiF	1824
<i>Dittrichia viscosa</i>	stink aster		1842
<i>Pallenis spinosa</i>	shiny golden-star		1847
<i>Calendula arvensis</i>	field marigold		1908
<i>Atractylis gummifera</i>	atractylis		1931
<i>Galaactites spinosa</i>	Mediterranean field thistle	NiF	1971
<b>MONOCOTYLEDONS</b>			
<b>Liliaceae</b>			
<i>Asphodelus aestivus</i>	common asphodel	NiF	2089
<i>Merendera filifolia</i>	merendera		2132
<i>Urginea maritima</i>	sea squill	NiF	2163
<i>Scilla autumnalis</i>	autumn squill		2189
<i>Asparagus albus</i>	asparagus	NiF	2214
<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i>	butcher's broom	fruit	2219
<i>Smilax aspera</i>	common smilax, sarsaparilla		2222
<i>Crocus serotinus</i>	autumn crocus		2325
<b>Agavaceae</b>			
<i>Agave americana</i>	agave, century plant		2253
<b>Amaryllidaceae</b>			
<i>Leucojum</i> (or <i>Acis</i> ) <i>autumnale</i>	autumn snowflake		2263
<i>Narcissus serotinus</i>	autumn daffodil		2272
<b>Palmae – Palm family</b>			
<i>Chamaerops humilis</i>	dwarf fan palm		2357
<b>Araceae – Arum family</b>			
<i>Arum italicum</i>	Italian arum	NiF	2361
<i>Arisarum</i> ( <i>vulgare</i> ) <i>simorhinum</i>	friar's cowl		2378

## Orchidaceae

*Spiranthes spiralis*

autumn lady's tresses

NiF

2389

*Gennaria diphylla*

two-leaved gennaria

NiF

2390

## Gramineae

*Typha angustifolia*

lesser reedmace

*Cynodon dactylon*

Bermuda grass

2481

*Arundo donax*

giant reed

2494

*Phragmites australis*

common reed

## FERNS (PTERIDOPHYTA)

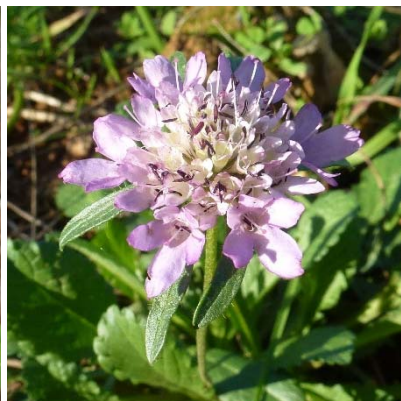
*Ceterach officinarum*

rustyback fern

2532

*Pteridium aquilinum*

bracken



*Atractylis gummifera*, usually dead seed heads, here also with a flower;  
strawberry tree fruits; mournful widow *Scabiosa atropurpurea*.

## Fungi (incomplete)

Shaggy inkcap *Coprinus comatus*

A parasol *Geastrum* sp

Spectacular rustgill *Gymnopilus junonius*

Russula sp perhaps *Russula aurea* gilded brittlegill

Split gill *Schizophyllum commune*

## Slime mould

Dog sick slime mould *Mucilago crustacea*



Two fungi in the cork oak woodland. Spectacular rustgill *Gymnopilus junonius* (collage); the stem ring is a feature in this wood-rotting species. Split gill *Schizophyllum commune*.