

Southern Portugal

23 – 30 March 2008

Leader:

Mike Read

Introduction:

Along the Algarve coast lies many sandy beaches while further inland villages of white-walled and red-roofed buildings are dotted through a typical maquis landscape. Add to this the warm winter (and hot summer) sunshine and you have a popular holiday destination. The area is also really good for birding, especially as migrants make their way north in spring and the lower intensity agriculture allows huge swathes of flowers to bloom in a way no longer seen in the UK. Birds and flowers abound at every turn.

This tour produced a good number of bird species despite the almost constant cool north to northwest winds that seemed to keep many species' heads down. Highlights included 5 new species for a *Travelling Naturalist* group in southern Portugal namely Mute Swan, European Nightjar, Orphean Warbler, Cirl Bunting and Black-headed Weaver. (The latter bird was seen on the 2006 tour but not specifically identified.) Throughout the tour we encountered some lovely birds including Black-crowned Night-heron, White Storks, Greater Flamingos, Purple Gallinules, Stone Curlews, Black-winged Stilts, Caspian Terns, Woodchat Shrike, European Bee-eaters, Azure-winged Magpies, Crested Larks, Sardinian Warblers and Serins.

However, perhaps the most memorable day was when we ventured a little further inland to the plains between Ourique and Mertola. Here the birding was just superb with numerous Corn Buntings everywhere, at least 15 Montagu's Harriers, Red and Black Kites, Lesser Kestrels, 15 or more Black-bellied Sandgrouse, a male Black-eared Wheatear and a good flock of Calandra Larks. But pride of place must surely go to the Bustards with Little Bustards appearing quite close to us in the midst of a purple-blue haze of wild flowers and the Great Bustards of which we saw a *Travelling Naturalist* record number of at least 53 individual birds.

In all we recorded a total of 141 species of birds, enjoyed some fine food and wine and the leader certainly needs to go on a diet before his next tour!! I look forward to the great pleasure of your company on a future *Travelling Naturalist* tour.

Mike Read

Daily diary:

Sunday 23 March

The majority of the group flew out from Gatwick together but with take-off being just a little late we thought it would delay us somewhat. However, the tail wind pushed us towards our destination and we landed at Faro about 10 minutes early. Once we had collected our bags and the hire vehicle, we were soon heading for Armacão de Pera. We arrived in time for a rather late dinner after which we went to our rooms for a well earned nights sleep.

Monday 24 March

Quinta do Lago and Dunas Douradas

We began the day with a pre breakfast walk westwards from the hotel. As we set off, House Sparrows and Yellow-legged Gulls were numerous around the buildings and a few House Martins seemed to be prospecting for a nest site just across the road. High overhead a few Alpine Swifts circled and chased each other. At the open area there was a group of about 15 Goldfinches and 6 Greenfinches while off shore

about 30 Northern Gannets were fishing. A little further along we saw a few Barn Swallows and a pair of Red-rumped Swallows, a Common Kestrel flew off westwards and 2 Cattle Egrets headed inland. Along the cliff top path our sightings included Common Blackbird and Spotless Starling by the buildings, Sardinian Warbler and Iberian Chiffchaff in the scrub while close in at sea we saw a couple of Sandwich Terns passing and 2 Cormorants were perched on a rock. Close views of a Serin completed our outward walk and on the way back we noted a couple of Crested Larks.

After breakfast we headed eastwards to Quinta do Lago where we parked at the edge of the Ria Formosa Nature Reserve. The mud flats held good quantities of waders including Sanderlings, Turnstones, Dunlins, Bar-tailed Godwits, Whimbrels, Redshanks and Greenshanks, a couple of Little Stints plus Ringed, Kentish and Grey Plovers. 2 or 3 Little Egrets stalked the shallows and then a European Spoonbill dropped in for a brief feed before flying off west. Overhead we saw a couple of Common Swifts and a few of their Pallid cousins while a Booted Eagle circled away into the distance. A gentle stroll then took us to a pool on the golf course and the birding here was equally good. Purple Gallinules and Red-crested Pochards vied for our attention and both of these species gave excellent, close views. Other species noted here included Great Crested and Little Grebes, Northern Shoveler, Common Pochard and a well-hidden Cetti's Warbler. As we headed a little further on, a group of about 30 Common Waybills flew down on to the ground and began feeding giving excellent views. Beyond this area a lagoon held many Greater Flamingos and a few ducks while in the trees at least 4 White Stork nests were each occupied by a sitting bird. A Caspian Tern flew past as we watched. On our return walk past the golf course pond, a pair of Little Bitterns put in an appearance and we were rewarded with good views of these as well as a 'blue-headed' version of Yellow Wagtail.

