

Vercors

Sunday 3 – Sunday 10 June 2007

Trip report

Leaders:

Mike Read

Bruno Veillet

TRIP DIARY

Sunday 3 June

We were met at Lyon airport by our local guide, Bruno Veillet and after a leisurely lunch, we drove to the Marais de Charvas and took a short walk in search of wildlife. A **Golden Oriole** sang from the depths of the nearby forest but sadly did not show itself and the same applied to a couple of **Nightingales** in the scrub on the marsh. Here we also heard **Cuckoo** and **Blackcap** singing while over the end of the reserve we saw a group of **5 Black Kites** flying around together. Flowers here included **Bog Ophrys**, **Lesser Butterfly Orchid** and **Marsh Helleborine** and we also encountered a few **Agile Frogs**.

We then drove to Lyon station to pick up some more of the group, returned to the airport for one final member of the group and set off for the Vercors. As we drove along the péage we managed to see a few **Common Buzzards**, **Black Kites** and the occasional **Common Kestrel** and at one place we saw one **White Stork** in flight while another stood on a nesting platform. We left the dual carriageway and began the climb into the hills of the Vercors where we occasionally saw more raptors. One **Black Kite** swooped down just a few metres in front of Bruno's minibus and took something from the roadside. This gave everyone an excellent view of a spectacular moment. We completed the journey to La Chapelle and soon everyone was enjoying a fine evening meal. After dinner a few clients stood outside the hotel and could hear **3 Scops Owls** calling and one was glimpsed as it flew across the street below the hotel entrance.

Monday 4 June

We began the day with a short walk behind the hotel in glorious sunshine; a fabulous start to our tour in the Vercors. In the grounds of the hotel we saw **Great Tit**, **Black Redstart** and **House Sparrow** while overhead numerous **Common Swifts** dashed about in search of food. A couple of **Cirl Buntings** were well seen and another pair of **Black Redstarts** seemed to be nesting under the eaves of one of the houses. Further along the road we could hear the calls of **Red-legged Partridges** and on the roof of the school building, **2 White Wagtails** were living up to the latter part of their names. As we stood looking over a scrubby area, two good birds were found. The first was a male **Red-backed Shrike** that was perched high on a bush in typical fashion. The second good bird proved much more elusive however. A singing **Wryneck** could be heard but despite considerable searching we could not sight it. As we began our walk back, the bird had moved its position and as we searched the pines it was now singing from, one or two of the group glimpsed it as it flew out. **Yellowhammer** and a **Serin** completed the pre breakfast birding.

After breakfast we drove northwards through various sleepy villages and through the fabulous Gorges de la Bourne. Close to Lans-en-Vercors we drove up a tiny side road and took a short walk into an area of forest where wild orchids were numerous. They included **Burnt**, **Coralroot**, **Bird's Nest**, **Twayblade** and **Military Orchids** as well as **Sword-leaved** and **White Helleborine**. However we were soon 'in contact' with our main target here, **Black Woodpecker**. Young had recently left a nest and one of these birds could be heard calling. After considerable searching, this juvenile was located low down on a beech tree but it was only visible from lower down a steep woodland slope and not

everyone could make the descent and the subsequent scramble back up! As we left, the final members of the group were fortunate to see **2 Chamois** that ran off through the forest.

Our next port of call was along another small back road where we parked and took a short walk. Along the roadside were lots of flowers and this superb display continued on the way out to a spectacular viewpoint. Here we saw **2 Rock Buntings** one of which gave super views. Our main 'target' bird here was **Wallcreeper** and after about 10 minutes of searching, Bruno located one flying towards us. Most of the group managed to see it but sadly, although it was in view for quite a distance, one or two people missed it. Despite more searching, it was never found again. During our search time, other species could be heard calling including **Black Woodpecker**, **Cuckoo** and a **Tawny Owl**. We felt it was most unusual to hear this latter species calling in the middle of the day but assumed it might have been a recently fledged bird. Just before we left the cliff-top **4 Chamois** were seen crossing a rocky slope below us, and a **Sparrowhawk** drifted across the end of the gorge. We had lunch back at the minibuses with a **Chiffchaff** singing nearby and on the surrounding grassy banks were three species of **Orchid** namely **Man**, **Frog** and **Early Purple**. Just before we left, Bruno made another good find, **4 Tawny Owl** chicks sitting in an old raven's nest on the cliff. No wonder we had heard a bird calling. We had been stood right above the nest for a while!

We drove back to Lans-en-Vercors and on the edge of town we drove through an area of fields where a **Common Quail** was calling very close to the road. A little further along we strolled out on a field track and managed to see **2 Marsh Warblers** and a **Red-backed Shrike**.

A drive over the hills took us close to Autrans where we stopped at a clump of trees and we saw **6 Long-eared Owls**. Seven young had recently fledged from a nest and we saw 5 of these as well as an adult bird; brilliant! In some fields, also close to Autrans, we found 3 or 4 **Whinchats** and from here we drove back to the Gorges de la Bourne. At a small bridge at the top of the Gorges we found **4 Dippers**. Three of these flew off up river and the other went down. Many of the group managed to see this latter bird. We also paused at the Pont de Valcheviere and here we added **Grey Wagtail** to the day's list but by now it had begun to rain so we headed back to the comfort of the hotel.

