

Portugal

The Algarve in Autumn

Tue 3rd – Tue 10th Oct 2017



Trip photos (clockwise from top left): Great Shearwater • Slender-billed Gull • Western Swamphen • Glossy Ibis • Little Bittern • Iberian Magpie. © tour leader Mike Crewe/Limosa Holidays

**Report compiled by tour leaders:
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Tour Leaders: Robin Chittenden and Mike Crewe

with Debbie Burkett, Alison Everett, Janet Lowndes & Vaughan Ryall, Richard Murray, Val & Ray Piercy, Mike Rowe & Rhona Wallace.

This turned into another very lucky autumn birding trip to the Algarve. The most unusual find was a Lanner Falcon (a species not yet accepted on the Portuguese country bird list, although several records are pending). Other highlights, among many, were a male Pallid Harrier, Wilson's Storm Petrel, two Black Vultures, nine Black-bellied Sandgrouse and a Bonelli's Eagle.

Daily Diary**Day 1 – Tuesday, October 2nd 2017**

We arrived at our first hotel in time for a fine buffet supper.

Day 2 – Wednesday, October 3rd 2017

Birds on the saltponds around Tavira are used to human activity and, as a result, hardly blink when you scrutinize them closely. Birding kicked off with lovely views of 40 Spoonbills, in a feeding frenzy, accompanied by one or two Slender-billed Gulls. Bluethroats seemed to show much better this year with at least two perched birds showing their lovely breast colours. Three others were not quite so obliging. Several Red-rumped Swallows cruised about.

Heading to some more saltponds we found a few Audouin's Gulls, two peachy adult Slender-billed Gulls and over one hundred Mediterranean Gulls. Waders were perhaps a little down on previous visits but all the usual species were present and sometimes only yards away: several Curlew Sandpipers, Sanderlings and Dunlin, Kentish Plovers and Common Ringed Plovers, but only a few Little Stints. We took a look at the Santa Luzia saltponds where there were around one hundred Audouin's Gulls, all adults.

After a light lunch and short siesta we headed to the lake at Quinta do Lago, which had much less reed cover, compared to previous years, but happily the usual suspects were all still there. We finished up seeing up to four Little Bitterns, including a very close female and a sunning male. Up to ten Western Swamphens mooched about, including four looking somewhat out of place on the golf tees and greens. On the lake were two Red-crested Pochards among the other more usual duck species. Vaughan had the good fortune not only to spot, but to photograph, a Wryneck which a few of the group managed to get on to. A Bluethroat showed well to all. Other notable birds were a Hoopoe, many Iberian Magpies, eight Glossy Ibises and Pied and Spotted Flycatcher. The non-native Black-headed Weavers were much in evidence: we even found a couple of their nests. Two gaudy Common Waxbills wowed the group.

Day 3 – Thursday, October 4th 2017

The 'pseudo-steppe' of the Alentejo region was baked to a crisp. Our first stop was by a partially dried up river and yielded a Green Sandpiper, Pied Flycatcher and a couple of Grey Wagtails. At the next stop five Black-bellied Sandgrouse flew in and then four more popped out a little nearer. But all too soon they took to the air.

Stopping and scanning at various likely spots, as we cruised through the region, eventually paid dividends, when two male Great Bustards strolled out onto the plain. Further down the road, two Crag Martins were spotted and these eventually perched by the road. Conveniently perched up in perfect light was a Southern Grey Shrike, and a Griffon Vulture cruised over.

On the return leg some pools along a dried up river bed were alive with stuff. Perhaps the most eye-catching was the startlingly iridescent Violet Dropwing. Many Iberian Marsh Frogs plopped into the water. We stopped at a reservoir and spotted a few Little Ringed Plovers, and several Lapwings, that had returned to winter. A couple of Mute Swans were probably the same birds present two years previously, as they are scarce in this part of Portugal. Two Black Vultures cruised over. Nearby one field had at least fifteen Eurasian Stone-curlews, one of which flew to reveal the white wing markings. As a bonus as we arrived back at Tavira, we spotted a Black-winged Kite by the road. A quick turn round and those sitting on the other side of the mini-bus got good views too. It was also there the next morning.

