



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS 2013



Helping you enjoy wildlife



Helping to protect wildlife



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More information

In this brochure we can give only a flavour of the holidays on offer. You are welcome without commitment to have a pack of information about any holiday, including a previous holiday report and itinerary. Holiday reports are also on www.honeyguide.co.uk

Honeyguide conservation programme

£40 of the price of your Honeyguide holiday goes to a conservation body, often the bird protection society of the host country, towards its current conservation work. The societies and projects we support are described under each holiday.

HONEYGUIDE CHARITABLE TRUST

A donation to a local conservation project has been part of the holiday price since the start of Honeyguide in 1991. To date (August 2012), we have raised £80,839 for conservation projects, mostly in Europe.

The Honeyguide Wildlife Trust Limited was registered as a charity in June 2004, registered charity number 1104604. The object of the charity, in summary, is "To help conserve... the natural environment and wildlife".

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Holidays for the year 2013

Welcome to the 23rd season of Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays.

The bee-eaters on the brochure's front cover are from Spain, but could equally well be from two new destinations in this year's Honeyguide programme.

Languedoc is a new part of Mediterranean France for us. English birdwatcher and conservationist Derek Moore lives here for much of the year, and he is keen to share his local area with Honeyguiders.

The little-known Kinsunság National Park is in Hungary, south of Budapest, where in Gabor Orbán we have another knowledgeable local host. Paul Tout, with me on the recce visit, will co-lead, as well as closer to his home for our holiday in Istria, Croatia.

February is a new time for our Tarifa & Gibraltar holiday, having previously run during the September migration season. It's a chance to swap the English winter for some warmth in southern Spain and a mix of winter and early spring wildlife.

The Peloponnese peninsula in Greece is new to the brochure as all the places on our first holiday here in 2012 were spoken for at an early stage. It was a great success and we're pleased to offer it more widely.

Domingos Leitão has been highly praised as our guide and host in Portugal. He will lead an autumn group in 2013, in Portugal's Algarve and southern Alentejo regions. Our long-running Menorca holiday moves to October, with ever-popular leader Chris Gibson.

Extremadura is back to its more usual time in March, as is the French Pyrenees, in June. Crete remains in April and the Danube Delta in June. South Africa and Madeira are again in our autumn.

Two regular destinations 'missing' from this brochure, the Spanish Pyrenees in April and the Dordogne in May, are running with Honeyguiders who have made up their own group. There may be room for one or more others with these: please ask.

There are holiday reports, news, photographs and more on www.honeyguide.co.uk. Updates to the programme may have additional flights from airports near you – or we can discuss your ideas.

The Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust (see below) continues, with your help, to support conservation projects linked to each holiday.

I hope you can join us on a wildlife holiday in 2013.

Chris Durdin

Chris Durdin
August 2012

The purpose, quite simply, is to claim tax from HM Customs & Revenue against the contributions from Honeyguiders. This can raise an additional 25p in the pound, and we then make the usual donations with the holidays a bit bigger for LPO, SEO, HOS, SOR and so on. This raises more than an additional £1000 each year for conservation.

Trustees of the charitable trust are Helen Crowder, Malcolm Crowder (secretary) and Chris Durdin (chairman).

We would be very grateful if everyone booking a holiday who is a UK taxpayer could complete the simple gift aid declaration on the booking form.

We also welcome additional donations or legacies through the Honeyguide charity.

We are very grateful to the Wildlife Outreach Network in Essex, which has provided extra support for our projects for several years.

Your leadership team 2013

Chris Durdin, this year leading in **Tarifa, Extremadura, Crete, the Dordogne** (still running but not in the brochure) and the **French Pyrenees**, is the driving force behind Honeyguide, running holidays since 1991. For many years he combined this with his work for the RSPB in Eastern England, often the Society's spokesman, but has been concentrating on Honeyguide full-time since 2009, alongside writing a book about Norfolk's cranes. He's also a qualified soccer coach, for one son's under ten year group. As a naturalist, Chris is an all rounder.

Tarifa & Gibraltar

Frank (Francisco) Vargas is the RSPB's Farmland Bird Recovery Officer in Essex, but he comes from near the Strait of Gibraltar and his family's farm is there still. **Chris Durdin** – see above.

Extremadura

Martin Kelsey OBE is our regular leader in Extremadura where he lives with his family, close to Finca Santa Marta. His background in ecology includes a three-year study on marsh warblers. After three years in the Amazon rainforest with the British Ornithologists' Union, where he met his wife Claudia, he worked for BirdLife International, before joining Save the Children. **Chris Durdin** – see above.

The Peloponnese

Robin Hamilton has a wide knowledge of western and central Europe and its wildlife, especially birds. He worked for many years for English Nature. **Rachel Hamilton** spent her working life teaching natural history and conservation with the Field Studies Council and at Otley College in Suffolk. She is an enthusiastic all round naturalist, though her first interest is botany. Robin and Rachel, both of whom are experienced wildlife leaders and keen linguists, are regular leaders in Greece, and were with our first group here in 2012.

Languedoc

Derek Moore OBE was the director of wildlife trusts in Suffolk and Wales, leading many holidays during that time. Now retired, he lives for much of the year in southern France, and enjoys sharing his love of his new 'local patch'.

Istria (and Hungary)

Paul Tout lives on the Italy/Slovenia border. Originally from Hertfordshire, until recently he was a teacher and now manages a botanic garden. He's been a Honeyguide leader for many years in his local area and nearby Istria, and has a fund of knowledge about central-eastern Europe and its wildlife.

Hungary

Gábor Orban, with his partner Andrea, runs Ecotours, which specialises in wildlife groups in Eastern Europe and in Latin America, where they spend several months each year. But in

Kinkunság National Park we're on their home patch, not least as we stay in their accommodation at Kondor Lodge.

Paul Tout – see Istria.

Danube Delta

The team of local leaders from our friends at **Ibis** was undecided when going to print.

French Pyrenees

Ivan Nethercoat is training & interpretation manager in the RSPB's People Engagement department at Sandy. He is a regular and well-travelled Honeyguide leader, including holidays in the Balearics, Crete and French Pyrenees. His degree, many moons ago, was in photography, and he is very happy to help any photographers in the group. **Chris Durdin** – see above.

Menorca (and Spanish Pyrenees)

Chris Gibson is a conservation officer for Natural England based in north Essex, an author of several wildlife books and has led many holidays for Honeyguide. He is an outstanding all rounder, from birds through flowers to moths, recognised as a 'naturalist of distinction' by the British Naturalists' Association. He's also with a group (not in the brochure) in the Spanish Pyrenees this year.

Algarve & Alentejo

Domingos Leitão works for SPEA, the Portuguese BirdLife partner, and alongside this is a holiday leader in his home country.

South Africa

Geoff Crane is the man behind Crane's Cape Tours & Travel, both local leaders and ground agents for Honeyguide in South Africa. An experienced guide himself, he co-leads all Honeyguide's holidays in South Africa.

Madeira

Catarina Fagundes and Hugo Romano run Maderia Wind Birds, a small company specialising in observing the endemic and indigenous species of birds and plants on the island, and jointly lead all our groups on the island. The company embraces the principles of sustainable tourism, contributing to the conservation and interpretation of the natural heritage of Madeira's archipelago.



The air holidays shown are **ATOL Protected** by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is **ATOL 3253**. ATOL protection extends primarily to customers who book and pay in the United Kingdom.



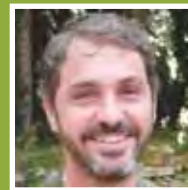
Our logo is a greater honeyguide (*Indicator indicator*), an African bird that guides people or honey badgers to bees' nests. Those guided and the bird then enjoy the honeycomb. Honeyguide wildlife holidays also have enthusiastic leaders to guide you to nature's best.



Chris Durdin



Martin Kelsey



Frank Vargas



Chris Gibson



Rachel Hamilton



Robin Hamilton



Paul Tout



Gábor Orban



Derek Moore



Ivan Nethercoat



Domingos Leitão



Geoff Crane



Catarina Fagundes



Hugo Romano

Our holidays have been designed with the general naturalist in mind. Beginners are especially welcome but all holidays offer much to the more experienced naturalist. Some holidays are loosely based on 'birdwatching without blinkers'; some are a mix of birds, flowers and other wildlife. Several holidays can be good for butterflies. Local history, culture and food play a part in every holiday.

The holidays lend themselves to anyone wishing to leave the organised programme to sketch, paint, write or just potter.