Tuesday 5 June

Our early walk this morning took us along the main street of La Chapelle and on to a smaller side road. As we left the hotel, a **Black Redstart** was singing from a TV aerial across the street, a **Serin** was seen further along and **Common Swifts** flew overhead. At a grassy bank **Military**, **Man** and **Twayblade Orchids** were growing close to each other and a **Garden Warbler** was heard singing (good views were obtained of this bird a little later). As we reached some open fields a **Common Quail** was calling in the distance, **Cirl Bunting** and **Yellowhammer** were both seen and a **Red-backed Shrike** gave us good views. Breakfast called louder than the Quail so we returned to the hotel. Just before we left for our day out, **2 Crested Tits** were seen in the hotel grounds.

We soon left the town behind and climbed through fields and forests to reach the Font d'Urle area. From the roadside we could hear **Skylarks** singing and there was a **Common Kestrel** hovering over the grassy slopes. As we began our walk numerous **Alpine Choughs** were flying around giving good views. As we walked through a fabulous Alpine meadow full of countless wild flowers, we found some **Frog Orchids** and **Pheasant's-eye Narcissus** while a **Water Pipit** drew our attention for a while before the next interesting discovery. The flowers were too numerous to list but varied to the yellows of glorious **Globe Flowers**, the pinks of **Thrift**, whites of the delicate **Ciliate Rock-jasmine** and the deep, deep blues of **Trumpet Gentians**. A male **Northern Wheatear** stood on a group of rocks and was soon joined by a female. This seemed to cause some consternation to the male from the adjoining territory and soon all three were engaged in a territorial boundary 'stand off' situation. An alarm call from an **Alpine Marmot** drew our attention and soon we were looking at three or four individuals. Some of the group then ventured down into a cavern where a few nests of **Alpine Chough** were found. After this we strolled across to the col where a huge panoramic view opened up before us. Looking down from here we saw a **Black Kite** chasing a male **Kestrel** with both involved in some amazing aerial manoeuvres. A couple of **Common Buzzards** were also seen in the area.

From here we drove to the lower lying fields near Vassieux and paused at the Memorial de la Resistance for a quiet moment of reflection. However a few birds were still seen including **Black Redstart**, **Common Buzzard** and **Northern Wheatear** while a **Common Quail** called from the grassy depths not far away. We had our lunch at the Col de Vassieux and afterwards walked the short distance from our parking spot up to the col itself. As some of the group watched a **Tree Pipit** engaging in a song flight, others briefly saw a **Honey Buzzard** disappear into the adjacent woodland. The view out to Die and the surrounding area was superb and in slightly clearing weather a group of **24 Griffon Vultures** were seen to spiral upwards and gain height before eventually drifting away.

As we drove away from the area a **Red Squirrel** dashed across the road and into the woodland and a pair of **Mistle Thrushes** flew across a small field. As we stopped for the shortest of walks to a small pond, a couple of **Honey Buzzards** drifted past and away behind some woodland. The pond held lots of **Alpine Newts**, which frequently rose from the muddy depths to take in a gulp of air. **Broad-bodied Chaser** dragonflies held territories around the pond and were occasionally involved in skirmishes with their neighbours. As we left, another skirmish was taking place as **3 Honey Buzzards** seemed intent on ensuring that a passing **Short-toed Eagle** did not linger in their air space. A short distance down the road a **Roe Deer** ran for cover as we passed on our way to our next stop.

At the Col de Rousset we again enjoyed superb panoramic views to Die (or should that be to Die for?!) as well as hearing **Bonelli's** and **Garden Warbler** and seeing at least **4 Chamois**. As the rain began, we felt a coffee stop was called for and this was taken just behind the col. As the rain eased and then stopped, we headed to a point where we could look to a Golden Eagle's nest but it appeared there was no-one at home. (We later heard that this particular nest was occupied this year). Within the surrounding woodland we heard a **Black Woodpecker** calling and we saw a somewhat distant **Firecrest**.

Again the rain started and so we decided to make the shortish drive back to the hotel. As we made the journey we saw a juvenile **Grey Heron** in a roadside field.

Wednesday 6 June

We left the hotel at 4.30am for an early walk in the Hauts Plateaux reserve as we began our walk at 5.00am **Song Thrushes** were filling the air with their song, yet throughout the whole of our walk not a single one was seen! As we wandered on **Goldcrest** and **Firecrest** could both be heard joining the dawn chorus along with numerous **Willow Tits** and **Robins**. Typical of this habitat **Tree Pipits** were soon joining in and eventually in the far distance we could hear our main target species calling, **Black Grouse**. Despite it being a little late in the year for their lekking displays, two birds were still engaged in the fascinating courtship rituals. However, we could only see one of them and that bird was perched at the very top of a conifer tree. A **Ring Ouzel** had been seen by one or two members of the group while **Chaffinch** and **Chiffchaffs** seemed to be fairly numerous. We remained watching the grouse for some time and as we did so a group of at least a dozen **Common Crossbills** flew into some nearby conifers and gave us excellent views. Much more distant was a female **Ibex** walking along on the skyline of Grand Veymont. We all managed to obtain views of this animal but most of us missed the two **Citril Finches** that flew passed calling. However, a **Wryneck** was much more obliging and eventually this bird perched in a dead pine tree and we were able to get telescope views. We were a little late back to the hotel for breakfast and so our departure for the days outing was also delayed a little.