Day 4 – Friday, October 5th 2017

As soon as we arrived at Monchique, the highest mountain in the Algarve, Dartford Warblers popped out all over the place. We saw about twelve in all. Then a singing Blue Rock Thrush performed a display flight and two Rock Buntings fed for a while under some cafe tables. Nearby, twelve Ring Ouzels were watched flouncing around the berry-laden vegetation. Also spotted were a Black Redstart, eight Blackcaps and a brief Subalpine Warbler. But

perhaps best of all was a Common Rock-thrush.

From a tranquil spot, at a lower altitude, where we later had a fabulous lunch, we were lucky to see 40 Griffon Vultures circling over. In the wood there was a Short-toed Treecreeper, two showy Firecrests, a Pied Flycatcher and a Crested Tit. Two Two-tailed Pashas zipped through the trees. Heading to the coast a large flock of roosting gulls greeted us from the viewing screen at Lagoa dos Salgados. Scanning through the birds we located an Audouin's Gull, a Caspian Tern, three Bluethroats, 150 Glossy Ibises, two Wood Sandpipers and a Little Stint. We then traveled to our second hotel at Sagres, in time for a super supper.

Day 5 – Saturday, October 6th 2017

We took an early morning walk near our hotel at Sagres and watched the birds emerge, to warm up, in the first shafts of sunlight: Willow Warblers, a Pied Flycatcher, a couple of Spotted Flycatchers, two Redstarts, including a fabulous male and, best of all, a gorgeous Wryneck, which posed for all to delight in. Other nice things included a Crag Martin, a juvenile Turtle Dove, several Thekla Larks, and Red-billed Choughs. Offshore were European Shag and several loitering Cory's Shearwaters, in the calm conditions.

After a magnificent buffet breakfast we headed to the Vale Santo Farm area, but all seemed quiet so we headed towards the raptor watchpoint. We stopped to look at a few Thekla Larks and a couple of European Honey-buzzards flew over. Heading up to the belt of pines, a large brown falcon zipped past and was gone. It had to be a Lanner Falcon or Saker but which one and it was gone. All came good in the end though.

As we walked up the slope to the viewpoint a Short-toed Eagle and twenty Black Kites circled over. Several Booted Eagles followed these. Then a large eagle, with paddle-shaped wings, soared up: a young Bonelli's Eagle. Then a juvenile Goshawk steamed over, a Hen Harrier, then another juvenile Goshawk, mobbing a juvenile Montague's Harrier. Then more Short-toed and Booted Eagles even lower this time. Then the moment we were hoping for - the large brown falcon did a fly past heading south-west, then even better, it turned and flew past even closer in a north-easterly direction. All got on to the bird and photographs confirmed that it was a Lanner Falcon. In the afternoon we went exploring inland, finding a Spectacled Warbler and a Little Owl. Near Sagres we ended the day watching perfectly illuminated Iberian Magpies heading off to roost.

Day 6 – Sunday, October 7th 2017

On our next morning we headed to the cape itself. A few Great Skuas flew past, as did several Cory's Shearwaters and a few Balearic Shearwaters. Perhaps the most interesting sight was a Short-eared Owl, flapping over the ocean trying to make headway, in the vicious south-easterly winds. A Peregrine flew just over our heads. Stopping at the nearby fort, the only small migrant was a Spotted Flycatcher. Also there was a Black Redstart and Blue Rock Thrush. A Short-toed Eagle and several Black Kites came past low. We had a quick look at the Sagres Bird Festival, which is held there.

Highlights from another stint at the raptor watchpoint were an Egyptian Vulture soaring with a group of Black Kites. Other goodies were a Hobby, Red Kite, Goshawk, three Hen Harriers and a European Bee-eater. Heading back for lunch we accidentally came across the release of a recuperated Common Buzzard. Part of the Sagres Bird Festival. According to a local birdwatcher it is a duty for governments to provide rescue and rehabilitation services for wildlife as required by EU legislation. Portugal has many of these centres throughout the country.

After a siesta we headed out to the fields again. There had been an arrival of Hen Harriers, all ring-tails. A Peregrine stooped right in front of us in an attempt to catch a Linnet. No Little Bustards could be located though. Exploring a little further, and as we sorted out a slight issue provided by the extra soft sandy track, three Black Storks sweetened the shenanigans by flying past. As we headed back towards Sagres, the male Pallid Harrier that had been in the area for a few days, flew past us right by the road. Unfortunately those in the second minibus failed to see it, so we quickly turned around and viewed the area from some raised ground. Val spotted it on the ground. It then began hunting the area. Such excitement.