After coffee at the beach restaurant, where a Rock Sparrow was seen, we had our picnic overlooking the rising tide where wading species continued to feed. After this we drove, on a somewhat devious route, to a pool at Dunas Douradas. As we drove, an Eurasian Hoopoe flew across the road just in front of us but the traffic conditions meant that we could not stop for better views. At Dunas Douradas there were large numbers of European Pond Terrapins basking in the afternoon sunshine. One log held at least 17 individuals, some of which were stacked 3 high! Little and Cattle Egrets were seen here but the prize bird was a Black-crowned Night-heron that we managed to get excellent views of even noting its red eye. This completed our day out and we returned to the hotel with time to relax before dinner.

Tuesday 25 March

Caldas de Monchique, Foia and the Odelouca Valley

To begin the day we drove to the eastern end of Armacão to walk near the marsh. Here there were plenty of birds to be seen as the tide was fairly low and plenty of mud was exposed. Wading species included Kentish Plover, Sanderling, Greenshank, Redshank, Ruff, Common Snipe and about 24 Black-winged Stilts. The Stilts and Sanderlings were seen at very close range especially. Other species noted included Cormorant, White Stork, Marsh Harrier and Black-headed Gulls.

After breakfast we headed for the Algarve's highest mountain, Foia. As we left the motorway near Portimão we paused for a brief view over some nearby salt marsh where we could see 2 Spoonbills and at least 5 White Storks. As we drove up towards Foia, we paused at a viewpoint near Caldas de Monchique to take in the extensive views towards the ocean. Here we saw Blackcap, Robin, Serin, Chaffinch, Short-toed Treecreeper and a couple of Red-rumped Swallows. After a pause in Monchique for a coffee, we drove to the top of Foia. Here the strong wind was rather buffeting and also quite cold; most unusual for this time of year in the Algarve. As a consequence, birds seemed to be keeping their heads down. However, we did manage excellent views of a male Rock Bunting as well as seeing Dartford Warbler, Linnet, Woodlark and a Green Woodpecker clinging to the wall of a derelict building! We also heard the scolding alarm calls of a Winter Wren that remained hidden.

The wind was so cooling that despite finding a relatively sheltered spot, most people had their lunch inside the minibus. Then we drove back down to Caldas de Monchique where a short walk produced good views of Cirl Bunting, Blackcap and at least 3 Iberian Chiffchaffs. A Great Spotted Woodpecker called from the trees but was not sighted. From here we drove to the Odelouca Valley. As we stood beside the first part of the river, a Cetti's Warbler or two were frequently heard but, typical of the species, were never seen. Many

gulls (Yellow-legged and Black-headed) flew to and from the nearby refuse tip along with at least a dozen White Storks. Cattle Egrets rested on some shallows beside a Grey Heron. The Egrets then flew off and joined some of their colleagues in a field where we estimate there were at least 100 individuals. Searches further up river produced views of Grey Wagtails, Moorhens, Cormorants and a couple of Common Kestrels but little else. One final binocular sweep of the hilltops proved worthwhile when three Short-toed Eagles were spotted. Though distant, through the 'scope, their pale undersides and darker head could be seen. A super end to our day out.

Wednesday 26 March

Castro Marim area

Westwards before breakfast we found the usual birds around the buildings including House Martins and a couple of Red-rumped Swallows. Over the sea were about 30 Northern Gannets and few Sandwich Terns while resting on the surface of the water was a Great Skua. Alpine Swifts and a couple of Common Kestrels were seen flying and a Hoopoe was feeding beside a pathway. As usual we noted Sardinian Warbler but another bird, obviously from the same family, caused some confusion. This turned out to be a female Orphean Warbler, the first sighting of this species for a *Travelling Naturalist* group in the Algarve. Our final good sighting of this walk was a Common Sandpiper feeding on a lawn and beside an empty pool.