Our first port of call was the Col de Rousset and we stopped a little beyond our viewing point yesterday. From here we could see numerous **Griffon Vultures** both on the cliffs and also on top of the cage holding some of the re-introduction scheme birds. **Kestrels** and **Ravens** were also seen here flying just above us while on some of the grassier slopes we managed to find **5 Chamois**. Below the Col de Rousset is a feeding station that we had seen from the Col de Vassieux and we decided on a brief visit to this location. There were more vultures in a cage here but on the ground and on the top of the cage there must have been at least another 20 **Griffon Vultures**. We also had good views of a **Kestrel** perched on a pine tree and distant views of a **Common Buzzard** and **Goldfinch**.

We paused in Chamaloc for morning coffees and were pleased to have groups of **Common Swifts** screaming around the buildings. We then drove to the Vassieux plain for our lunch and we could hear at least three different **Quail** calling, there were numerous **Skylarks** singing and feeding in the grassland and a **Red-backed Shrike** perched on the top of some nearby bushes. As we neared the end of our feast it started to rain and so we decided to move areas in the hope of finding better weather, as it is often possible to do in a mountainous region. Just to the north of La Chapelle we managed to find four species of orchids growing on one small roadside bank. These were **Lizard, Man, Fragrant** and **Burnt Orchids**. We then drove to the north of La Chapelle and out towards Oscence and here we too a short walk before the rain set in once again. During this walk we managed to see numerous **Yellowhammers** a distant **Short-toed Eagle** and perhaps the best view of **Red-backed Shrike** for the trip. Beside a muddy puddle we found tracks of both **Fox** and **Badger** whilst a **Cuckoo** began its repetitive calling not too far away. Eventually though the rain set in once more and bearing in mind our early start for the day we decided that we should return to the hotel which we did by about 4.30pm.

Thursday 7 June

As we were to move to another part of the Vercors today, there was no pre-breakfast walk to allow time for packing. Rather than go direct to Chichilianne we decided on a route that would give us the best opportunities for bird watching. How right we were in our choice! At the Col de la Machine/Cirque de Combe Laval **House Martins** were nesting on the cliffs and just above them an unseen **Black Redstart** was occasionally singing. As birds seemed a little scarce we moved a short way along the road and here found a few **Crag Martins** flying around. Again the birding seemed a little sparse but as we walked back towards the minibuses the cry of '**Wallcreeper**' went up and for the next 15-20 minutes we were treated to excellent views of a lovely male bird on the cliffs just above us. These were the best views a Travelling Naturalist group has ever had of a **Wallcreeper** in the Vercors.

We journeyed onwards and after a quick stop at the shops at St Jean-en-Royans we drove on along the D70 and just beyond the Col de Bacchus we paused to view some flowers. **Bee** and **Pyramid Orchids** were quite numerous but the biggest prize here was a good quantity of **Toothed Orchids**. In amongst the flowers a few butterflies flitted including a couple of lovely **Glanville Fritillaries**, which fed on the flowers of **Wild Thyme**. Birding was not forgotten however and here we had views of **Red-backed Shrikes** as well as **Honey** and **Common Buzzard** overhead. A little further on at a viewpoint we found **3 or 4 Linnets** as well as **Black Kite** and another **Kestrel**. On the edge of Beaufort-sur-Gervanne there was a **Common Whitethroat** perched on some overhead wires. This was a new species for us and we soon added three more namely **Woodlark, Ortolan Bunting** and **Rock Sparrow**. Of the latter species there were at least 5 individuals to be seen off and on and a pair of **Woodlarks** were feeding young. Our view of **Ortolan Bunting** was rather distant and spoiled by heat haze but nevertheless we did see one! As we headed towards our lunch spot at least **3 Black Kites** flew around. Were they anticipating some leftovers?

Both **Woodlarks** and **Skylarks** could be heard singing as we had our lunch and once again raptors could be seen overhead including **Black Kites** and both species of **Buzzard**. Surrounding our picnic spot were further good orchid species to be seen amongst the flowers, including **Red** and **Broad-leaved Helleborines, Violet Bird's nest, Lizard, Bee, Late Spider** and **Mirror Orchids**. Soon we were heading on towards Die and near Pontaix we saw **Grey Wagtail** and a couple of fairly close **Short-toed Eagles**. We took a brief detour to the Cirque d'Archienne and spent a while looking at what seemed to be an empty **Golden Eagles** nest across the valley when somebody had the thought to look behind us. There soaring along the edge of the cliffs was a magnificent adult **Golden Eagle** and this remained in view for quite some time.

Eventually we dragged ourselves away from this lovely location and headed up to and over the Col de Menée and from there, it was all down hill to Chichilianne and our hotel.

Friday 8 June

As we left the hotel for our pre-breakfast walk down the hill, views to Mont Aiguille and the higher mountains beyond were masked by thin low cloud and mist. Occasionally a scene would open for a few moments before becoming obscured once again. It was wonderful to see the mountains in this playful mood. Down by the river **Grey** and **White Wagtails** could be seen and a pair of **Black Redstarts**

seemed to be nesting in the electricity building. **Serin, Goldfinch, Yellowhammer, Garden Warbler** and **Blackcap** were all identified but for a while a drumming woodpecker in the distant woodland had us puzzling. Was it Great Spotted or Black? Eventually the consensus of opinion decided on **Black Woodpecker**.