Day 7 – Monday, October 8th 2017

The next morning we took a trip out of Sagres harbour on a powerful rib. The skipper had intended to head to the continental shelf to the west of the Cape, but a fog bank put paid to that idea, so we headed about eight miles south of Cape St Vincent. En route we chanced across a pod of six Bottle-nosed Dolphins that came right beside the boat. You could see them through the gin clear water. Reaching a likely looking area where there were no birds in sight, we stopped and started chumming. This produced an oily slick that within seconds attracted a mass of gulls. In virtually no time there were up to 12 European Storm Petrels, patterning away. Occasionally one of the two Great Skuas would dive into the flock of gulls in attempts to steal morsels. A Sooty Shearwater

cruised though to have a look and a little later, a Great Shearwater did the same, but happily ended up landing right by the boat. As is usual, it would appear, as we set about returning to Sagres, a Wilson's Storm Petrel suddenly appeared. On the return leg we saw three Short-beaked Common Dolphins.

The raptor watchpoint was a little quiet, although a bunch of twenty or so Black Kites circled over, including the light-coloured individual we had seen two days previously. Small birds were more in evidence. We saw a few Spectacled Warblers, two Subalpine Warblers, Common Redstart, Black Redstart, three Woodlarks and two Stock Doves.

Day 8 – Tuesday, October 9th 2017

On our last morning we searched for - and happily found - three Little Bustards. We watched these and, returning for breakfast, we chanced upon a perched Black Kite and Corn Bunting.

Our last stop of the tour was near the airport at Ludo Farm. Here the highlights were a Booted Eagle and Western Osprey, plus our only sightings of European Pond Terrapin.

Annotated List of Birds Recorded (*Total species - 166*)

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

A pair was on an irrigation reservoir near Castro Verde on 5th.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

A good gathering at Quinta do Lago on 4th and smaller numbers at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Noted at Quinta do Lago on 4th and at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Small numbers at Quinta do Lago on 4th and at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

Singles seen at Quinta do Lago on 4th and Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta ferina*

Two were at Quinta do Lago on 4th.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Ten or so were at Quinta do Lago on 4th and four at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Noted on three dates with the largest number in the open fields around the Castro Verde area.

European Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*

On our pelagic, we enjoyed fabulous views of at least 16 of these birds around our boat.

Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

One was seen rather briefly but well as it circuited our boat during the pelagic trip on 9th.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis*

A couple briefly during the pelagic trip on 9th, but seen much better in good numbers as they passed Cape St Vincent on 8th.

Sooty Shearwater *Ardenna grisea*

A nice surprise, with a couple seen on our pelagic, one coming very close during our chumming session!

Great Shearwater *Ardenna gravis*

Two birds came in very close and even settled briefly on the water during our boat trip on 9th.

Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauritanicus*

At least 10 from Cape St Vincent on 8th and one passed us while we were heading out on our boat trip on 9th.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Small numbers at Quinta do Lago on 4th and at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

One at Quinta do Lago on 4th.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*

Common around the saltpans of the Algarve with birds seen regularly in such habitats.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

Three seen flying over during that 'sand trap' moment on 8th!

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Plenty of nest evidence around the area and a good number of birds still present, too. Our best count was of around 70 birds at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

Not only good numbers, but seen well, too! Very confiding birds were enjoyed at Quinto do Lago, while at least 150 were at Lagoa dos Salgados.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Quite plentiful around saltponds throughout the area with some feeding parties showing very well at Tavira.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

After a bit of a search, we finally enjoyed some great views of perhaps four different birds at Quinta do Lago.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Seen most days, especially around cattle!

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Small numbers noted almost daily throughout.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Regular in small numbers around wetlands.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Very common offshore around the Cape St Vincent/ Sagres area with some great views on our boat trip.

European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

One to two or three dates, mostly involving perhaps the same bird hanging around Sagres harbour.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Variable numbers around coastal wetlands including gatherings of roosting birds on sandbars.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

A total of five birds seen during the week at various wetland sites, as well as at the cape.

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

A nice roadside bird near Tavira on 5th and 6th.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

A second calendar-year bird appeared with the kite flock at the point on 8th.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*

Three were seen near Castro Verde on 5th and about 40 were noted in the Monchique area on 6th.

Cinereous (Black) Vulture *Aegypius monachus*

Two seen cruising over the small reservoir near Castro Verde on 5th.

Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

Great views of up to six of these smart, pale birds around Cape St Vincent/Sagres on 7th and 8th.

