

# Honeyguide

## WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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**Spring in the Spanish Pyrenees**  
**10 – 17 May 2003**

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List of participants

|                              |             |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| Bill Berry<br>Janie Berry    | Colchester  |
| John Mallinson               | Colchester  |
| Sam Seager<br>Sally Seager   | Surrey      |
| Peter Robinson               | London      |
| Pat Rose                     | Felixstowe  |
| Chris Oliver<br>Gordon Small | Southampton |
| Peter Mudd                   | Colchester  |
| Martin Hemsley               | Basingstoke |
| Tony Bennett                 | Surrey      |

Leaders

|                                |                   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Chris Gibson<br>Maureen Gibson | Dovercourt, Essex |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|

Report by Chris Gibson

*Illustrations by Maureen Gibson. Front cover: Berdún with griffon vultures*

As with all Honeyguide holidays, £25 of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case for La Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO), the Spanish Ornithological Society, and its work in Aragón. During the holiday, Juan Carlos Cirera from SEO came to Berdún to collect £300 from this group's holiday in Extremadura.

This year's donations, including from two Honeyguide groups in Extremadura, bring the total given to SEO since the first Honeyguide holiday in Spain in 1991 to £8,620 and the total conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays to £29,800. A thank-you letter from SEO appears at the end of this report.

**SPRING IN THE SPANISH PYRENEES**

## ***10-17 MAY 2003***

### ***Saturday 10 May: The journey there...and a local walk***

A very early start for most at Stansted at least held the promise of a few hours in the Spanish sun later in the day. The airport was positively crowded, but all who were expected met up on time, to enjoy a pleasant flight to Bilbao. On arrival 90 minutes later, just as in Britain, it was sunny and calm, the main difference being the welcome rise in temperature. The next challenges were soon negotiated – we located first Tony, who had overnighted in Bilbao, and then Ricardo and his bus. A **big** bus .... knowing the layout of Berdún, I had some reservations about it reaching the top of the hill!

Typically, the first birds on the list were pan-European airport specialities – kestrel, goldfinch and swift. But before long, we really started to feel our Pyrenean adventure had begun. The forest-clad hills just outside Bilbao started off the theme that was to run for the whole trip - large birds of prey. The first pair of griffon vultures was a mere 20 km down the road, while a sprinkling of red and black kites turned into a veritable deluge as we neared our destination. Close to Vitoria, three and a half (one chick) white storks stood sentinel upon two church-top nests, while beyond this lowland belt, the foothills of the Pyrenean ranges started to loom. Straight away on reaching them, more griffons appeared sailing over the hillsides, an ever-present motif for the holiday and an unforgettable image. The plants along the road verges were also striking: yellow Spanish broom and gorse, and white *Robinia* served to brighten up what was in places a rather unprepossessing prospect.

Approaching Pamplona, the landscape changed again, and for the better: dramatic mountainscapes accentuated by the legions of wind turbines on the more prominent hills. Mixed feelings there - it's good that renewable energy sources are being tapped and the rotation of the sails has a certain stately beauty, but any one could make mincemeat (literally) out of a vulture. A snack stop at the Hotel Iturrimurri provided much more than a cracking tortilla – just outside we encountered our first spotless starlings (nesting in the roof), a raven overhead, three red-backed shrikes hunting insects from the hedgerows, and a clutch of lady orchids.

Shortly afterwards, beyond the tollbooths, we were flagged down by the *Policia Foral*, the officer resplendent in his wide red beret and comedy moustache! Quite what was going on, we were not quite sure, but it involved close examination of the tachograph records, and even checking calibration of the tachometer. But eventually underway again, we soon started to enter the landscape which was to be our constant companion for the week. The lower slopes of eroded marl appeared relatively lifeless, apart from the gorse-like *Genista scoparia* and the beautiful shrubby rest-harrow in full bloom. 'Lifeless' was a highly appropriate description of the reservoir at Yesa, its waters an incredible milky-blue on account of the suspended marl, but broken only by a single coot and yellow-legged gull. Then, perched on a distant hilltop lay Berdún a welcome, dramatic and distinctive sight from any angle.

After carefully manoeuvring the bus up to the village (Ricardo managed it!), everyone gratefully disembarked to stretch cramped limbs, while Viv and Charis came to extend their welcome. Time to unpack and settle in for a while, before we embarked on a short orientation perambulation of Berdún, to whet our appetite for the week. Some fifty griffon vultures sailed overhead, and just as dramatic, there were swallowtails everywhere, both 'scarce' and 'common', nightingales in song, black redstarts on the rooftops, and a ciril bunting, taking his 'little bit of bread' without any reference to cheese. Not so obvious, at least by sight, were the rock sparrows below the western lookout: had it not been for their buzzing, wheezing calls, they might well have remained incognito. But for most, the real prize was a stunning male rock thrush, a jewel in blue and orange, then flashing white as it flew up and soared down, rump feathers raised, in display flight. Wildlife appetites suitably whetted, it was time then to see to more basic needs, as we headed across the square to Emilio's for the first of many delightfully tasty and convivial meals.

### ***Sunday 11 May: local walks around Berdún – Río Veral and Río Aragón***

It dawned clear and sunny, but few were about to see the sunrise – yesterday's early start had taken its toll. But after breakfast, we gathered in the churchyard to look again at the local birds. Starlings, so often ignored, proved in the spotlight of a 'scope to be spotless. Resplendent in their oily blue-black plumage, and distinctive in their more restricted range of calls than our familiar species, spotless starling was a new bird to many of the group. Sparrows, however, were not Spanish, just 'ordinary' house, although altogether more smart than many of our grime-encrusted city birds. Or perhaps it was just the light - everything seemed to shine with colour, from

goldfinches twittering in the trees to red kites sweeping majestically across the plains. And then there were the black redstarts; the males were particularly handsome as is usual with the more variegated Iberian race, and their distinctive sweet-wrappier rustle followed by a loud chattering song came from many a rooftop.

Our attentions soon turned to the plants, particularly feral snapdragons and festoons of ivy-leaved toadflax on the old walls, and to insects taking advantage of the floral abundance. But as we headed down onto the marl - the aptly-named Badlands - towards the Río Veral, our eyes were again lifted skyward as a couple of honey buzzards, presumably migrants, drifted low overhead. A male red-backed shrike kept a watch for prey items along the track, and nightingale, stonechat and circl bunting all took up similar prominent poses, allowing good 'scope views. Our first crested larks flew up from the open areas, sharing their arid habitat with northern wheatear and tawny pipit.

One thing missing though, apart from a brief snatch of Dartford song, was scrub warblers, usually so noticeable here. Maybe they had been hit by the unusually snowy winter past, or maybe they were just not showing - it is amazing how birds can hide so effectively in the little scrub available in this skeletal, primeval landscape. *Genista*, box and barberry formed the structure, these in turn providing some respite for more palatable species, such as beautiful flax and lady and early spider-orchids, from the incessant browsing of goats and sheep. Other plants had chemical defences - the poisons of stinking hellebore, for example, and the herby aroma of garden thyme, a dual defence against grazing and heat, and a wonderful addition to the scentscape. But perhaps the highlight was the wonderful show of shrubby rest-harrow in flower, lending a warm pink glow to the favoured slopes.

By now, the thermals were developing, and vultures were heading out of the gorges. Mostly griffons, a couple of Egyptian vultures lent some variety, conveniently flying past a light-phase booted eagle - same colour scheme, different shape. Down in the river, its level surprisingly low, marsh frogs were croaking and quacking, and a common sandpiper fluttered downstream.

Denser vegetation across the bridge seemed to be the sort of place birds would congregate, and so it proved. Blackcap, melodious warbler, chiffchaff and wren were all in song; common blue and clouded yellow butterflies flew around the clearing; and Gordon spotted a red squirrel in the trees. The best the rest of us got was a glimpse of waving branches. By now it was fast approaching lunchtime, so a quick stroll back up the hill led us to a welcome drink and sustenance at Emilio's.

After lunch, everyone was raring to continue our local explorations, many having shed surplus clothing but then put it back on again as a thunderstorm was raging over San Juan de la Peña. Our churchyard meeting point provided a magnificent view of a short-toed eagle, hovering for all to see, a wasp-beetle and a rock sparrow, rather a surprise given that we usually see them only at the other end of the village. A walk southwards, down the hill, keeping one eye on the storm, past a flowering Judas tree and across the main road took us towards Martés and the Río Aragón. The views back to Berdún, with a backdrop of the snow-clad high Pyrenees were most memorable. Crested larks displayed all their features around the group of traditional Aragónese barns, along with a solitary hoopoe, and two more short-toed eagles, this time sub-adults, flew past. Several northern wheatears flickered across the fields, and a couple of woodchat shrikes kept an eye on proceedings from a fence-line.