After breakfast we paid a brief visit to Clelles for some picnic supplies and on the way back towards Chichilianne we found numerous **Common Spotted** and perhaps half a dozen **Lady's Slipper Orchids** on the roadside bank. Along the road towards Trezanne more orchids were found including **Lady, Man, Spitzel's Coralroot** and **Bird's Nest Orchids**. A **Nuthatch** called from within the woodland whilst somewhere overhead, obscured by the trees was a **Common Buzzard** calling. From Trezanne we walked along a couple of trails which led into some woodlands and again **Common Buzzards** and **Nuthatch** seemed to accompany us. **Bonelli's Warblers** seemed quite numerous and underneath a sheet of corrugated iron we found an **Asp Viper** along with two probable **Wood Mice**. It seems that these two mammals were living dangerously! A little further along the trail we came to an area where a few **Lady's Slipper Orchids** were growing and about 15 more **Spitzel's Orchids**. As we began the return walk a **Black Woodpecker** flew past unseen by most.

We had lunch at the Col de Prayer where a singing **Bonelli's Warbler** was a constant companion. A couple of **Crossbills** landed in a tree across the road and gave us excellent though brief views whilst around us were at least 5 species of orchid including 20 or more **Lady's Slipper Orchids**. As with the previous day, inclement weather at the end of lunch encouraged a change of location so we drove out to Gresse-en-Vercors and then up the winding mountain road to the Pas du Serpaton. The mountains around looked very atmospheric (lots of threatening rain clouds!!) but still we decided to walk up to the viewpoint. As we passed through glorious Alpine flower meadows we located a few **Pink Globe Orchids** amongst the mass of flowers. A couple of **Red-billed Choughs** flew around calling and gave us every opportunity to see how their beaks were very much longer than those of their Alpine cousins. A **Honey Buzzard** soaring around seemed a little out of place at this altitude but then a **Quail** began calling and we began to feel not that high at all! **Water Pipit, Whinchat** and **Linnet** were amongst the other birds sighted during this fabulous walk and as we eventually neared the vehicles on our return walk it began to spot with rain. This only lasted a few moments so again we stood gazing at the surrounding scenery as Mont Aiguille eventually appeared from the clouds. To finish the day, a shrill alarm call alerted us to the presence of **Alpine Marmots** and we managed to see at least three before we left and headed back to the hotel.

Saturday 9 June

The highlights of our pre-breakfast walk up the road beyond our hotel began around the buildings themselves where **Common** and **Black Redstart** were both present. Many of the birds that we saw were now becoming common to us so to name three species that were a little less common seemed sensible at this point. **Bonelli's Warblers** were quite numerous during this walk and at one point we managed to get fair but brief views of one individual. A **Black Woodpecker** was heard calling in the distance but we never did see it. And a pair of **Crested Tits** were almost certainly feeding young close to the track that we walked along.

After breakfast we drove towards Col de Menée and paused in the lovely conifer woodlands to view the roadside orchids of various species and as we did so there were other things of interest too. Beside the road a cattle trough held a very young **Fire Salamander**, a **Robin** that was singing a short distance into the trees was eventually seen and a **Firecrest** graced us with its presence for a few minutes. Just beyond the Menée tunnel we paused with the intention of walking up the hill in search of **Ortolan Buntings**. However, as some of the group began the walk, others turned and there perched on the roadside wires was the said bunting! This particular bird gave us really excellent views and a short way up the hill we could hear another one singing. **Wheatear, Water Pipit** and **Black Redstart** were all sighted. **2 Short-toed Eagles** drifted past high above us and **2 Ravens** were feeding on the slope very close to a pair of **Red-billed Choughs**; this provided useful size comparisons between these two members of the crow family. Perhaps the best moment here had to be when a **Red-backed Shrike**, which we had watched for some time, suddenly dived headlong into a bush in an attempt to catch a passing **Crested Tit**. Thankfully the hunt was unsuccessful and perhaps in a state of shock, the Crestie came and perched quite close to us briefly.

From here we drove to the Vallée de Combeau and a pause a short way in added a new species for Travelling Naturalist in Vercors. A **Nutcracker** was heard calling by a few of the group but unfortunately we never did see it. A **Chamois** feeding on a grassy slope across the valley gave us excellent views as did a **Short-toed Eagle**, the first of two, which rose out of the valley woodland. **Bonelli's Warblers** were again present and a **Raven** flew along the cliff above us and this bird was mobbed by a couple of **Crag Martins**. As we neared the top of the valley for our lunch stop **5 Honey Buzzards** circled above some beech woodlands and eventually drifted away only to be replaced by a **Common Buzzard** and another **Short-toed Eagle**. Everyone agreed that our picnic sight was superb, despite the lack of seating, due to the masses of flowers that surrounded us. Perhaps this was the best piece of Alpine meadow we had seen. After lunch we went for a walk in the upper valley where a good flock of **Crossbills** (perhaps 20 or more) were seen in amongst the conifers. Occasional **Citril Finches** gave us a quick fly past and a **Ring Ouzel** perched on a nearby tree, whilst more **Crested Tits** searched the conifer twigs for food. The highlight of the afternoon came as we stood watching a **Tree Pipit** in a dead conifer and a fine male **Citril Finch** landed almost beside it.

As we began the return journey towards our hotel we paused at a couple of locations to see yet more **Lady's Slipper Orchids** including one really magnificent group in full bloom. During the drive towards the Col de Menee we had to slow down at one point just to look at the **Crossbill** in the road ahead of us. Thankfully it flew up into a tree and joined another of its clan. Before reaching the hotel we made a couple of brief stops to get photographs of Mont Aiguille which had at long last revealed itself.

