

Autumnal Algarve

Wildlife at Leisure

Led by Guillaume Réthoré

21st - 28th October 2025

21st October - Arrival and Alte

Part of the group arrived at the end of the morning. We went to Faro Island, close to the airport to have lunch. We ate outside, by the canal between Faro and the island. The weather was pretty windy and grey so we then drove to the Alte Hotel.

We explored the area behind the hotel, our first contact with the biodiversity of the Algarve. Gerry and Gail found some interesting plants. Few birds were present. By the end of the walk, we saw a Swallowtail.

John and Anne arrived at the end of the afternoon and we were back at the hotel for the first of a series of copious dinners. Before dinner, we experienced the difficulties of opening butter packages.

22nd October - Rocha da Pena and Fonte Benemola

It was raining when we had breakfast but the weather by the time we left so we stuck to our plan for the day. When we arrived at Rocha da Pena, we could not see the top of the ridge, it was in the fog! However, many birds were singing: Robins, Sardinian Warblers, Blackcaps, Great Tits, Chiffchaffs. We even saw a Nuthatch which posed a few seconds. A Rock Bunting perched in a tree allowing us great views. It flew and a Blue Rock Thrush landed nearby. A male Black Redstart arrived and perched in the same tree. It flew away and the female occupied its perch. As we walked towards the top, the weather slowly improved. We stopped a bit before the top, enjoying the view, the bird songs and a Robin showing well. On the way back, we found a Swallowtail caterpillar.



We had our pic-nic by the fountain and a coffee after lunch. We met the owner of the café, who is also the builder of the fountain. We then went to Fonte Benemola. The weather was much better.

There, we walked on a track, under the sun and hearing Robins and Blackcaps. When we arrived at the river, Heather found a Two-tailed Pasha. Then, a Brimstone showed-up. Dragonflies and a Speckled Wood were flying by the river. We walked back to the car,

seeing an Algerian Psammmodromus and another Brimstone from the car park. We drove back to the hotel where we had time to relax before dinner.

23rd October - Castro Marim and Tavira

The weather was clearer and we even saw a Raven and Spotless Starlings from the hotel before leaving. We headed towards Castro Marim, by the Spanish border. We saw a Common Magpie on the way and a Black-winged Stilt as we arrived at the Castro Marim reserve. We passed by the visitor centre. From one of the windows, we looked at an Osprey perched on a post. A group of Spanish Sparrows were in a nearby bush. The building was very noisy so we left and explored the area around. Few birds were in the salt pans, only a Yellow-legged Gull and a Black-winged Stilt. A small flock of Sanderlings landed near the stilt for a few seconds before flying away. Heather spotted a passerine in a bush: a male Subalpine Warbler showing pretty well as it was feeding. A Zitting Cisticola perched in front of us but disappeared in the vegetation. A Spoonbill flew in the distance, and a Flamingo flew around us before landing out of sight. Gail found a Dartford Warbler which showed well. A bit further, a group of Avocets was resting in a pool. Two Crested Larks were walking on a small dyke. A group of Spoonbills was resting with several Great Cormorants in a lagoon in the distance. We stopped by a small building on an elevation and found a Small White. The Osprey took-off and we saw it flying with a female Marsh Harrier. We sat in the shade, resting a bit before lunch as it was quite hot. The only bird on the mudflats along the Guadiana River was a Grey Plover.



We ate our lunch by the visitor centre, in the shade. We then went to Castro Marim to have a coffee before driving towards Santa Luzia (capital of the octopus), near Tavira.

Before reaching the salt pans, we saw Crested Larks and Stonechats in a field by the path. As we arrived, two Little Egrets were perched on a fence. Many birds were present in the first lagoon. They were mostly Dunlins. A Sanderling was feeding close to the track. Further, a Little Stint was foraging with Dunlins. The second pool had Black-winged Stilts and Redshanks close to the path. As we were looking at these birds, Dunlins arrived and landed close to us. A few Flamingos were visible on the other side of the road. The third pool was dry and had no birds so we walked slowly back to the vehicle. A Slender-billed Gull flew past us but did not stop. Back at the car, we looked at a Common Ringed Plover close to the road. We drove back to the hotel, seeing a Common Buzzard on the way.