As we set off for Castro Marim, we began seeing good birds just outside Armacão de Pera. 5 European Bee-eaters caused us to stop and we soon added a couple of Woodchat Shrikes and as we watched, a Marsh Harrier drifted past in the background. A good while later we had nearly reached the Spanish border and left the coastal motorway bound for an area just south of Castro Marim. Here we parked and, undaunted by the rather strong breeze, set off on our walk. Caspian and Little Terns searched the waterway for food, Corn Buntings sang from many locations and 9 Avocets flew westwards. A calling Stone Curlew attracted our attention and we soon located 2 of them. Spotless Starlings were plentiful as were Crested Larks. As we paused to view a pair of Red-legged Partridges, we found a Crag Martin flitting around with the Barn Swallows. Out on the salt pans there were a few Black-winged Stilts, an occasional Common Redshank and perhaps 200 Greater Flamingos but the buffeting wind seemed to ensure little else put in an appearance in this open habitat. Amongst the trees on the grassy slope we located 4 more Stone Curlews, a few White Storks, a Hoopoe was heard calling and we were then given the briefest of views of a Great Spotted Cuckoo. As we made our way back to the minibus, a Spoonbill was feeding beside a Little Egret and as we drove to Castro Marim for a coffee stop, a group of Black-tailed Godwits were seen feeding in a pool.

As we left Castro Marim a little later, we paused to look over a roadside pool and this contained a fair selection of waders including 2 Common Snipe, many Black-winged Stilts, 2 Dunlins, at least 4 Kentish Plovers, 6 Curlew Sandpipers and about 30 Little Stints. We had lunch at the north end of the reserve overlooking a couple of pools where we watched 4 Avocets, 11 Black-tailed Godwits and a passing Marsh Harrier from the comfort of the minibus.

Out towards the nature centre, we turned north and in some trackside pools we located 3 pairs of Black-winged Stilts, a Green Sandpiper and a Little Ringed Plover. At the visitor centre we looked at the ponds below and could see some Northern Shovelers and Gadwalls, more Stilts, 3 Greenshanks, Kentish, Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers and another Spoonbill. Afterwards we walked out on to the salt marsh to search for birds but most of them seemed to be keeping their heads down due to the wind. A couple of Common Stonechats, a few Tree Pipits and Yellow Wagtails were all that we could find in the bird line, while we did note a number of Clouded Yellow butterflies struggling northwards. We headed back to the vehicle and then made our way back to Armacão de Pera to end a trying but, considering the weather conditions, a successful days birding.

Thursday 27 March

The plains from Ourique to Mertola

The pre breakfast walk to the west of the hotel produced the usual birds namely Yellow-legged Gulls, House Martins, Barn and Red-rumped Swallows, Alpine Swifts and Sardinian Warbler along with presumably the same Common Sandpiper that we noted the previous day.

A drive northwards later took us to the plains of the Alentejo region. Close to Ourique we glimpsed a Little Owl as we pulled up to park and shortly afterwards a Hoopoe flew into the same tree and also promptly disappeared! Along the roadside numerous pairs of White Storks were nesting on telegraph poles and Corn Buntings seemed to be everywhere. By a small pond, 3 Nuthatches were perched on successive fence posts and 3 Northern Lapwings, a Green Sandpiper and a Greenshank were seen feeding while 2 Grey Herons stood nearby. Further along the track there were a good number of Spotless Starlings to be seen among the trees along with a couple of Short-toed Treecreepers and a pair of Great Tits. Red and Black Kites were seen in flight and soon afterwards a female Hen Harrier drifted into view. To complete this walk we added 3 Woodlarks, a pair of Woodchat Shrikes and a fine male Black-eared Wheatear but sadly not everyone saw this latter bird.

After a coffee stop in Castro Verde, we drove to some nearby grassland where, after a short search, we managed to locate 4 male and 2 female Little Bustards. Many of these birds were amongst a carpet of Purple Vipers Bugloss; a fabulous sight! Also at this spot we saw a Red Kite, a few Common Kestrels and White Storks, a couple of Calandra Larks and lots of Corn Buntings. Further along the road towards Mertola we paused for lunch overlooking a river. More White Storks were in this area as well as 3 more Red Kites, a male Little Bustard and a Southern Grey Shrike. On the river a Cormorant was frequently diving for fish.