Sunday 10 June

We left the hotel at 9 a.m. and began the journey towards Lyon and various flights and train home. After a quick stop at Clelles for book purchasing, we saw a **Lesser-spotted Woodpecker** close to the junction with the main road. This was a new species for Travelling Naturalist in the Vercors. Soon we were looking up to the Pas de Serpaton the superb viewpoint that we had visited a couple of days earlier. Soon after that a **Short-toed Eagle** was circling to the left of the road and a couple of **Black Kites** flapped lazily along to the right. By 10 a.m. we were passing Grenoble airport and seeing more **Black Kites** and a few **Common Buzzards**. After a few more miles of driving we reached Grenoble airport area for a little birding. Along the boundary fence a few **Corn Buntings** were singing their 'jangly keys' song and in the hidden depths of an area of scrub, a **Nightingale** and a **Melodious Warbler** were both singing. Out over the grassland beside the runway perhaps **25 Black Kites** were flying around and a lone male **Montagu's Harrier** hunted for food, perhaps one of the many **Skylarks** that occasionally rose in song. A male **Red-backed Shrike**, the last of the holiday, also perched on the perimeter fence. At the other end of the airport a couple more **Melodious Warblers** were seen at close range to complete our watching here.

Along the remaining journey to Lyon many more raptors graced the skies and, at the same spot as we had seen them on the outward journey, **3 White Storks** were seen in flight. We arrived at Lyon station at the exact hour we had planned for and bade farewell to most of the clients. After a pause for some lunch at a service station, the leaders and the 2 remaining clients headed for Lyon airport and their respective journeys home at the end of a most satisfying and enjoyable tour.

SPECIES LIST:

BIRDS

Black Grouse	<i>Lyrurus tetrix</i>	Just a single bird seen early on 6 th during the walk in the Hauts Plateaux reserve.
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	Heard on 4 th during the pre breakfast walk then a single bird was seen briefly on 7 th .
Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	First heard at Lans-en-Vercors on 4 th and then heard on 5 th (2 places), 6 th (3 at lunchtime)

Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	plus 1 other), 7 th and 8 th . 2 on 4 th at Lans-en-Vercors which Bruno (perhaps a little tongue-in-cheek) described as the bird of the day.
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	One seen in flight and another was stood on a nesting platform as we drove towards the Vercors on 3 rd and during the return journey, 3 were seen in flight at the same location.
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Seen on 3 rd during the journey to the Vercors then singles were seen on 4 th , 5 th and 7 th .
Common (Eurasian) Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Seen in small numbers every day except 9 th .
European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	Our first was a single bird near Lans-en-Vercors on 4 th then we saw 3 birds mobbing a Short-toed Eagle near Vassieux on 5 th , 1 near Beaufort on 7 th , 1 at the Pas de Serpaton on 8 th and finally 5 together above the Vallon de Combeau on 9 th .
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Seen on 3 rd , 4 th , 5 th and 7 th in small numbers and then about 35 seen on the way to Lyon on 10 th .
Eurasian Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Only noted on 2 days with a couple of dozen seen from the Col de Vassieux on 5 th and at least 50 seen at and near the Col de Rousset the following day.
Short-toed (Snake) Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	Singles seen on 5 th , 6 th and 10 th as well as 4 on 7 th as we moved from La Chapelle to Chichilianne, and 5 on 9 th at the Col de Menee (2) and in the Vallon de Combeau (3).
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	2 males seen at Grenoble airport on 10 th .
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Just a single sighting near Engines on 4 th .
Common (Eurasian) Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Small numbers seen every day.
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	No birds were seen as we watched an occupied nest site close to Rousset on 5 th but then we had prolonged views of above the Cirque d'Archiennne on 7 th .
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	<i>Columba livia</i>	Noted on 3 rd & 10 th in Lyon and in Die on 7 th .
(Common) Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Noted on the first 2 and last 2 days of the tour.
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decacoccto</i>	Noted on 5 days mostly in built up areas.
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Heard on 5 consecutive days from 4 th .
Eurasian Scops-owl	<i>Otus scops</i>	1 seen and another 2 heard calling in La Chapelle on 3 rd then heard on 5 th .
Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>	One adult & 5 (out of 7) fledged young seen near Autrans on 4 th .
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	An adult was heard calling in woodland and then a nest containing 4 young was found on a cliff near Engines on 4 th .
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Seen every day especially around dwellings.
Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	A bird heard calling during the pre breakfast walk in La Chapelle on 4 th was glimpsed flying out of a tree but then one was seen by everyone on the early walk to the Hauts Plateaux on 6 th .
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Heard on 4 th & 7 th and seen during the early walk at Les Haut Plateaux on 6 th .
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	One seen near Clelles on 10 th as we began our journey towards Lyon. The first sighting for a Travelling Naturalist group in Vercors.
Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	Everyone could hear the recently fledged juvenile near Lans-en-Vercors on 4 th but only a few of the group could make it down the very steep slope to see it. An adult was also heard calling at the same location and another was a few miles away later the same day.

