

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Spanish Pyrenees
29 April – 6 May 2025

Holiday participants

Jill Jordan
Everard Daniel
Ann Greenizan

Daphne Seaton and Fiona Jolliffe
Gill Cartwright and Tove Ford

Leader: Peter Rich

Report by Peter Rich pyreneeswithyou@gmail.com

Our hosts: Peter Rich, Marta and her team at Casa Sarasa www.casasarasa.com

The group also stayed for two night at Hotel Merindad de Olite in Olite hotelmerindaddeolite.com/

Photos by Everard Daniel, Ann Greenizan (AG) and Peter Rich.

Cover, top: ramonda; high Pyrenees at Portalet. Bottom: *Narcissus abscissus*.



This year's group, including Peter and Marta from Casa Sarasa.



Wall lizard (AG).

This holiday, as for every Honeyguide holiday, also puts something into conservation in our host country by way of a contribution to the wildlife that we enjoyed, in this case for La Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO), the Spanish Ornithological Society / BirdLife Spain, and its work in Aragón.

The conservation contribution this year of £40 per person was supplemented by an additional donation and by Gift Aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, leading to a total of £590. This donation brings the total given to SEO since the first Honeyguide holiday in Spain in 1991 to £22,515 (through all Honeyguide holidays, mostly the Spanish Pyrenees and Extremadura). The total for all conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 is £159,397 (August 2025).

DAILY DIARY

29 April: arrival day, Bilbao, Pitillas and Olite

This was the day after the power cut that left all of Spain without electricity, so we were all expecting delays and disruption, but fortunately it was as if nothing had happened. The flight arrived 30 minutes ahead of schedule and everyone had gathered on the landside by the time I arrived. We had a 40-minute drive to lunch at Altube in bright sunshine with strong winds from the south. The self-service restaurant had a good choice of sandwiches, salads and mains although, slightly disappointingly, little for vegans. We carried on uneventfully to Pitillas lagoon beyond Olite, although we did spot a group of twenty griffon vultures circling, plus some red and black kites.

As we approached the visitor centre at Pitillas lagoon, our first sighting was of a zitting cisticola perched on some reeds at the side of the van which, after a brief pause, flitted off in a gust of wind. We had scarcely got out of the car before Ann had found some diminutive bluets (damselflies) sheltering in the lee of some tall grass. First a couple, then as other people came to look, others were discovered until some twenty or so individuals were found, daintily clinging on or flitting between resting places as the wind bashed the leaves around. Photos later identified them as azure bluet and common bluetail. We all looked up at the sound of the chattering of Cetti's warbler from the nearby bushes while from the lagoon itself the sound of coots came drifting over.

Everard had already stationed himself on the lagoon's edge and despite the wind causing the water surface to go choppy, he had soon found common pochard and red-crested pochard as well as some 25 mute swans, an anomalous presence here in Spain. As we gathered to join him, scanning the far side of the lagoon revealed a quartering marsh harrier and a pair of great egrets. Meanwhile Ann had found a common darter on a patch of mud, while Fiona and Daphne had started finding some interesting plants: yellow gromwell *Neotostema apulum*, beautiful flax and purple-veined rocket, with special excitement reserved for a small clutch of mirror orchids. Other plants included spinach sea beet, wild clary, thyme, blue pimpinell, rose garlic and white asphodel.



Mirror orchid, a highlight today; black-necked grebe.

As the Honeyguiders gently dispersed to follow their noses, reports filtered back that both male and female red-veined darters had been seen, a passing Frenchman had found a large psammmodromus lizard with yellow stripes, while Everard's constant scanning of the water had found black-necked grebes, with corn buntings perched jauntily atop the bushes. After a good couple of hours, we finally decided to call it a day and head off to our hotel in Olite. The drive back was interrupted by a pair of white storks just by the road.

Our destination for the first couple of nights of this new itinerary was the Merindade Hotel in the old part of the medieval village of Olite. Boasting a renaissance castle reminiscent of those to be found in the Loire Valley as well as a parador (closed for refurbishment) the village has a lovely network of streets and stone buildings, with shady squares and interesting churches. Dinner was taken in the basement restaurant, with some fine Navarra wines. And with a week of natural history to look forward to we decided to try and establish a day-by-day highlights list, the first candidate for today being the mirror orchids.

Wednesday 30 April, sunny, clear, wind from south Bardenas Reales Natural Park – Pitillas – Olite

Breakfast at 08:30 was served by Adriana, making a special effort with soya yoghurt and milk for the vegans. Then there was time waiting at the foot of the 14th century castle while I went to get the picnic things from the little shops in town, time spent appreciating rowdy swifts and the greenfinches. We drove south along the N121 towards our day's destination, the Bardenas Reales Natural Park. On the way, crossing the Aragón river (the same river that flows past Berdún many kilometres upstream) a great cormorant flew under the bridge, while some of the hillsides still bore the signs of the devastating forest fire that in June 2022 burnt more than 15,000 hectares of southern Navarra.

Approaching the Bardenas Park visitors' area we soon became aware of quite what a popular place this is, as dozens of camper vans, 40 cars and a couple of large coaches filled the car park of the small visitor centre. As we waited in the queue for the loos, a harassed employee of the visitor centre was handing out freebie information sheets in French, which he was later persuaded to give in English. From there we moved to the nearby panoramic viewpoint where we could get an overview of the park, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve measuring some 45 kilometres by 24, consisting of eroded sandstone and mudstone cliffs with semi-arid steppe habitat in between, some of it arable farmland. At this time of year, the area enjoys a few glorious weeks of greenery as the crops are still growing, so there was an unusually verdant landscape spread before us, rather the habitual semi desert.



'The iconic Castildetierra' in Bardenas Natural Park.

land around, but possible, as otters and beavers are turning up in the most unlikely of places in northern Spain. A couple of botanical highlights at this place were some splendid red-horned poppies (*Glaucium corniculatum*, right) and the steppe specialist albardine or esparto grass *Lygeum spartum*, with its striking seed-head.