11 – 18 February 2013

Tarifa and Gibraltar

Winter warmth and wildlife in Andalusia



Price: £1,430 per person in twin room for a full week (Monday to Monday)

Single room supplement: £100

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights Gatwick to Gibraltar, or Monarch flights Manchester to Gibraltar

Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Frank Vargas and Chris Durdin



Griffon vulture



Barbary nut iris



Barbary macaque



Gibraltar

Within sight of the Strait of Gibraltar and north Africa, the winter in southern Spain is mild and signs of spring start early. A great variety and large numbers of wintering birds mingle with early migrants, and early flowers include regional specialities. Temperatures are typically around 20°C during the day, adding to the easy conditions for a relaxed, early season wildlife holiday.

Wetlands – especially La Janda – support large numbers of wintering birds. Among the waterbirds are herons, egrets, cranes, spoonbills and glossy ibises. Ducks can include the threatened white-headed duck, here in its core area in western Europe.

Another threatened bird, one of the rarest in the world, is the northern bald ibis, for many years reduced to one colony in Morocco and a few elusive birds in the Middle East. This area has a reintroduction programme that is going well, and this iconic species can be surprisingly easy to see.

Passerines also winter here in big numbers. Farmland supports big winter finch flocks, buntings and larks. Northern European robins, song thrushes and black redstarts overwinter here, along with a bluethroats and any number of blackcaps and chiffchaffs, plus firecrests and goldcrests.

Signs of spring will include the first swallows and martins. Birds of prey aren't here on the huge scale of the autumn migration, but there should be a steady trickle of griffon vultures along with short-toed eagles and lesser kestrels. White storks increasingly overwinter in the Iberian peninsula, but are also early migrants. Many hoopoes also stay year-round, and surprising wintering birds in this area are nightjars, albeit not easy to see.

We stay at Huerta Grande, situated inland from Tarifa, within the southern tip of the Natural Park of Los Alcornocales (the cork oak). Cork oak woodland is one of the key habitats of the area, and our base is in a narrow gorge or 'canuto', the year-round moisture conserving a sub-tropical habitat unique in Europe.

Gibraltar

We will also visit the British territory of Gibraltar. It's famous for its Barbary macaques, the last wild population in Europe. These are much easier to see than the often elusive Barbary partridge, here on the Rock along with blue rock thrush and peregrine. Wintering passerines can include alpine accentor.

The Strait of Gibraltar is a vital migration route for seabirds and cetaceans and, weather permitting, the holiday will include a boat trip into the Strait to look for these. Dolphins and long-finned pilot whales are likely and there's a chance of sperm whale.



Long-finned pilot whales

Flowers

Many flowers have adapted to take advantage of the mild winter, including alliums, asphodels, Barbary nut irises, giant and early *Ophrys* orchids, the strange-looking friar's cowl and Andalusian birthwort. There are daffodils to seek out, especially paperwhite and hoop petticoat narcissi. Local species include Andalusian rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum baeticum* and the sea-lavender *Limonium emarginatum*, in Europe found only in the Strait of Gibraltar. Annual flowers of bare or disturbed ground include scarlet pimpernel, field marigold and thorn-apple.

Other wildlife

It's quite a good time of year for amphibians, such as stripeless tree frogs and fire salamanders. Early butterflies could include large tortoiseshell, Cleopatra and the monarchs resident in the area, attracted by milkwort plants.

Conservation project

The Ornithological Group of Estrecho (GOES), formed in 1982, studies and protects wild birds and their habitats. It operates a ringing station and here and elsewhere more than 90,000 birds have been ringed since 1983, both resident



SUPPORTING species such as white storks and the many migrants that rely on this route to and from Africa. Other work includes publications and school visits.

19 – 27 March 2013

Extremadura

Wild central Spain

Extremadura is one of the few remaining truly wild areas of Spain and, indeed, Europe. The region is renowned for its amazing variety of birds of prey, especially in Monfragüe National Park, and special species such as the bustards and larks to be found on the rolling plains of the Spanish steppes.

The plains around Trujillo and Cáceres form part of the great Spanish steppes with their fascinating assemblage of birds. Here we will search for great bustards performing their incredible breeding display, if we are lucky, an astonishing ritual in which the male turns himself into the appearance of a huge white pom-pom of feathers. Other steppe birds in this area are little bustards, stone-curlews and both pin-tailed and black-bellied sandgrouse. Crested and calandra larks are also found in the plains. Another speciality is Spanish sparrow, a rather local bird in Spain despite its name.

We will explore Monfragüe National Park, some 25 miles north of Trujillo. This is one of the most outstanding areas for seeing birds of prey in a country which is itself probably the best for raptors in Europe. It has the core Spanish population of black vultures, which breed here along with griffon and Egyptian vultures.

Eagles are well represented here with Spanish imperial, golden, short-toed and booted. From the various viewpoints, which make fine vantage points for raptor-watching, other species that can be seen include black stork, chough and rock bunting.

The lower valleys approaching Monfragüe hold good stands of holm oak woodland, the 'dehesa' or wood pasture that is such a distinctive feature of Extremadura. The dehesa is famous for the wintering cranes, most of which leave in February, but here also are azure-winged magpies, that amazing, colourful bird of the east with an outpost in Spain. One theory was that they originated from birds escaped during trade with China in earlier times, but proof that it is a relict population has recently come to light with the discovery of sub-fossil bones.

We stay at the charming Finca Santa Marta, a granite-built olive oil mill converted into a country inn, situated in the countryside south of Trujillo.

Flowers

Patches of white Spanish broom and the pink *Silene colorata* bring colour to fields close to Trujillo. Miniature daffodils include delicate hoop petticoat and angel's tears narcissi. Early orchids, such as conical, champagne and naked man orchids, irises and lupins are flowering.



Birds

As well as those already mentioned, we should see a selection of the following: Montagu's harrier, red, black and black-shouldered kites, peregrine, raven, hoopoe, blue rock thrush, little owl, southern grey shrike, red-rumped swallow, woodlark, Sardinian warbler, cirl and corn buntings, spotless starling and great spotted cuckoo.

Other wildlife

Spain is western Europe's stronghold for wild mammals, including genet, mongoose and lynx, but these are mainly secretive or nocturnal. Stripe-necked terrapins and Iberian wall lizards are more obvious.

Itinerary

Excursions will include visits to the Monfragüe National Park, including places such as Peña Falcon and the Tiétar cliffs; the holm oak dehesa region; and exploration of the plains around Trujillo and Cáceres. We will also visit



the wonderful old town of Trujillo with its striking central square and white storks and lesser kestrels.

Conservation project

Traditional low intensity farming, especially non-irrigated arable farmland but also seasonal grazing, supports much of the special wildlife of Extremadura – and can never be protected just by nature reserves. The conservation of the Spanish steppes and 'dehesa' wood pasture is a great priority for the Sociedad Española de Ornitología (Spanish Ornithological Society / BirdLife Spain).

SUPPORTING



Price: £1,520 per person in twin room for nine days (Tuesday to Wednesday)

Single room supplement: £200

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights
Gatwick – Madrid

Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Martin Kelsey and Chris Durdin



Lesser kestrels

Belén Plain



Iberian fritillaries

More information visit
www.honeyguide.co.uk 5

16 – 23 April 2013

Crete

Island birds and flowers in the cradle of civilisation



Price: £1,350 per person in single or twin room, for a full week (Tuesday to Tuesday)

This includes taverna evening meals, with wine and coffee but excludes lunch, for which please allow £3-4 per day, or a little more for a taverna lunch.

En suite facilities

EasyJet flights, Gatwick to Heraklion

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 14, with two leaders

Main leader: Chris Durdin



Little bittern



Orchis boryi - Spili

Crete is a magical and mysterious island. Home of Europe's earliest civilisation, influenced by many nations, yet it retains its own identity and culture of which its people are justifiably proud.

The island's position in the Mediterranean has not only played a crucial role in its history but is an important migration route for birds on their way north in spring. Crete in April is free of crowds, the days can be warm and the hillsides are full of flowers.

This, the largest and most southerly of all the Greek islands, is dominated by a backbone of mountains through which cut many deep gorges. These are as spectacular as they are rich in wildlife, be it migrant birds, nesting vultures or endemic wild flowers.

Wildlife and history are difficult to separate on Crete, with many important archeological sites also rich in both plants and birds. We shall sample Minoan ruins at Phaestos and Ayia Triada and, perhaps, spend some time in the old Venetian port of Rethymnon.

We are based at the small and friendly Sophia Hotel in the small town of Plakias on the south coast. It is ideally placed for local walks and excursions and has an impressive backdrop of gorges and mountains.

Flowers

Crete's rich flora of 1600 native species includes 140 endemic to the island, such as Cretan cyclamen and Cretan ebony. In April many orchids are at their peak with Cretan bee, naked man, few-flowered, rainbow, four-spotted and bumblebee orchids among 20 or more species. Shrubs like Jerusalem sage and cistus contribute to colourful and aromatic hillsides.

