

Spanish Pyrenees

3 – 10 June 2006

Trip report

Leaders

John Muddeman & Robin Chittenden

Daily Diary

Saturday 3 June

John fortunately arrived well over an hour ahead of the group, allowing him to get into the *enormous* queue for the car hire at the airport, so when the group arrived we 'only' had to wait about 30 minutes before getting out to the vehicles... Getting away at c. 2:30 we started the long drive to Jaca and having got some miles under our belts either snacked in the buses or in the car park of a cafe with views towards Montserrat.

Little was really of note en route, apart from a few White Storks on a huge nest on a church tower in a village, and we only noted our first raptor, a Black Kite, after 240 km! However, a few more appeared and at a third stop (this time for icecreams) at a petrol station, we also noted our first Spotless Starlings, Crested Lark, Serin and White Wagtail. As we headed N of Huesca, so the abundant flowering hummocks of *Echinospartium horridum* became quite a roadside feature for a while.

We finally arrived at a little after 7 p.m., only to discover one of the suitcases was not ours, and one of ours was missing.

Sunday 4 June

The day dawned, fine, clear and cool. Ideal. We left at 9 after breakfast and headed towards the Hecho valley. A few raptors off to one side, including Black and Red Kites and Egyptian Vulture, produced a 'brief' roadside stop, with further interest in the form of two distant Booted Eagles and several Griffon Vultures to boot, while the trees around held singing Bonelli's Warblers and the verges were sprinkled with Rue-leaved Isopyrum and a few butterflies including Black-veined White, Adonis Blue, and Marsh and Meadow Fritillaries.

Time just flew by, so we headed up towards the Gabardito walking refuge. The car park at the end had a number of cars, camper vans and a coach present; this was clearly the weekend! A couple of clumps of Common Columbine brightened up the edge of the car park. A couple of the local Citril Finches called from the pines near the refuge but refused to show except to just one or two at a time and for only a few seconds each time. These subtly coloured birds kept us on the go for some time as they moved about and fed occasionally under the pines, while frustratingly, even on our return only part of the group arrived in time to see a superb male in full song.

After considerable deliberation over a raptor which had perched on a very distant crag top, the pale shawl confirmed it as a Golden Eagle, sadly our only one of the trip as it turned out.

We strolled sedately through the woods, noting our first Green Hellebores and leaves of the abundant Hepatica, though a fine little colony of One-flowered Wintergreens under the shadow of the pines and a single spike of Bird's-nest Orchid were of most note. Birds included the local Coal and Great Tits, and very brief singing Chiffchaff and Goldcrest. The cool conditions were keeping butterflies down, though several fine Duke of Burgundy butterflies graced the juniper bushes on our return in hotter sunny conditions. A huge cliff opposite had perched Griffon Vultures and their now well-grown offspring, while the first of numerous Red-billed Choughs made an appearance, swooping down towards a pasture

below us, calling loudly. A few more butterflies commanded attention, and the dainty spike of a Burnt-tip Orchid graced the rather dry turf.

We pushed along to the end of a large crag which loomed over the rather rough path. 'A gentle slope' was not entirely true, but the reason for pushing ourselves to here soon became evident as a superb Wallcreeper fluttered out from a deep cleft and out onto the front of the rockface, albeit rather high! It worked its way across, then finally back again, much to the 'relief' of several on the tour! Lunch was taken here, despite the near trampling from numerous passing walkers, and as hoped, our views of the Wallcreeper were bettered later when two appeared, the adult male feeding the other bird. A pair of Alpine Swifts and numerous Crag Martins were also seen by most, but no so the rather elusive singing Rock Bunting trying to masquerade as one of the local Dunnocks.

A number of plants caught our eyes here and on the walk back, including *Gobularia repens*, Mountain Clover and a few Trumpet Gentians. While trying to track down the flighty Citril Finches again, a couple of Lammergeiers, one carrying a backbone around for the entire time, wheeled around for c. 10 minutes before finally disappearing over the mountain top, a superb sight.

We rounded off the day with a few minutes in a typically windy, but fortunately warm, Boca del Infierno. A few Grey Wagtails kept us entertained in our wait, though no Wallcreepers appeared, despite one of Robin's friends appearing for a chat!

Monday 5 June

A pre-breakfast walk down to the 'Jaca bridge' was very productive, with different groups seeing Golden Oriole, Melodious Warblers, Garden Warblers and a few Nightingales en route! A Dipper performed well in the river for all.

We started our drive up towards the Astún ski centre, though a raptor circling high off to one side caught our attention at one point, and a careful check revealed a superb circling Black Vulture, a rare bird for the area and a terrific find!