As we passed between agricultural fields, some starting to show the beautiful pink of sainfoin, it was sadly apparent that even in this relatively unintensified system, most arable weeds and many farmland birds were missing. Shepherd's-needle was the only plant of note. Still, there were at least a few singing skylarks amongst the ever-present corn buntings. Just as at home, the road verges harboured much of the plant diversity, which in turn was attracting a considerable number of showy insects: black-veined white and green-underside blue butterflies; four-spotted, Mother Shipton and burnet companion moths. But for me, best of all were two iridescent beauties - a ruby-tailed wasp and the 'burnet with a fur collar' *Zygaena lavanduli*.

Descending finally towards the Río Aragón, the lepidopteran drama grew, with a fly-by male brimstone, a rather grotty Spanish festoon, several Moroccan orange-tips, the males an almost psychedelic combination of sulphur yellow and vivid orange, and a single, somewhat battered Camberwell beauty. But otherwise it was quiet, until the marsh frog chorus piped up. And then the golden orioles joined in, culminating in several sweeping flights across the river. Finally, while waiting for the lifts home, three bee-eaters were hawking over the trees, while overhead the local black kite asserted itself over a red interloper, the two birds tumbling in the skies, and even making contact.

After dinner, the night was still and clear, and a late session was in order. Surprisingly, there was no significant

moth, bat or scops owl activity, but the barn owl left its roost in the church on cue at 10 PM, before returning, seemingly tumbling vertically from an enormous height, an hour later. And the moons of Jupiter through the telescope are always a reliable fallback.

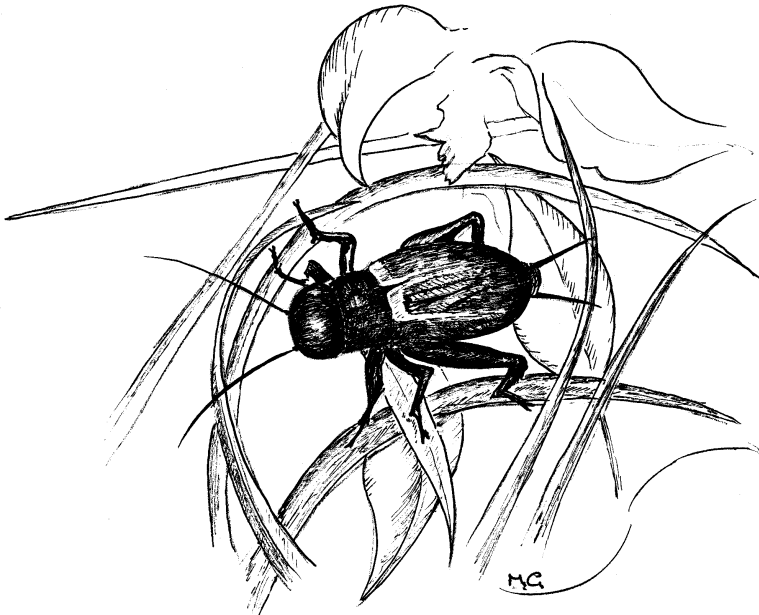
### **Monday 12 May: San Juan de la Peña**

Another lovely clear dawn – something of a pattern becoming evident here, and one which was not to be broken until the very end of the week – saw several of the group connecting with one particular nightingale which made a habit of singing from the very top of a spindly conifer. At the lookout, the usual rock sparrows were in residence, and indeed appeared to have made a nest inside one of the concrete telegraph poles. Suddenly a dark shape scythed up the valley, as a hobby sped by; it proceeded to repeat this on two further occasions, on the last of which it was within just a few metres.

Bleary eyes at breakfast again – not this time due to the early travelling, but to the vocal antics of the local breeding swallows, seemingly just outside the rooms of several of us. Early risers the Spanish swallows – chattering away from just after 3 AM! After a few nights of this, a new adjective invented by John was especially apt for Maureen – ‘hirundicidal’!

Our first destination of the day was the historic village of Santa Cruz de la Seros, at the foot of la Peña. We arrived just in advance of several coachloads of tourists, who, fortunately for us, were interested only in the church. From the village, griffon vulture nests could be picked out on the towering cliffs, some in occupation, and as the morning progressed and thermals began to form, so the skies filled with griffons and other raptors. Lower down, crag martins were patrolling the churchyard, to and from their mud nests on the tower, where there was also a male black redstart in residence.

A short walk up the hill soon produced some new plants. Cowslips, stinking hellebore and hepatica (sadly almost finished flowering) nestled in the hedge bottoms, with bold blue splashes of *Polygala nicaeensis* higher up. The pines here were very heavily infested with mistletoe. Firecrests were noisily proclaiming their territories, and one presented most of the group with superb views, while several, equally noisy Bonelli’s warblers proved somewhat more elusive. A pair of bullfinches flew across a clearing, and a spotted flycatcher was spotted flycatching! By now, larger insects were becoming active in the heat: violet and twin-spot fritillaries added a splash of colour to the meadows, together with a confiding specimen of their diminutive look-alike, the Duke-of-Burgundy.



Once more in the bus, we took the long, twisty road uphill to the ‘new’ monastery at the top. The grassy surrounds of the monastery and car park were surprisingly rich, with swathes of grape-hyacinth and green-winged orchids. Around the pond, field crickets (*left*) were very vocal (competing for attention with the marsh frogs), until anyone approached too close that is. Maureen proved to be a natural, catching two in quick succession; the second one even had a full complement of legs! The area is clearly much used by wild boar, to judge from the rootings and snufflings which were obvious all over the woodland: a delight to see, as I’ve long believed our British woodlands are all the poorer for the lack of their dynamic effects.

A scramble up to the top of the slope took a little longer than anticipated, as the paths had become rather overgrown, but eventually we made it through the seeming impenetrable vegetation – *Echinopartium horridum* – the ‘nasty spiny broom’ is aptly named. But it was worth it, with wonderful views in every direction, an array of delightful plants at our feet and festoons of lichen on the trees, indicating the quality of the air in these parts. The views of the peaks of San Juan de la Peña to the west and Oroel to the east were stunning, although it wasn’t advisable to admire and walk because of the rather steep drop into the valley below. A green hairstreak made an iridescent addendum to the scrubby hilltop,

along with the ubiquitous painted ladies and a grizzled skipper, and the yellow crab spider seemed to have got its camouflage mixed up: sitting on a dark green bush, it could hardly have been more obvious to potential prey or predators.

Back down for lunch among the pines, entertainment was laid on in the form of an acrobatic nuthatch, and a fly-by male cleopatra. Then another walk through the trees produced a variety of woodland birds, including coal tit, goldcrest and firecrest. In the small clearings by the ruined chapel of St Teresa, the carpets of rock daffodils were almost finished flowering, but elder-flowered and early purple orchids and some strikingly large specimens of burnt candytuft were some compensation. As we walked back, the crested tits appeared, showing well for all, but especially well for those who waited to see adult feeding fledged chick.

The old monastery, a little way downhill, is set dramatically into the conglomerate cliffs, and a short stop here proved equally productive. First we explored a little way up the road, to see the cliffs clothed in rock petrocoptis and, most dramatically, in flowering rosettes of Pyrenean saxifrage, while the first lammergeier of the trip sailed high overhead. The song of blackcaps, robins and blackbirds resounded around the mixed woodland, the chorus also incorporating a trilling Bonelli's warbler, northern chiff-chaff and great spotted woodpecker. Down the track, there were lots of black and red firebugs, avoiding the mud-patch remnants from yesterday's storm, and several recently-emerged but hard-to-spot spikes of fly orchid. Once our eye (or more aptly, Sally's and Janie's eye) was in, the orchids appeared to materialise from nowhere, on one occasion alongside a Pyrenean fritillary (flower not butterfly).

At dinner, we produced the present from our 'phantom companion' Phil, who had been booked with the group, but ended up going himself the week before. He'd left us a bottle behind the bar. None of us knew what it actually tasted of, but the consensus was a mixture of apple, aniseed and honey, with a definite tang of Benylin! Suitably fortified against the freshening wind, we tried again for scops owls, more in hope than expectation. And failed. Indeed, failed on every score – moths, bats, owls – apart from a fleeting glimpse of the barn owl leaving roost, some 6 minutes earlier than the previous day.