Birds

The mountains and gorges of Crete are a stronghold for birds of prey, with the largest population of griffon vultures in Greece.

Lammergeier, Bonelli's and golden eagles and buzzard all breed, as do crag martin, blue rock thrush, chough and raven. The hillsides and scrub support both Sardinian and the much rarer Rüppell's warbler. At this time of year a whole range of birds passes through on migration, pausing especially at wetlands, however small; these might include red-footed falcon, alpine swift, bee-eater, squacco heron, little bittern and various waders and warblers.

Other wildlife

Even at this time of the year there are butterflies such as swallowtail, scarce swallowtail, Cleopatra and eastern festoon. We often see freshwater crabs; reptiles can include Balkan (stripe-necked) terrapin and Balkan green lizard.

Excursions

As well as local walks, our minibus trips this week include visits to Moni Préveli, Kourtaliótiko and Kotsiphos Gorges, Frangokastello, Spili, Ayia reservoir and, probably, the mountain plateau at Omalos.

Conservation project

The lammergeier conservation project is run by the Hellenic Ornithological Society, BirdLife Greece. In the Balkans it occurs only in Greece, with the bulk of the population on Crete. Alongside survey and monitoring, the long-term survival of Europe's rarest vulture is being tackled by site protection, food provision and the encouragement of traditional grazing systems.

SUPPORTING



Freshwater crab



Plakias Bay

18 – 25 April 2013

Peloponnese

Traditional, rural Greece

Three fingers of the Peloponnese, pointing south towards Crete, form the distinctive shape of Greece's southern tip. Already culturally and ecologically different from mainland Greece, this was reinforced when, in 1893, the Corinth Canal was cut through and the peninsula effectively became an island.

Bridges mean access is straightforward, but the separation is reflected in the wildlife community – such as Peloponnese cyclamen and two endemic lizards – and in everyday life. In today's increasingly urban Greece, here is an area where links to the land, small communities and a slow pace of life persist – Greece as it used to be. Donkeys used as working animals remain a common sight. The region has its own language, still spoken by older residents.

We're based in the Tyros-Livadi area on the coast of Arcadia, facing east into the Aegean Sea. Tyros is a small village with a long sea front and a fishing harbour. It is not on the main tourist trail; the majority of visitors are Greek. We stay in holiday apartments at nearby Livadi, a quiet coastal village with a friendly taverna for our evening meals.

With a coast running north-south, it's well placed for migrant birds. Some drop in to refuel on the brackish lake at Moustos and on the intertidal flats near Nafplio – the latter an unusual habitat in the scarcely tidal Mediterranean.

Breeding birds are a fairly typical southern European mix: short-toed eagle, woodchat shrike, Sardinian and subalpine warbler, for example. Rock nuthatches pop up in villages and historical sites, such as Mycenae.

Carob, citrus, fig and Judas trees emphasise the Mediterranean feel. Spring wild flowers are a rich, colourful mix including purple vipers bugloss, orchids and the local endemic Parnon alkanet.

Uncovering more about the Peloponnese is why we're here: Honeyguide is following a Honeyguider. Sue Davy moved here in 2006 and has a passion for the area's wildlife and way of life. She likes to share it with us – and glean information from the combined wildlife expertise of a Honeyguide group and leaders.

Trees and shrubs

In Greece, Syrian juniper is confined to this area. Other conifers are Aleppo and black pines and Grecian fir. Both species of strawberry trees occur, sometimes growing side by side. Kermes oak, lentisc, Jerusalem sage and various cistuses are common shrubs. Hillsides have evergreen maples and wild olives; we expect to find almond leaved-pear and Valonia oak. Around villages chaste tree is common, as is the pretty but invasive lantana.



Flowers

Spring flowers could include peacock and crown anemones, tulips *Tulipa orphanidea* and *Tulipa goulimy*, *Cyclamen peloponnesiacum*, widow iris, *Gagea graeca*, four-spotted and few-flowered orchids, *Fritillaria messanensis* and old friends like crown daisies and pitch trefoil.



Peloponnese cyclamen

Reptiles and mammals

The area boasts two endemic lizards. Greek rock lizards – distinctively unstriped – and chunky Peloponnese wall lizards are found nowhere else. That's if the books are right: we wonder as nature guides show no wild boar here, but in chestnut forest we have found clear evidence from rootings, backed up by locals' reports. Golden jackal occurs but is tricky to see: mammals more likely to be seen include stone marten and eastern hedgehog. Other reptiles include geckos, Balkan green lizard and marginated tortoise.

Birds

Those noted above plus little bittern, slender-billed gull, buzzard, black-winged stilt, rock partridge, red-rumped swallow, blue rock thrush, crested lark, sombre tit, firecrest and girl bunting.

Other wildlife

Spring butterflies include southern swallowtail, Cleopatra, southern festoon, southern comma and southern white admiral. The supporting cast includes Egyptian locust and violet carpenter bee.

Itinerary

Local walks and minibus trips, coastal and into the hills, all within the eastern part of the Peloponnese peninsula.

Conservation project

The Management Body of Mount Parnon & Moustos Wetland record and protects biodiversity in the protected area. For mammals such as jackals and otters this is a challenge as they avoid human contact, and Honeyguide has already helped by supplying infra-red cameras.

SUPPORTING



Price: £1,430 per person in twin room for a full week (Thursday to Thursday).

Single room supplement: £200

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights London Gatwick – Athens

Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 13

Leaders: Robin and Rachel Hamilton



Woodchat shrike



Greek rock lizard (L) and Peloponnese wall lizard (R)



Corinth canal; Aegean coast; spring flowers.

More information visit
www.honeyguide.co.uk 7

Price: £1,430 per person in twin room for a full week (Thursday to Thursday).

Single room supplement: £150

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights London Stansted or Liverpool to Carcassonne

Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Main leader: Derek Moore

25 April – 2 May 2013

Languedoc

Secret southern France

Impressive gorges, beautiful towns and villages, marshes and lagoons, vineyards, limestone scrub – just a taste of the variety in a little known corner of Mediterranean France.

The Languedoc region covers roughly half of France's Mediterranean coast. Our holiday area overlaps the departments of l'Aude and Hérault in

spotless starlings, more usually associated with nearby Spain.

The ancient Cathar village of Minerve is built into a junction of the gorges Brian and Cesse. Here blue rock thrushes nest alongside alpine swifts, red-rumped swallows, rock sparrows and crag martins. Eagle owls also frequent the area and golden eagles nest nearby. Short-toed eagles and Montagu's harriers also breed here.

The surrounding garrigue is a haven for warblers: subalpine, Sardinian, Orphean and melodious warblers are all widespread and nightingales sing. Some of the finest wines of the region are grown here and the vineyards produce birds such as ortolan bunting. Rollers, bee-eaters and woodchat shrikes add to the exotic nature of this place.

An invitation

After many years running wildlife trusts in the UK, Derek Moore lives for part of the year in this part of France, between Narbonne and Carcassonne – both centres of the French wine trade. He's passionate about the area and its wildlife and is keen to share his local knowledge, and to learn more from a Honeyguide group.

The area can be enjoyed at a very leisurely pace. The nature-rich sites are very accessible and the local people are friendly and tolerant. Ecotourism is in its infancy in this area and it is hoped that when the value of the local wildlife is appreciated then protecting it will become easier.

We are based at the hotel Château de Siran, a recently renovated 16th century country house built on a wall dating from the Middle Ages, set in vineyard country.

Other wildlife

The low scrub of the garrigue is punctuated by classic Mediterranean species such as asphodels, giant fennel and large Mediterranean spurge. After early blooming bearded irises, there are opportunities to find the Pyrenean snakeshead, wild tulips and orchids such as early spider, lady, yellow bee, military and loose-flowered.

Butterflies such as Cleopatra, scarce swallowtail, three clouded yellow species and many others can be found. Hummingbird hawkmoths are common and giant peacock moths start turning up at this time.

For those who love reptiles, the spectacular rat-sized ocellated lizard and the Montpellier snake are regularly seen.

Conservation project

La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (French Bird Protection League) is active locally with keen volunteers protecting scarce birds such as lesser grey shrike and Bonelli's eagle.



Minerve



Ocellated Lizard



Montagu's harrier

the region's southwest. Here visitors are starting to uncover how the area is steeped in history, from the days of the Romans in Narbonne, then the capitol of southern Gaul, to the more recent sufferings of the Cathars under Simon De Montfort and his crusaders.

Less known is that among this historic and beautiful landscape there is an exciting range of flora and fauna. For birdwatchers, nearly all the classic Mediterranean species can be found. These include flamingos, at the Étang de Pissevache, alongside Kentish plovers and passage waders and terns.