Almost at the Somport Pass we got out to seemingly empty high altitude meadows and scrub, and in fact it took considerable patience to drag out a few birds. These were well worth it though, with great views of singing Rock Bunting, a family of Black Redstarts, Dunnock and Northern Wheatears, while a bit of judicious 'pishing' pulled a number of fine Crossbills out of the dense pines for all to see well. Common Wall Lizards were abundant along the roadsides, but marmots were strangely absent.

Parking near the ski station we took a somewhat truncated walk - just how much noise and dust can people create around a ski station in summer?! However, we finally also watched a close Water Pipit, almost completing the suite of alpine species here. A drinks break was called for before taking lunch 'over the road' at the Candanchu ski station and luckily one of the skiers' bars was open! Lunch around the car park in a stiff chill breeze was somewhat curtailed with the discovery of a large flock of Alpine and a few Red-billed Choughs feeding on the turf opposite!

A little stream valley was also a heat trap, pulling in several butterflies including Green Hairstreak and Dinky Skipper among a selection of plants, including most notably, Bird's-eye Primrose and Large-flowered Butterwort on the edge of the water where a few Common Frogs were hiding.

Walking a gravel path through the meadows and rock outcrops we soon noted yet more of the rather pale local Northern Wheatears, our first good Rock Thrushes and plenty more Water Pipits, while two large groups of Pyrenean Chamois (=Isard) fed high in a coll above us, the young gambling across the precipitous slopes. An adult Lammergeier drifted past high, giving more prolonged views than one which had dropped down behind some cliffs earlier, though attention switched again to a couple of brief Alpine Marmots foraging the sward and a few more Pyrenean Chamois lower down, which were fun to watch in the scopes. Plants then caught our eye, including plenty of Dragonmouth and a clump of Moss Champion amongst others, plus a couple of feeding Hummingbird Hawk-moths. Three more much closer Pyrenean Chamois were visible on our return to the bus!

Our last stop took us into a rather dry steep roadside meadow, dotted with orchids, though many were already going over, including Elder-flowered, Green-winged, Early Purple and Greater Butterfly, plus

single Common Twayblade and a group of marsh orchids in a damper patch at the top. Several Spiked Rampion were also beginning to open. A couple of calling Citril Finches here remained unseen, but not so a fine Red-backed Shrike, a pretty bird to round off the day.

Tuesday 6 June

Given no planned change (i.e. cooling!) in the weather for the rest of the week, we headed down into the lowlands for the day. Our first stop was by a rather too dry pool near Huesca, where the dense vegetation kept all the waterbirds from view! A pity, though a group of students flushed a few Mallard and a White Stork for us, and noisy Great Reed Warblers sat on tall reedmace heads for us to admire in the scopes. Walking round to the exit channel produced Corn Buntings, Crested Larks and a couple of Tree Sparrows, plus the first of three female-type Marsh Harriers, with a couple of Coot and a very brief Little Grebe on the open water. A huge patrolling Emperor Dragonfly and lots of crayfish were rather easier to spot though! Our first Jackdaws were noted as we left, along with terrific views of a very smart and chestnut-crowned Woodchat Shrike.

We passed the little village of Montmesa and along one of the numerous tracks in the area soon found several Calandra Larks our in a fallow field, with a couple of Greater Short-toed Larks giving good views - a real bonus in the strong heat haze. A pair of Tawny Pipits from the first bus was only matched by another Greater Short-toed Lark alongside a Rock Sparrow from the second! A male Marsh Harrier floated across the fields for all.

A couple of Purple Herons and passing Little and Cattle Egrets were about all that was noted on the edge of the reservoir as we approached, though a few Great Crested Grebes were out in the middle. A fine selection of midges finally drove us away and round to a shady lunch spot with picnic tables. Luxury! Griffon Vultures, Black Kite, Serins, Goldfinches, Greenfinches, singing Golden Orioles (three of which sped over giving brief views) and Nightingale were all noted, despite the heat.

The return was via a rather quiet back road, though the views over the main part of the reservoir revealed some very distant dark dots. Sadly, given a severe heat haze they stayed that way, though we could just about make out the flickering forms of a large flock of Black Terns way out over the middle of the water...

A roadside stop near the Ardisa reservoir was a delight, with several dozen butterflies of multiple species feeding on roadside scabious flowers. Swallowtails, a Southern Small and two Western Bath Whites, Cleopatras, False Ilex Hairstreaks, an Adonis Blue, Cardinal and Provençal Fritillaries, Spanish Gatekeepers and Essex and a Mediterranean Skipper among other made a wonderful sight. Simon concentrated on the birds and picked up a passing Red-rumped Swallow, our first ever in this area. The reservoir however was something of a disappointment, though a Hoopoe and a couple of Sand Martins were of note, while as we left, the spillway below us produced a number of smart Little Ringed Plovers on the rather bare concrete. Our last new bird for the day and nice to pick up since we hadn't seen any around the reservoir.