We carried on one of the dirt tracks that circles the somewhat incongruous military firing range at the centre of the park, used by the Spanish Airforce for bombing practice, stopping by the side of the track for our picnic lunch, perched on the back of the van. Here there were crested and short-toed larks as well as possible calandra, but the wind was continuing to whip up the dirt and scatter sand into our sandwiches, so we pressed on to another viewpoint to admire the sandstone cliffs. Here we quickly found half a dozen griffon vultures perched on their nesting shelves, with some chicks just visible beyond the edge. With the scope focussed on the vultures, we almost missed the bee-eaters that whizzed up and down the gulch to our left, coming up to pose nicely on some distant bushes.

The day was advancing and by now the wind was colder. The constant presence of other sightseers driving around the park raising huge clouds of dust was beginning to get a bit tiresome, so we headed away to the northern exit, past monumental multicoloured rock formations, stopping and scouring from time to time, hoping to catch some steppe birds. We found a black-eared wheatear just by the van and the whirling shapes of more vultures in the distance, but sadly nothing more singular.

As we still had some time, we made a stop at Pitillas again, on the way back to Olite. This time we pushed around the south-western side, and found a great spot, slightly raised, from which we got some fine views

Scooting ahead of a noisy busload of schoolchildren, we headed towards the iconic Castildetierra, a pinnacle of multilayered sandstone topped by a wobbly rock. Despite the people, noisy motorbikes and vehicles, we were all able to marvel at this geological wonder, Tove was particularly pleased to be able to compare notes with her brother visiting the Grand Canyon, while Fiona and Daphne tracked down an interesting endemic thistle *Atractylis humilis* and the colourful stock *Matthiola fruticulosa*. Leaving the people behind we stopped a short distance away at a small body of water surrounded by reedbeds. Here there was a pair of mute swans with four cygnets, as well as two pairs of coots and six chicks or 'cootlets' as they could be called.

Among the tamarisk bushes we saw a spotted flycatcher coming and going, as well as an unusually late pied flycatcher lurking in the lower branches of the bushes. A purple heron gave us a couple of flypasts, while Ann found us a cigar gall and a brown noctuid caterpillar, possibly a treble lines. Some scat and the mangled remains of a crayfish on the edge of the pond made us suspect that otters may be present, a somewhat unlikely proposal given the semi-arid steppe-



out over the water and the reedbeds. Purple heron, hoopoe, Iberian yellow wagtail and all the previous day's ducks were seen, plus some bonus orchids, including man and lizard. The crowning moment on the short drive back to the hotel was a swooping male marsh harrier, that hawked and hovered just next to us, changing position and adjusting to the wind, barely 10 metres away from us.

At dinner the restaurant staff had made a fine effort for those with special dietary requirements, while the day's highlight was unanimously voted to be the spectacular geology and landscape of the Bardenas Reales Natural Park, despite the presence of other humans.

Thursday 1 May Pitillas – Santa Criz – Berdún

Another great breakfast by the lovely Adriana at the Merindade de Olite hotel, who had remembered our tea and coffee orders from the previous morning. Some dull sunshine, but no wind, we set off on this public holiday (first of May) fearing that we may have to struggle with some crowds at our planned sights. Following a tip from Josu at the visitor centre we headed clockwise around the Pitillas lagoon for our third visit in as many days.

We drove around some irrigated fields and vineyards before parking and walking down to the lagoon's edge, where bank holiday activity was evident in the presence of just one other person. We stopped a few metres away and started to take in our surroundings. Standing on a bank covered in wild thyme in full flower, the sky pealed with the song of skylarks and corn buntings, while the constant cries of coots on the water carried over to us. Fiona, Daphne and Gill were soon working on the plants, finding in quick succession some early spider, yellow and sombre bee orchids, as well as shepherd's needle, corn gromwell, Pyrenean and white rockrose. Out on the water, Everard and Gill had soon latched onto red-crested pochard, great crested grebe and shelduck, while over the reedbeds a group of 10 terns flitted across, this way and that, wings catching in the morning sunlight. After a long debate about how much white we could see against the light, we settled on black tern.



Black-winged stilt; yellow bee orchids; early spider orchid.

Some black-winged stilts appeared in a nearby pond, and as we were walking over to get a better view, the reedbed resounded with the foghorn sound of a bittern coming from the eastern shore! Great excitement all round, as this was a sound new to nearly everyone, me included. As we stood there, we heard it time and again – maybe ten times in a space of fifteen minutes – carrying over the great reed warbler that had started up nearby, as well as the overarching skylark trills. “Like someone blowing on a bottle” was how it was described, and was quickly put up as the probable first choice for the day's highlight. Listening out as we did, we still got to see some grey herons, marsh harriers and a purple heron that flew several times over the reeds. Even as we walked back to the van, the bittern's call accompanied us, while the botanists added some new plants to the list, including yellow gromwell, as well as stumbling across a snail infestation of some mallow leaves, with maybe 80 small snails of at least six species crowded onto two plants.

Back in the van we headed onwards along the dirt tracks in a clockwise direction, sometimes coming close to the water, sometimes being led away from it. One promising track leading down to the water's edge was found to be impassably muddy, so we backed up from it, pausing to snatch an ID of some pale flax, before heading off down another farm track. We briefly enjoyed a magnificent flypast of a pair of bee-eaters right in front of the van, their full, glorious colours glinting in the sunlight, before we came across a little gulch crossing a field which had some very promising holes in the mudbank. Stopping to get out, the serendipity of a changed route was such that we realised we had come across a colony of more than 30 bee-eaters,

which flitted in and around the gulch, entering into the nesting tunnels and waiting just on their edges or on the low branches in the immediate vicinity. All the while this was with the constant gurgling chatter so characteristic of what must be Europe's most colourful bird. Finally sated with the fine views we had enjoyed, we got back into the van and continued round the lagoon, pausing to find and identify a calandra lark next to the track, until we saw another harrier dropping down in front of us. As it flew into the air again, we saw the tell-tale ring on the tail of a female Montagu's harrier. Up and down it went in front of us, as we crawled forward for about 10 minutes, giving everyone a fine view, including those in the back of the van.



Bee-eater at a nesting hole.