At the extensive freshwater reedbeds near Capestang, bitterns, purple herons and little egrets nest, and squacco herons are seen. Purple swamphens have colonised and this is the best site in the area for moustached warbler. Migrants here have included collared pratincole, whiskered and gull-billed terns and common crane. The area around Gruissan holds more wetlands including rice fields and wet grassland. White storks and occasionally black storks and glossy ibises put in an appearance. Black-winged stilts, avocets, marsh harriers and more herons also nest in this area. A little farther north there is a thriving colony of more than a hundred pairs of lesser kestrels and not far away the hub of a good population of little bustards. The latter area is also excellent for great spotted cuckoos and stone-curlews.

The cape of Leucate, to the south, is a limestone promontory which is excellent for watching the spring migration of birds. From late April onwards, this is the perfect place to watch honey buzzards moving north, together with bee-eaters, swifts and swallows. Spectacled warblers, Thekla Larks and black-eared wheatears also breed here in the small, scented garrigue fields on the headland round the lighthouse. Nearby Le Franqui is good for migrants and a regular place for slender-billed gulls. Port Leucate has a small population of

SUPPORTING



Istria

Nine days in peninsula Istria (Croatia)

At the crossroads of the Balkans, Central Europe and the Mediterranean, Istria has a fascinating history, geology, flora and fauna. In a relatively small area (about 4000 km²) one passes from a rocky coastline and a strip of Mediterranean scrub and woodland through areas of low-intensity agriculture rich in wild flowers and farmland birds.

Away from the coast, the land rises to 1000m or more above sea level with broad submontane grasslands, limestone gorges and splendid beechwoods. Beyond the Limski Kanal, a fjord-like inlet that separates northern and southern Istria, climatic conditions are similar to those found farther south in Greece and southern Italy.

The limestone mountains of the interior are still wild and sparsely populated by Albanian and Romanian communities brought in as colonists by the Austrians and Venetians during the Middle Ages, following depopulation caused by outbreaks of the plague. As elsewhere in the flower-rich Karst, limestone areas are peppered with remarkable dolinas (swallow-holes) where the roofs of caves have collapsed, leaving hollows with their own micro-climate with a curious mixture of alpine, western European, Balkan and Mediterranean flowers.

Birds

Mediterranean birds are well represented with subalpine and Sardinian warblers, bee-eaters, hoopoes and alpine swifts. Scops owls are abundant. Black-headed bunting is near the north-western edge of its distribution, and fieldfare at its southern limit. Limestone cliffs and gorges are breeding grounds for blue rock thrush, eagle owl and several pairs of golden eagles. The forests have honey buzzards and goshawks and interesting woodpeckers: black, lesser spotted and grey-headed are at our base. Griffon vultures from nearby colonies on the island of Cres often put in an appearance. Wetlands are rather scarce and isolated, but there are a few such as Il Palù south of Rovigno, along the river Mirna close to the hotel and the large salinas at Sečovlje on the border between Slovenia and Croatia.

Flowers

Istria's flora is a fascinating mix of Mediterranean, Balkan, subalpine and northern communities. Mediterranean maquis dominates the coast including myrtle, various species of cistus, wild sage, evergreen oak and tree heath along with terebinth and mastic trees, though the composition of the community varies greatly with geology.

Moving away from the coast, and up in terms of altitude, average annual temperatures drop rapidly, allowing the appearance of northern, subalpine and even a few true alpine species. The grasslands of upper Istria are notable for their floral displays in April and May. Fields and verges are awash with orchids, especially green-winged

in purple swathes set among cow-wheat, rattle and occasional round-headed orchids.

Other wildlife

Butterflies abound throughout Istria. In May, large tortoiseshell, black-veined white and swallowtails are present, along with a range of blues and fritillaries. Mediterranean Istria has a wide range of other wildlife including Hermann's tortoise and the ophisaurus, Europe's largest lizard, not unlike a giant slow-worm. Inland, the cooler and heavily forested Upper Istria has few human inhabitants and is home to wolves, lynx and brown bear.

Istarska Toplice

All of this is less than ninety minutes from, for Honeyguide, our rather untypical base at the modern Hotel Mirna at the spa of Istarska Toplice. Perfectly located in central-northern Istria, in Croatia, it is close to the Slovenian border and about 40 minutes from Italy. Its extensive grounds are alongside the river Mirna oakwoods, fought over by the Venetians and Austrians for their timber and notable for their white truffle production. They are also rich in bird life and perfect for early morning walks. The large hotel pool, fitness room, sauna and massage facilities will be available to participants who fancy a swim before dinner or a day spent in the hotel just enjoying the facilities.



Ascalaphus macaronicus

Itinerary

Two or three days will be spent on local walks in the varied landscape around the hotel, mixed with a visit to the nearby coastal salinas at Sečovlje. We will also visit the extreme southern tip of Istria, Punta Prematura and Kamenjak, with its magnificent Mediterranean flora and fauna, the seas around which support the Adriatic's only known (and tiny) colony of the critically-endangered monk seal. Trips will include visits to Mt Taiano and Mt Učka for alpine flowers and birds including rock partridge and ortolan bunting.

Conservation project

BirdLife Slovenia (DOPPS) – the northern part of Istria is in Slovenia – is working hard to protect natural areas, especially wetlands. It also runs projects for endangered species, in particular roller and the globally threatened corncrake and lesser kestrel.

SUPPORTING



Price: £1,520 per person in twin room for nine days (Wednesday to Thursday)

Single room supplement: £120

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights Stansted to Trieste

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 14

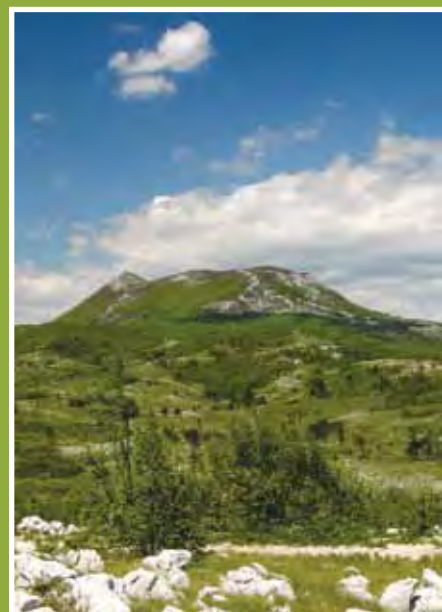
Main leader: Paul Tout



Blue rock thrush



Green-winged orchids



Mt Učka

Price: £1,480 per person in twin cabin for full week (Saturday to Saturday)

Single cabin supplement: £150

En suite facilities

Scheduled Wizz Air flights, London Luton to Bucharest.

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 14

Optional three-day extension to the Carpathian Mountains, 8 – 12 June, including brown bear watching: £500 per person, single supplement £60.

Leaders: Ibis team, with a local guide from Ibis in the Carpathians

1 – 8 June 2013

Danube Delta

A week in Europe's largest wetland

There is nowhere in Europe quite like the Danube Delta. Covering 2,200 square miles, the lion's share in Romania, the rest in the Ukraine, no naturalist's lifetime should be without the experience of visiting the delta.

Immense, important, breathtaking, threatened, beautiful; almost any superlative seems to fit some aspect of the Danube Delta.

For wetland birds, it is birdwatching made easy. Most famous are the pelicans, white and the

combined with a hotel in Tulcea. The food is very good. From Tulcea, the pontoon is towed into the delta's core.

Some of the best areas for birds are in Dobrogea – the area round the edge of the delta. Lagoons with wildfowl and migrant waders and are best visited from here. Dry country birds include calandra and short-toed larks; raptors include long-legged buzzard. Scrub areas hold barred warbler and ortolan bunting; the villages have white storks and Syrian woodpeckers.

Our local guides know the area and its wildlife well. But equally important is their hospitality. As the Romanian Ministry of Tourism brochure rightly says, 'Come as a tourist, leave as a friend'.



White pelicans



Brown bear, a highlight of the Carpathians



Spoonbills

globally threatened Dalmatian. Enjoy them as your boat drifts close to a flock on a lake; another day a flight of them catches you by surprise as they glide easily overhead.

The delta is as varied as it is spectacular. One hour you may be along riverine forest, with glossy ibises, egrets and sparkling blue kingfishers either side of you. Moving into an open area there may be lily-nesting whiskered terns alongside family parties of ferruginous ducks and red-necked grebes with youngsters clambering onto their backs. Then there are little bitterns disappearing into high reeds to the deep-throated sounds of great reed warblers or the distant buzz of a Savi's warbler.