Nick and Mary rounded off their day by seeing a Scops Owl at the end of the park, so we pencilled it in for another evening...

Wednesday 7 June

A pre-breakfast visit in the vans to the local river was successful again, this time including a Green Woodpecker for the earlier walkers, 2 male and a female Hobby, two Bee-eaters, 2 Dippers and a singing Skylark for variety!

After yesterday's longer drive we stayed closer to the hotel, with the morning walking a couple of sections of a small, quiet side road in the bottom of the valley. Things seemed very quiet as we parked, but we paused for a few minutes on a little bridge just to 'wait and see'. An excellent choice, since a pale phase Booted Eagle soon circled out over the adjacent woods giving us our best views. Bonelli's Warblers sang from the nearby woods too, several coming out very close at one point to dispute an

invisible territory boundary, while along the stream, large numbers of Spanish Pool Frogs 'laughed' raucously in the sun. A short snatch of song revealed a superb Wryneck sat next to a pair of Linnets, but against the sun. Fortunately this came down into our little valley and sang repeatedly in view for some time. Long enough in fact for John to find a calling male Subalpine Warbler behind us, which showed well in a small ash, and also for Robin to then notice an Orphean Warbler, and a pair of these elusive birds sneaked through the bushes in front, though were difficult to see clearly!

The butterflies were also excellent along this stretch as we finally walked up, with dapper Southern White Admirals, showy Marbled Fritillaries and abundant False Ilex Hairstreaks and Spanish Gatekeepers to keep us more than occupied. A few of the very pale greyish-looking Spanish Chalkhill Blues were on the wing too among the shorter herbs. The flowers were good too, with abundant Shrubby Restharrow and Pyrenean Flax of most note.

Another stretch in slightly more open terrain saw us watching first one, then another superb Short-toed Eagle, a Woodlark sang and showed all too briefly on the hillside and a superb male Rock Thrush put in a couple of short visits, perching openly in some small dead trees. All to the accompaniment of a few calling Bee-eaters on the opposite slopes.

Lunch was taken at San Juan de la Peña, near the near Monastery. The continued building works were less than ideal, but at least the little café here provided good coffees and there were loos too! It was actually unusually quiet for birds, though as we left for a walk through the woods, some of us heard a Black Woodpecker call twice. Or was it some other birders playing a tape? We'll never know! Coal Tits, a Nuthatch and singing Robins and Song Thrushes seemed more typical of the UK, but a couple of Short-toed Treecreepers soon put paid to that idea! A singing Firecrest, just like the ones in Jaca remained high in the canopy and unseen, but at least the views from the *Balcón de los Pirineos* to the spine of the Pyrenees were good, a few passing Griffon Vultures adding to the scene.

The pink local form of Common Rock-rose and showy spikes of Dropwort in the calcareous grassland caught our eyes on the way back, while more plants were on hand down at the old Monastery, especially the abundant *Petrocoptis hispanica* flowering beautifully on its walls, here at its type location. St Bernard's Lily, Solomon's-seal, and the endemic Pyrenean Saxifrage and Ramonda were also of most note, while those pushing on little further were also rewarded with a few showy flowers of Bastard Balm. We finished the main part of the day with another pause en route down, this time for the remarkable spikes of the large Pyrenean Bellflower growing on the roadside banks.

An earlier dinner, less talking (!) and a rapid exit meant we were soon speeding our way back towards Puente la Reina to get there before dusk. Just, as it happened, and as darkness fell we looked and listened to the evening sounds, unfortunately dominated by a number of very noisy frogs (!), though there were three very brief views of foraging Eurasian Nightjar over the surroundings, and also a brief churr from one, but no sign of our main target. Indeed, once it was too dark to see well, we drove on, passing a notably large gathering of other birders just round the corner, and cruised the back road. A fine Midwife Toad was not what we'd hoped for, but an interesting find, nevertheless, and we returned to Jaca having given it our best go.

Thursday 8 June

After our late night out (!) we had no official early morning walk, though the usual suspects were noted by the early risers.