Saying a fond farewell to Pitillas, which had turned out to be a real naturalist's hotspot, we drove towards Berdún, following one of the back routes, over a low mountain pass that still bore the scars of the devastating 2022 forest fire that reduced 15,000 hectares of Navarra to cinders over the space of just three days. Stopping for much needed coffee and powder rooms in San Martín de Unx, our lunch stop was at the picnic tables at the Roman ruins of Santa Crix. Bank holiday worries about overcrowding were unfounded here too, as there was just one other car in the carpark. Ann quickly found us some invertebrates, including a violet carpenter bee, *Peirates stridulus* (a red and black bug) and an Egyptian locust.

After lunch we ambled at Honeyguide pace (150m in 60 minutes) up the paved pathway leading to the Roman ruins at the top of the small hill. The south facing slope was like a Mediterranean garden, with cascades of flowering thyme, three types of Euphorbia (*serrata*, *exigua* and *sun*), flowering yellow jasmine, *Phlomis lichnitis*, purple-veined rocket, *Sideritis hirsuta* and *Bellardia trixago* among others. Pyramidal, lady and lizard orchids vied for our attention, while insects flitted by, with red-tailed wasp, panoptes blue and a pair of mating black-eyed blue butterflies meriting special mention. Once up at the top we found ourselves at a partially excavated site of a small Roman city, with impressively huge stones of public buildings such as the forum and a temple piled up to one side. Nightingales started to serenade us from the bushes and for once the south wind seemed a little cooler, so back downhill we went, to make our way back to the vans and off to Berdún and Casa Sarasa. We arrived with enough time to enjoy visiting the lady orchids at the bottom of the garden, Marta's pond, and to sit outside in the evening sunshine before coming inside for wildlife checklists and the first of many delicious meals provided by Marta González and her team. The vegans were in very capable and considerate hands.

Friday 2 May Aísa Valley

The early risers were treated to some fine views of nightingales on the trees at the bottom of the garden, and everyone said how they had enjoyed being serenaded during the night. A murky, overcast sky with a strong wind from the southeast and a haze that prevented any views of the mountains awaited us first thing, but today was forecasted to be among the least cold for the rest of the week, so we decided to head to the high mountains, specifically to the Aísa valley, despite the threat of rain.

After a longish, scenic drive up valleys and over passes we found ourselves in the car park with only eight other cars – not bad for a bank holiday weekend – and immediately started on the roadside flowers. A pristine clump of alpine toadflax poked out from a fissure in the rock, while some spikes of *Valeriana tuberosa* poked up their pinkish heads from the floor, as well as a mini host of the diminutive all yellow *Narcissus minor*. Also protruding from the limestone wall was an almost perfect bonsai Austrian pine, barely 80 cms tall. Walking through the cattle gate and up the box-lined pathway we soon found white flowers of hepatica, splendid nodding heads of oxlip and our first yellow forms of elder-flowered orchid. Up the steep ramp we headed, finally emerging onto the first plateau, where a carpet of oxlips, Pyrenean, trumpet and spring gentians awaited us, interspersed with clumps of daffodils and white Pyrenean buttercups. Through the murky haze we could see the mountains with a considerable amount of snow still, giving this morning's excursion a decidedly 'early spring' vibe. We wandered happily enough over the

carpet of flowers until it began raining, slowly at first, then a little more heavily. We sought refuge in a mountain hut while the worst of it fell, making the most of the open window to get the scope onto some isards (Pyrenean chamois) on the far side of the valley. At a break in the rain, we decided that it would be foolhardy to go further up the mountain, instead opting to beat a dignified retreat downhill again, admiring dunnock and coal tits on the pines on the way.



Today's highlight: flowers in Aísa valley. Trumpet gentians; elder-flowered orchid; spring gentians.

We had an early lunch at the picnic spot a couple of kilometres downhill, then spent an agreeable time dodging the rain and enjoying the moments of sunshine. Early purple and marsh orchids, long-tailed tits and Egyptian vultures kept us busy, as did a swooping pass by a female goshawk through the trees above our heads. The rain was getting heavier, so we headed back down the valley to enact Plan B. First stop was coffee in Aísa, then back to Berdún down a longer but straighter route. In Berdún we did a quick walking tour around the village, seeing the remains of the fortified defences, the closely joined houses and narrow streets before stopping at Casa Chuglar.

Casa Chuglar is the new name for the building that veteran Honeyguiders would know as the Painting School, the historic village house that used to host holiday groups in Berdún from 1980 until 2006 when Casa Sarasa took over. Now owned by the dynamic Toche and Angel, traditional folk musicians, part of the house is a museum for some of their 500 traditional musical instruments. With his inimitable charm and idiosyncratic English, Angel led us on a journey through the mysteries of Aragonese folk music, playing all sorts of wonderful instruments, such as the Zambomba, Gaita, Salterio and Dulzaina. Not natural history, true, but a fascinating and wonderful experience that everyone really enjoyed.

Saturday 3 May

Portalet

It was the best day's weather forecast for the rest of the week, so we headed up for another high mountain day, at the Portalet pass into France up the Tena Valley. The wind was still coming from the south, so while it wasn't as cold as it could have been, there were moments when it felt brisk. We had barely left the van when Ann had already spotted us a marmot on the rocks above. Heading up to the tarn we walked past *the* bank, this south facing slope just above the buildings at the frontier that throughout the spring hosts an incredible array of different flowers, blooming and fading as the weeks pass. Right now, at the beginning of May, it was the turn of the two-toned *Narcissus abscissus*. Thousands of heads bobbed in the wind, a veritable carpet that would be replaced a fortnight later by a similar number of white asphodels, and later still by *Iris latifolia*.



Alpine marmot.



Snowbell *Soldanella alpina*.

Among the daffodils we found *Ranunculus amplexicaulis* while several marmots were spotted on the rocks below the track. A short-toed eagle appeared out of nowhere and hung suspended over our heads for what seemed like an eternity before drifting away, while red-billed and alpine choughs wheeled overhead calling loudly, spooked by the big raptor. On the rocks we found *Androsace*, chamois cress, hairy and bird's eye primrose, *Daphne laureola*, *Viola pyrenaica* and *Corydalis solida* as well as the usual spring, trumpet and Pyrenean gentians. Ann with her usual precision vision found us all a rock thrush perched across the tarn, which was greatly appreciated by all.