(European) Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	Also heard on 8 th and 9 th . Heard early on 5 th in La Chapelle then seen on 6 th on the way back from the Hauts Plateaux walk and on 8 th during the move to Chichilianne.
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	Noted every day except 3 rd with some good & sometimes close sightings during the tour.
(Eurasian) Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	Heard calling close to the airport on 3 rd by those that arrived on the early flight.
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Seen every day from 5 th in small numbers.
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Seen every day except 6 th .
(Spotted) Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	Heard calling in the Vallon de Combeau on 9 th but sadly not seen. The first contact with this species in the Vercors for Travelling Naturalist.
Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	Heard calling at Font d'Urle on 5 th then seen on 8 th at Pas de Serpaton (1) and the following day near the Col de Menee (2).
Alpine (Yellow-billed) Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>	At least 40 seen on 5 th at Font d'Urle and a few also seen at other locations that day. 2 very distant birds were seen above Grand Veymont and at the Col de Rousset on 6 th .
(Western) Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	Just seen on 4 th in La Chapelle.
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	Seen on 3 rd & 10 th close to Lyon airport.
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	Seen every day.
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	2 on 5 th at Font d'Urle, 7 th near Beaufort & on 9 th (feeding close to 2 Red-billed Choughs) at the Col de Menee.
Marsh Tit	<i>Parus palustris</i>	1 in La Chapelle on 3 rd , our only sighting.
Willow Tit	<i>Parus montanus</i>	Heard on a number of occasions during the early walk to Les Hauts Plateaux on 6 th when we also saw the species a few times.
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	Heard on 4 th near Lans-en-Vercors then seen on 4 consecutive days from 6 th .
(European) Crested Tit	<i>Parus cristatus</i>	2 seen by the Hotel Bellier on 5 th then seen in 2 locations on 9 th .
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Seen every day from 4 th .
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	Just noted on 3 days in small numbers.
Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Hirundo rupestris</i>	At least 2 on 6 th at the Col de Rousset then seen on 7 th at the Col de la Machine and on 9 th in the Vallon de Combeau mobbing a Short-toed Eagle!
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Seen every day.
(Common) House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	Seen on each of the first 5 days.
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	3 seen near Beaumont on 7 th .
(Eurasian) Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Noted every day from 5 th .
(European) Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	2 on 4 th near Lans-en-Vercors.
Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippalais polyglotta</i>	At least 3 noted near Grenoble airport on 10 th .
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Noted on 5 days mostly on song.
Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	Noted on 5 consecutive days from 5 th .
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Noted on 4 th & every day from 6 th .
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	1 well seen during the pre breakfast walk on 5 th and noted later the same day. Also encountered on 8 th & 9 th .
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Just a single sighting on overhead wires near Beaumont on 7 th .
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>	Noted on 6 consecutive days from 4 th with some giving quite good views.
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	Just seen during the early walk to Les Hauts Plateaux on 6 th .
(White-throated) Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	Just 4 seen briefly at the upper end of the Gorges de la Bourne on 4 th .
(Winter) Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Heard on 5 th , 6 th , 7 th and 9 th but not seen.

(Eurasian) Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	Seen close to Trezanne on 8 th where the species was probably nesting.
Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>	A single bird was seen near Engines on 4 th . It was seen to fly some distance before disappearing under the cliff beneath us. On 7 th we had excellent views of one not far from the Col de la Machine. Everyone in the group managed good views of this individual.
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Just noted on the first 2 days of the tour.
Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	A single bird was seen on the Hauts Plateaux during the early walk on 6 th and another was high in the Vallon de Combeau on 9 th .
(Common) Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Seen every day.
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Many were singing at first light during the walk to Les Hauts Plateaux on 6 th but we did not actually see a single one! Also heard on 9 th .
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	2 near the Col de Vassieux on 5 th were our first then also seen on 7 th , 8 th & 9 th .
(European) Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Noted on 4 days but, typical of the species in many European countries, we rarely saw one.
Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	Heard on 3 rd & 10 th during journeys to and from the Vercors and also heard during the move to Chichilianne.
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	Seen every day particularly close to each hotel.
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Noted on 6 days particularly close to the Hotel au Gai Soleil.
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	About 5 seen near Autrans on 4 th and a single bird was noted at the Pas de Serpaton on 8 th .
Eurasian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	Seen on the way to the Vercors on 3 rd then singles seen on 6 th & 8 th .
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	At least 3 at Font d'Urle on 5 th then 1 male at the Col de Menee on 9 th .
House Sparrow	<i>Paser domesticus</i>	Seen every day in varying numbers.
Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	At least 3 seen near Beaufort on 7 th .
Duncock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Seen on 6 th during the early walk to Les Hauts Plateaux and heard on 8 th near Trezanne.
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Noted in small numbers on 5 days.
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Seen every day in small numbers.
Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	At least 3 seen on 5 th at Font d'Urle and 1 was seen at Pas de Serpaton on 8 th .
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Noted on 5 th , 6 th , 8 th & 9 th .
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Noted every day from 4 th .
European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	The first were 2 before breakfast on 4 th then also seen on 4 other days.
Citril Finch	<i>Serinus citrinella</i>	2 seen briefly as they flew past us as we watched a black Grouse on 6 th at the Hauts Plateaux. We then had similar 'fly-pasts' at the top of the Vallon de Combeau on 9 th but then one perched beautifully in the top of a dead tree and gave excellent views.
(European) Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Seen every day except 3 rd & 10 th .
(European) Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Seen every day.
Common Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	3 on 7 th not far from Beaufort then heard the following day at the Pas de Serpaton.
Common (Red) Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	At least 12 during the Hauts Plateaux walk on 6 th then 2 at the Col de Prayer on 8 th and at least 15 at the top of the Vallon de Combeau on 9 th .
(Eurasian) Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Heard in various wooded locations on 4 days but sadly not actually seen.

Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	At least 4 at Grenoble airport on 10 th .
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Noted on 6 days especially at Oscence on 6 th .
Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	1 seen in the distance near Beaumont on 7 th and another that was seen at close range at the Col de Menee on 9 th .
Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	Seen on 4 days including during our first pre breakfast walk on 4 th .
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	2 well seen close to Engines on 4 th . A new species for Travelling Naturalist in Vercors.
MAMMALS		
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	Signs on 2 days.
Wood Mouse	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	2 seen under a sheet of tin (with an Asp Viper Nearby!) on 8 th .
Beech Marten	<i>Martes foina</i>	A dead one seen by the road close to Lyon airport on 3rd
Eurasian Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	Tracks on 2 days.
Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Signs of their feeding activity on 8 th .
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	Tracks seen on 9 th .
Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	1 on 5 th near Col de Vassieux.
Chamois	<i>Rupicaria rupicaria</i>	6 on 4 th , 5 on 5 th & 6 th and 1 on 9 th .
Alpine Ibex	<i>Capra ibex</i>	A single distant female seen on Grand Veymont on 6 th .
Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	Singles seen on 5 th and 6 th .
Alpine Marmot	<i>Marmota marmota</i>	4 at Font d'Urle on 5 th & 3 at Pas de Serpaton on 8 th .
Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	2 on 8 th at Pas de Serpaton and one seen 9 th .
AMPHIBIANS		
Alpine Newt	<i>Triturus alpestris</i>	
Agile Frog	<i>Rana dalmatia</i>	
Fire Salamander	<i>Salamandra salamandra</i>	
REPTILES		
Asp Viper	<i>Vipera aspis</i>	
BUTTERFLIES		
Apollo	<i>Parnassius apollo</i>	
Clouded Apollo	<i>Parnassius mnemosyne</i>	
Black-veined White	<i>Aporia crategi</i>	
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	
Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>	
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>	
Brimstone	<i>Gonopteryx cleopatra</i>	
Small Blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>	
Peacock	<i>Inachis io</i>	
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	
Painted Lady	<i>Cynthia cardui</i>	
Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>	
Glanville Fritillary	<i>Melitaea cinxa</i>	
Spotted Fritillary	<i>Melitaea didyma</i>	
Marbled White	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>	
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilius</i>	
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	
Small Skipper	<i>Thymelicus flavus</i>	

DRAGONFLIES

Broad-bodied Chaser

Libellula depressa

Beautiful Demoiselle

Calopteryx virgo

VERCORS PLANT SPECIES

Juniperus communis ssp.alpina

Dwarf Juniper

Picea abies

Norway Spruce

Pinus uncinata

Mountain Pine

Acer campestre

Field Maple

Acer pseudoplatanus

Sycamore

Hedera helix

Ivy

Vincetoxicum hirundinaria

Swallow-wort

Narcissus poeticus

Pheasant's-eye Narcissus

Cynoglossum officinale

Hound's Tongue

Echium vulgare

Viper's Bugloss

Buxus sempervirens

Box

Echium vulgare

Viper's Bugloss

Myosotis alpestris

Alpine Wood Forget-me-Not

Symphytum officinale

Common Comfrey

Campanula glomerata

Clustered Bellflower

Campanula persicifolia

Peach-leaved Bellflower

Phyteuma nigrum

Black Rampion

Phyteuma orbiculare

Round-headed Rampion

Sambucus ebulus

Dwarf Elder

Sambucus nigra

Elder

Silene dioica

Red Campion

Silene latifolia ssp. Alba

White Campion

Silene nutans

Nottingham Catchfly

Stellaria graminea

Lesser Stitchwort

Bellis perennis

Daisy

Centaurea cyanus

Cornflower

Centaurea montana

Mountain Cornflower

Homogyne alpina

Alpine/Purple Coltsfoot

Bupthalmum salicifolium

Yellow Ox-Eye

Leucanthemum vulgare

Ox-eye Daisy

Taraxacum officinale group

Common Dandelion

Tragopogon pratensis

Goatsbeard

Tussilago farfara

Coltsfoot

Sedum acre

Wall-pepper

Dipsacus fullonum

Teasel

Euphorbia cyparissias

Cypress Spurge

Castanea sativa

Sweet/Spanish Chestnut

Fagus sylvatica

Beech

Fumaria officinalis

Fumaria officinalis

Gentiana acaulis

Trumpet Gentian

Gentiana lutea

Great Yellow Gentain

Geranium dissectum

Dusky Cranesbill

Geranium phaecum

Herb Robert

Geranium robertium

Wood Cranesbill

Geranium sylvaticum

Common Globularia

Globularia punctata

Bugle

Ajuga reptans

Red Deadnettle

Lamium purpureum

Bastard Balm

Melittis melissophyllum

Meadow Clary

Salvia pratensis

Wild Thyme

Thymus serpyllum

Broom

Genista spp.