### ***Tuesday 13 May: High Pyrenees - Portalet to Formigal***

We woke to a continuation of last night's wind, but now turned to a cool northerly direction. But the updraughts created as it struck Berdún's hill brought out the griffons very early. By 7.30, there were already more than thirty taking advantage of the lift, and patrolling the skies, often only a matter of 20 metres from those of us lucky enough to be out watching them – eyeball to eyeball – so close that the blood from the last meal could be seen clearly on the feathers.

As we waited for the coach, a superb honey buzzard sailed past. Then it was off to the hills, for our high mountain day. The cloud on the mountains appeared to be lifting, so, fingers crossed...

Higher and ever higher, towards Formigal, then Portalet, was like going back in time: early summer in the lowlands, to the first inkling of spring at five thousand feet. Here, patchy snow beds lay above the border crossing, and evidently the complete blanket of snow had receded only a few weeks ago. After a coffee stop, we explored the local rocky grassland, a natural alpine garden. Bold pink splashes of *Primula hirsuta* adorned the rock faces and crevices, and Janie found a single spike of the elusive snowbell, right by the car park. Gentians, both spring and trumpet, were opening their flowers as the sun broke through the clouds, despite the nippy breeze; carpets of blue matted globularia and golden daffodils, intermingled with Pyrenean fritillaries; a fair sprinkling of elder-flowered orchids, in both cream and purple colour forms; Pyrenean violet and buttercup; oxlips, green hellebores, spurge laurel, spring and Pyrenean squills .... the list goes on.

Both red- and yellow-billed choughs were flying noisily around the rocky outcrops (the former onomatopoeic, and the latter producing an incredible series of weird trills and clicks), and meadow pipits, wheatears (one performing a spectacular aerial territorial display), a yellowhammer and a migrant tree pipit made the birdlife briefly reminiscent of home. The first of several water pipits, in subtle shades of blue and pink about as 'pretty' as any pipit can ever be, was feeding along the edge of melting snows, as Pat located the source of the strange wader-like piping, an alpine marmot atop the rocky mound which presumably formed its winter hibernation home.

After lunch on the coach, we headed down the road towards Formigal, some 5km of steady walking, but with new botanical vistas appearing at every turn. In addition to more – much more – of the aforementioned, a selection of later species started to come to prominence, including, in different areas, kingcups, bird's-eye

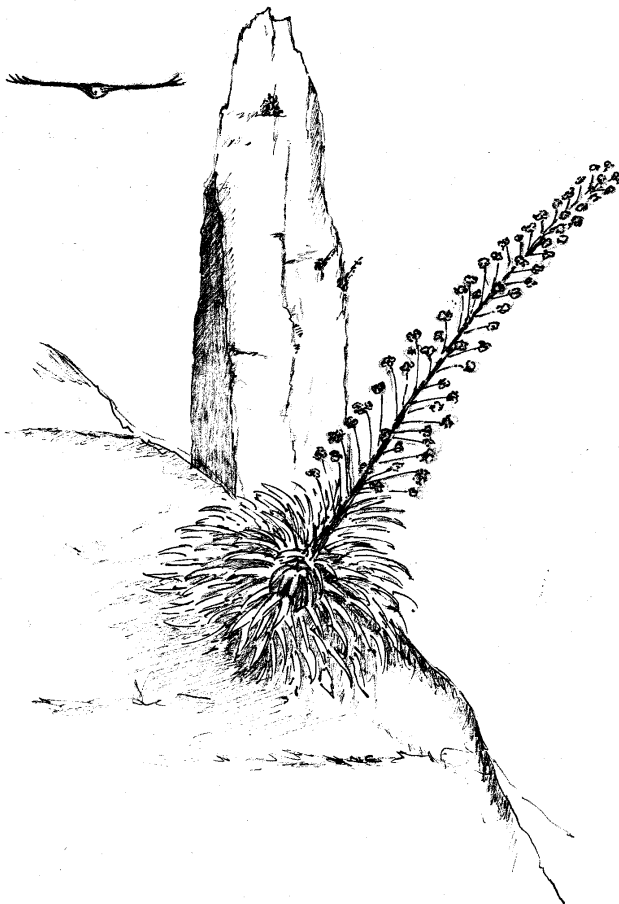
primrose, butterwort, yellow rock-jasmine, prostrate and alpine toadflaxes, and kidney-vetch in an impressive, if confusing, range of colours. In the early afternoon sun, lizards were becoming very active – many were Iberian wall lizards, but at least a few higher up were the restricted-range Iberian rock lizard, including a pair indulging in a spot of courtship nibbling. Marmots too seemed to be taking advantage of the rays, seemingly prostrate on every rocky knoll, or grazing contentedly in the vicinity. Two groups of chamois (or izard, as the Pyrenean species should now be called) were spotted by eagle-eyed Gordon; indeed we were all ‘eagle-eyed’ as a short-toed drifted up the valley, being mobbed furiously by a buzzard, and later a golden eagle sailed majestically along the eastern ridge. But pride of place must go to the near-adult lammergeier which floated relatively low overhead, only to pass another in the sky, much further away, as we followed its flight path.

Suitably fortified by this flush of birds, we continued down in high spirits to the coach, climbed aboard, only to come to a halt a few hundred metres down the road, as Jesus, our driver, wanted us to look at a site he takes people to for lady’s-slipper orchid. As expected though, it was much too early in the season, and there was no sign, although a superb long-hovering short-toed eagle was ample reward. But soon we were on our way back home, most of the bus asleep from the exertions of the day.

The night-time vigil in the churchyard attracted its biggest crowd yet, and everyone saw a barn owl. Indeed, some discussion ensued as to whether two birds were involved – that particular issue was never resolved, as neither was the riddle of the near-absent scops owls.

### **Wednesday 14 May: Biniés gorge and walk back to Berdún**

The breeze had died down by dawn, and those wandering in preparation for breakfast managed to see a hoopoe and hear a quail. Then a short trip by car brought us to near to the start of the Foz de Biniés. This entailed a



minor change to the plan, as we had found out the day before that the road was closed just down from the gorge, the result of a landslide. Viv duly persuaded the workman to stop his digger and allow us past, on foot, and through the ‘entrance gates’ – vertical walls of rock, cleft by the river, and covered in the large flowering rosettes of Pyrenean saxifrage (*left*) and the delicate pink flowers of *Petrocoptis*.

Walking up the gorge produced many botanical delights and specialities: vivid pink cushions of rock soapwort; the yellow shock of flowers on *Allium moly*; the unusual brick-red-purple-flowered goat’s-beard *Tragopogon crocifolius*; bee and pyramidal orchids. As the temperature lifted, so insects became more active, and several fritillary and blue butterflies started to appear – an identification nightmare for the leaders, but always good to see, nonetheless. So too the vultures became active, lifting off the rocks, and rising on the thermals until almost a hundred were in the air together. A male blue rock thrush showed briefly to most of the group, and at least one Bonelli’s warbler finally gave up the hide and seek. Sadly, though, one of the hoped-for highlights failed us – the *Ramonda* on the roadside rock still needed a couple of weeks to reveal its African violet-like flowers. And as we potted back down the gorge to rendezvous with Viv for lunch, several caught up with good views of a dipper, and even better ones of a couple of subalpine warblers.

Because of the road closure, we were not able to lunch in the meadow above the gorge. Instead, we were ferried to a lovely hilltop holm oak wood pasture, across the valley from Biniés village. Viv produced tablecloth, wine, water, salads and warm *tortillas* from Emilio. A more pleasant setting could hardly be imagined. Afterwards, we wandered down to the orchid meadow on the banks of the Veral, shrinking by the year, as the river erodes its own banks. Military, lesser butterfly, early and late spider were all in flower, and chalkhill blue was a new

butterfly for the trip.

At this point, several opted for a lift back, and an afternoon of leisure, while the rest of us walked back down the valley all the way to Berdún. Among the riverside poplars, golden orioles of both sexes were heard well, but remained amazingly almost invisible; otherwise there was little to report, other than a jolly good walk. And then the last slog up the hill...which some of us turned into an ‘off-piste’ scramble across the Badlands, and gave us a good view of a hobby speeding past.

At dinner, we got a taste of ‘local’ culture. The TV was on, and it was the European Cup semi-final: Real Madrid v Juventus. We soon realised that the Madrid team does not command support around Berdún, so a few well-placed chants of ‘Juve! Juve!’ certainly ingratiated ourselves with the locals. Although trooping out before half-time, for a date with the barn owl, probably undid all the goodwill!