A side turning took us through more rolling farmland with fields full of various flowers. Crested Lark and Woodchat Shrikes were seen as well as at least 5 Montagu's Harriers. Eventually, our main target bird was found as a lone Great Bustard was identified in the distance. We need not have worried or searched so hard as at another location we saw at least 35 of these birds in flight. No doubt they had been disturbed by someone or something. Also here we saw a dozen or more Common Kestrels hovering in the same area and it seemed as if each telegraph pole held a pair of nesting White Storks. Along a side track there were another 16 or more Great Bustards, about 15 Black-bellied Sandgrouse, 10 or more Montagu's Harriers one of which scared up a flock of perhaps 100 Calandra Larks.

As we completed the journey to Mertola, we saw a couple more Hoopoes, 2 Common Buzzards, many more White Stork nests and a few Woodchat Shrikes. At Mertola itself we had a group of 8 European Bee-eaters fly past, there were plenty of House Martins (but sadly no Crag Martins) nesting on the bridge over the gorge and in the distance we could see 5 Lesser Kestrels. From the riverside vegetation a Cetti's Warbler sang and many of the town's buildings held pairs of nesting White Storks. The return journey took us via Almodôvar and along this road we saw a few more European Bee-eaters, Common Buzzard, our first Pheasant and our second Great Spotted Cuckoo. This latter bird gave closer, prolonged views unlike our previous one near Castro Marim. As we neared Armacão de Pera the light was beginning to fade and this brought out a pair of Little Owls which we watched for a while before returning to the hotel and another fine evening meal.

Friday 28 March

Alvor Estuary, Odelouca Valley & Pera Marsh

During the drive to the Alvor Estuary we saw a few Alpine Swifts and at least 11 Eurasian Spoonbills close to Portimão. As we drove down the side of the estuary a Willow Warbler was seen feeding along the fence line, while out on some pools 3 or 4 pairs of Black-winged Stilts seemed to be holding territory. We parked and were soon viewing a group of 40 or more Flamingos and 8 Avocets in a nearby pool and a pair of Crested Larks on the gravelly car park. As we began a walk along the sea wall a few Kentish Plovers were found on the sandy shore, 4 Stonechats were in the scrub that also held a Woodchat Shrike. A couple more Kentish Plovers could be seen on the salty lagoons inside the sea wall and a few Yellow Wagtails seemed to be passing through on migration. It was here that a late wintering Golden Plover was well found. Further along the sandy inter-tidal areas held a Whimbrel, 5 Bar-tailed Godwits, a few Grey Plovers and half a dozen Oystercatchers, whilst Sandwich Terns either fished the watery channels or rested on a row of posts. As we reached the salt pans a group of waders flew in and these included a few more Grey Plovers and Kentish Plovers but also there were a couple of Dunlins and some Turnstones. Little Egret and Spoonbill were also noted here.

After a brief stop in Mexilhoeira Grande for a cup of coffee we headed to the Odelouca Valley for our picnic lunch. As we munched away, Cetti's Warblers sang from both sides of the river and both Grey and Pied Wagtails were seen. Some of the group enjoyed the relaxing sunshine once they had finished eating but despite impressions (!) eyes were still wide open and passing White Storks and Alpine Swifts were the resulting sightings. We briefly ventured a little further into the valley after lunch and happened upon a flock of at least 300 Cattle Egrets.

For the afternoon we decided to visit the Pera Marsh where an unfinished bridge and an incomplete boardwalk proved a little puzzling! As usual the birding was good here with a few Gannets being noted off-shore, whilst in the marsh itself we found a number of good species, these included Purple Gallinules, Little and Cattle Egrets, Little Grebes, Shoveler, Mallard and a Common Pochard and a new species for the trip, a Mute Swan. As we drove to the western side of the marsh, a Eurasian Jay was seen flying across the road. On this part of the marsh there were a number of Avocets and Black-winged Stilts gracing the shallows with a few Sanderlings scuttling about at the water's edge. At least 4 Spoonbills and a few Grey Herons were added to the list and then a Marsh Harrier flew past to complete our sightings here.

After an evening meal at the Serol restaurant in Armacão de Pera we drove to the outskirts of town to look for and listen for night-time wildlife. A couple of Little Owls were glimpsed and at another location one was heard calling at very close range but a more distant sound was the churring call of a European Nightjar; a first record of this species for a *Travelling Naturalist* group in southern Portugal.