24th October - Castro Verde

The weather was good again when we left but it got foggy on the way. When we arrived at Castro Verde it was overcast. On the way, we saw the first bird of prey of the day: a Red Kite.

We first stopped in one of the streets of Castro Verde to look for a Long-eared Owl. The bird was there, on its favourite tree! The presence of people looking up the trees caught the local people's attention.



Leaving the town, we drove along a secondary road and turned onto a dirt track leading towards the LPN (Liga para a Proteção da Natureza) centre, also called Vale Gonçalinho. We stopped at the beginning of the track as a big bird was perched on a trig point: an adult **Spanish Imperial Eagle!** The pale shoulders contrasting with the dark plumage were very visible. We parked by the visitor centre and looked around. Two Great Bustards were in a field in the distance. Two more were a bit closer. A Marsh Harrier passed close to us. Several Black-bellied Sandgrouse flew in the distance. Closer to us, two Corn Buntings were perched on a nearby tree.

We started walking around the property managed by the LPN. We spotted a bird of prey flying low over the fields. It came closer: a ringtail Hen Harrier hunting. A flock of Jackdaws was around an old grain silo used by the species to breed. John found a bird of prey perched on a big eucalyptus: a juvenile Spanish Imperial Eagle. It flew away, allowing good views. Another bird was perched in the same eucalyptus, visible in a hole between the branches: an adult Spanish Imperial Eagle, the same bird seen earlier. The pale shoulders were even more visible. Cattle Egrets were among cows; some Jackdaws even perched on some of them. A Cow was laying in the middle of the track, so we went on another one. We saw again the Hen Harrier. We had a look at rocks close to the tower and found a Little Owl. On the side of the path, Gerry found a *Narcissus serotinus*. Scanning the surrounding, we spotted a kettle of about twenty Griffon Vultures. A Peregrine Falcon flew over us. We walked back to the visitor centre for lunch. John looked again at the field where the bustards were and saw them again.

During lunch, two mating Southern Migrant Hawkers flew near us and perched by the roof of the building.

We left Vale Gonçalinho and drove back towards Castro Verde. We saw a Common Buzzard perched on a post on the way. We spotted a Great Bustard in a field and stopped to look at it. It slowly walked out of sight. Two more were standing on an elevation and three flew away. A Red Kite was soaring above the area and Lapwings feeding in the fields. Two Ravens were perched on a tree, above a buzzard. On the other side of the road, eight Great Bustards were walking in a field, but further.

We had a coffee in Castro Verde and then went to Entradas. We stopped by a pond. Unfortunately, there was little water and people were walking along the shore. A Grey Heron and a Little Egrets were perched on the dam. Two Little Ringed Plover were standing by the water. A Marsh Harrier was flying in the distance. As we decided to leave, a soaring Black Stork appeared, it flew over us. Two Black-winged Stilts landed, soon joined by Lapwings.

We had a look at another lagoon before leaving. The area was quieter. Many Lapwings, Mallards and a pair of Gadwalls were present. Two Little Grebes and a White Stork were on the shore.

It was time to return to Alte. The trip back was smooth and it was sunny when we arrived at the hotel.

25th October - Monchique and Lagoa dos Salgados

Before we left, a delivery truck blocked our vehicle but we managed to go on time. We drove to the Monchique area on a secondary road, seeing a Jay and a Red-legged Partridge on the road.

We stopped in an area with Cork Oaks. Robins and Nuthatches were calling when we arrived. We walked along a small road. Blackcaps were singing and a Cetti's Warbler calling. Heather found a Firecrest. We waited for it to show-up again. Two Iberian Green Woodpeckers flew over us and Heather found a Chiffchaff feeding in a Cork Oak. We walked back. Two Serins were perched on a dead tree, however, the light was quite bad. It started drizzling so we had to wear our coats but as soon as we put them on, the rain stopped. We walked along an orchard. Anne found two Nuthatches in an oak. Four Linnets were feeding in the grass. We strolled between the Cork Oaks. By a stream, a Wren was singing. A Grey Heron flew over the area, an unusual sighting in this area. This bird appeared again before we reached the van. A last look around allowed us to have a good view of an Iberian Green Woodpecker and a Jay before leaving.