#### ***Thursday 15 May: Riglos and Agüero***

Perfect weather before breakfast enticed a few takers for an early walk, and this time we decided to head down the track onto the Badlands. A turtle dove sped through, perhaps a last vestige of spring migration, but our interest was awakened by a commotion in the bushes, which resolved into a (territorial?) pair of orphea warblers. The day had begun well and that set the tone for a feast of highlights.

After breakfast, a visit to the bakery provided an interesting interlude to the wildlife, and then it was off, south. A Montagu’s harrier gave a brief roadside view as we sped past, followed by both yellow-legged and lesser black-backed gulls on the Embalse de Peña. Just after the reservoir we stopped, in accordance with Viv’s prior directions, looked up and there was a pair of alpine swifts wheeling around the cliffs. After crossing the road and the dam, we came to a rock, absolutely dripping in Pyrenean saxifrages, in full, glorious bloom; sparkling drifts of Pyrenean hyacinth; and rosettes of *Ramonda*. Unlike yesterday, these *were* in flower, a result no doubt of their lower altitude and more southerly location. A subalpine warbler sang and fed in a small willow on the nearby island, and as we headed back to the coach, a couple of red squirrels watched us watching them from the tree canopy. An unknown site to the leaders and only a short stop, but one which certainly left a lasting impression.

And so we continued on for the last few miles of our journey, breaching the massive conglomerate cliffs of Riglos, the final outpost of the Pre-Pyrenean range. Unfortunately, the climbers had beaten us to it, so there were only a few griffons on nest and noisy parties of choughs around the cliff. But overhead, vultures were everywhere, including a single, distant lammergeier, typically flying directly away from us, and a rather more obliging peregrine, which made a dramatic stoop upon an unwary chough, the latter only just escaping with its life. Sardinian warblers were there too – but keeping almost invisible in the low scrub, a delicious, aromatic mix of box, rosemary and *Genista*. Again, though, it was the unexpected which proved most exciting. I got lost in the village streets, and ended up above the village, off the usual route. And there, in splendid black and white was a pair of black wheatears, showing themselves to advantage, feeding, flying and displaying. True serendipity this – had we taken the ‘correct’ route, we would have passed within 30 metres of them, and probably been unaware of their presence.

As we returned through the village, we took the opportunity to examine the new interpretive signs, detailing the wildlife, recreational opportunities and geological history of the area, all under a lammergeier logo (what else?!). There seems recently to have been a great leap forward in the overt recognition of environmental issues, culminating in the nearly completed construction of a vulture interpretation centre on the outskirts of Riglos, and I would like to think that Honeyguide and its customers have contributed at least a little bit to that most welcome process.

The old railway station at Riglos provided a very hot location for lunch. So hot in fact that even the warmth-loving insects seemed to be hiding, and all we could find was a clouded yellow and a few green-underside blues. But the Sardinian warbler that accompanied our munching was much appreciated by those who it crept up on, before popping out into full view.

After lunch, we headed to Agüero – the undeveloped equivalent of Riglos across the valley – passing a surprising marsh harrier on the way. Jesus deposited us on the ‘wrong’ side of the village, *ie* on the opposite side to anywhere I had visited before. But serendipity struck again as we headed up the hillside. As it turned out, the angle of viewing the cliffs was better from here, the light being behind us, and we had a grandstand view of the breeding griffons, with an Egyptian vulture nest site to boot. A noisy party of some 20 red-billed choughs kept us further entertained, as did yet another (displaying) male black wheatear.



After dinner, the entertainment just kept coming. Juan-Carlos, local SEO representative, came to meet us, to give us a slide talk, and to receive the cheque from Honeyguide, the participants' contribution to conservation in Spain. As always, his talk was beautifully presented – how many of us could give such an informative talk, laced with humour, in a second language? – and served to highlight how many of the conservation issues we face back home, from tourism to agriculture and pollution, apply equally in Spain. But it is a simple fact that as Spain is one of the epicentres of European biodiversity, the stakes are even higher. And I am pleased to report that SEO is not just catching up the likes of RSPB, but in some ways surpassing it: their latest initiative into marketing of bird-friendly organic pasta is something many of us could learn from.

Once again there was demand for a night-time stroll. It proved to be the most productive one of the week, with the by-now-expected emerging barn owl; scops owl calling, albeit rather distant; serotine and pipistrelle bats detected in the bat detector; and best of all a huge female giant peacock moth lumbering around under a street light. Fully ten centimetres wingspan, it was quickly netted and examined. We debated whether to keep it overnight to show the rest of the group, but decided its freedom should take priority. As it turned out, probably the wrong decision, as next morning lying beneath the light was a small pile of discarded wings, presumably the body having become a scops owl supper.

### ***Friday 16 May: Arbayún and Lumbier gorges***

A cooler start to the day, no doubt related to the high level cloud which was starting to appear yesterday afternoon, and which was suggestive of a little bit of more familiar, home-like weather to come. Heading west, past Yesa, we notched up a few great crested grebes, then past the Lumbier vulture restaurant, where there was a gaggle of griffons, albeit almost hidden from the watchpoint. Then disaster: on the long straight after Lumbier town, the coach slowed and then ground to a halt, as Jesus waggled the gear-stick uselessly. And he had no means of contacting base, until Peter R. came to the rescue and produced a mobile phone. They may be annoying and intrusive, but at times like this they prove their worth. Clearly we were in for a long wait, as the engineer had to come from Jaca, and frustratingly this was just about the farthest point we were from there during the whole week. We decided not to walk the 5km to Arbayún, particularly because of the heavy lorries thundering down the road, full of limestone, and instead explored the interesting looking piece of Badlands habitat a field back from the road (for want of a better name, Site X).

There we just sat and potted and wandered and before long the group was scattered to the four winds. Over the couple of hours before we sat down to lunch, we saw melodious warblers nest-building; two short-toed eagles engaged in display flight; a couple of fly-by lammergeiers; Egyptian vultures and booted eagles; and great spotted woodpecker. Maureen, enjoying a 'quiet moment' behind a bush, nearly got bitten on the bum by a (venomous) two-metre long Montpellier snake, and tales came back from the more distant wanderers of woodlark, great reed warbler and wild gladioli. So, all in all, not a bad little spot. Nevertheless we were relieved (if only because the weather was closing in) to see the mechanic and the confidence with which he brandished a new gear linkage, and before one o'clock we resumed our journey.

On and up, through remnant patches of holm oak woodland – possibly the climax woodland type on the marl – to the precipitous gorge of Arbayún. Viewing is easy here: a platform has been erected over the edge of the gorge giving splendid views of the griffon vulture breeding cliffs. Despite the cloud and threat of rain, many griffons were aloft, sweeping past us and giving excellent views. Three Egyptian vultures were in the air together, then two sub-adult birds settled on a rock face and started to indulge in a spot of mutual preening. Finally, Tony proved his credentials as supreme peregrine spotter by finding a bird perched on a small bush at the far end of the gorge.

As we disembarked at the Foz de Lumbier, it can only be assumed that the 'restaurant' over the hill was serving up something special. The air was filled with vultures, more than 150 of them, more than I have ever seen before, all heading in the same direction. The river was full of fish, and the cliff clefts full of rock doves, at least most of which looked to be pretty much of the wild type. Passing through the first tunnel into the gorge, we entered a world of birds. Crag martins were hanging from 'invisible strings', one was preening on a ledge, and others were visiting their nests, one of which was deep in the tunnel itself. Groups of choughs and jackdaws hurtled around, our first Iberian chiffchaff was in full and distinctive song nearby, with several others farther down the valley, and a pair of blue rock thrushes (the male in particular) gave prolonged views on the far cliffs. And of course griffons were everywhere – flying, sitting on nest ledges, and watching us watching them from the highest pinnacles.

By now though it was raining, and even a few rumbles of thunder were echoing around the gorge. So looking down was increasingly in order. Little-Robin and ramping-fumitory were just two of the lower-growing plants, while the shrub layer included wild jasmine, a Mediterranean plant, in full, though sadly not fragrant, flower, an indication of the warmth in this sheltered gorge. In contrast, dogwood (with its persistent sclerenchyma – the ‘magic floating-leaf trick’) and spindle (its new shoots eaten and covered in the silken trappings of the small ermine moth *Yponomeuta cagnagella*) indicated the limy nature of the soil.