Saturday 29 March

Fortaleza de Sagres, heath near Beliche & Cabo de Sao Vicente

Today we headed west to visit the most south-westerly point of mainland Europe. Before reaching the Cape we had a couple of other places to visit first. During the drive we noted a couple of Red-rumped Swallows, a few Alpine Swifts and Azure-winged Magpies, at least 30 Jackdaws and a sprinkling of Cattle Egrets in various fields. As we arrived at the Fortaleza de Sagres a male Black Redstart was singing from the Fort ramparts. Once inside we had better views of the Black Redstart whilst a Serin was feeding close to a group of Linnets. As we wandered around the coastal pathway the array of wildflowers seemed to take everyone's attention on this limestone headland. On the rocky habitat we saw a few more Black Redstarts and perhaps half a dozen Thekla Larks, although this latter species proved a little more elusive than usual. A couple of Red-billed Choughs were a pleasant surprise here. The off-shore wind seemed to be keeping the Gannets and other passing seabirds quite a long way out. However, we did manage to find a couple of small groups of Balearic Shearwaters and Common Scoters. Despite considerable searches around this area, no Blue Rock Thrush was found but then as we exited through the Fort doorway, a male was perched on the cliff top and gave us excellent views. As we reached the vehicle a further 2 Blue Rock Thrushes flew past.

After a pause for coffee at Beliche where we saw a very busy pair of Stonechats, we went out onto some heathy grassland to have our picnic lunch. A lovely Mirror Orchid was a good find here, as were the 2 male Little Bustards that we saw. The first of these birds was located by its brief 'raspberry' display calls! A couple of Red-billed Choughs and Crested Larks were seen here along with a few Corn Buntings and a pair White Storks. After lunch we drove the track out across the grassland and managed to locate a nice group of Skylarks, our first for the trip as well as Common Kestrel hovering close by and a pair of Little Owls clearly visible in an old ruined building.

To complete the day we paid a brief visit to Cabo de Sao Vicente where a Peregrine was virtually the first bird we saw. This bird rode the breeze for quite some time with hardly a wing-flap; a superb display of this bird's flying ability. Still more Gannets passed off-shore along with our first Great Black-backed Gull and a couple of European Shags. On the nearby cliffs and islands large numbers of Yellow-legged Gulls seemed to be preparing for the approaching breeding season. This completed our visit to this lovely and unique area and during the return drive to Armacão de Pera we saw many of the same species as we noted on the way out.

Sunday 30 March

Pera Marsh and the journey to Faro airport

With just an hour and a half available after breakfast and before we needed to head for the airport, we paid a brief visit to the western side of the Pera Marsh. Again Black-winged Stilts were very much in evidence and at least one pair seemed to be selecting a potential nesting site. A group of 5 Sanderlings fed busily among the long-legged stilts and at the northern end of the marsh a group of Avocets were resting with their beaks tucked into their back feathers. A group of 58 Flamingos fed in the middle of the lake while 5 Spoonbills rested in the grassy margins. As we wandered along we could see various ducks including Mallard, Common Pochard and Gadwall as well as good numbers of Little Grebes, Coots and Moorhens. A single Purple Gallinule was the only one of this species we located today. Other birds noted in the area included Common Sandpiper, Mute Swan, Grey Heron, Corn Bunting and Fan-tailed Warbler. All too soon our birding came to an end so we returned to the hotel to have a cup of coffee, collect our luggage and head for Faro airport.

SPECIES LISTS:

BIRDS

Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	Noted on 25 th on the way to and from Foia and then seen on the next 2 days with good numbers inland between Castro Verde and Mertola
Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	Heard near Castro Verde on 27 th
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	A single bird at Pera Marsh on 28 th and 30 th was the first bird seen by a <i>Travelling Naturalist</i> group in the Algarve
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	First seen at Quinta do Lago and Dunas Douradas on 24 th then noted on a further 4 days especially in coastal areas
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Noted every day except 29 th
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Seen at Quinta do Lago on 24 th , at Castro Marim on 26 th then at the Pera Marshes on 28 th & 30 th
Eurasian (Common) Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Heard at Quinta do Lago on 24 th
Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	About 9 seen at Quinta do Lago on 24 th
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	Seen at Quinta do Lago and Dunas Douradas on 24 th and at the Pera Marshes on 28 th and 30 th
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	3 at Quinta do Lago on 24 th
Common (Black) Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	A couple of small groups flying west, low over the sea off Fortaleza de Sagres on 29 th
Balearic Shearwater	<i>Puffinus mauretanicus</i>	A group of half a dozen seen flying west past Fortaleza de Sagres on 29 th was our only sighting
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	First seen at Quinta do Lago and Dunas Douradas on 24 th then noted on a further 3 days in coastal areas
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Seen at Quinta do Lago on 24 th and then at Castro Marim on 26 th
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	7 or 8 at Quinta do Lago on 24 th then at least 400 were in the Castro Marim area on 26 th . Also seen at the Elvor Estuary on 28 th and at the Pera Marshes on 28 th and 30 th
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	The first one was near Armacão de Pera on 24 th but then we saw the species every day in a wide range of locations. The largest numbers were on the plains between Ourique and Mertola on 27 th

Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	A single bird seen at Quinta do Lago on 24 th was followed by sightings near Portimão on 25 th (2), Castro Marim on 26 th (1), and at the Pera Marsh on 28 th (11) & 30 th (4)
Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	A pair were on the ‘Gallinule pond’ at Quinta do Lago on 24 th
Black-crowned Night-heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	A single bird was seen at Dunas Douradas on 24 th
Cattle Egret	<i>Ardeola bubulcus</i>	Noted most days in smallish numbers but on 25 th there were at least 100 in the Odelouca Valley where, on 28 th , numbers had increased to more than 300 birds
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Noted every day in small numbers except 29 th
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Mostly seen in coastal areas but not noted on 29 th
Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	At least 30 seen offshore during the pre breakfast walk on 24 th then seen every day we looked over the sea in areas from the hotel westwards
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	A few seen at Quinta do Lago on 24 th then noted every day in small numbers including far inland on 27 th between Castro Verde and Mertola
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	Just a couple seen at Cabo de Sao Vicente on 29 th
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	About 5 seen swooping about over the Guadiana Gorge at Mertola on 27 th
Common (Eurasian) Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Noted every day in small numbers with the most being well over a dozen between Ourique and Mertola on 27 th
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Just a single bird seen as soon as we arrived at Cabo de Sao Vicente on 29 th
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	At least 6 seen between Ourique and Mertola on 27 th
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	A single bird was seen between Ourique and Castro Verde on 27 th
Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	3 somewhat distant birds seen together in the Odelouca Valley on 26 th
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	A single bird seen over the marsh to the east of Armacão de Pera on 25 th then seen at Castro Marim on 26 th (at least 3 individuals) and at Pera Marsh on 28 th
Montagu’s Harrier	<i>Circus pygarrus</i>	At least 15 seen between Ourique and Mertola on 27 th with some close and excellent views
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	1 on 25 th at Foia and then at least 4 on 27 th during our visit to the plains west of Mertola
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraeetus pennatus</i>	Just a single bird seen at Quinta do Lago on 24 th
Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>	A single bird east of Castro Verde was our first sighting then later we saw at least 35 which, having been disturbed, all flew off west, and finally, a little to the east, we saw a further 16 individuals. All on 27 th before we reached Mertola
Little Bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>	At least 10 seen between Castro Marim and Mertola on 27 th and then a further 2 (males) seen on heath near Beliche on 29 th
Purple Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	At least 6 seen at Quinta do Lago on 24 th then a similar number were at the Pera Marsh on 28 th where a couple of days later we saw a single bird
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Noted on 5 days

Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Noted on 4 days
European Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>	At least 6 close to Castro Marim on 26 th
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematops ostralegus</i>	6 on the Alvor Estuary on 28 th ; the usual and only place we see them in the Algarve
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	At least 15 on the marsh to the east of Armacão de Pera on 25 th was our first sighting then seen on a further 4 days including at the Pera Marsh on 30 th
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avocetta</i>	At least 20 on 26 th in the Castro Marim area on 26 th then seen on 28 th at the Alvor Estuary and on the Pera Marsh. The species was also noted at this latter location on 30 th
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Just 3 seen near Ourique on 27 th
European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	A single bird was well found on the Alvor Estuary on 28 th
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Noted on the marshes at Quinta do Lago on 24 th then at least 11 seen on the Alvor estuary on 28 th
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Noted on 3 days; 24 th , 26 th and 28 th
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	A couple of individuals seen at Castro Marim on 26 th
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	First seen at Quinta do Lago on 24 th then seen on a further 3 coastal days
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	2 on the Marshes east of Armacão de Pera on 25 th then noted on a further 2 occasions
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Just seen at Castro Marim on 26 th
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Seen at Quinta do Lago on 24 th & the Alvor Estuary on 28 th
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	At least 5 at Quinta do Lago on 24 th and 1 on the Alvor Estuary on 28 th
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	The only 'contact' was a bird heard calling at Quinta do Lago on 24 th
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Small numbers seen in coastal areas on 5 days
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Small numbers seen in coastal areas on 5 days
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	A single bird seen at the northern end of the reserve near Castro Marim on 26 th was our first then another bird was seen near Ourique the following day
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Single birds seen on 4 days including 2 sightings on the lawn of the 'Club Nautique' on 26 th & 27 th
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	A few seen at Quinta do Lago on 24 th then the only other sighting was 2 on the Alvor Estuary on 28 th
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	Seen on 24 th at Quinta do Lago and then on a further 4 occasions/locations
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	At least 30 close to Castro Marim on 26 th
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	At least 6 near Castro Marim on 26 th
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	First seen at Quinta do Lago on 24 th then seen on 26 th at Castro Marim and on 28 th on salt pans at the Alvor Estuary
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Just a single bird seen on the marshes to the east of Armacão de Pera on 25 th
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	Common; seen every day

Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Just a single bird seen at Quinta do Lago on 24th
Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	A single sighting of a bird passing Cabo de Sao Vicente on 29th
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Noted on 4 days with the first being at the Armacão de Pera Marsh on 25th
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	2 or 3 at Quinta do Lago on 24 th and a further 4 at Castro Marim a couple of days later
Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	3 seen passing the hotel area on 24 th and a similar number at the same location a couple of days later. At the Alvor Estuary on 28 th there were at least 15 present
Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	About 8 birds seen close to Castro Marim on 26 th
Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	A single bird seen sitting on the sea just west of the hotel during the pre breakfast walk on 26 th with perhaps the same bird present during breakfast on 29 th when it was seen chasing a gannet
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>	About 15 seen between Castro Verde and Mertola on 27 th
Feral Pigeon/Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	Noted every day
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Noted every day
Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>	A very brief sighting at Castro Marim on 26 th was most unsatisfactory but we need not have worried as another was well seen on roadside wires the following day near Mertola
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	2 near Armacão de Pera on 27 th were followed by a couple of glimpses and some close-to-the-road calling the following evening. These were followed by 2 near Beliche on 29 th
European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	Heard calling close to Armacão de Pera on 28 th
Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>	Noted on 5 days including during pre breakfast walks westwards from the hotel
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Noted on 24 th at Quinta do Lago and also seen on 27 th and 28th
Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	Only specifically identified at Quinta do Lago on 24 th but no doubt we saw the species other days too
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	5 near Armacão de Pera on 26 th then seen the following day between Castro Verde and Mertola (small numbers in 3 groups) and then heard at Pera Marsh on 30 th
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	2 seen during journeys on 24 th near Dunas Douradas, 1 well seen the following day before breakfast plus at least 2 more later then at least 4 encountered between Ourique and Mertola on 27 th
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Just heard calling at Caldas de Monchique on 25 th
European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	2 seen well away from trees on Foia on 25 th
Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	At least 3 seen on 27 th during our visit to the plains between Castro Verde and Mertola
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	Noted on 3 successive days from 26 th
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Just 2 sightings of single birds on 28 th near the Pera Marsh and on 30 th on the way to Faro