Down into France we headed, crossing the simple stone wall, to find some pristine snowbells *Soldanella alpina* on the frontier. Then back to the café and shops at the frontier post, followed by another flyby of short-toed eagle. We saw singing water pipits while a kestrel and some choughs launched into one of the perpetual battles for which they are famous.

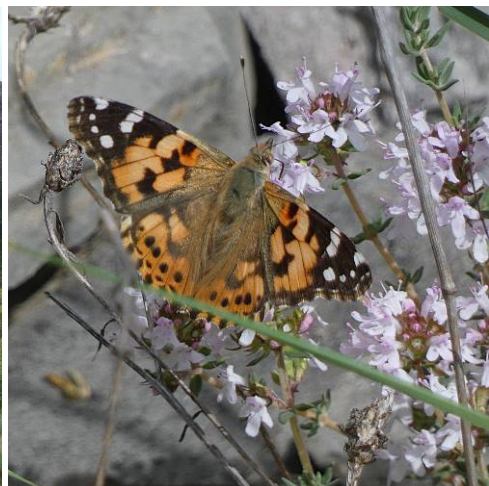
We had lunch down at La Sarra, for once sheltered at the bottom of the valley. Here we took a nice walk up the river, with plenty of hepaticas, primulas and orchids in the undergrowth, with some great views of crested tit. We crossed the river on the bridge, then went down the other side, surviving two 'water feature' crossings. Then down to the restaurant for coffee and while we sat enjoying our drinks, a dipper and a pair of grey wagtails gave a fine display. All in all, a great day in spectacular mountain scenery.

On the way home we made a photographic stop for Berdún, suddenly surrounded by painted ladies around the van. But now we had bright sunshine and it was 24°C. After another lovely dinner we tried out the Honeyguide bat detector, but frustratingly weren't entirely sure what the readings were. We put out the moth trap under the cover of the barbecue roof – covered due to the flashing of lightning in the distance. There was a big storm in the night with lots of rain.

Sunday 4 May Agüero and Riglos

A bright, beautiful sunny day, not a cloud in the sky – a perfect spring day, or so it seemed. Moth trap was poor (by Berdún's high standards), just two spurge hawkmoths, three muslin moths, one whitepoint and one great prominent.

Today's destination was to go towards the outer ranges to the south. It was Sunday at the end of the bank holiday weekend, so lots of traffic, it seemed. There is a major road-straightening project going on down the Bailo – La Peña road which luckily wasn't active on a Sunday, so we suffered no delays. First stop was La Peña reservoir, walking over the dam. Black redstarts and crag martins flitted around while we found great clumps of Mediterranean spurge and an incredibly strong-smelling rue. The real stars of the show however were found just above the steps of the central rock. Perfect ramonda flowers, plus rue-leaved saxifrage plants and Malling toadflax, while round the corner Pyrenean saxifrage spikes stood proud. Honeysuckle, jasmine and scorpion senna, flowering Amalanchier, everything bathed in bright sunshine, such a perfect spring day it seemed, until Everard spotted some comings and goings of griffon vultures on the big cliff above the road – against the backdrop of some very dark clouds!



Pyrenean saxifrage; Los Mallos at Agüero; painted lady.

We carried on towards Agüero, and after a quick photo stop to capture the village and the backdrop of the Mallos we turned off to the unfinished Santiago church, surrounded by juniper, buckthorn, mastic, kermes oak and strawberry trees. I gave some hurried explanations about the chapel and the Romanesque carvings – just as a cloudburst forced us to seek shelter in the portal!

It cleared up a bit, so we carried on to the back of the village. Sardinian warblers chattered into song in the bushes, while griffons came and went on the conglomerate cliffs of the Mallos. At our feet was an array of great plants: *Coris monspellensis*, *Helichrysum stoechas*, thyme broomrape, rue, rosemary, snapdragon, mayweed, aphyllantes, paronychia, thyme etc among juniper bushes. A true rock garden laid out on the rocks, tenacious plants clinging to the tiny amount of soil and substance to be found in the cracks – with not enough earth to allow the grasses to dominate. It was still cloudy and windy with rolling thunder and flashes of lightning to the south and the east, some of it echoing over the Mallos.

Vultures started coming and going, then the grey and white arrival of an Egyptian vulture. Rock doves and red-billed choughs joined them. There were plenty of painted ladies, and some wall browns were flitting around. It started spitting with rain, so we went back to the van and off to find somewhere for lunch. We had our picnic in Murillo – totally surrounded by nightingales. It rained at the end, so we hurried off for coffee in the hotel with the incredible view of the Mallos de Riglos.

We decided to go to Riglos to try and get close to the mighty rocks. We were walking up through the village when it started spitting with rain and we took shelter under a nettle tree (*Celtis australis*). The spitting turned to rain, turned to heavy rain, turned to hail, then more rain. It just seemed to be lightening up, then it would carry on! Streets were awash and impromptu cataracts cascaded down the 300m high cliffs! Luckily it was not particularly cold and we all had waterproofs on. The storm finally let up after 20 minutes and we were able to carry on. There was frantic bird activity as the rain stopped – goldfinches, house sparrows, black redstarts, blue tits, serins and marsh tits flitting about from bush to bush, while stage left the griffons just took off, one after another. We were just under the Mallos when we spotted a tiny cave opening with two perfectly framed Egyptian vultures: posed, looking out over the plain, seemingly checking out the weather! Around the corner we appreciated the enormity of the conglomerate rocks from up close, then back to the van, home, and a fire in the sitting room!

Highlights of the day: Ramonda at the dam and Egyptian vultures in their cave peering out.



Egyptian vultures in their cave peering out, perhaps thinking "Is it going to stop raining?"

Monday 5 May – Fago and Biniés

Cierzo – our dominant north wind. Overcast and cool

Because of weather, we had left some of the things that we normally do at the beginning of the week for the end, specifically the Fago and Biniés gorges – now that the road through the gorges is open again after being closed for all of 2024. It was cloudy all the way up, but no wind as the north-south orientation of the gorge means that is sheltered from the Cierzo.

First stop was at the viewpoint, overlooking the gorge dropping down 300m below us. Here were griffons, swifts, kestrels and, after some searching, a blue rock thrush. We walked up the gorge along the road for

about three kilometres. There was lots of interesting flora, some butterflies too. Pyrenean hyacinth, *Globularia gracilis*, *Saponaria ocymoides*, scorpion senna, St Lucie's cherry, Montpellier and Italian maples. A golden eagle was glimpsed going over on two occasions, plus buzzards and Egyptian vultures. As sun came out, birds got a bit more animated, as did butterflies.