And then through the second tunnel, just to say we had done it, a look at the Devil’s Bridge, and back through the tunnels and gorge to the coach and some welcome shelter from the rain. Only for most of the coach to empty again a couple of hundred metres down the road, when a bee-eater was spotted on a wire crossing the river. It flew off as we approached, but ample compensation came in the form of a magnificent male golden oriole which emerged from the canopy for a few precious seconds, and remained there for longer than the customary ‘fleeting view’. Then it was off to the bar in Liédena, for a welcome cuppa, courtesy of Honeyguide, as thanks for the group’s understanding acceptance of the earlier breakdown.

Our final evening meeting took the form of a slide show from Viv (rather rudely interrupted by a power cut), giving us a great feel for life in Berdún, and much appreciated now that we felt ‘part of the scene’ ourselves. The final dinner came, as is traditional, with champagne, as we looked back at the week, and by general consensus it was highly successful. The total number of birds – 114 species – was perhaps a little lower than might have been hoped for, but that is mostly due to migrant species missing as a result of the later than usual holiday. But in terms of quality, in every respect, whether birds, plants, insects, views, weather, company, food or drink, it was a superb week, one which will leave long-lasting memories. A last night-time stroll around the town, in damp conditions, produced little in the way of wildlife, but we did discover the church was open, being prepared for a wedding tomorrow. So all those who had speculated as to what it was like over the week now had the chance to find out – the answer is remarkably ornate for such a small town.

#### ***Saturday 17 May: Río Aragón and the journey home***

The original plan had been to leave Berdún early, and spend the afternoon in Bilbao. But earlier in the week, it seemed that the magic of Berdún had cast its spell, and by popular demand, we elected to stay around the area we had come to love for as long as possible. The decision gave the leaders several nightmares, particularly with the rain continuing overnight – perhaps Plan A would have been better? Imagine our relief as we emerged to see the rear edge of the cloud bank disappearing eastwards along the Canal de Berdún, and to feel the sun come out for another hot day, erasing all memories of the rain.

The early morning crew came up with a singing hoopoe, seen from the Badlands but perched on a roof up in Berdún, and several melodious warblers – perhaps the rain had brought them down. The re-arranged plan was to ferry us down to the Aragón bridge by car, then to spend three hours or so wandering along the river. As soon as the first contingent arrived, new birds started to feature – a sparrowhawk flew past and a wryneck was calling. A whitethroat was singing from the top of a tree, in which a black kite was at rest, and garden warblers seemed to be in every bush – again, perhaps, rain-downed migrants. Golden orioles were everywhere, giving glimpses and longer views, especially in flight across the river; a couple of woodchat shrikes kept a watchful eye out; and then a troop of bee-eaters joined in the show. At first just two or three, by lunchtime these had grown to about thirty. In a new poplar plantation, a couple of male Spanish wagtails were holding territory, showing their smart plumage (white throat, dark ear coverts, partial white supercilium) to an array of onlookers, who unfortunately were so enraptured, they missed the couple of Bonelli’s eagles passing overhead. But no such problems with a young male Montagu’s harrier which played and sky-dived in a group of kites for about five minutes.

Settling down for lunch in the shade of a black poplar simply gave us a final opportunity to bask in the delights of the Spanish countryside, and reflect on the fact that this ‘extra’ day had actually proved to be one of the very best of the whole holiday. All too soon though we were back in the cars, up to Berdún, finishing packing, just in time to see the happy couple emerge from the church before we loaded ourselves and our luggage onto the bus, and we bade farewell to Viv and Berdún.

Three white storks on three nests, plus one in flight, provided the bird interest on the way back, followed by firecrests outside the Hotel Altube, a superior motorway café where we stopped for a snack and *servicios*. At the airport by 19.30, we were able to check in almost straight away, then we were greeted with news of flight delays. Annoying but not so annoying as to spoil the holiday spirit – we arrived back at Stansted around midnight, still embraced by the magic of Berdún.

## KEY TO LOCALITIES

B - Berdún, including the banks of the Veral and Aragón  
Bi - Biniés gorge  
J - San Juan de la Peña and Santa Cruz de la Seros  
R – Riglos, Agüero and the ‘*Ramonda* rock’  
L - Lumbier and Arbayún Gorges (and ‘site X’)  
P - Portalet and Formigal

## BRYOPHYTES (Mosses)

*Grimmia pulvinata* B

## PTERIDOPHYTES (Ferns)

*Asplenium adiantum-nigrum* Black Spleenwort Bi  
*A. fontanum* Bi  
*A. ruta-muraria* Wall-rue B Bi L  
*A. trichomanes* Maidenhair Spleenwort Bi J P  
*Ceterach officinarum* Rustyback Fern B Bi  
*Equisetum arvense* Field Horsetail B  
*E. variegatum* Variegated Horsetail B  
*Polypodium interjectum* Intermediate Polypody Bi  
*P. vulgare* Common Polypody Bi L P  
*Pteridium aquilinum* Bracken J

## GYMNOSPERMS (Conifers)

*Abies alba* Silver Fir Bi  
*Cupressus sempervirens* Cypress B R L  
*Juniperus communis* Juniper B Bi J R  
*J. communis* ssp. *nana* P  
*J. oxycedrus* R  
*J. phoenicia* Phoenician Juniper R L  
*Pinus halepensis* Aleppo Pine R  
*P. nigra* Black Pine B Bi J R P  
*P. pinea* Stone Pine R  
*P. sylvestris* Scots Pine B Bi J R L P  
*Taxus baccata* Yew Bi

## DICOTYLEDONS

The list concentrates on those seen in flower, with just a few more distinctive non-flowering species

### Aceraceae

*Acer campestre* Field Maple B Bi L  
*A. monspessulanum* Montpellier Maple Bi  
*A. opalus* Bi

### Anacardiaceae

*Pistachia lentiscus* Lentisc Bi R  
*P. terebinthus* Turpentine Tree Bi R L

### Apiaceae

*Bupleurum rigidum* B Bi  
*Conopodium pyrenaicum* J  
*Daucus carota* Wild Carrot B  
*Eryngium campestre* Field Eryngo B Bi R L  
*Foeniculum vulgare* Fennel B R  
*Meum athamanticum* Spignel P  
*Scandix pecten-veneris* Shepherd’s-needle B  
*Selinum pyrenaicum* B Bi