We first headed W, stopping on a roadside near Puente la Reina again, the second bus briefly seeing a Turtle Dove, this time looking at an area of Box scrub with woodland behind. Birds again took their time to get going, but we soon picked out singing Stonechat and Corn Bunting, and a couple of Red-backed Shrikes were in constant close attention. Finally, an Ortolan Bunting, cryptically positioned in the scrub, was soon picked out by Robin, though it was chased off energetically by a Corn Bunting before all had seen it in the scopes. It wasn't too long before it reappeared though, and in the meantime we content ourselves with singing Cirl Bunting and a fine Ocellated Lizard which had hauled itself out onto a large rock to try and warm up. Various butterflies also caught our attention, and some Southern White Admirals, rather less mobile than those the day before, made good photographic subjects.

We pushed on down towards Riglos, where it was fortunately breezy, keeping the temperature down a little. A short walk along the roadside revealed singing Orphean Warbler, Crested Lark and a fine Bee Orchid, but little else, so we soon moved on towards the 'mallos'. More roadside birds lead to a long delay here, with two male and a single, very busy female Black-eared Wheatear on the slopes, joined by Tawny Pipits feeding chicks and eventually everyone managed to see one or two of the family of Dartford Warblers flitting between the scrub patches.

Time was running away, so we moved on again to have lunch in the car park at Riglos, under the towering rock pinnacles. A good move, since it also produced our only Peregrine of the trip and great views of the passing Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Red-billed Choughs and a couple of brief Alpine Swifts. It also helped us contemplate the futility of rock climbing, with several groups of climbers working their way up the cliffs, mostly along routes worked a thousand times and worn smooth by their passage.

The slopes under the mallos were remarkably quiet, possibly given disturbance from the climbers, so we continued on and 'round the back', a very brief snatch of song from a wheeling Blue Rock Thrush only being picked up by one or two lucky members of the party. The wind was funnelling through the gap, but the shade was welcome, and allowed us to scan the slopes opposite. Fortunately, almost immediately we picked out the tiny dark forms of a pair of distant Black Wheatears, foraging on the scree slopes, but they stayed tantalisingly distant, especially in the shaking scopes! We waited patiently to the sound of shreeping Rock Sparrows and 'gravel-gargling' Black Redstarts, and the pair moved much closer along the slope, allowing good views of the starkly contrasting black-and-white of the male's plumage, the female being notably browner.

Our return again drew a blank for other cliff-dwelling species, so we left a little earlier (our exit helped by some appallingly loud 'music' in the only bar in the village!) and made a couple of stops at likely-looking spots along the Gállego river as we returned N. The second of these came up trumps, and a couple of fine Blue Rock Thrushes made short forays among the huge boulders under the cliff opposite, much to our delight.

I often wonder what locals think of groups of tourists wandering out after dusk with binoculars round their necks, but we rounded off the day with an after-dinner wander in search of Scops Owls. A small group of French chatting off to one side and numerous barking dogs were not a good omen, but after some persistent waiting and imitating the birds, one came and called close by, though steadfastly remained hidden. A couple of others serenaded each other down in the valley, but kept their distance and we turned in after another full day.

Friday 9 June

A chilly and breezy pre-breakfast bridge visit, with Robin off on an errand to get a replacement vehicle... The Melodious Warblers hadn't shown up, the Golden Orioles were quiet and even the Dippers were being elusive. However, recompense came in the form of a passing Hobby, then a pair of fly-by Hawfinches, while those who missed these were watching a green parakeet on the wires which rapidly flew off! Presumably a Monk Parakeet, well established in many towns and cities in Spain now.

After a later than usual breakfast, we readjusted for a walk to the local fort. However, given the hundreds of Common Swifts wheeling round just in front, attracting a hungry-looking Red Kite which passed over on numerous occasions, and a number of Rock Sparrows shreeping from the walls and also feeding on the path in front, we didn't get very far! In fact, it became an excellent lesson in raptor ID, with distant Griffon Vultures, close Red and Black Kites and even a close Booted Eagle hunting over the town park (!) giving great views. A distant large bird hovering over the nearest hillside was also a Short-toed Eagle, showing how even at long range the behaviour of a bird can be diagnostic.

Robin was now back and even had time for a spot of breakfast before we reappeared, and the rest of the day was spent in the upper Gállego Valley. A 'tactical' stop en route produced a nice selection of typical raptors, including two Lammergeiers, Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Common Buzzard and Common Kestrel, though a very distant Honey Buzzard was just too far away to be countable! Another short stop

ahead revealed a pair of Common Sandpipers and their two half-grown young, though the latter did a fantastic job of hiding among the little bushes along the river's gravel banks.