Through Fago, with the macabre story of the man who killed the mayor just twenty years ago, then over the pass to Ansó. Questions were raised about how these isolated villages could ever have any services and there was general amazement at the generally excellent state of the roads. After a quick stop for coffee and loos in the postcard-perfect village of Ansó, we continued down the Veral valley to the viewpoint above Biniés gorge. Here, while the picnic was prepared, we were able to enjoy a lovely flower-covered bank where woodcock, lady, yellow bee and burnt-tip orchids were found, plus veronica, basil thyme, purple gromwell, marjoram and bastard balm. Spanish swallowtail, Berger's clouded yellow, panoptes blue and orange tips flitted by, Bonelli's warblers were heard and a peregrine zoomed by on an urgent mission while lots of griffons came and went to the cliffs in the Gorge.

Then we dropped down to Biniés meadow, where in a muddy puddle we found a profusion of blues: small, osiris, common, Amanda's, green-underside, Provence and chalkhill, plus skippers – red-underwing, southern and rosy grizzled – quite sensational!

Finally, we drove up the rise to see Berdún again and realised the strength of the wind that we had been missing all day. We made a quick visit to the Aragón River at Martes bridge with a single objective – to find some brown bluebells (*Dipcadi serotinum*) so Everard could see that they really do exist, but unfortunately none were out yet. Military, early spider, mirror and yellow bee orchids somewhat made up for the Dipcadi disappointment, with subalpine warbler, nightingales, grey wagtail and little ringed plover on the river.

Home for dinner and last checklist. Highlight of the day: puddling blues.



Puddling green-underside blues.

As usual on a Honeyguide holiday, people were asked for their holiday highlights:

Jill	Fantastic flowers, daffodils, bee-eaters, crested tit, scarce swallowtail.
Ann	Butterflies puddling, Egyptian vultures in their cave, bittern, marmot calls in the high mountains, the echoing thunder rolling off the cliffs in Riglos during the storm. Marta's cooking.
Everard	Mountain meadows, bee-eaters, Montagu's harrier.
Tove	Rock formations, Egyptian vultures, gentians and butterflies
Gill	Super abundance of floral displays, puddling butterflies, Short-toed Eagle, walk to the Riglos Mallos in the rain, Ramonda
Daphne	Bittern, landscapes and geology, bee-eaters
Fiona	Gentians, bittern, butterflies puddling, the variety of plants, snowbells, all the orchids
Peter	Bittern (a lifer for me), the Ramonda display at the dam and having really got to know Pitillas Lagoon.

Tuesday 6 May – Bilbao and home

We drove back to Bilbao and the airport for midday flights.

CO₂ report: I now own a plug-in hybrid petrol van, so some CO₂ was saved during the trip. We did a total of 1556km, of which 576km were done using electricity.

Peter Rich, Casa Sarasa, Berdún

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WILDLIFE LISTS

BIRDS

Great crested grebe
Black necked grebe
Cormorant
Great white egret
Little egret
Grey heron
Purple heron
Bittern
White stork
Mallard
Black kite
Red kite
Egyptian vulture
Griffon vulture
Short-toed eagle
Marsh harrier
Montagu's harrier
Goshawk
Common buzzard
Golden eagle
Booted eagle
Common kestrel
Peregrine
Quail
Mute Swan
Shelduck
Pochard
Red-crested pochard
Gadwall
Black-winged stilt
Little ringed plover
Coot
Black-headed gull
Yellow-legged gull
Black tern

Rock dove
Woodpigeon
Collared dove
Cuckoo
Swift
Kingfisher
Bee-eater
Hoopoe
Iberian green woodpecker
Great spotted woodpecker
Crested lark
Thekla lark
Skylark
Crag martin
Swallow
Red-rumped swallow
House martin
Meadow pipit
Water pipit
Yellow wagtail
Grey wagtail
White wagtail
Dipper
Wren
Dunnock
Robin
Nightingale
Black redstart
Whinchat
Stonechat
Black-eared wheatear
Rock thrush
Blue rock thrush
Blackbird
Song thrush

Cetti's warbler
Fan-tailed warbler
Great reed warbler
Melodious warbler
Subalpine warbler
Sardinian warbler
Blackcap
Bonelli's warbler
Chiffchaff
Goldcrest
Spotted flycatcher
Pied flycatcher
Long-tailed tit
Marsh tit
Crested tit
Coal tit
Blue tit
Great tit
Jay
Magpie
Alpine chough
Red-billed chough
Carrion crow
Raven
Spotless starling
House sparrow
Chaffinch
Serin
Greenfinch
Goldfinch
Linnet
Cirl bunting
Reed bunting
Corn bunting

KEY TO LOCALITIES

B – Berdún, including the Badlands and the banks of the Veral and Aragón
H – High Pyrenees (Portalet, Formigal, Aïsa, Hecho, Anso, Roncal, Bellagua, Gabardito)
G – Gorges (Biniés, Lumbier and Arbayún)
P – Pre-Pyrenees (San Juan de la Peña, Santa Cruz de la Seros, Oroel, Riglos, Agüero and Loarre)

MAMMALS (including droppings and other signs)

Pipistrelle B
Soprano Pipistrelle B
Bent-winged bat
Red Squirrel B H P
Alpine Marmot H
Common Vole H
Wild Boar B H P
Roe Deer B H
Isard

BUTTERFLIES

Southern Grizzled Skipper
Red underwing Skipper
Rosy grizzled Skipper
Scarce Swallowtail
Spanish Festoon
Large White
Small White
Bath White
Orange-tip
Clouded Yellow
Berger's Clouded Yellow
Brimstone
Small pearl-bordered Fritillary

AMPHIBIANS

Iberian Water Frog B G
Common Frog H

REPTILES

Iberian Wall Lizard B H G P
Common Wall Lizard B H
Pyrenean Rock Lizard H
Large Psammmodromus G

Painted Lady
Wall
Speckled Wood
Duke of Burgundy
Common Blue
Holly Blue
Black-eyed Blue
Green-underside Blue
Panoptes Blue
Small Blue
Amanda's blue