Mountain Kidney-Vetch

Anthyllis montana

Common Kidney-Vetch

Anthyllis vulneraria

Horseshoe Vetch

Hippocrepis comosa

Laburnum

Laburnum anagyroides

Lucerne

Medicago sativa

Onobrychis vicifolia
Psoralea bituminosa
Tetragonolobus maritimus
Trifolium pratense
Trifolium repens
Anthericum liliago
Erythronium dens-canis
Lilium martagon
Ornithogalum umbellatum
Polygonatum odoratum
Polygonatum verticillatum
Viscum album
Fraxinus excelsior
Orobanche caryophyllacea
Orobanche rapum-genista
Papaver rhoeas
Armeria maritima ssp alpina
Polygala nicaensis
Androsace villosa
Primula veris
Moneses uniflora
Pyrola rotundifolia
Caltha palustris
Pulsatilla alpina
Trollius europaeus
Alchemilla alpina
Alchemilla vulgaris
Amelanchier ovalis
Cragaegus monogyna
Filipendula ulmaria
Fragaria vesca
Geum rivale
Rosa canina
Rubus idaeus
Rubus ulmifolius
Sorbus aria
Sorbus aucuparia
Cucurbitaria laevipes
Gallium mullugo
Galium verum
Populus tremula
Saxifraga granulata
Saxifraga moschuta
Saxifraga paniculata
Erinus alpinus
Melampyrum arvense
Melampyrum cristatum
Rhinanthus alectorolophus
Scrophularia canina
Verbascum pulverulentum
Daphne sneorum
Daphne mezereum
Anthriscus sylvestris
Meum athamanticum
Urtica dioica
Viola calcarata
Viola tricolor
Aceras anthropophorum
Anacamptis pyramidalis
Epipactis palustris
Epipactis helleborine
Cephalanthera damasonium
Cephalanthera longifolia

Sainfoin spp.
Pitch Trefoil
Dragon-s-teeth
Red Clover
White Clover
St Bernard's Lily
Dog's Tooth Violet
Martagon Lily
Star-of-Bethlehem
Angular Solomon-s Seal
Whorled Solomon's Seal
Mistletoe
Ash
Clove-scented Broomrape
Greater Broomrape
Field Poppy
Mountain Thrift
Nice Milkwort
Ciliate Rock-Jasmine
Cowslip
One-flowered Wintergreen
Round-leaved Wintergreen
Marsh Marigold
Alpine Pasque-flower
Globeflower
Alpine Lady's Mantle
Lady's Mantle
Snowy Mespilus
Hawthorn
Meadow-sweet
Wild Strawberry
Water Avens
Dog Rose
Raspberry
Blackberry/Bramble
Whitebeam
Rowan
Crosswort
Hedge Bedstraw
Lady's Bedstraw
Aspen
Meadow Saxifrage
White Musky Saxifrage
Paniculate/Livelong Saxifrage
Fairy Foxglove
Field Cow-wheat
Crested Cow-wheat
Greater Yellow-rattle
Alpine/French Figwort
Hoary Mullein
Garland Flower
Mezereon
Cow Parsley
Spiguel/Alpine Fennel
Stinging Nettle
Long-spurred Pansy
Heartsease/Wild Pansy
Man Orchid
Pyramidal Orchid
Marsh Helleborine
Broad-leaved Helleborine
White Helleborine
Sword-leaved Helleborine

Cephalanthera rubra
Coeloglossum viride
Corallorhiza trifida
Cypripedium calceolus
Dactylorhiza fuchsii
Dactylorhiza majalis
Dactylorhiza sambucina
Gymnadenia conopsea
Himantoglossum hircinum
Limodorum abortivum
Listera ovata
Neottia nidus-avis
Ophrys apifera
Ophrys fuciflora
Ophrys insectiflora
Ophrys ciliata
Orchis mascula
Orchis militaris
Orchis palustris
Orchis purpurea
Orchis spitzelii
Orchis tridentata
Orchis ustulata
Platanthera bifolia
Traunsteinera globosa

Red Helleborine
Frog Orchid
Coralroot Orchid
Lady's-Slipper Orchid
Common Spotted Orchid
Broad-leaved Marsh Orchid
Elder-flowered Orchid
Fragrant Orchid
Lizard Orchid
Violet Limodore
Twayblade
Bird's-nest Orchid
Bee Orchid
Late Spider Orchid
Fly Orchid
Mirror Ophrys
Early Purple Orchid
Military Orchid
Bog Orchis
Lady Orchid
Spitzel's Orchid
Toothed Orchid
Burnt Orchid
Lesser Butterfly Orchid
Pink Globe Orchid

Once again our local guide Bruno Veillet provided us with some very memorable moments. On our first full day in the Vercors many of us had had good views of a young Black Woodpecker and both Rock Bunting and Long-eared Owls were seen which were new to Travelling Naturalist in the Vercors. And it seems like the trip just went on from there with fabulous sighting after fabulous sighting. Other new species included Fire Salamander, Corn Bunting, Lesser-Spotted Woodpecker (the latter on our final day) and a number of new orchid species including Toothed and Mirror Orchids and Broad-leaved Helleborine. We exceeded 30 species of orchid for the first time and ended up with a bird tally of 95 species. Perhaps THE most memorable moment was when we spent a good few minutes watching a fine male Wallcreeper at fairly close range.

Add all this wildlife to the grandeur of the mountainous backdrops to just about everywhere we went and you realise that the Vercors is a very special place indeed. Long it remain so and long may Bruno continue to be our local guide. Thank you for yet another great trip Bruno and thank you to you the clients for helping to make it that way.

I hope to see you again on another trip in the not too distant future.

Mike Read, June 2007

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