Up at the top, just short of the Portalet Pass, we parked just after the hideous skiing developments underway, and took a quick break before walking over the border into France (and noting Pyrenean Thistle growing as a 'weed' on the way!). The difference in unspoiled scenery here in the French Pyrenees National Park could not have been much greater compared to that in Spain, but we soon found a fascinating selection of plants and a few birds in the rocky outcrops on the grassy slopes here. Pyrenean Snakeshead and Pyrenean Buttercup were both just hanging on, having largely finished flowering, though a few Narcissus-flowered Anemones had finished, while a plethora of smaller clovers and vetches and a small patch of Black Vanilla Orchids were also admired. A singing Ortolan Bunting remained unseen, but not so a couple of Alpine Marmots, a male Rock Thrush and plenty of Northern Wheatears. A single Horned Pansy plant was in flower as we returned.

Lunch was taken by most up a side track on the Spanish side, this time amongst a wealth of flowers, including abundant Ciliate Rock-jasmine and Pyrenean Hyacinth and close to a swathe of Mountain Cornflower. A Quail 'blipped' away continuously, while even lying back to take a snooze was difficult since a raptor passing over was a Lammergeier!!!

After lunch we continued up this track, taking time to watch the antics of a few young 'sparring' Alpine Marmots being watched over by their parents, plus superb views of a male Rock Thrush, Water Pipits and Northern Wheatears. The rocks were adorned with numerous flowers including Spoon-leaved Candytuft and Rock Cinquefoil, with the quite different Alpine Rose and Alpenrose almost side-by-side opposite! A pile of trackside droppings were actually very interesting, clearly being the roost site for a Ptarmigan, presumably left over from the previous winter! While a few of us went past the remains of some old mine works to some shallow muddy pools, where numerous Palmate Newts, plenty of salamander larvae and also tadpoles were present, others took in the wealth of flora and another adult Lammergeier which cruised over seemingly at head height before gaining altitude and eventually drifting off...

We finally dragged ourselves away with just one last stop to go. Splitting into two groups, the first half were lead by a local guide up into a scrubby slope from where then emanated a series of clearly audible 'oohs' and 'ahhs'. Their return was slower, given the want for photography of the plentiful orchids present, and then the second group went on a repeat visit to appreciate the remarkable flowers of a few clumps of the spectacular Lady's Slipper orchid growing here at one of only a small handful of known sites in Spain. A superb Rock Bunting in the same scrub paused close by with a beak full of food for waiting young, with a lovely Tree Pipit following suit just moments later. To cap it all, several bushes of Pyrenean Honeysuckle were also in full flower. A superb finale!

Saturday 10 June

Last, transit days can be a disappointment, but we were somewhat spared by having the early morning free. A visit to the pinewoods nearby at Oroel was a great pre-breakfast visit, though a stiff chill breeze heralded a change in the weather and made listening for bird song more difficult. Numerous Crested Tits, only seen very briefly by one or two lined our route as we walked a quiet back road through the forest, singing Chiffchaff and Firecrest also remained out of sight, though Coal Tits were more obliging. A couple of calling Bullfinches were our first since the Gabardito visit, though most concentrated on some very close Nuthatches which came in when pished. Several Lesser Butterfly Orchids along a roadside bank and a few impressive spikes of Great Yellow Gentian made for a difference, while a Pine Marten, which casually crossed the road just yards away from the group was definitely the highlight of the excursion. Sadly, seconds later it simply vanished into the thick tangle of ground cover.

We left Jaca at 11 and started the long drive to Barcelona. The traffic was slow, but we got some excellent mileage under our belts before taking a quick break near Monzón. Fortunately we very soon afterwards made a lunch break down a little track by some pools. The giant reeds by the pools housed singing Eurasian Reed Warblers, our first for the trip and the high-pitched calls of a few Penduline Tits emanated from several spots around us in the tamarisk bushes. Once we'd (almost!) finished one of these was called out and a male performed beautifully in front, feeding on reed heads and creeping about

in the tamarisk flowers right in front for some time. A brilliant end, or so we thought. But not quite so, when a Great Spotted Cuckoo flew slowly right across the motorway in front as we sped closer to Barcelona!

We rounded off by bidding our final farewells at the airport, John flying to Madrid and the rest returning to the UK.

We would like to thank you for making this an exceptionally pleasant and humorous trip, especially in the light of a few little 'upsets' with cases and vehicles which fortunately did not interfere with the day-to-day running of the trip. We hope you had a great time and look forward to seeing you again, either with The Travelling Naturalist or Limosa Holidays, or, of course, on another of our multiple joint tours.

Our very best wishes, *John Muddeman & Robin Chittenden.*

SPECIES LISTS

BIRDS

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: One University Lake Cuarte 6th and another en route 8th

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*: Several Embalse de la Sotonera & Ardisa Reservoir 6th

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: Two Montmesa & Embalse de la Sotonera 6th

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*: Five Montmesa & Embalse de la Sotonera 6th

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: One or two seen nearly every day

Purple Heron *Ardeola purpurea*: Two Montmesa & Embalse de la Sotonera 6th & one Almacelles 10th

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*: Up to six seen on the drives between Barcelona to Jaca

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*: Several Embalse de la Sotonera 6th

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*: Seen daily in good numbers

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*: Seen daily in smaller numbers than Black Kite, but still plentiful. A superb bird and well worthy of its Spanish name of "Royal Kite".