MOTHS

Casilda consecraria
Great Prominent
White point
Spurge Hawkmoth
Muslin moth

Hummingbird Hawkmoth
Burnet Companion
Mother Shipton
Epinotia thapsiana
Lesser Yellow Underwing

Grass Eggar
Zygaena lavanduli

OTHER INVERTEBRATES

Arion ater - a large black slug H P
Cepaea hortensis Banded Snail B
Misumenia vatia - a crab spider B P
Scutigera coleoptrata - a centipede B
Anacridium aegyptiacum Egyptian Locust B G P
Pholidoptera griseoptera Dark Bush-cricket B
Orthetrum cancellatum Black-tailed skimmer
Sympetrum fonscolombei Red-veined Darter P
S. striolatum Common Darter B
Crocothemis erythraea Scarlet Darter B
Ischnura elegans Blue-tailed Damselfly B
Coenagrion puella Azure Bluet
Aquarius najas - a large pond skater B G
Peirates stridulus - a red and black bug

Bombylius major Bee-fly B G
Cicindela campestris Green Tiger-beetle B G P
Copris lunaris - a dung beetle B
Geotrupes stercorarius Dor-beetle H
Blaps mucronatus Churchyard Beetle B G
Dasylabris maura - a velvet ant B
Diplolepis rosae Robin's Pin-cushion Gall B G
Apis mellifera Honeybee B
Bombus terrestris - a bumblebee B
Xylocopa violacea Violet Carpenter-bee B G P
Chrysis ignita - a ruby-tailed wasp B P
Polistes sp. - a paper wasp B G P
Eumenes sp. - a potter wasp G
Ammophila sp. - a sand wasp B P

PLANTS

BRYOPHYTES (Mosses)

Grimmia pulvinata B
Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus B

PTERIDOPHYTES (Ferns)

Asplenium trichomanes Maidenhair Spleenwort H G P
Ceterach officinarum Rustyback Fern B G
Polydodium vulgare Common Polypody H G P
Polystichum lonchitis Holly Fern H
Pteridium aquilinum Bracken P

GYMNOSPERMS (Conifers)

Abies alba Silver Fir G P
Cupressus sempervirens Cypress B G P
Juniperus communis Juniper B G P
J. communis ssp. *nana* H
J. oxycedrus P
J. phoenicia Phoenician Juniper G P
Pinus halepensis Aleppo Pine P
P. nigra Black / Austrian Pine B H G P
P. laricius Corsican Pine
P. sylvestris Scots Pine B H G P



'Bonsai' Austrian pine.

DICOTYLEDONS

Aceraceae

Acer campestre Field Maple B G P
A. monspessulanum Montpellier Maple G
A. opalus G

Anacardiaceae

Pistachia lentiscus Lentisc G P
P. terebinthus Turpentine Tree G P

Apiaceae

Bupleurum falcatum -Sickle-leaved Hare's Ear
B. rigidum B G
Carum carvi Caraway H
Conopodium majus Pignut P
C. pyrenaicum P
Eryngium bourgatii Pyrenean Eryngo H
E. campestre Field Eryngo B G P
Foeniculum vulgare Fennel B P
Scandix pecten-veneris Shepherd's-needle B P

Apocynaceae

Vinca major Greater Periwinkle B H
V. minor Lesser Periwinkle P

Aquifoliaceae

Ilex aquifolium Holly P

Araliaceae

Hedera helix Ivy B H G P

Asteraceae

Achillea millefolium Yarrow H P
Artemisia absinthium Wormwood B P
A. campestre Field Southernwood B
Bellis perennis Daisy B H P
Calendula arvensis Field Marigold B P
C. officinalis B
Carduus C. carlinoides Pyrenean Thistle H
C. tenuiflorus Slender Thistle B
C. lanceolatus
Carlina acaulis Stemless Carline-thistle H
C. vulgaris Carline-thistle B H G
Cichorium intybus Chicory G
Cirsium arvense Creeping Thistle B P
Crepis vesicaria Beaked Hawk's-beard B P
Crupina vulgaris Bearded creeper
Filago pyramidata Broad-leaved Cudweed B P
Helichrysum stoechas B G P
Lactuca perennis Blue Lettuce G

Onopordon acanthium Scotch Thistle B
Pallenis spinosa P
Picris hieracioides Hawkweed Ox-tongue B
Santolina chamaecyparissus Lavender Cotton B G P
Senecio vulgaris Groundsel B P
Silybum marianum Milk Thistle B P
Sonchus oleraceus Smooth Sow-thistle B P
Taraxacum sp. Dandelion B H P
Berberidaceae
Berberis vulgaris Barberry B G P
 Betulaceae
Betula pendula Silver Birch B H G P
Boraginaceae
Borago officinalis Borage B
Buglossoides purpureo-caerulea Purple Gromwell B G
B. arvensis Corn Gromwell
Echium vulgare Viper's-bugloss B G P
Lithodora fruticosum Shrubby Gromwell B G P
Lithospermum arvense Corn Gromwell B P
Myosotis alpestris Alpine Forget-me-not H
Symphytum officinale Comfrey B P
Brassicaceae
Aethionema saxatile Burnt Candytuft G P
Arabis alpina Alpine Rock-cress H G P
A. turrita Towercress G P
Biscutella didyma P
Brassica napus Rape B
Capsella bursa-pastoris Shepherd's-purse B
Cardamine raphanifolia G
Cardaria draba Hoary Cress B P
Diplotaxis muralis Annual Wall-rocket B
D. ericoides White rocket
Draba aizoides Yellow Whitlow-grass H
D. dubia H
Erophila verna Early Whitlow-grass G P
Eruca sativa Purple-veined rocket
Erysimum grandiflorum H
Iberis sempervirens H
Matthiola fruticulosa Sad Stock G
Sisymbrium altissimum Tall Rocket B
S. officinale Hedge Mustard B
Buxaceae
Buxus sempervirens Box B H G P
Cannabaceae
Humulus lupulus Hop G
Caprifoliaceae
Lonicera etrusca Perfoliate Honeysuckle G
L. periclymenum Honeysuckle B
L. pyrenaicum Pyrenean Honeysuckle G
L. xylosteum Fly Honeysuckle B G P
Sambucus ebulus Dwarf Elder B G P
Sambucus nigra Elder G
Viburnum lantana Wayfaring Tree B G P
Caryophyllaceae
Arenaria grandiflora P
Cerastium fontanum Common Mouse-ear B P
Paronychia kapela P
Petrocoptis hispanica G
Petrorhagia prolifera G
Saponaria ocymoides Rock Soapwort G P H
Silene alba White Campion B G P
S. nutans Nottingham Catchfly B H G P
S. vulgaris Bladder Campion B P
Stellaria media Common Chickweed B G P
Chenopodiaceae
Chenopodium C. bonus-henricus Good King Henry
 H
C. polyspermum Many-seeded Goosefoot B
Cistaceae
Helianthemum apenninum
H. nummularium Common Rock-rose B G
H. ledifolium
H. nummularium ssp. *pyrenaicum* B G P