The visit is timed for a combination of good weather and wetland birds at their most abundant and obvious. As well as true wetland birds, the land and wooded areas within the wetlands are rich with rollers, bee-eaters, golden orioles and woodpeckers, the last including black and grey-headed. Dragonflies bring hobbies and red-footed falcons in pursuit, and occasionally the vast form of a white-tailed eagle drifts through.

Much of this needs to be done by boat, or rather boats. This holiday is run in collaboration with Ibis Tours who are based in Tulcea, gateway to the delta. A delightful 'pontoon' – floating hotel – is our holiday base, usually



Whiskered tern

Birds

Those above plus purple, squacco and night herons, great white and little egrets, spoonbill, pygmy cormorant, Syrian woodpecker, red-crested pochard, red-backed and lesser grey shrikes, penduline and sombre tits, icterine warbler and, with luck and perseverance, paddyfield warbler.

Other wildlife

This is, primarily, a birdwatching holiday, but the flowers in Dobrogea are a fascinating mix of eastern and northern European and Mediterranean species. Trees include Caucasian and manna ashes, Cornelian cherry, oriental hornbeam and silver lime. Terrapins, frogs and butterflies add interest, and muskrat is a possibility in the delta.

Itinerary

We'll spend three days in Dobrogea exploring a mix of wet and dry land. The other three days will be in the heart of the delta, much of it by boat but with walks onto dry land.

Conservation project

The Romanian Ornithological Society is a small but active bird conservation society. Our contribution goes towards a group of young naturalists called Falco cherrug (the saker), which is run by Eugen Petrescu, who is both one of the Ibis team – quite often a leader for Honeyguide groups – and the SOR representative in the delta.

SUPPORTING



Hungary

Kinkunság National Park

Imagine a day with rollers, bee-eaters and golden orioles where you're staying, then a wetland with pygmy cormorants and whiskered terns within easy striking distance. Not far away are great bustards on extensive open plains.

All this is in the little-known Kinkunság National Park, south of Budapest. The National Park is in several parts, covering some 570 km² of the Great Hungarian Plain between the River Danube to the west and the River Tisza to the east. The mix of wetlands, plains and open farmland in a fairly compact area makes it ideal for a varied but relaxed wildlife holiday in the Honeyguide style.

Kondor Lodge is in a shady spot, ideally located in the middle of this area. Around the garden there are redstarts, scops owl, red squirrel and green lizard – plus those calling golden orioles.

Two minutes' walk way and you can be overlooking the reedbeds of Kondor Lake, which has easy walks on either side. There are wetland birds, like great white egrets, but more striking, perhaps, are rollers – the local population boosted by many nestboxes – bee-eaters, red-backed and lesser grey shrikes.

There are points in the wide, open steppes – the flat puszta – where everything in sight is natural. Great bustards can be seen here, but also sometimes in fields of lucerne. Clumps of trees hold small colonies of red-footed falcons. Viewing platforms give shade, shelter and useful height to overlook plains and wetlands.

The abandoned meanders of the winding River Tisza form a series of sometimes large oxbow lakes. Some are packed with birds, including those pygmy cormorants, plus marsh terns, ferruginous ducks and purple, squacco and night herons. Once you are tuned in, you can hear the songs or calls of river, Savi's and great reed warblers and penduline tits.

Other wetlands in the National Park can have a more coastal feel, with avocets, stilts and shelducks, hinting at the once extensive inland Pannonian Sea. The slight saltiness in low-lying areas can make for naturally species-poor grassland, and accounts for the unusual sea lavender *Limonium gmelinii*.

Elsewhere, there is plenty of colour, especially from meadows of yellow rattle, patches of blue larkspur and the deep purple wild sage *Salvia nemorosa* on road sides.

Birds

Those noted above plus white and black storks, spoonbill, glossy ibis, black-necked grebe, Mediterranean gull, collared pratincole, stone-curlew, tawny pipit and Montagu's harrier. Saker falcons use nestboxes on pylons; cuckoos, turtle doves and tree sparrows are impressively common countryside birds.



Other wildlife

There are sousliks (ground squirrels) in grassland, and hares. The Danubian meadow viper *Vipera ursinii rakosiensis* – considered by some a local subspecies – is unlikely to be encountered in the wild. Sand lizards on mobile dunes and yellow-



bellied toads in ponds are more likely. The National Park also encourages rare breeds of traditional domestic stock, notably the impressively horned Hungarian grey cattle.

Invertebrates

Butterflies: close to the River Danube there is a chance of both Freyer's and lesser purple emperor, plus glider. Silver-washed fritillary, short-tailed and silver-studded blue, large tortoiseshell and abundant marbled whites are among others. White-legged damselflies and various dragonflies are likely.

Flowers

Eastern larkspur, *Veronica longifolia*, dark red helleborine and large blue alkanet are some of the showier species. Subtler specialities in June, many with an eastern bias to their distribution, include *Gypsophila paniculata*, Breckland catchfly, downy woundwort and 'wolf's blood' *Euphorbia seguieriana*.

Itinerary

There will be local walks around Kondor Lodge and bus trips to various parts of the National Park and river valleys of the Danube and Tisza.

Conservation project

The Kiskunság Bird Protection Association runs a ringing station – with the longest net system in Europe – monitoring moustached warbler, nightjar and many other species. The Association is rehabilitating Lake Kolon in the National Park, maintaining water levels suitable for birds and creating nature trails, lookout towers and hides.

Price: £1,430 per person in twin room for a full week (Monday to Monday)

Single room supplement (four): £120

En suite facilities

Scheduled Wizz Air flights, London Luton to Budapest

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 14

Leaders: Gábor Orban and Paul Tout

Oxbow lake



Roller



Silver washed fritillary; white-legged damselfly.

Price: £1,430 per person in twin room for a full week (Tuesday to Tuesday)

Single room supplement: £150

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights, London Stansted to Lourdes

Deposit: £200

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Chris Durdin and Ivan Nethercoat

4 – 11 June 2013

French Pyrenees

Stunning scenery and mountain wildlife



For a combination of mountain views, flowers, butterflies and birds, the Pyrenees takes some beating. Spectacular cirques, flower-filled meadows and soaring vultures; it lends itself to our mixed natural history style.

Many Honeyguiders know the Spanish Pyrenees: the French side is lush, greener and the emphasis of this holiday much more on the high Pyrenees. Access is easy to gentle walks or pottering in mountain pastures, up there with the isard – Pyrenean chamois – and marmots.

The short turf of mountain pastures has alpine plants including snowbells, trumpet and spring gentians, garland flower and birdseye primrose. In meadows, columbines, globe flowers and St Bernard's lily delight the eye. On walls, the delicate pink of fairy foxgloves is everywhere. Fragrant and elder-flowered orchids and narrow-leaved helleborine are likely, and there's a chance of black vanilla orchid. Familiar flowers in unfamiliar forms include a red kidney vetch and sheets of broad-leaved marsh orchid *Orchis majalis* subsp. *alpestris*.

Snowfinch, both red-billed and alpine choughs, rock bunting and rock thrush are highly likely. That most thrilling of birds, the lammergeier, is as easy to see here as anywhere; other birds of prey include griffon and Egyptian vultures, golden eagles and red kites.



Apollo butterfly



Lammergeier



Cirque de Gavarnie



Moulting marmot

There are wallcreepers, though typically they are elusive. Butterflies include clouded apollo, Camberwell beauty and swallowtail, plus a wide selection of blues, fritillaries and others.

Watercourses can hold Pyrenean brook newts and Pyrenean rock lizards scuttle around on rocks in the higher pastures.

Our base is the Hotel La Brèche de Roland, of Gèdre, just north of Gavarnie. It's an attractive former 17th century family house in the village, looking out onto Brèche de Roland. The 'brèche' or breach is like a bite out of the top of the cirque, measuring 100m by 60m. Roland, nephew of Charlemagne, carved it, according to 11th century legend. He was leading the fight against the Moors and was trying to smash his magical sword Durandel to save it from enemy hands.

Birds

Highlights, in addition to those mentioned above, could include short-toed eagle, peregrine, alpine swift, black woodpecker, woodlark, crag martin, water pipit, black-bellied dipper, crested tit, red-backed shrike and citril finch.

Butterflies

Some of the more than 50 species seen in the area: apollo, black-veined white, Moroccan orange-tip, Cleopatra, clouded & mountain clouded yellows, green hairstreak, Adonis & Escher's blues, Queen-of-Spain and pearl-bordered fritillaries, large wall brown, Piedmont ringlet, pearly heath and red-underwing skipper.