We stopped at a supermarket and as the weather was better, we decided to go to Foia, the highest place in the Algarve. However, we stopped before the top as clouds were hiding it. We had lunch looking at the coast. The place was almost empty when we arrived but it got busier and busier. Crag Martin flew in front of us before we left. We drove to the top of the hills to have a coffee but the café was closed. Instead, we went to Caldas de Monchique. As we stepped out of the van, Crag Martins flew over the town. We had coffee in a small square. Looking at the chimneys, we spotted a male **Blue Rock Thrush**.



We then went down the hills, passed a colony of Storks (a couple of birds were on a nest), and headed east to Lagoa dos Salgados, a freshwater lagoon. The water level was high. From the track leading to the beach, we saw Azure-winged Magpies. We parked and walked toward the blind. A male Stonechat was perched on top of a bush at the beginning of the path. A Marsh Harrier flew low over the lagoon and then a group of six Glossy Ibises dropped in the vegetation. We sat behind the blind. Coots and Mallards were swimming in front of us. Two juveniles Flamingos were feeding in the northern part of the lagoon. We saw again the Marsh Harrier, always flying low and disappearing behind the vegetation. A Lapwing was on an island with a Cormorant. Anne found a Little Egret by the dyke in the middle of the lagoon. A Moorhen crossed the dyke, in the middle of the vegetation. Before we left, a flock of Glossy Ibises flew west, pretty low. We heard a Cetti's Warbler, louder than the one heard in the morning, on the way to the car park. We left the area. A Glossy Ibis was in the middle of the track, allowing us to see it well.

26th October - Ria Formosa

We left and went towards Faro. We drove past and parked by big houses. A Hoopoe flew away when we started walking but perched in a tree. Unfortunately, it did not stay long as a cyclist flushed it. We stood by a hide and looked at the mudflats. As the tide was low, many Fiddler Crabs were present. Two Ospreys flew over, one of them flushing many gulls. A Whimbrel landed nearby and we watched it hunting and eating crabs. A Ringed Plover was also near us. A Bluethroat perched on top of a bush and long enough for everybody to have a good look at it. A Redshank was walking along a puddle, soon joined by a Greenshank. A Hoopoe was feeding on the green. We had great views of this confident bird.

We walked towards the lagoon by the golf course. Gail found a Reed Warbler in the reeds. We managed to see it before it disappeared. Mallards, Gadwalls and Little Grebes were swimming in that part of the lagoon. Two Glossy Ibises used the green to feed. We found a female Pintail among the other ducks. The blue sides of

the bill were visible before it decided to rest. We walked a bit and saw Wigeons and Shovelers. Gail found a Purple Swamphen on the opposite bank, showing well. At the same time, we heard the Cetti's Warbler. A Little Bittern flew from one reedbed to another. As usual, it disappeared when it landed. Azure-winged Magpies were on the track and the pine trees and showing well. While we were looking at the ducks, two Hoopoes flew in front of us. We went inside the hide, on the first floor. From there, we could see the whole lagoon. Two Kingfishers flew low over the water but disappeared behind an island. We enjoyed the birds and the quietness of the area. Some Gadwalls were already displaying. A big group of Coots were feeding on the green. We walked back to the first hide. On the way, we saw Black-headed Weavers nests. Gail found Tropical tend-web Spiders webs. Another Hoopoe was feeding on the green by the track.

We ate by the mudflats, looking at Whimbrels, Grey Plovers and a Turnstone. After lunch, we walked on the dyke leading to the bridge to Faro Island. A Redshank was close to the path. On a sand bar a Common Sandpiper and a Ringed Plover were fighting over the best spot to stand. We stopped by another part of the mudflats and could even sit. A Turnstone, a Redshank and a Greenshank were feeding in the same area but the Turnstone was bullied by the two other birds and had to leave the area. From this spot, we also saw Ringed and



Kentish Plovers. We saw many more Fiddler Crabs as we walked along the dyke. We reached an area where some young Flamingos (grey birds) were feeding close to the path. Several Shovelers were swimming with the Flamingos while a Black-tailed Godwit was feeding. On the mudflats, Sanderlings were foraging by a Little Egret. A bit further, Grey Plovers and a Whimbrel were feeding. An Osprey was perched on a dead tree. It took-off when a second bird flew by and came back to the same branch. We walked back. Before reaching the end of the dyke, we had close views of a Ringed Plover and a Sanderling in a puddle. A big group of Spoonbills flew over the mudflats towards Faro

Island. We spotted a pale Booted Eagle above the golf course. We had a last look at the mudflats. There were more waders: Dunlins, Grey Plovers, Turnstones, a **Whimbrel** and a Bar-tailed Godwit, all feeding among Black-headed Gulls.