### Aquifoliaceae

*Ilex aquifolium* Holly J

### Araliaceae

*Hedera helix* Ivy B Bi J R L  
*H. hibernica* Irish Ivy Bi

### Asclepiadaceae

*Vincetoxicum hirundinaria* Swallow-wort Bi

**Asteraceae**

*Achillea millefolium* Yarrow J P

*Arctium minus* Lesser Burdock Bi

*Artemisia absinthium* Wormwood B R

*A. campestre* Field Southernwood B

*Asteriscus aquaticus* B L

*Bellis perennis* Daisy B J P

*B. sylvestris* B L

*Calendula arvensis* Field Marigold B

*Carduus acanthoides* Watted Thistle B

*C. tenuiflorus* Slender Thistle B

*Carlina acaulis* Stemless Carline-thistle P

*C. vulgaris* Carline-thistle B

*Centaurea calcitrapa* Red Star-thistle B

*Cichorium intybus* Chicory L

*Cirsium arvense* Creeping Thistle B

*Crepis vesicaria* Beaked Hawk's-beard B

*Filago pyramidata* Broad-leaved Cudweed B J

*Helichrysum stoechas* B R L

*Lactuca perennis* Blue Lettuce Bi

*Onopordon acanthium* Scotch Thistle B

*Picris hieracioides* Hawkweed Ox-tongue B

*Rhagadiolus stellatus* R L

*Santolina chamaecyparissus* Lavender Cotton B Bi R L

*Silybum marianum* Milk Thistle B

*Taraxacum* sp. Dandelion B R P

*Tragopogon crocifolius* Bi R L

*Tussilago farfara* Colt's-foot J P

**Berberidaceae**

*Berberis vulgaris* Barberry B Bi R

**Betulaceae**

*Betula pendula* Silver Birch B J P

**Boraginaceae**

*Borago officinalis* Borage B

*Buglossoides purpureo-caerulea* Purple Gromwell Bi

*Cynoglossum cheirifolium* B R

*C. creticum* B L

*Echium plantagineum* Purple Viper's-bugloss B

*E. vulgare* Viper's-bugloss Bi R

*Lithodora fruticosum* Shrubby Gromwell B Bi

*Myosotis alpina* Alpine Forget-me-not P

*Symphytum officinale* Comfrey B

**Brassicaceae**

*Aethionema saxatile* Burnt Candytuft J

*Alliaria petiolata* Garlic Mustard Bi J

*Alyssum alyssoides* Small Alison B

*Arabis alpina* Alpine Rock-cress P

*A. hirsuta* Hairy Rock-cress Bi

*A. turrata* Towercress Bi P

*Barbarea vulgaris* Winter-cress B J

*Brassica napus* Rape B

*Capsella bursa-pastoris* Shepherd's-purse B

*Cardaria draba* Hoary Cress B

*Draba aizoides* Yellow Whitlow-grass P

*Erophila verna* Early Whitlow-grass J

*Lepidium heterophyllum* Smith's Pepperwort B

*Lunaria annua* Honesty B

*Matthiola fruticulosa* Sad Stock L

*Sinapis arvensis* Charlock B

*Sisymbrium austriacum* Austrian Rocket P

*S. officinale* Hedge Mustard B  
*Thlaspi alpestre* Alpine Pennycress P  
**Buxaceae**  
*Buxus sempervirens* Box B Bi J R L  
**Cactaceae**  
*Opuntia ficus-indica* Prickly-pear B  
**Caprifoliaceae**  
*Lonicera etrusca* Perfoliate Honeysuckle Bi L  
*L. periclymenum* Honeysuckle B  
*L. xylosteum* Fly Honeysuckle B J  
*Sambucus ebulus* Dwarf Elder B J  
*Sambucus nigra* Elder Bi  
*Viburnum lantana* Wayfaring Tree B Bi J  
*V. opulus* Guelder-rose J  
**Caryophyllaceae**  
*Arenaria aggregata* B  
*A. grandiflora* J  
*Cerastium fontanum* Common Mouse-ear B J  
*Dianthus sylvestris* J R  
*Paronychia argentea* B  
*Petrocoptis pyrenaica* Bi J  
*Petrorhagia saxifraga* B  
*Saponaria ocymoides* Rock Soapwort Bi  
*Silene alba* White Campion Bi J  
*S. viridiflora* Bi J  
*S. vulgaris* Bladder Campion B R  
*Stellaria media* Common Chickweed B  
**Celastraceae**  
*Euonymus europaeus* Spindle-tree Bi L  
**Chenopodiaceae**  
*Chenopodium polyspermum* Many-seeded Goosefoot B  
**Cistaceae**  
*Fumana ericoides* L  
*Helianthemum apenninum* White Rock-rose B Bi J R L  
*H. canum* Hoary Rock-rose R L  
*H. nummularium* Common Rock-rose B Bi  
*H. nummularium* ssp. *pyrenaicum* B R L  
**Convolvulaceae**  
*Convolvulus arvensis* Field Bindweed B  
*C. cantabricus* B L  
*Cuscuta epithimum* Dodder L  
**Cornaceae**  
*Cornus sanguinea* Dogwood B L  
**Corylaceae**  
*Corylus avellana* Hazel B Bi J  
**Crassulaceae**  
*Sedum dasyphyllum* Thick-leaved Stonecrop B Bi R  
*S. reflexum* Rock Stonecrop Bi J L  
*Sempervivum montanum* P  
*Umbilicus rupestris* Navelwort Bi J R  
**Cucurbitaceae**  
*Bryonia dioica* White Bryony B Bi R L  
**Dipsacaceae**  
*Dipsacus fullonum* Teasel B  
**Ericaceae**  
*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* Bearberry J  
*Vaccinium myrtillus* Bilberry J  
**Euphorbiaceae**  
*Euphorbia amygdaloides* Wood Spurge B Bi J  
*E. chamaebuxus* Pyrenean Spurge B L  
*E. characias* B Bi R

*E. flavicoma* P  
*E. helioscopia* Sun Spurge B  
*E. serrata* B Bi R L

### **Fabaceae**

*Anthyllis vulneraria* ssp. *forondae* Kidney Vetch P  
*A. vulneraria* ssp. *pyrenaica* J L  
*Astragalus monspessulanus* B Bi R L  
*Cercis siliquastrum* Judas Tree B  
*Colutea arborescens* Bladder Senna B Bi  
*Coronilla emerus* Scorpion Vetch B Bi L  
*Dorycnium pentaphyllum* B Bi L  
*Echinopartium horridum* J  
*Genista hispanica* Spanish Gorse B J R  
*G. scorpius* B Bi J R L  
*Hippocrepis comosa* Horseshoe Vetch B Bi  
*Laburnum anagyroides* Laburnum B  
*Lathyrus aphaca* Yellow Vetchling B  
*L. montanus* Bitter Vetch J  
*L. setifolius* B R L  
*Lotus alpinus* P  
*L. corniculatus* Bird's-foot-trefoil B  
*Medicago arabica* Spotted Medick B  
*M. lupulina* Black Medick B  
*M. sativa* Lucerne B  
*Onobrychis supina* B L  
*O. viciifolia* Sainfoin B R  
*Ononis fruticosa* Shrubby Rest-harrow B Bi R L  
*Psoralea bituminosa* Pitch Trefoil B Bi R L  
*Robinia pseudoacacia* False Acacia B R  
*Spartium junceum* Spanish Broom R  
*Tetragonolobus maritimus* Dragon's-teeth B  
*Vicia cracca* Tufted Vetch B R  
*V. sativa* Common Vetch B R  
*V. sepium* Bush Vetch J  
*V. villosa* Fodder Vetch B

### **Fagaceae**

*Fagus sylvatica* Beech J  
*Quercus coccifera* Kermes Oak B Bi J R L  
*Q. ilex* Holm Oak B Bi J L  
*Q. petraea* Sessile Oak J  
*Q. pyrenaica* Pyrenean Oak J  
*Q. pubescens* Downy Oak Bi

### **Fumariaceae**

*Fumaria capreoloata* Ramping-fumitory L  
*F. officinalis* Fumitory B R

### **Gentianaceae**

*Blackstonia perfoliata* Yellow-wort B Bi  
*Gentiana acaulis* Trumpet Gentian P  
*G. lutea* Large Yellow Gentian P  
*G. verna* Spring Gentian P

### **Geraniaceae**

*Erodium cicutarium* Common Stork's-bill B R  
*E. malacoides* B  
*Geranium molle* Dove's-foot Crane's-bill B  
*G. purpureum* Little-Robin L  
*G. pusillum* Small-flowered Crane's-bill B  
*G. robertianum* Herb-Robert B Bi J L  
*G. rotundifolium* Round-leaved Crane's-bill B

### **Gesneriaceae**

*Ramonda myconi* Bi R

### **Globulariaceae**

*Globularia cordifolia* B  
*G. punctata* J  
*G. repens* P  
*G. valentina* B

#### **Juglandaceae**

*Juglans regia* Walnut B R

#### **Lamiaceae**

*Ajuga chamaepitys* Ground-pine B  
*Lamium amplexicaule* Henbit Dead-nettle B R  
*L. purpureum* Red Dead-nettle J  
*Lavandula angustifolia* B J R  
*Marrubium vulgare* White Horehound B R L  
*Melittis melissophyllum* Bastard-balm Bi  
*Phlomis lychnitis* B R  
*Rosmarinus officinalis* Rosemary R  
*Salvia verbenaca* Wild Clary B R L  
*Stachys recta* Yellow Woundwort Bi L  
*Thymus vulgaris* Garden Thyme B Bi R L

#### **Lentibulariaceae**

*Pinguicula grandiflora* Large-flowered Butterwort P  
*P. vulgaris* Butterwort P

#### **Linaceae**

*Linum bienne* Pale Flax B  
*L. narbonense* Beautiful Flax B Bi R L  
*L. suffruticosum* Pyrenean Flax L

#### **Loranthaceae**

*Viscum album* ssp. *album* Mistletoe B Bi  
*V. album* ssp. *austriacum* Bi J R

#### **Malvaceae**

*Malva sylvestris* Common Mallow B L  
*M. neglecta* Dwarf Mallow B R

#### **Moraceae**

*Ficus carica* Fig B R L

#### **Oleaceae**

*Fraxinus excelsior* Ash B Bi  
*Jasminum fruticans* Wild Jasmine B Bi L  
*Olea europaea* Olive R

#### **Onagraceae**

*Epilobium hirsutum* Hairy Willowherb B

#### **Orobanchaceae**

*Lathraea clandestina* Purple Toothwort B  
*Orobanche alba* Thyme Broomrape R  
*O. caryophyllacea* Bedstraw Broomrape Bi  
*O. gracilis* Bi  
*O. hederæ* Ivy Broomrape Bi