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*: Two or three including one carrying a bone Gabardito 4th, one Candancho 5th and three Portalet Pass 9th

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*: Seen daily in small numbers, mostly involving smart black-and-white adults.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*: Probably more common in Aragon than anywhere else in the World.

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus*: An extraordinary discovery by John of one flying high over Villanua 5th

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*: Two Alastuey Road including a perched bird almost showing its short toes 7th and three Portalet Pass 9th

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*: Four University Lake Cuarte & Montmesa & Embalse de la Sotonera 6th & one en route Barcelona/Jaca 3rd & 10th

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*: One seen by Cliff Barcelona to Jaca 3rd

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*: One seen by Peter Jaca 4th.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*: One or two seen daily.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*: One distant bird perched at Gabardito 4th & one en route seen by Simon 6th

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*: A fabulous adult pale morph low over our Hotel in Jaca 5th and ones and two seen most days

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*: One or two seen most days.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*: Three Jaca 7th & one there 9th.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*: One Riglos 8th.

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*: One heard Alastuey Road 7th

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*: One heard Jaca by Peter 4th & another singing Portalet Pass 9th

Coot *Fulica atra*: A few University Lake Cuarte, Montmesa & Embalse de la Sotonera & Ardisa Reservoir 6th

- Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*: Four+ Ardisa Reservoir 6th
- Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*: One Jaca 8th
- Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*: Two with two small young below Portalet Pass 9th
- Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis*: Several Embalse de la Sotonera 6th & one Portalet Pass 9th.
- Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*: One seen by Simon en route Barcelona to Jaca 3rd
- Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger*: At least fifty-five exceptionally distant birds Embalse de la Sotonera 6th
- Feral Rock Dove** *Columba livia*: Noted daily. Four of pure looking stock Rock Dove Portalet Pass 9th
- Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*: Seen daily in varying numbers.
- Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*: Long-established in northern Spain and seen daily throughout the tour.
- Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*: Two Tormos area 6th & one Arres 8th
- Monk Parakeet** *Myiopsitta monachus*: One Jaca 9th
- Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*: Heard at a few sites and one seen
- Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius*: A first summer bird flew over en route to Barcelona. Seen by those not studying the backs of their eyelids.
- European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus*: One glimpsed a few times Alastuey Road 7th
- Alpine Swift** *Apus melba*: Two Gabardito 4th and two Gallego River 8th
- Common Swift** *Apus apus*: Common around towns and larger villages.
- Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*: One Jaca 5th
- European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster*: Several near Montmesa & Ardisa Reservoir 6th, six plus Alastuey Road 7th and ones and twos on most days Jaca
- Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*: Three Barcelona to Jaca 3rd, a few Embalse de la Sotonera & Ardisa Reservoir 6th and singles seen at a couple of locations
- Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla*: Two Alastuey Road 7th
- Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis*: One heard Jaca 7th & another heard Oroel 10th
- Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius*: One heard San Juan de la Pena 7th and an old nest hole Oroel 10th but not a sniff of a sighting
- Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*: Up to three seen at a few sites
- Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra*: At least eight seen in the arid croplands near Montmesa 9th. A wonderful lark with long, dark wings and that distinctive white trailing edge.
- Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata*: Common in the lowlands in cropped areas and good numbers seen around Huesca.
- Woodlark** *Lullula arborea*: One seen briefly in song flight Alastuey Road 7th
- Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*: Heard at a few spots and seen Riglos 8th
- Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*: Four University Lake Cuarte & Ardisa Reservoir 6th
- Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*: Several seen at many suitable locations
- Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*: Seen every day.
- Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica*: One seen by Peter near Ardisa Reservoir 6th
- House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*: Seen daily with a number of colonies at cliff locations — presumably their ‘natural’ homes before they adopted houses as nest sites.
- Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris*: Four near Montmesa & Embalse de la Sotonera 6th and two Riglos 8th.
- Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*: One distant brown dot Astun 5th and one Portalet Pass 9th
- Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*: Small numbers of breeding birds scattered Astun & Candancho 5th and several Portalet Pass 9th.
- Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*: Ones and twos seen at suitable habitats
- White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba*: Small numbers seen daily, mostly around small towns and villages.