Convolvulaceae
Convolvulus cantabricus B G
Cuscuta epithymum Dodder B G P
Cornaceae
Cornus sanguinea Dogwood B G P
Corylaceae
Carpinus betulus Hornbeam P
Corylus avellana Hazel B G P
Crassulaceae
Sedum album White Stonecrop B
S. dasyphyllum Thick-leaved Stonecrop B G P
S. reflexum Rock Stonecrop G P
Petrosedum sediforme Pale Stonecrop
Sempervivum montanum H
Umbilicus rupestris Navelwort G P
Cucurbitaceae
Bryonia dioica White Bryony B G P
Dipsacaceae
Dipsacus fullonum Teasel B
Ericaceae
Arbutus unedo Strawberry tree
Arctostaphylos uva-ursi Bearberry P
Rhododendron ferrugineum Alpenrose H
Vaccinium myrtillus Bilberry P
Euphorbiaceae
Euphorbia amygdaloides Wood Spurge B G P
E. characias B G P
E. exigua P
E. flavicoma H
E. helioscopia Sun Spurge B
E. lathyris Caper Spurge B
E. peplus Petty spurge
E. serrata B G P
Fabaceae
Anthyllis montana Mountain Kidney-vetch H
A. vulneraria ssp. *forondae* Kidney Vetch H P
A. vulneraria ssp. *pyrenaica* H G P
Argyrolobium zanonii G
Cercis siliquastrum Judas Tree B P
Coronilla emerus Scorpion Vetch B G
C. scorpioides P
Dorycnium hirsutum G
D. pentaphyllum B G P
Echinospartium horridum P
Genista hispanica Spanish Gorse B G P
Hippocrepis comosa Horseshoe Vetch B H G P
Lathyrus aphaca
L. montanus Bitter Vetch P
L. vernus Spring Pea P
Lotus alpinus H
L. corniculatus Bird's-foot-trefoil B P
Medicago lupulina Black Medick B P
M. sativa Lucerne B
Onobrychis
O. viciifolia Sainfoin B P
Ononis fruticosa Shrubby Rest-harrow B G P
Oxytropis campestris Meadow Milk-vetch B G
O. pyrenaica H
Psoralea bituminosa Pitch Trefoil B G P
Robinia pseudoacacia False Acacia B P
Spartium junceum Spanish Broom P
Tetragonolobus maritimus Dragon's-teeth B
Trifolium
T. pratense Red Clover G
T. repens White Clover B
Vicia cracca
V. pyrenaica Pyrenean Vetch H
V. sativa Common Vetch B P
V. villosa Fodder Vetch B
Fagaceae
Fagus sylvatica Beech H P
Quercus coccifera Kermes Oak B G P
Q. faginea P