Flowers

These are some of the most typical or striking of a long list: livelong saxifrage, mountain avens, entire-leaved primrose, rock-jasmine, ramonda, mountain thrift, large-flowered butterwort, Pyrenean rampion, spreading bellflower, alpine aster, Pyrenean snakeshead, Tofield's asphodel, St Bernard's lily, Pyrenean hyacinth and butterfly orchids.

Itinerary

The cirque of Gavarnie is rightly famous; it can be busy but that takes little away from its magnificence and wildlife interest. Other sites to be visited include the Barrage des Gloriettes, Saugué valley, Ossoue valley, Col de Tentes, Col du Tourmalet and Cirque de Troumouse.

Conservation project

The lammergeier, or bearded vulture, is Europe's scarcest bird of prey. Though never common, their decline prompted a partnership to tackle their protection and, as a result, numbers are now on the up. La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, the French Bird Protection League) is active here, with careful monitoring of local population of the *casseur d'os* (bonebreaker), including tracking birds with radio transmitters; site protection in collaboration with other mountain users, such as climbers; and food provision in the breeding season.

SUPPORTING



2 – 9 October 2013

Menorca

A relaxed autumn holiday on this quiet Mediterranean island



Menorca provides the perfect setting to see birds and flowers typical of the Mediterranean. A small island, a little over 30 miles long and 13 miles wide, its quiet, unhurried atmosphere complements a relaxing wildlife holiday. All parts of the island can be reached easily and quickly so most of the holiday can be spent in the field enjoying an array of wildlife, set within a landscape rich in archaeological sites, with excellent access to the whole of its diverse coastline along the newly established coastal path. It all has a charm rarely equalled elsewhere in Europe today.

While small, the island holds a great variety of habitats. The rugged coasts are spectacular and off-islands provide nest sites for the scarce Audouin's gull. Views of the surrounding sea may reveal Cory's or Mediterranean shearwaters. Lagoons and fresh water lakes hold a variety of waders including black-winged stilts, plus egrets, herons and even the occasional flamingo.

Sardinian warblers skulk in bushes; Thekla and short-toed larks show themselves from dry stone walls; stone-curlews stalk around rocky fields; woodchat shrikes, ravens and tawny pipits are often seen.

There are often birds of prey overhead. Menorca holds concentrations of booted eagles, Egyptian vultures and red kites, the kites happily increasing after a period of decline.

The island provides a stepping stone for birds migrating across the Mediterranean – so anything can turn up. In autumn, depending on the weather, this could include thrushes, chats, flycatchers and finches. The last few bee-eaters may still be around, and hoopoes are semi-resident.

Pastures, coastal rocks and sand dunes are home to a range of wild flowers, including several which are unique to the Balearics. Most are spring-flowering but, depending on when the autumn rains fall, we should see some marvellous displays of autumn bulbs, including merendera, autumn squill, sea squill and the tiny daffodil *Narcissus serotinus*. October is the peak time for blooming of the tree heath *Erica multiflora*.

Other wildlife includes huge Egyptian grasshoppers and, in wetter areas, stripeless tree frogs and terrapins.

As with any autumn holiday to the Mediterranean, some things are not guaranteed: bird migration is dependent upon the weather at the time, and the quality of the 'second spring' of autumn flowering depends upon the rainfall over the previous weeks.

But some things are guaranteed: a leisurely holiday in wonderful surroundings and a good chance of warm sunshine to round off your summer!

Matchani Gran, our holiday base, is a Menorcan farmhouse near Mahón delightfully converted for private guests or small groups. It has a swimming pool and terrace, all set in 10 acres of countryside complete with hoopoes, Thekla larks and Hermann's tortoises.

History

The island's varied history shows well in architecture and archaeology. Strange stone monoliths, known locally as Torres, date from around 1000 BC. Of later origin are traditional stone huts called Talaiots. Access to these monuments is easy and they are often good places to see wildlife.

The small cities of Ciutadella and Mahón are both fascinating. A mix of architectural design reflects the result of dominance by Romans, Moslems and British.

Itinerary

We will often be walking on the Cami de Cavalls, which winds its way round Menorca's coast. Excursions could include Fornells harbour and the cape and lighthouse at Cavallaria; the hill of Monte Toro; Punta Prima; the old capital of Ciutadella; Algendar gorge; Mahón harbour; Son Bou reedbed and dunes; the salt pans at Mongofre Nou and the seasonal wetland at Tirant.

Conservation project

The Grup Balear d'Ornitologia i Defensa de la Naturalesa (GOB – the Balearic Ornithological Group) is an active local organisation working to protect the Balearic Islands from overdevelopment. Red kites were declining on Menorca, due to accidental poisoning and deaths on electricity pylons, and GOB has successfully campaigned to reverse this.



Merendera filifolia



Price: £1,430 per person in twin room for a full week (Wednesday to Wednesday)

Single room supplement (four): £200

En suite facilities

Scheduled Monarch flights, Birmingham, Luton or Manchester to Mahón

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 14, with two leaders

Main leader: Chris Gibson



Hermann's tortoise



Audouin's gulls



Narcissus serotinus; Menorcan olive wood gates

More information visit
www.honeyguide.co.uk 13

Price: £1,290 per person in twin room for a full week (Friday to Friday)

Single room supplement: £180

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights, London Gatwick or Liverpool to Faro (based on 2012 schedules)

Deposit: £200

Maximum numbers (two leaders): 14

Main leader: Domingos Leitão

8 – 15 November 2013

Algarve & Alentejo

Autumn birds in south Portugal

Superb coastal wetlands, craggy cliffs and extensive plains: the south of Portugal offers first-class birdwatching in a comfortable climate.

Autumn sees an appealing mix of residents, winter visitors and migrant birds, some moving along the coast or towards their winter quarters in Africa.

This holiday, in Algarve and Alentejo, incorporates a mixture of wetlands, coastal cliffs, oak forest, dry grassland and hilly areas. Highlights could include Iberian specialities, like black-shouldered kite, great and little bustards, black-bellied sandgrouse and azure-winged magpie, plus plenty of other wildlife and beautiful landscapes.

By staying inland and on the protected west coast, we can enjoy the undeveloped Algarve, moving past the better known beaches and golf courses, and head into the extensive grasslands of the remote Alentejo.

Barrocal, coast and Alentejo

At Alte, birdwatching in the traditional farmland areas of the limestone Barrocal may yield short-toed and Bonelli's eagle, little owl, hoopoe and woodlark. The classified site of Rocha da Pena is a magnificent natural monument of great beauty. Scrub here may hold southern European birds such as southern grey shrikes, Dartford and Sardinian warblers, cirl and rock buntings, and blue rock thrush on the cliffs.

Migratory or late summer butterflies, like small copper, long-tailed and Lang's short-tailed blues and painted lady could still be on the wing. At nearby Benémola spring, one of the few permanent streams in the Algarve, we can look for seasonal dragonflies, like western willow spreadwing, epaulet skimmer and red-veined darter.



Castro Marim Nature Reserve, in the Guadiana estuary near the border with Spain, has extensive marshes and salinas. Waders should include black-winged stilt, avocet and Kentish plovers, plus many migrants from the Arctic. Other waterbirds likely are good numbers of greater flamingos, spoonbill and egrets, and late terns could include Caspian.

At Ria Formosa Nature Park, at Quinta do Lago, the mudflats and lagoons of the area have a variety of waterbirds including specialities like purple gallinule, little bittern and red-crested pochard. Other unusual wildlife, like fiddler crabs and European chameleon, can be seen.

Castro Verde Special Protection Area, in Alentejo, is the most important dry-grassland area in Portugal. During the day we explore the dry grasslands, which supports more than 1,000 great bustards. Birds of prey can be outstanding here, including griffon and black vultures, golden and Spanish imperial eagles. Other grassland birds include little bustard, black-bellied sandgrouse and stone-curlew. Larks include calandra and Thekla, and Spanish sparrows occur in flocks.

Atlantic Algarve

The second part of this holiday is based at Sagres in the far west of Algarve. Our route takes us via Salgados lagoon near Pêra. This small coastal lagoon can be crowded with migratory waterbirds. Moving west, Monchique is the highest mountain in Algarve, and the greener landscape will attract passerines, butterflies and dragonflies.

The peninsula of Sagres includes Cape São Vicente, the extreme south-western point of continental Europe, from which seabird passage could include shearwaters, gannets, skuas and terns. The scrub and grassland above the impressive sea cliffs hold passerines and counts show a concentration of migrant raptors, though you have to be lucky, in the right place at the right time, to see them.

A pelagic trip gives the chance for seabirds and dolphins. Autumn flowers can include Portuguese autumn crocus, autumn and sea squills and autumn snowflake. Our leader, Domingos, is especially good at finding reptiles and amphibians.