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus*

Quite a variety of birds with both light and dark colour morphs being seen. Some great views of at least 10 different birds from the raptor watchpoint near Cape St Vincent.

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*

A second calendar-year bird was a great example of what could be called an 'educational' bird as it cruised around the raptor watchpoint area on 7th.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Small numbers were noted on a daily basis around Cape St Vincent.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

Two on 7th and one on eighth, all juveniles from the raptor watchpoint.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

One to two on four dates, spread throughout the week.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

A little influx seemed to take place later in the week with one seen on 7th, then eight on 8th.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

A ginger-bellied youngster was seen from the raptor watchpoint on 7th.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

A nice surprise of a bird that should have been in eastern Europe, or central Asia or anywhere but here! After brief flight views, we tracked down the second calendar-year male resting in a field. This bird had been in the area for several days.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Just one, seen passing the raptor watchpoint area on 8th.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

A wandering group of up to 20 birds accounted for most of our sightings as they kept making daily excursions to check migration conditions at the cape.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

A frequent bird during the week with small numbers of roadside birds noticed on most dates.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

After a grand tour of the Castro Verde area, we eventually latched on to a couple of roadside birds on 5th.

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*

They kept us waiting this year, but we eventually enjoyed great views of three on Cape St Vincent on 10th.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

One heard squealing away in the reeds during our lunch stop near Ludo on 10th.

Western Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Award for crazy bird of the trip! Some great views of this species at Quinto do Largo, both around the lake and walking on the golf course! Also one at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Small numbers at freshwater wetland sites on three dates during the week.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

A few birds recorded at Quinto do Largo and Lagoa dos Salgados.

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

A nice gathering of at least 15 in a field in the Castro Verde area on 5th.

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

A handful of birds on the estuary at Tavira on 3rd and 4th and a singleton flying past Cape St Vincent on 8th.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

A regular and welcome feature of the saltpan complexes that we visited throughout the week.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Singles at Tavira and Ludo and a total of four at Lagoa dos Salgados.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

About 20 on an irrigation pond near Castro Verde on 5th then a few at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th and one at Cape St Vincent on 7th.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Noted at Tavira on 4th and two at Lagoa dos Salgados on 2nd.

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

At least 20 birds on the saltfans around Tavira on 4th, then one at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Six on an irrigation pond near Castro Verde on 5th.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

At least eight at the salt pans around Tavira on 4th.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

One snuck out of the reeds for a while at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

At least 10 at the salt pans around Tavira on 4th and one at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

At least 12 at the salt pans around Tavira on 4th.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Single figures noted at the saltfans around Tavira on 3rd and 4th.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

Single figures noted at the saltfans around Tavira on 3rd and 4th.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Small numbers on four dates at coastal saltfan complexes and wetlands.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

At least four at Tavira on 4th and one at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

A part of five birds was on the irrigation reservoir near Castro Verde on 5th and three more were seen at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Two were at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Small numbers were seen teetering around the edges of saltfans and ponds on three dates.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

At least six around the saltfans near Tavira on 4th.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

At least 20 around the saltfans near Tavira on 4th and a similar number at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

At least six around the saltfans near Tavira on 4th and at least one at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

At least 20 around the saltfans near Tavira on 4th.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

A small scattering of birds around coastal wetlands in the first half of the week.

Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei*

Wonderful views of at least 15 of these graceful gulls around Tavira on 4th.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Small numbers noted on three dates at coastal wetlands.

Audouin's Gull *Ichthyaetus audouinii*

In the region of 100 were at the saltpans at Tavira on 4th and one was in the gull roost at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*

Small numbers were noted at coastal wetlands with the best views being of birds in flight over the saltpans near Tavira on 4th, where over 100 were present.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Widespread, common and noted every day of the trip.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Widespread, common and noted every day of the trip, with the majority being juveniles.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

One roosting with gulls at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

A small scattering of ones and twos at coastal wetlands, plus a party of 15 flying past Cape St Vincent 8th.

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*

At least six flew past Cape St Vincent on 8th, then we had fabulous views of close-up and personal birds around our boat on 9th.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

A feisty skua that tore into the gulls around our boat on the pelagic showed all the features of this species, but good views were difficult to obtain under the circumstances.

Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis*

All too distant, but we did manage scope views of nine birds near Castro Verde on 5th.

Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Noted throughout the tour with a wide range of colour forms present in towns, while those at the cape showed the plumage characteristics of wild birds.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

A nice addition of two in flight over the raptor watchpoint on 9th.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Just a single bird seen before breakfast at Ponta da Atalaia on 7th.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Widespread throughout the area in towns and villages.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

One seen on the roof of a small chapel not far from the raptor watchpoint on 7th.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Amazing to find one battling in from way offshore at Cape St Vincent on 8th.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

One to three on three dates around Tavira, Lagoa dos Salgados and Ludo.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

One skipped quickly past us and was only seen by a few of our group at the raptor watchpoint on 8th.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Some nice views of this wonderful bird, with at least eight individuals seen during the course of the week.

Eurasian Wryneck *Upupa epops*

One found by some of the group at Quinto do Lago on 4th and another sat up in the sun at Ponta da Atalaia on 7th.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

At least one at our lunch stop at Monchique on 6th.

Iberian Green Woodpecker *Picus sharpei*

A sneaky bird gave us a brief fly-by as we drove out from the hotel on 5th.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

A regular roadside bird with one to eight noted daily. Especially common around the cape area.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*

Robin strikes again while Mike fiddles with the gears! Seen briefly from the vehicles on 7th, we eventually met up with this bird again from the raptor watchpoint. A very rare bird in Portugal, but all previous reports have been left pending by the records committee due to a perceived possibility of an escaped origin.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

One to three on three dates around the Cape St Vincent area. All those seen well enough appeared to be of the relatively small and compact, Mediterranean breeding form.

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*

Single figures noted most days, but at least 20 were logged around the Castro Verde area on 5th.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Noted on four dates but rather elusive and generally involved single birds darting across roads as we drove.

Iberian Magpie *Cyanopica cooki*

One of the star birds of the holiday, this species is now recognised as an Iberian endemic, after long having been thought to have possibly been introduced from the Far East by early traders. This idea was laid to rest after sub-fossil bones of this species were found in caves in Gibraltar, dating the species' existence in the area to well before a time when any traders could have brought them here. Non-breeding flocks of this bird can be impressive and on at least a couple of occasions we watched parties of over 50 or so birds trailing through the trees.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*

Small numbers on most days but seemingly very scarce in the Cape St Vincent area.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

A wonderful feature of the Cape St Vincent/Sagres area with noisy flocks seen daily there and sometimes numbering over 100 in a flock.

Western Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

Four birds were hanging around a military installation near Sagres on 7th and 9th.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Small numbers noted in the Castro Verde area.

Northern Raven *Corvus corax*

Single figures logged on five dates, with a highest count of seven around Castro Verde on 5th.

European Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus*

One seen well at our Monchique lunch stop and one heard near the raptor watchpoint on 9th.

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Rather local; noted around Castro Verde and Monchique.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Only recorded in wooded areas around Monchique on 6th.

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

Heard in song on Monte Foia on 6th then three seen perched at the raptor watchpoint on 9th.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Small numbers heard and seen around Cape St Vincent, around the farm area.

Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae*

One near Mertola on 5th, then seen regularly in good numbers around Cape St Vincent/ Sagres.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Widespread and common during the first half of the trip, especially around Tavira.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Two over the saltpans at Tavira on 4th and one at Sagres on 9th.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Small numbers noted on five dates, with a maximum of 12 on 4th.

Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

A total of four birds noted, the best being a pair hawking insects around a culvert near Castro Verde on 5th.

Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Four over the saltpans at Tavira on 4th.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

At least 16 around the saltpans at Tavira on 4th and 5th.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

One or two heard calling from cane breaks around Tavira and one seen briefly but well during lunch on 10th.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

After two at Monchique, we recorded small numbers daily around the Sagres area.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Rather less common than Willow Warbler with one to two noted on three dates around Sagres.

European Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

One at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th and at least two at Ponta da Atalaia before breakfast on 7th.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Common and widespread with a few very good views of birds in scrubby habitats near wetlands.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Noted in the mixed woods around Monchique on 6th.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

One seen by some of the group at Ponta da Atalaia before breakfast on 7th.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

Some nice views of several birds around Monte Foia on 6th.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*

Widespread and common, though often just a flirty tail bouncing into the undergrowth or across the road.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

Singles at Monte Foia on 6th and near the raptor watchpoint on 9th.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*

One at Cape St Vincent on 7th, then four or so on 9th.

Common Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

Two showed very well at our Monchique lunch stop on 6th.

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

At least three noted in the low scrub around Monte Foia on 6th.