Q. ilex Holm Oak B G P
Q. pubescens Downy Oak G
Q. pyrenaica Pyrenean Oak G P

Fumariaceae

Corydalis solida H

Fumaria

F. officinalis Fumitory B P

Gentianaceae

Blackstonia perfoliata Yellow-wort B G

Gentiana acaulis Trumpet Gentian H

G. occidentalis Pyrenean Gentian

G. verna Spring Gentian H

Geraniaceae

Erodium cicutarium Common Stork's-bill B G P

Geranium columbinum Long-stalked Crane's-bill G

G. molle Dove's-foot Crane's-bill B G P

G. purpureum Little-Robin B G

G. pusillum Small-flowered Crane's-bill B

G. pyreneum

G. robertianum Herb-Robert B G P

G. rotundifolium Round-leaved Crane's-bill B G P

G. sanguineum Bloody Crane's-bill P

Gesneriaceae

Ramonda myconi B G P

Globulariaceae

Globularia cordifolia B

G. gracilis G

G. nudicaulis H

G. punctata G P

G. repens H P

Juglandaceae

Juglans regia Walnut B P

Lamiaceae

Acinos alpinus Alpine Basil-thyme H

A. arvensis Basil-thyme P

Lamium purpureum Red Dead-nettle H P

Lavandula angustifolia B P

Marrubium vulgare White Horehound B P

Melittis melissophyllum Bastard-balm G

Mentha aquatica Water Mint B

Phlomis lychnitis B G P

Rosmarinus officinalis Rosemary P

Salvia verbenaca Wild Clary B G P

Sideritis hirsuta P

Thymus pulegium Large Thyme B

T. vulgaris Garden Thyme B G P

Lentibulariaceae

Pinguicula grandiflora Large-flowered Butterwort H

Linaceae

Linum bienne Pale Flax B

L. narbonense Beautiful Flax B G P

L. perenne Perennial Flax B

L. suffruticosum Pyrenean Flax B G

Loranthaceae

Viscum album ssp. *album* Mistletoe B G

Malvaceae

Malva sylvestris Common Mallow B G

M. neglecta Dwarf Mallow B P

Moraceae

Ficus carica Fig B G P

Oleaceae

Fraxinus excelsior Ash B G

Jasminum fruticans Wild Jasmine B G P

Olea europaea Olive P

Phillyrea angustifolia

P. latifolia G

Orobanchaceae

Orobanche alba Thyme Broomrape P

O. gracilis G

Papaveraceae

Glaucium corniculatum Red horned Poppy

Papaver argemone Prickly Poppy P

P. dubium Long-headed Poppy B

P. hybridum Rough Poppy B P

P. rhoeas Common Poppy B P

Platanaceae

Platanus hispanica

Plantaginaceae

Plantago lanceolata Ribwort Plantain B

P. major Greater Plantain B G

P. sempervirens B P

Chaenorhinum organifolium Malling toadflax

Polygalaceae

Polygala alpestris H P

P. calcarea Chalk Milkwort P

P. comosa Tufted Milkwort B G P

P. nicaeensis B G P

P. vulgaris Common Milkwort B

Polygonaceae

Oxyria digyna Mountain Sorrel H G

Polygonum aviculare Knotgrass B P

Rumex crispus Curled Dock B

R. obtusifolius Broad-leaved Dock B

R. pulcher Fiddle Dock B

Primulaceae

Anagallis arvensis Scarlet Pimpernel B G P

A. foemina Blue Pimpernel

Androsace pyrenaica H

A. villosa H

Coris monspeliensis B G

Primula elatior Oxlip H

P. farinosa Bird's-eye Primrose H

P. hirsuta H

P. veris Cowslip H G P

P. veris x *elatior* H

Soldanella alpina Alpine Snowbell H

Vitaliana primuliflora Yellow Rock-jasmine H

Ranunculaceae

Aquilegia vulgaris Columbine G P

Caltha palustris Marsh-marigold H

Clematis vitalba Traveller's-joy B G P

Helleborus foetidus Stinking Hellebore B G P

H. viridis Green Hellebore H G

Hepatica nobilis H P

Ranunculus acris Meadow Buttercup H

R. amplexicaulis H

R. bulbosus Bulbous Buttercup H G

R. gouanii H

R. pyrenaicus H

Thalictrum tuberosum B G P

Resedaceae

Reseda lutea Mignonette B G P

Rhamnaceae

Rhamnus alaternus Mediterranean Buckthorn G P

R. alpinus H

R. pumilus Dwarf Buckthorn H

Rosaceae

Alchemilla alpina Alpine Lady's-mantle H

Amelanchier ovalis Snowy Mespilus B H G P

Crataegus monogyna Hawthorn B H G P

Fragaria vesca Wild Strawberry H G P

Malus sylvestris Crab Apple G P

Potentilla repens Creeping Cinquefoil B G

P. tabernaemontani Spring Cinquefoil B H G P

Prunus avium Wild Cherry H P

P. mahaleb St Lucie's Cherry G P

Rosa canina Dog Rose B H G

R. glauca B G

R. rubiginosa Sweet-briar G

Rubus fruticosus Bramble B G P

Sanguisorba minor Salad Burnet B H G P

Sorbus aria Whitebeam G P

S. aucuparia Rowan B

Rubiaceae

Cruciata laevipes Crosswort B P

Galium aparine Cleavers B G

G. mollugo Hedge Bedstraw G
G. verum Lady's Bedstraw G

Rubia peregrina Wild Madder B G P

Salicaceae

Populus nigra Black Poplar B G

P. tremula Aspen B

Salix alba

S. eleagnos B

S. pyrenaica H

Saxifragaceae

Saxifraga granulata Meadow Saxifrage H P

S. longifolia Pyrenean Saxifrage H G P

S. moschata Musky Saxifrage H

S. tridactylites Rue-leaved Saxifrage H G

Scrophulariaceae

Antirrhinum majus Snapdragon B G P

Bellardia trixago

Cymbalaria muralis Ivy-leaved Toadflax B Linaria

alpina Alpine Toadflax H

Veronica hederifolia Ivy-leaved Speedwell B

V. nummularia H

V. teucricum H

Solanaceae

Solanum dulcamara Bittersweet B G

Thymelaeaceae

Daphne laureola Spurge-laurel P

Ulmaceae

Ulmus minor Elm B G

Celtis australis Nettle tree P

Urticaceae

Parietaria judaica Pellitory-of-the-wall G P

Urtica dioica Stinging Nettle B G P

U. urens Annual Nettle B

Valerianaceae

Centranthus ruber Red Valerian B

Valeriana tuberosa

Violaceae

Viola cornuta Horned Pansy H

V. odorata Sweet Violet G P

V. pyrenaica Pyrenean Violet H P

V. riviniana Common Dog-violet P

V. rupestris Teesdale Violet H

Vitidaceae

Vitis vinifera Grape-vine G

MONOCOTYLEDONS

Amaryllidaceae

Narcissus minor H

N. pseudonarcissus ssp. *alpestris* P

N. pseudonarcissus ssp. *pseudonarcissus* H

N. abscissus

Cyperaceae

Schoenus nigricans Black Bog-rush B

Scirpus holoschoenus Round-headed Club-rush B G

Dioscoreaceae

Tamus communis Black Bryony G

Iridaceae

Gladiolus sp. Wild Gladiolus G

Iris germanica Purple Iris P

I. latifolia English Iris

I. albiflorus

I. graminea B

I. pseudacorus Yellow Flag B

Liliaceae

Allium roseum Rose Garlic B P

Aphyllanthes monspeliensis B G P

Asparagus acutifolius G

Asphodelus albus White Asphodel H G P

A. fistulosus Hollow-stemmed asphodel

Fritillaria pyrenaica Pyrenean Snake's-head B H G P

Hyacinthus amethystinus B G P

Lillium martagon

Muscari comosum Tassel Hyacinth B G P

M. neglectum Grape-hyacinth B G P

Scilla verna Spring Squill H

Orchidaceae

Anacamptis pyramidalis Pyramidal Orchid G

Aceras anthropophorum Man Orchid

Dactylorhiza sambucina Elder-flowered Orchid H P

Himantoglossum hircinum Lizard Orchid G

Ophrys apifera Bee orchid

O. fusca Sombre Bee-orchid B G

O. lutea Yellow Bee-orchid B G

O. scolopax Woodcock Orchid B G P

O. speculum Mirror Orchid B G P

O. sphegodes Early Spider-orchid B G P

Orchis mascula Early Purple-orchid H G P

O. militaris Military Orchid B

O. purpurea Lady Orchid B G

O. ustulata Burnt Orchid B

Platanthera bifolia Lesser Butterfly-orchid B



Corydalis solida (AG), man orchids, burnt-tip orchid.