#### **Papaveraceae**

*Chelidonium majus* Greater Celandine Bi  
*Papaver rhoeas* Common Poppy B

#### **Plantaginaceae**

*Plantago lanceolata* Ribwort Plantain B  
*P. media* Hoary Plantain B Bi J P  
*P. major* Greater Plantain B Bi

#### **Polygalaceae**

*Polygala nicaeensis* B Bi J

#### **Polygonaceae**

*Oxyria digyna* Mountain Sorrel Bi

#### **Primulaceae**

*Anagallis arvensis* Scarlet Pimpernel B R L  
*Coris monspeliensis* B  
*Primula elatior* Oxlip P  
*P. farinosa* Bird's-eye Primrose P

*P. hirsuta* P  
*P. veris* Cowslip Bi J P  
*Vitaliana primuliflora* Yellow Rock-jasmine P  
**Ranunculaceae**  
*Aquilegia vulgaris* Columbine Bi J  
*Caltha palustris* Marsh-marigold P  
*Clematis vitalba* Traveller's-joy B Bi J  
*Helleborus foetidus* Stinking Hellebore B Bi J R L  
*H. viridis* Green Hellebore P  
*Hepatica nobilis* J  
*Pulsatilla alpina* P  
*Ranunculus bulbosus* Bulbous Buttercup Bi  
*R. gouanii* P  
*R. gramineus* J L  
*R. pyrenaicus* P  
*Thalictrum tuberosum* B Bi R L  
**Resedaceae**  
*Reseda lutea* Mignonette B Bi J  
*R. phyteuma* Corn Mignonette R  
**Rhamnaceae**  
*Rhamnus alaternus* Mediterranean Buckthorn Bi R L  
*R. pumilus* Dwarf Buckthorn P  
**Rosaceae**  
*Amelanchier ovalis* Snowy Mespilus B Bi J R L  
*Crataegus monogyna* Hawthorn B Bi J  
*Filipendula vulgaris* Dropwort B  
*Fragaria vesca* Wild Strawberry Bi J  
*Geum montanum* Alpine Avens J  
*G. sylvaticum* J  
*Malus sylvestris* Crab Apple Bi  
*Potentilla repens* Creeping Cinquefoil B  
*P. rupestris* Rock Cinquefoil J  
*P. tabernaemontani* Spring Cinquefoil B Bi J P  
*Prunus avium* Wild Cherry J  
*P. mahaleb* St Lucie's Cherry Bi J L  
*Rosa canina* Dog Rose B Bi P  
*Rubus fruticosus* Bramble B Bi J R  
*Sanguisorba minor* Salad Burnet B Bi J R L P  
*Sorbus aria* Whitebeam Bi J  
*S. torminalis* Wild Service-tree Bi  
*Spiraea hypericifolia* L  
**Rubiaceae**  
*Cruciata laevipes* Crosswort J  
*Galium aparine* Cleavers B L  
*G. mollugo* Hedge Bedstraw Bi L  
*G. verum* Lady's Bedstraw Bi L  
*Rubia peregrina* Wild Madder J  
**Salicaceae**  
*Populus nigra* Black Poplar B Bi  
*P. tremula* Aspen B  
*Salix alba* White Willow B Bi  
*S. eleagnos* B  
*S. purpurea* Purple Willow B  
**Santalaceae**  
*Osyris alba* R  
**Saxifragaceae**  
*Saxifraga granulata* Meadow Saxifrage J P  
*S. longifolia* Pyrenean Saxifrage Bi J R  
*S. pentadactylus* J R  
**Scrophulariaceae**  
*Antirrhinum majus* Snapdragon B Bi R L



*Cymbalaria muralis* Ivy-leaved Toadflax B  
*Linaria alpina* Alpine Toadflax P  
    *L. purpurea* Purple Toadflax Bi  
    *L. supina* Prostrate Toadflax P  
*Rhinanthus minor* Yellow Rattle J  
*Scrophularia canina* B  
*Veronica austriaca* Large Speedwell B  
    *V. persica* Common Field Speedwell B  
    *V. prostrata* P

#### **Simaroubaceae**

*Ailanthus altissima* Tree-of-heaven B

#### **Solanaceae**

*Solanum dulcamara* Bittersweet B Bi

#### **Thymelaeaceae**

*Daphne laureola* Spurge-laurel J  
    *D. laureola* ssp. *philippii* P

#### **Tiliaceae**

*Tilia cordata* Small-leaved Lime Bi J  
    *T. platyphyllos* Large-leaved Lime Bi

#### **Ulmaceae**

*Ulmus minor* Elm B Bi

#### **Urticaceae**

*Parietaria judaica* Pellitory-of-the-wall R L  
*Urtica dioica* Stinging Nettle B L

#### **Valerianaceae**

*Centranthus ruber* Red Valerian B  
*Valeriana dioica* Marsh Valerian L  
    *V. globularifolia* J

#### **Violaceae**

*Viola odorata* Sweet Violet J  
    *V. pyrenaica* Pyrenean Violet P  
    *V. riviniana* Common Dog-violet J

#### **Vitidaceae**

*Vitis vinifera* Grape-vine Bi

### **MONOCOTYLEDONS**

#### **Amaryllidaceae**

*Narcissus pseudonarcissus* ssp. *alpestris* J  
    *N. pseudonarcissus* ssp. *pseudonarcissus* P  
    *N. rupicola* Rock Daffodil J

#### **Cyperaceae**

*Carex flacca* Carnation Sedge B Bi

#### **Dioscoreaceae**

*Tamus communis* Black Bryony Bi

#### **Iridaceae**

*Gladiolus* sp. Wild Gladiolus L  
*Iris germanica* Purple Iris R  
    *I. pseudacorus* Yellow Flag B

#### **Juncaceae**

*Juncus effusus* Soft Rush B  
    *J. inflexus* Hard Rush B  
*Luzula campestris* Field Woodrush J P  
    *L. sylvatica* Greater Woodrush J

#### **Liliaceae**

*Allium moly* Bi  
    *A. roseum* Rose Garlic B R  
*Aphyllanthes monspeliensis* B Bi R L  
*Asparagus acutifolius* Bi  
*Asphodelus albus* White Asphodel Bi J L P  
*Dipcadi serotinum* Brown Bluebell B  
*Fritillaria pyrenaica* Pyrenean Snake's-head J P

*Hyacinthus amethystinus* B Bi R L  
*Muscari comosum* Tassel Hyacinth B R  
    *M. neglectum* Grape-hyacinth B J L  
*Ornithogalum narbonense* B  
*Ruscus aculeatus* Butcher's-broom J L  
*Scilla liliohyacinthus* Pyrenean Squill P  
    *S. verna* Spring Squill P

#### **Orchidaceae**

*Anacamptis pyramidalis* Pyramidal Orchid Bi  
*Dactylorhiza sambucina* Elder-flowered Orchid J P  
*Listera ovata* Common Twayblade J  
*Ophrys apifera* Bee Orchid B Bi  
    *O. fuciflora* Late Spider-orchid B  
    *O. insectifera* Fly Orchid J  
    *O. lutea* Yellow Bee-orchid B  
    *O. scolopax* Woodcock Orchid B Bi J  
    *O. sphegodes* Early Spider-orchid B Bi L  
*Orchis mascula* Early Purple-orchid J P  
    *O. militaris* Military Orchid B  
    *O. morio* var. *picta* Green-winged Orchid J  
    *O. purpurea* Lady Orchid B Bi L  
*Platanthera bifolia* Lesser Butterfly-orchid B  
    *P. chlorantha* Greater Butterfly-orchid J

#### **Poaceae** (very incomplete)

*Anthoxanthum odoratum* Sweet Vernal-grass B  
*Arundo donax* Giant Reed B R  
*Bromus sterilis* Barren Brome B  
    *B. tectorum* Drooping Brome B  
*Catapodium rigidum* Fern-grass B  
*Dactylis glomerata* Cock's-foot B  
*Deschampsia cespitosa* Tufted Hair-grass B  
*Hordeum murinum* Wall Barley B  
*Melica uniflora* Wood Melick Bi J  
*Phragmites australis* Common Reed B  
*Poa annua* Annual Meadow-grass B

#### **Typhaceae**

*Typha latifolia* Greater Reedmace B

#### **LICHENS**

*Cladonia foliacea* B J  
*Ramalina* sp. Bi  
*Rhizocarpon geographicum* P  
*Usnea* sp. J