Our bases are the three-star Alte Hotel, located outside the village of Alte, surrounded by small fields and Mediterranean scrub, and Hotel Mira Sagres in the village of Vila do Bispo.

Conservation project

Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA, BirdLife in Portugal) has a network of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) with local volunteers monitoring these and acting as 'caretakers'. In particular, with our help, SPEA is improving the annual bird monitoring on the protected west coast IBA.



Purple gallinule



Large psammodromus



Cape St Vincent

13 – 20 November 2013

Madeira

Pearl of the Atlantic

Madeira's scenic contrast between sea and mountains, tropical gardens and equable year-round temperatures – around 17°C in winter – make it a tempting holiday destination, especially in the British winter. For naturalists, the isolation of this Portuguese archipelago, some 500 kilometres west of the African coast, brings special wildlife including many species found only here.

The scenery is striking, with cliffs and mountains rising to more than 1800 metres squeezed into an island of only 741 km². Old irrigation channels, known as levadas, with their side paths are excellent – and fairly flat – ways to get to know Madeira and its cultural and natural heritage, like the laurel forest. The green forest contrasts with the blue ocean – where there is a chance to observe some cetaceans.

The rural hotel where we stay, Quinta do Furão, is in Santana in the north of the island, a peaceful and traditional setting away from the main tourist areas around Funchal. From here one can admire the rocky cliffs rising from the sea and the mountains touching the clouds.

Flora

The main focus of this trip for flora will be the laurel forest, a UNESCO World Heritage site, with its endemic trees, shrubs, ferns, mosses and lichens. This forest is so named due to the dominance of trees from the laurel family, such as bay laurel, fetid laurel, Madeira mahogany and the Canary laurel. A few native flowers should be flowering in November, including Madeira marigold, though the majority will just be in leaf. Away from the laurel forest, the range of flowers from around the world is interesting, such as bird-of-paradise, agapanthus and king protea – these all from South Africa – among many exotic trees and shrubs.

Birds

Two birds occur only on Madeira, trocáz pigeon and Madeira firecrest, and we aim to find these. Local subspecies around at the time we are in Madeira include Berthelot's pipit *Anthus bertelotti madeirensis*, Madeira chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs madeirensis*, grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea schmitzi* and rock sparrow *Petronia petronia madeirensis*. Other birds include plain swift, canary, spectacled warbler, waxbills and migrants such as waders. Bird density is low in Madeira and local knowledge to find these specialities is essential.

Other wildlife

A sea trip offers the chance to see Cory's shearwaters close to Madeira Wind Birds' boat. There is also a chance of cetaceans, for which short-finned pilot whales are the most likely. The endemic Madeira wall lizard is abundant.



Butterflies are also interesting and easy to see with endemic species Madeira grayling *Hipparchia madeirensis* and Madeiran speckled wood *Pararge xiphia*, plus sub-species like Madeira small copper *Lycaena phlaeas phlaeoides*. Indian red admiral, long-tailed blue and the beautiful monarch butterfly also breed on the island.

Itinerary

Our days out, all starting on the north coast of the island, visit a range of landscapes and protected areas throughout Madeira. Some days combine gentle walking with bird and flora watching; others will be mainly by minibus stopping at hot spots. A sea trip on the eastern side of the island shows us Madeira from the sea and its maritime species. There will also be a free day with an opportunity to visit the celebrated tropical gardens in Funchal.

Conservation Project

Europe's rarest breeding seabird and once thought to be extinct, the Zino's Petrel or freira is endemic to Madeira. The Freira Conservation Project (FCP), founded in 1986, is a group of people and institutions working on the conservation of Zino's petrels, especially by controlling its main predator, the rat. The FCP has overseen a steady increase in numbers nesting in the central massif of Madeira. We will not see them as they can only be seen between April and August.

Frank Zino, the son of Alec Zino who rediscovered the bird and named it as a separate species, is the FCP's president and will meet us for a brief talk about Zino's petrels.

SUPPORTING



Madeira firecrest



Monarch on pride-of-Madeira



Madeira chaffinch

Laurel forest

Price: £1,470 per person in twin room for a full week (Wednesday to Wednesday)

Single room supplement: £160

En suite facilities.

Scheduled easyJet flights, Gatwick to Funchal

Deposit: £200

Maximum number: 7, minimum 4

Leaders: Catarina Fagundes and Hugo Romano

14 – 29 November 2013

South Africa's Garden Route

Plus big game in the Addo Elephant National Park

Price: £3,950 per person in twin room for 14 nights plus two travelling days (Thursday to Friday)

Single room supplement: £400

En suite facilities

Scheduled flights, London to Port Elizabeth via Johannesburg

Deposit: £400

Number: minimum of 4, maximum 13

Leaders: Geoff Crane and Mike Raymaker



Orange-breasted sunbird



African monarch



Kudu

The 'Garden Route': beautiful sweeping beaches and coastal wetlands on South Africa's south coast. It's the final destination of many migrating birds from Europe, where they mingle with African birds near whales and Cape fur seals by the shore.

The Addo Elephant National Park was set up to protect the last elephants and Cape buffalos in the southern part of South Africa. It now has all the mammals originally found here, plus some 200 bird species.

Together they make a superb combination of the best of South Africa's wildlife, set in an easy to explore and malaria-free area.

The holiday will be based on two centres, eight nights in the Garden Route in a guesthouse just outside Plettenberg Bay and five nights at the Addo Elephant National Park. Two further nights will be spent on overnight flights from the UK to Port Elizabeth via Johannesburg and back.

The Garden Route

Indigenous forests, a rugged coastline, wetlands, mountains, rivers and hidden coves hint at the range of wildlife to be enjoyed on the Garden Route.

The beautiful coastline of the Robberg Peninsula is a red sandstone promontory. Its rugged coastline and high cliffs is a favourite venue for naturalists. Southern right whales, dolphins, Cape fur seals and seabirds are seen from the cliff tops, while in among the coastal fynbos there are rock hyraxes and agama lizards. Archaeological digs are revealing interesting facts about the early inhabitants (700BC) of the peninsula.

Nature reserves have mighty Outeniqua yellowwood trees, as well as milkwood and many other indigenous trees and plants, plus many forest birds. Diepvalle Forest has the last few remaining forest elephants, though the chance of seeing one of these great animals is slim. Birds include Narina trogon, African emerald cuckoo, green woodhoopoe and Knysna woodpecker. Above the forest towards the Spitskop Peak we will be out of the forest and into fynbos, a chance to do some botanising.

On a leisurely boat trip up the Keurbooms River we look out for kingfishers, fish eagles and darters, while the boat takes us into the forest. Much of the area is the Tsitsikamma National Park, where the indigenous forest and the Indian Ocean meet. Knysna turaco, Cape batis and chorister robin are three of many forest birds.

The Millwood Forest settlement was once a large gold mining town, now fast disappearing into the forest. Old rusting machinery and ruins show what the settlement once was. It's a good area for birdwatching, with blue-mantled crested flycatcher and terrestrial brownbul among many others.

An early start for a day trip to Oudtshoorn, the ostrich capital of the world. The Cango Caves, one of South Africa's greatest natural wonders, has stalactites, stalagmites and helictites.

Craggy mountain scenery at the Swartberg Pass includes 'mountain fynbos'. Up at this high altitude there are many of the protea family that survive the snow in winter and heat in summer. This mountain range of beautiful vistas and twisted strata separates the Great Karoo from the Little Karoo. Cape rock-jumper, Victorin's warbler, Cape siskin and orange-breasted sunbirds are a few of the special birds to look out for.

In Knysna Lagoon National Park by the Indian Ocean, tidal mudflats attract herons and migrating waders. We also walk at the Featherbed nature reserve, which is only accessible by boat.

Addo Elephant National Park

The Addo Elephant National Park is renowned for its impressive herds of elephants, but with selective re-introductions now has the full spectrum of wildlife originally found in the area, including lion, black rhino, leopard and Cape buffalo, as well as Burchell's zebra, eland, red hartebeest, warthog and kudu. Smaller mammals may be sighted with a little patience, including yellow mongoose and meerkats.

Raptors include pale chanting goshawk and jackal buzzard, and grassland has Denham's bustard, black korhaan, blue crane and secretarybird. Black-backed jackal, scrub hare and porcupine are best seen on a night drives, an optional extra, with luck along with owls, spotted thick-knees and nightjars. We take regular game drives within the park, but there is also a lot to see on foot around the accommodation.

A hide overlooks an active water hole where, when floodlit at night, it attracts water dikkop (like a stone-curlew) as well as mammals. There can be lesser honeyguide in the trees and lesser striped swallows around the accommodation. Another hide overlooks a pond, which is good for black crane, southern red bishop and weavers.