Azure-winged Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>	Noted every day except 30 th but mostly during journeys when we were unable to stop
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Just a single bird seen close to Mertola on 27 th
Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrhacorax pyrrhacorax</i>	2 at Fortaleza de Sagres and a further 2 or 3 near Beliche all on 29 th
Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	3 at Mertola on 27 th were followed by a flock of about 30 birds on 29 th on the way to Cabo de Sao Vicente where we saw a further 2 individuals
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	Just 2 seen near Castro Verde on 27 th
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	4, presumably 2 pairs, seen near Ourique on 27 th
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Heard on 24 th near Quinta do Lago then briefly seen on 27 th near Ourique
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Noted every day
Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	Just a single bird seen near Castro Marim on 26 th
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Seen every day including regular birds around the hotel
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	A pair seemed to be nest building in a culvert just west of the hotel so these birds were seen regularly but away from this area, the species was only noted on about 3 occasions
Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	At least 100 seen between Castro Verde and Mertola on 27 th with the majority being a large flock disturbed by a passing Montagu's Harrier!
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	Noted every day except 25 th
Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>	Just seen at Fortaleza de Sagres on 29 th as usual
Wood Lark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	A single bird seen flying away on the top of Foia on 25 th then 3 seen and heard singing near Ourique on 27 th
Eurasian Sky Lark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	About 30 seen on the heath near Beliche on 29 th
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Small numbers seen every day
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	First noted at Quinta do Lago on 24 th where a bird was seen to fly from one patch of scrub to another. Also heard at this location and on 25 th , 27 th & 28 th
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	A single bird seen as we arrived on the Alvor Estuary on 28 th
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	3 at Quinta do Lago on 24 th and one during the pre breakfast walk on 27 th
Iberian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>	A probable bird of this species was noted during the pre breakfast walk on 24 th then at least 3 were noted at Caldas de Monchique on 25 th
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Seen at Caldas de Monchique on 25 th then noted on 26 th & 28 th
Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>	A female seen during the pre breakfast walk on 26 th was the first sighting of this species by a <i>Travelling Naturalist</i> group in the Algarve
Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>	At least 3 seen close to the summit of Foia on 25 th
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	Regularly seen on 5 successive days from 24 th
Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Heard calling on Foia on 25 th and beside the Alvor Estuary on 28 th

Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	3 seen on successive fence posts close to Ourique on 27 th
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	1 at Caldas de Monchique on 25 th then at least 2 near Ourique on 27 th
Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	A single bird was seen on 24 th during the pre breakfast walk then fair numbers noted on 26 th , 27 th and 29 th
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Just a single bird seen at Caldas de Monchique on 25 th
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	At least 6 seen at Fortaleza de Sagres on 29 th
Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	Noted on 5 successive days from 25 th
Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	A male was seen on a fence near Ourique on 27 th
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Sadly the species seems to have gone from the cliffs close to the hotel but we saw 3 at Fortaleza de Sagres on 29 th with one of these birds giving fine views
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Noted every day
Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	A single bird in the unusual location of a beach café at Quinta do Lago on 24 th
Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>	A group of at least 30 were well seen as they fed on open ground at the edge of the golf course at Quinta do Lago on 24 th
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	1 at Quinta do Lago on 24 th then also seen at Castro Marim on 26 th and the Alvor Estuary on 28 th
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	1 at Monchique and 1 in the Odelouca valley on 25 th ; the species was at this latter location during lunch on 28 th
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	2 seen in the Odelouca Valley during lunch on 28 th
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	3 at the Alvor Estuary on 28 th
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Quite a few passing through on migration with birds noted on 4 successive days from 26 th
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Noted on Foia on 25 th and near Ourique on 27 th
European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	Well seen during the pre breakfast walk on 24 th on which day we also saw some at Quinta do Lago. We also saw birds on 28 th & 29 th
European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Noted every day except 30 th
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Common. Seen every day
Common Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Seen on 25 th Castro Marim, on 28 th at the Alvor Estuary and on 29 th near Beliche
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	Noted every day except 24 th with large numbers especially seen on the plains between Ourique and Mertola on 27 th
Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	A male at Caldas de Monchique on 25 th was the first record of this species in Southern Portugal for a <i>Travelling Naturalist</i> group
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	A fine male was seen on Foia on 25 th despite the windy conditions

Black-headed Weaver	<i>Ploceus melanocephala</i>	A bird of this species was seen at Quinta do Lago on 24 th as per our previous tour to the Algarve when the species was also seen but not fully identified. This is an African species and it has no doubt been introduced to the region or allowed to escape from a collection.
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OTHER TAXA

MAMMALS

Iberian Hare	<i>Lepus granatensis</i>	Noted on 26 th and 27 th
Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	Noted on 27 th , 29 th & 30 th
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	Small numbers seen on 3 days

REPTILES

European Pond Terrapin	<i>Emys orbicularis</i>	Many terrapins seen at Quinta do Lago and Dunas Douradas on 24 th were thought to have been this species but may equally well have been Spanish Terrapin. Report on the leader reflects his school days: Could do better
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Spanish Terrapin	<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>	
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BUTTERFLIES

Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	
Small White	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>	
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias croceus</i>	
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	

Very few butterflies were seen presumably due to the almost constant cold north-west wind that plagued us throughout this tour. Most unusual for this region and time of year.

OTHER TAXA

Fiddler Crab	<i>Uca tangeri</i>	Lots on the mud at Quinta do Lago on 24th
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