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*: Up to four at Jaca during the week.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*: Judging by the song, this species is widespread and common in woodland in the Pyrenees

Dunnock *Prunella modulari*: Scattered birds mostly in juniper scrub at the edge of the tree line at various locations.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*: Widespread and common in woodlands but always elusive on the Continent.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*: Seen spectacularly well Jaca 5th. Several others seen and more often heard at many scattered locations

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*: Widespread and very common. Found on high rocky slopes above the tree line but becoming more of a town bird lower down. Family parties were seen at a number of localities.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*: Only small number seen. one Alastuey Road 7th, several Riglos 8th and two Oroel 10th

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*: A good scattering of birds above the treeline excursions and one University Lake Cuarte 6th. The males here are a little variable, seemingly forming a cline between darker northern birds and paler southern birds. The palest birds of the race *libanotica* are easily confused with male Black-eared Wheatears.

Western Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*: A male seen in flight only, near Ardisa Reservoir 6th & three (two males & a female) Riglos 8th

Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucura*: A pair at Riglos 8th

Common Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*: Up to five Jaca Astun & Candancho 5th, one Alastuey Road 7th and a showy male Portalet Pass 9th

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*: A couple seen briefly Riglos 8th and a male by Gallego River 8th

Blackbird *Turdus merula*: Widespread and common in coniferous and mixed woodland.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*: Always shy and elusive on the continent but glimpsed at a few locations

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*: A couple seen in suitable habitat.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*: Heard Jaca 5th and near Almacelles 10th

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* : One glimpsed near Almacelles 10th

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*: About six University Lake Cuarte 6th.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*: A showy singing male Jaca during the week and a handful of other seen at scattered locations

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*: Two heard Alastuey Road 7th and at least two Riglos 8th

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*: At least four Alastuey Road 7th and one Riglos 8th

Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*: Two Alastuey Road 7th and a couple glimpsed Riglos 8th

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*: Singing in many locations and seen in several

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*: Heard daily in woodland

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*: One Atare Road junction 4th, two Alastuey Road 7th & one briefly Oroel 10th

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*: A couple singing in woodland in the higher valleys.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*: Widespread in pine woodland but difficult to get good views in the tops of conifers

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*: Two Alastuey Road 7th

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*: At least eight 8th

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*: A fabulous male near Almacelles 10th

Crested Tit *Parus cristatus*: A couple showed only very poorly Oroel 10th. Perhaps the late season this year in Pyrenees meant they were incubating eggs and were much less active than normal

Coal Tit *Parus ater*: Widespread in small numbers in higher conifer forests.

Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*: Small numbers noted almost daily but not particularly common.

Great Tit *Parus major*: Rather more common than Blue Tit and noted in small numbers daily.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*; One seen 4th flowed by a tame couple San Juan de la Pena 7th and a family party Oroel 10th

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* : Two fluttering around Gabardito 4th

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*: One Gabardito 4th & one San Juan de la Pena 7th

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*: Up to three Jaca all week and ones and twos, seen mainly in flight, at several other suitable sites.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*: Quite common in the mountains with scattered males noted daily in scrubby fields and hillsides. Females were notable by their absence and were probably sitting on eggs at this time of year.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*: At least six University Lake Cuarte, Montmesa, Embalse de la Sotonera & Ardisa Reservoir 6th

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* : Ones and twos noted most days but usually from a moving vehicle in the hills as we travelled between sites.

Common Magpie *Pica pica*: Widespread and quite common in the foothills and lowlands.

Alpine Chough *Pyrrhcorax graculus*: Several distantly Gabardito 4th and several much closer Candancho 5th

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhcorax pyrrhcorax*: Seen on more days than the Alpine and at lower levels

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*: Some ten birds seen near the university lake on 9th and a few Almacelles 10th

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*: Small numbers daily.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*: Small numbers daily.

Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor*: Widespread in small numbers in the lowlands.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Widespread and common throughout, even a few birds well up in the Pyrenean valleys.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*: At least five at Jaca on 6th, two on 9th and two at our lunch stop on the return to Barcelona on 11th.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*: At least ten in Montmesa & Tormos area 6th, several Jaca & Alastuey Road 7th and fifteen showy birds Jaca Fort 9th

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*: Very common in pinewoods throughout the area.

Serín *Serinus serinus*: A good scattering of birds with small numbers seen daily.

Citrel Finch *Serinus citronella*: At least three flighty birds Gabardito 4th and two briefly near Candancho 5th

Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*: Small numbers heard or seen daily.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*: Two flew over Jaca bridge 9th

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*: Quite common in small numbers.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*: Common in open scrubby areas throughout, from lowlands to highlands.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*: A family party of five Astun 5th

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*: One heard Oroel 10th

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella*: Quite widespread in small numbers at the top edge of the tree line.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirrus*: One singing 4th and a female Jaca 5th, a few Alastuey Road 7th and four Arres & Riglos 8th

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*: A couple rather distantly Astun 5th, at least two Alastuey Road 7th & one showed well to some of the second party to see the Lady Slipper Orchid 8th

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*: A male singing Arres 8th

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*: Widespread and common in the lowlands.