The Zuurberg Mountains are home to some fascinating plants. The Zuurberg cycad *Encephalartos longifolius* and the Zuurberg hunchback *Oldenburgia arbuscula* are two to look for. In the arid lands of the Karoo, birds, mammals and reptiles have adapted to the harsh climate.

Conservation project

The second South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP II) is one of the most intensive monitoring programmes ever undertaken in South Africa. Many areas are difficult to access but critically need atlas work and ongoing monitoring work for BirdLife South Africa to understand the bird conservation challenges in these remote sites.





African elephants



Bokmakierie



Pig's ear *Cotyledon orbiculata*



Lion

More holidays in South Africa: see www.honeyguide.co.uk



Dung beetle



Our holidays

- are all round natural history holidays, tailored to get the best out of the wildlife of each area
- go at a relaxed pace
- usually stay at one place
- include good, local food
- use the best of leaders, with extensive conservation knowledge, natural history skills, good experience of the local area and the right personal skills
- are designed to benefit you, wildlife and the local people whose services we use
- include a £40 contribution from each participant to wildlife conservation

Holidays for natural history societies, RSPB local groups or other groups can be arranged.

Visit: www.honeyguide.co.uk for holiday reports, photos and more.

Honeyguide booking form



Please use BLOCK CAPITALS and make cheques payable to Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays.

Please reserve _____ place(s) on your holiday to _____

I enclose / have sent by bank transfer _____ deposit(s) at £200 (£400 for South Africa) totalling: £ _____

Single room supplement(s): please book _____ single room(s) at _____ extra each

I understand that the balance will become payable eight weeks (12 weeks for South Africa) before departure.

Holiday insurance company and policy number (details can be sent later, if you prefer): _____

Passport number(s), issue dates and expiry dates: _____

| Title | Forenames* | Surnames | Date of birth |
|-------|------------|----------|---------------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

*As written on your passport. Please note or underline what you like to be known as, if different from the first name

Address: _____

_____ Postcode _____

Telephone _____ Mobile _____ E-mail _____

Next of kin/home contact point in case of emergency (name & tel. no.) _____

Any special requirements (eg dietary) _____ Non-smoker ☐ Smoker ☐

_____ Signed _____

_____ Date _____

For couples, do you prefer twin beds ☐ a double bed ☐ or don't mind ☐

The price of all Honeyguide holidays includes £40 earmarked for a local conservation project. We would be very grateful if everyone booking could complete the following conservation contribution consent and gift aid declaration.

Please complete sections 1 and 2

1. CONSENT FOR CONSERVATION CONTRIBUTION

We agree that Honeyguide Wildlife Trust Ltd (registered charity no. 1104606) may apply £40 from the cost of this holiday on behalf of each person named on the booking form, to be donated to a wildlife conservation project in the country to be visited.

PLEASE TICK BOX ☐

Complete (a) or (b)

(a) Please print the name of each person on the booking form who qualifies to gift aid their contribution.

.....

.....

.....

Date

(b) If **nobody** on the booking form qualifies to gift aid their contribution, please tick this box. ☐

2. GIFT AID DECLARATION

If you pay UK income tax or capital gains tax, Honeyguide Wildlife Trust Ltd can reclaim from HM Revenue & Customs an extra 25p on every £1 donated, helping your conservation contribution go further. To qualify you must pay at least as much UK tax for the year in which you donate as the amount we are able to reclaim on your donation – currently £10 on each £40 contribution.

If you are a UK taxpayer, please give us the opportunity of increasing your donation in this way.

giftaid it

Thank you

Please return to: Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays, 36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX

Honeyguide booking details



How to book: a booking is made when the completed booking form (a photocopy or emailed scan is fine) plus deposit have been received and accepted by us. We are very happy to take telephone or email bookings, to be confirmed with the form plus deposit during the week following your call / email.

Deposit and payment: £200 per person (£400 for South Africa) deposit is payable by cheque or bank transfer with the booking, with the remainder due eight weeks before departure (12 weeks for South Africa). Payments by credit, debit or charge cards cannot be taken.

Cancellation by you: if you have to cancel, please telephone as soon as possible and confirm in writing. The cancellation will take effect from when it is received in writing. The scale of cancellation charges below is calculated by the time period before departure.

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| More than eight weeks | deposit only |
| 5-8 weeks | 30% of total price |
| 2-5 weeks | 60% of total price |
| 1-14 days; on or after departure date | 100% of total price |

Travel insurance should cover you (less any excess) for cancellation charges if circumstances are beyond your control, such as ill health, and more than simply a change of mind.

Cancellation by us: in the unlikely event of this happening your money will be refunded in full. A decision to cancel would normally be made at the time of reminders for the remainder of payment, i.e. eight weeks before departure.

Single rooms and supplements: we don't like single room supplements but sometimes they can't be avoided, and we pass on the extra that the single room costs us. If you are willing to share but we don't find someone to share with you, you pay only half of any single supplement. Because we have often chosen small, community-based accommodation, single rooms may not always be available. It often helps to talk it through with us at an early stage.



Honeyguide enamel badges
free from the Honeyguide office.

Information: including detailed itinerary, information on books, maps, shopping, weather etc will be supplied as part of the package for enquirers or will be sent after booking. Previous holiday reports are available for most holidays.

Flights: flights noted in the holiday details were the likeliest when the brochure went to print. However many summer schedules were not then out. Which airlines fly to where, and on what days, are increasingly prone to change; this may affect the flights and occasionally the dates for some holidays. Flights from other UK airports are sometimes possible: please contact the Honeyguide office. Boarding passes or booking references will be sent 1-2 weeks before departure.

We use scheduled services and cannot be held responsible for any departure delays. We are not in a position to state the aircraft type to be used.

Changes to the programme: should circumstances beyond our control make significant changes to the programme necessary we will consult you to see if these are acceptable to you.

Holiday leaders: we do our best to keep the leader named for the holiday, but we reserve the right to replace him or her in the event of illness or some other reason. When two leaders are listed, one may not accompany the holiday if there are not enough participants.

Group size: very occasionally if there is one place available on a holiday and a couple wishes to book we may go over the group size stated. The minimum is usually four.

Overnight accommodation and parking near the airport: we often cannot avoid flights that mean an overnight stay for many participants. We may be able to advise on a hotel and/or parking. If staying overnight, please consider if you wish to have an extra day on your travel insurance.

Extending your holiday: for some holidays it is possible to arrive early or stay on. Please contact the Honeyguide office for details.

Passport: a valid full passport is essential.

Brochure: a spare brochure (more if you wish) will be sent with every booking.

Our price commitment: the prices of our holidays are fixed – there are no surcharges.

What the price includes: flights, airport taxes, carbon offsets, all travel and excursions, services of your holiday leader(s) and your conservation contribution are included in the holiday price. Also included are accommodation and meals – breakfast, packed lunch and evening meal, normally inclusive of wine – except for picnic lunches in Crete.

What the price excludes: insurance and personal spending.

Smokers etiquette: heavy smokers are discouraged from booking with Honeyguide. Light smokers are requested not to smoke when this may affect non-smokers, for example at meals or in transport.

Tips and gratuities: all services in the itinerary are covered. You may wish to leave a 'thank-you' for room or restaurant staff at the end of your stay. We may organise a collection if service has been particularly good.

Carbon offsets

Realistically, most of our travellers will fly. Air travel makes up only a small fraction of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions at present, but that fraction is growing. We're serious about our responsibility to tackle global climate change so we have chosen Carbon Clear to offset our carbon emissions from holiday flights. Carbon Clear invests in projects that remove carbon dioxide from the air by replacing polluting technologies with clean ones, and planting native trees.

Honeyguide has been including carbon offsets in the price of our holidays since 2007 and was one of the first travel companies to do so. Some Honeyguiders travel to our holiday destinations by public transport, and their holiday price is reduced by the cost of flights plus carbon offsets. For more information see www.honeyguide.co.uk



TRAVEL INSURANCE

Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays acts as an Introducer Appointed Representative for the purposes of your travel insurance, appointed by Global Travel Insurance Services Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority and whose status can be checked on the FSA Register by visiting www.fsa.gov.uk/register or by contacting the FSA on 0845 606 1234.

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Fax: 01903 268946
Email: enquiries@globaltravelinsurance.co.uk
Web: www.globaltravelinsurance.co.uk

You can go to our website where you can obtain a quotation and arrange the insurance online, or download an application form. If preferred, we can send you an application form on booking enabling you to arrange this insurance.

Beyond providing this information, we are not allowed to assist you in any way in the arrangement of your travel insurance or give any advice.

Honeyguide wildlife holidays



Cover picture: bee-eaters in Extremadura by Steve Fletcher

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