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Two showed very well at our Monchique lunch stop on 6th.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

One flitted around us at our Monchique lunch stop on 6th.

Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor*

Widespread and very common. The song of this species is very different to that of Common Starling and the rolling notes of Spotless Starlings were a regular feature of towns and villages in the area.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

Wonderful to enjoy a party of at least 12 of these, feeding on berries at Monte Foia on 6th.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Widespread in small numbers and noted daily.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

A party of six birds was seen in scrubby lane near Cape St Vincent on 7th.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Small numbers of migrants were noted, with one to four on four dates.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Several heard in woods around Monchique on 6th.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Small numbers were widespread in saltmarsh scrub along the coast and we found at least five around Tavira on 4th, three at Lagoa dos Salgados on 6th and one at Ponte da Atalaia on 7th. Adult males showed plumage characteristics of the more southerly 'White-spotted' form, *cyanecula*.

European Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

One to four on six dates throughout the trip.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

One to three on five dates with most birds around the Sagres area.

Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Two at Ponte da Atalaia on 7th and two in the Cape St Vincent area on 10th.

Common Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*

After a bit of searching, we eventually found a young bird that was hanging around Monte Foia on 6th.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

Widespread in small numbers, but seen especially well at Monte Foia on 6th.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

A scattering of migrants, with one to six noted on six dates.

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Very common and seen daily in good numbers on roadside fences, wires and bushes.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Plenty of migrants were around and we recorded this species every day in a range of open habitats.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Widespread in urban areas throughout.

Black-headed Weaver *Ploceus melanocephalus*

An African species that is now established as an introduction in Portugal. At least six seen at Quinto do Lago on 4th and a male at our roadside lunch stop near Ludo on 10th.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*

Another African species that is now established as an introduction in Portugal. Small numbers at a variety of sites but best seen at Quinta do Lago on 4th, where we scoped a male in song.

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Small numbers noted at wetland sites on five dates but none seen well enough to determine a subspecies.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

One to three on all but the first day, though often seen rather briefly.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Small numbers daily, with best views on the lawns of our Sagres hotel.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

One or two around our hotel at Sagres and a party of five on the move near Cape St Vincent on 8th.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

At least three seen around Monchique on 6th.

European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Small numbers heard or seen on four dates.

Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

A few noted each day, with larger gatherings of up to 70 birds around Cape St Vincent.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Plentiful, with busy parties of birds noted throughout the region on a daily basis.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Rather elusive, with one heard calling and singing at our Monchique lunchstop on 6th but it was only seen briefly by a few of us.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

One or two noted around Castro Verde and other heard and/or seen around Cape St Vincent on 10th.

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*

Some nice views of a few birds poking around the café at Monte Foia on 6th.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

Two seen at Monte Foia on 6th and one in the pine scrub near Cape St Vincent on 9th.

Mammals**European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus***

Noted at Tavira and Castro Verde.

Iberian Hare *Lepus granatensis*

Singles seen on three dates.

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*

One seen mooching around the saltpans at Tavira on 4th.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

One trotted across the open plains near Castro Verde on 5th.

Reptiles**Red-eared Slider *Trachemys scripta***

Several of this North American species were in the river where we had lunch near Ludo on 10th.

Spanish Terrapin *Mauremys leprosa*

Small numbers in wetlands around Castro Verde and near Ludo.

European Pond Terrapin *Emys orbicularis*

At least one seen basking in the river where we had lunch near Ludo on 10th.

Turkish Gecko *Hemidactylus turcicus*

Occasional individuals found at our hotels – notably at Tavira where they favoured a poolside view!

Amphibians**Iberian Marsh Frog *Pelophylax perezi***

Quite common in the pools that we visited on our Castro Verde day on 5th.

Butterflies

Common Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

Small White *Pieris rapae*

Western Bath White *Pontia daplidice*

Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea*

Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*

Lang's Short-tailed Blue *Leptotes pirithous*

Long-tailed Blue *Lampides boeticus*

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*

Two-tailed Pasha *Charaxes jasius*

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Wall Brown *Lasionymata megera*

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

Dragonflies

Iberian Bluetail *Ischnura graellsii*
Blue Emperor *Anax imperator*
Lesser Emperor *Anax parthenope*
Vagrant Emperor *Hemianax ephippiger*
Epaulet Skimmer *Orthetrum chrysostigma*
Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii*
Broad Scarlet *Crocothemis erythraea*
Violet Dropwing *Trithemis annulata*