MAMMALS

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*: One Gabardito 4th

Pyrenean Chamois *Rupicapra pyrenaica*: Fifty-five or so Candancho including three fairly low 5th about 30 Portalet Pass including one very close individual 9th

Beech Marten *Martes foina* or Pine Marten *Martes martes*: One spotted by Jean as it scampered across the road Oroel 10th. Unfortunately views were not quite good enough to fully confirm its identity.

Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*: One ran across the road in front of the second minibus near Jaca 4th and then odd ones seen on three other days

Alpine Marmot *Marmota marmota*: A couple Candancho 5th and a seven watched sparring at close range Portalet Pass 9th

REPTILES

Large Psammadromus *Psammadromus algirus*
Common Wall Lizard *Podarcis muralis*
Iberian Wall Lizard *Podarcis hispanicus*
Ocellated Lizard *Lacerta lepida*
Green Lizard *Lacerta viridis*
Ladder Snake *Elaphe scalaris*
Montpellier Snake *Malpolon monspessulanus*

AMPHIBIANS

Palmate Newt *Triturus helveticus*
Midwife Toad *Alytes obstetricans*
Common Frog *Rana temporaria*
Iberian Pond Frog *Rana perezi*

BUTTERFLIES

Common Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*
Scarce (Spanish) Swallowtail *Iphiclides podalirius (feisthamelii)*
Clouded Apollo *Parnassius mnemosyne*
Black-veined White *Aporia crataegi*
Large White *Pieris brassicae*
Western Marbled White *Melanargia occitanica*
Small White *Artogeia rapae*
Southern Small White *Pieris mannii*
Green-veined White *Artogeia napi*
Western Bath White *Pontia daplidice*
Western Dappled White *Euchloe simplonia*
Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines*
Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea*
Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*
Cleopatra *Gonepteryx cleopatra*
Wood White *Leptidea sinapis*
False Ilex Hairstreak *Satyrium esculi*
Blue-spot Hairstreak *Satyrium spini*
Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*
Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*
Little (Small) Blue *Cupido minimus*
Osiris Blue *Cupido osiris*
Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*
Silver-studded Blue *Plebejus argus*
Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*
Mazarine Blue *Cyaniris semiargus*
Provence Chalk-hill Blue *Lysandra hispana*
Adonis Blue *Lysandra bellargus*
Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*
Duke of Burgundy *Hamearis lucina*
Southern White Admiral *Limenitis reducta*
Camberwell Beauty *Nymphalis antiopa*
Large Tortoiseshell *Nymphalis polychloros*
Peacock *Inachis io*
Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*
Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*
Queen of Spain Fritillary *Issoria lathonia*
Marbled Fritillary *Brenthis daphne*
Knapweed Fritillary *Melitaea phoebe*
Meadow Fritillary *Mellicta parthenoides*
Marsh Fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia*

Spanish Marbled White *Melanargia ines*
Iberian Marbled White *Melanargia lachesis*
Great Banded Grayling *Brintesia circe*
Piedmont Ringlet *Erebia meolans*
Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*
Spanish Gatekeeper *Pyronia bathsheba*
Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilius*
Dusky Heath *Coenonympha dorus*
Pearly Heath *Coenonympha arcania*
Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*
Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*
Large Wall Brown *Lasiommata maera*
Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*
Red-underwing Skipper *Spialia sertorius*
Mallow Skipper *Carcharodus alceae*
Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages*
Essex Skipper *Thymelicus lineola*
Small Skipper *Thymelicus flavus*
Mediterranean Skipper *Gegenes nostradamus*

MOTHS

White-collared burnet *Zygaena lavandulae*
Chimney Sweeper *Odezia atrata*
Bordered Straw *Heliothis armigera*
Hummingbird Hawkmoth *Macroglossum stellatarum*
Silver Y *Autographa gamma*

DRAGONFLIES

Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*
Emperor Dragonfly *Anax imperator*
Lesser Emperor *Anax parthenope*
Blue-eyed Hook-tailed Dragonfly *Onychgomphus uncatius*
Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombei*
Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*

OTHER INSECTS

Great Green Bush Cricket *Tettigonia viridissima*
Violet Carpenter Beetle *Xylocopa violacea*

OTHER TAXA

Crab Spider species
Red Signal Crayfish *Pacifastacus Ienisculus*

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