#### **MAMMALS**

Northern Mole J P (molehills only)  
Greater White-toothed Shrew R (dead)  
European Free-tailed Bat B  
Serotine B  
Pipistrelle B  
Red Squirrel B R J  
Alpine Marmot P  
Pine Marten J (droppings)  
Wild Boar B J (rootings only)  
Izard P

#### **FISH**

Brown Trout Bi  
Barbel B

## **AMPHIBIANS**

Iberian Water Frog (Marsh Frog) B Bi J  
Common Frog P (tadpoles)  
Common Toad Bi

## **REPTILES**

Iberian Wall Lizard B Bi J R L P  
Common Wall Lizard B  
Pyrenean (Iberian) Rock Lizard P  
Green Lizard B  
Viperine Snake Bi (dead)  
Montpelier Snake L

## **BUTTERFLIES**

Grizzled Skipper J P  
Dingy Skipper B J  
Swallowtail B R  
Scarce Swallowtail B Bi J R (*right*)  
Spanish Festoon B Bi  
Large White B Bi  
Small White B  
Wood White B J R  
Black-veined White B J R  
Orange-tip B J P  
Moroccan Orange-tip B R  
Clouded Yellow B J R P  
Brimstone B Bi J R  
Cleopatra J R  
Peacock J (caterpillars)  
Comma J  
Camberwell Beauty B  
Red Admiral B  
White Admiral J (caterpillar)  
Small Tortoiseshell B P  
Painted Lady B Bi J R P  
Violet Fritillary Bi J  
Twin-spot Fritillary J  
Spanish Fritillary Bi  
Glanville Fritillary J  
Marbled White B R  
Wall B Bi J R  
Large Wall B  
Piedmont Ringlet P  
Speckled Wood B Bi R  
Duke of Burgundy J  
Common Blue B Bi J R  
Chalkhill Blue B  
Green-underside Blue B J R  
Adonis Blue Bi R  
Chequered Blue Bi  
Panoptes Blue B Bi R  
Small Blue P  
Purple-shot Copper R  
Green Hairstreak J R



## **MOTHS**

*Zygaena lavanduli* B  
*Yponomeuta cagnagella* L (caterpillars)  
Rush Veneer J  
Giant Peacock Moth B  
Pine Processionary Moth - caterpillars everywhere where there were pine trees, and even above the tree line at P

Lackey P (caterpillars)  
Figure-of-Eight B (caterpillar)  
Cream-spot Tiger B  
Yellow-tail B (caterpillars)  
Heart and Dart B  
Burnet Companion B  
Mother Shipton B  
Four-spotted B  
Silver-y B P

#### **OTHER INVERTEBRATES**

*Arion ater* a large black slug J P  
*Cepaea hortensis* Banded Snail B  
*Misumenia vatia* a crab spider J  
*Gryllus campestris* Field Cricket B Bi J R  
*Oedipoda coerulescens* Blue-winged Grasshopper B  
*Sympetrum fonscolombei* Red-veined Darter J  
*Empusa pennata* a praying mantis B  
*Coccus ilicis* a gall insect on kermes oak B R L  
*Aquarius najas* a large pond skater Bi  
*Cercopis vulnerata* a large bright froghopper Bi L  
*Pyrrhocoris apterus* Fire Bug B J  
*Coreus marginatus* Squash Bug L  
*Phytomyza ilicis* Holly Leaf-miner J  
*Bombylius major* Bee-fly B  
*Cicindela germanica* a tiger beetle J  
*Clytus arietis* Wasp-beetle B  
*Trichodes alvearius* B  
*Lytta vesicatoria* Spanish-fly B  
*Geotrupes stercorarius* Dor-beetle P  
*Blaps mucronatus* Churchyard Beetle B L  
*Amphimallon solstitialis* Summer Chafer L  
*Oxythyrea funesta* a flower chafer B  
*Apis mellifera* Honeybee B  
*Xylocopa violacea* a carpenter bee B R L  
*Chrysis ignita* a ruby-tailed wasp B  
*Messor barbara* a large ant B  
*Formica rufa* Wood Ant J  
*Polistes* sp. a paper wasp B

#### **BIRDS**

Great crested grebe – Yesa Reservoir  
Grey heron – Yesa and Aragón valley  
White stork – journeys to and from Bilbao  
Mallard  
Honey buzzard – B(3 on 11<sup>th</sup>, 1 on 13<sup>th</sup>)  
Black kite  
Red kite  
Lammergeier – J R L P(2)  
Egyptian vulture  
Griffon vulture  
Short-toed eagle – B(3) Bi J R L(2) P(2)  
Marsh Harrier – R  
Montagu's harrier – B R  
Sparrowhawk – B  
Common buzzard  
Golden eagle – P  
Bonelli's eagle – B(2)  
Booted eagle  
Kestrel

Peregrine – Bi R L P  
 Hobby – B  
 Red-legged partridge – L  
 Quail – B  
 Coot – Yesa  
 Common sandpiper – B L  
 Yellow-legged gull – B Peña Reservoir  
 Lesser Black-backed Gull – Peña Reservoir  
 Rock dove – J R L / Feral Pigeon  
 Woodpigeon – Bi J  
 Collared dove  
 Turtle dove – B and journeys  
 Cuckoo  
 Barn owl – B  
 Scops Owl – B J  
 Swift  
 Alpine swift – R L  
 Bee-eater – B R L  
 Hoopoe – B  
 Great spotted woodpecker – B J L  
 Wryneck – B  
 Crested lark  
 Woodlark – B L  
 Skylark – B P  
 Sand martin  
 Crag martin  
 Swallow  
 House martin  
 Tawny pipit – B  
 Tree pipit – P  
 Water pipit – P  
 Meadow pipit – P  
 Spanish wagtail – B  
 Grey wagtail – Bi L P  
 White wagtail  
 Dipper – Bi  
 Wren  
 Robin  
 Nightingale  
 Black redstart  
 Stonechat – B R  
 Northern wheatear – B L P  
 Black-eared wheatear – R  
 Black wheatear – R  
 Rock thrush – B P  
 Blue rock thrush – Bi L  
 Blackbird  
 Song thrush – B Bi  
 Mistle thrush – J R  
 Cetti's warbler  
 Great reed warbler – B L  
 Melodious warbler – B Bi L  
 Dartford warbler – B  
 Subalpine warbler – Bi R L  
 Sardinian warbler – R L  
 Whitethroat – B  
 Garden warbler – B J  
 Blackcap  
 Orphean warbler – B  
 Bonelli's warbler – B Bi J L  
 Chiffchaff – B Bi R L  
 Iberian chiffchaff – L

Goldcrest – J  
Firecrest – B Bi J R L  
Spotted flycatcher – Bi J R  
Long-tailed tit – B Bi J L  
Crested tit – J  
Coal tit – J  
Blue tit  
Great tit  
Nuthatch – Bi J  
Golden oriole – B L  
Red-backed shrike – B R Iturrimurri  
Woodchat shrike – B R  
Jay  
Magpie  
Alpine chough – P  
Red-billed chough – Bi J R L P  
Jackdaw – L  
Carrion crow  
Rook – P  
Raven  
Spotless starling  
House sparrow  
Rock sparrow – B  
Chaffinch  
Serin  
Greenfinch  
Goldfinch  
Linnet  
Crossbill – J  
Bullfinch – J  
Yellowhammer – P  
Cirl bunting  
Corn bunting

**Total – 114 species**

Chris Durdin  
HONEYGUIDE  
36, Thunder Lane  
Thorpe St. Andrew  
Norwich, NR7 OPX  
INGLATERRA

Zaragoza, 10th July, 2003

Dear Chris:

Once again I want to thank you for contributing with your donation of £300 to our Conservation Project in the steppes of Belchite (Zaragoza - Spain) what is part of £1.150 donated to SEO this year. With this money, Honeyguide has already given to our organization since 1991 £8.620, what is a valuable support to conservation of Spanish birds. The amount given this year to Belchite will be used to help in the purchase of some new equipment needed in the Information Center. Thanks to you and people and groups like yours the Ornithological Reserve of "El Planerón", in Belchite, can go a head succesfully.

Please, extend my thanks to your spring '2003 group in Berdún and all the others groups from Honeyguide that have contributed with SEO during last years. All of you are invited to visit our natural reserves whenever you have the chance.

I hope see you again soon.

Best wishes:

Juan Carlos Cirera Martínez  
SEO/BirdLife officer in Aragón.