We had a coffee in a posh place before driving back to the hotel where a birthday party was happening.

27th October - Sagres

As we reached the end of the week, we had all mastered the art of opening butter packages, but Carolyn remained the best. Before leaving, we experienced a bit of Song Thrush migration as several birds flew over the hotel, calling. The trip was longer since we went to the end of the world! On the way, we saw a Hoopoe and Azure-winged Magpies when we were waiting at a traffic light.

At Sagres, we went to Cabranosa, the best spot to watch migration in the Algarve. From the track, we saw many Thekla's Larks, Meadow Pipits and Goldfinches. Carolyn spotted a male Common Redstart which posed perched on the hedge along the path. When we parked, a Pied Flycatcher was on the ground looking for insects. As we stepped out of the car, a Black Stork flew over us, followed by a Kestrel. We first went into the pinewood looking for **Death's-head Hawkmoth caterpillar** feeding on Apple of Sodom bushes. We only found one, big and brown (while they are usually green). We walked back to the car. Looking around, we spotted a

White Stork flying with a juvenile Egyptian Vulture. From the small hill (actually a fossilised dune), we saw again the Black Stork. A Common Buzzard showed-up. John found a group of birds of prey south-west of our position: Short-toed Eagles. A Common Buzzard and a pale Booted Eagle flew over us, quite high. Two more Common Buzzards flew by, this time lower. The Short-toed Eagles were closer and two Black Storks below these birds. One of the Short-toed Eagles flew close to us with a Buzzard, allowing us to see the difference in size between these two species. Some of the eagles showed-up again, with a better light.



We had lunch at Cape St Vincent, with a nice view and little wind, something unusual in the area. Few birds were around however. We then had a coffee and it was the opportunity to do some shopping for some.

We came back on a different road, passing by Silves, so we could see the castle. We had our last dinner at the hotel (and it was quieter than the previous day). The fire alarm went on several time after dinner though and briefly during the night.

28th October - Departure

The weather was cloudier when we left and rain was forecasted. The baker was late delivering the bread so we left without any sandwich for our breakfast. We left Anne and John at Faro train station and the rest of the group was dropped at the airport.

Systematic list number 1: Birds (113 species)

	Day		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Date		21	22	23	24	25	26	27
1	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>				X		X	
2	Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>			X	X	X	X	
3	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>						X	
4	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>				X			
5	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>			X	X	X	X	
6	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			X	X	X	X	
7	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>							
8	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>				X		X	2
9	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>			X	X	X		1
10	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>					X	X	
11	Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>			X			X	
12	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>			X		3	X	
13	Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>						X	
14	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>				X	X	X	
15	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>			X	X	X	X	
16	Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>						1	
17	Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>						X	
18	Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>						X	
19	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>				X			
20	Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>							1
21	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>				X			
22	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>							11
23	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>			X	X	1		
24	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>				X			
25	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>			X	X	X		4
26	Spanish Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila (heliaca) adalberti</i>				2			
27	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>						1	2
28	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>			X			2	
29	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>				X		1	1
30	Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>				1			X
31	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>					X		
32	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>					X	X	
33	Purple Gallinule	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>						1	
34	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>					X	X	
35	Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>				17			
36	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>			X	X			

37	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>			X				
38	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>				X			
39	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>			X			X	
40	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>						X	
41	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>			X			X	
42	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>				X	X		
43	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>			X			X	
44	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>			X				
45	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>			X			X	
46	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>						X	
47	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>						X	
48	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>						X	
49	Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>						X	
50	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>			X			X	
51	Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>						X	
52	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>			X			X	
53	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>						X	

54	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>			X				
55	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>			X	X		X	
56	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>			X				
57	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>			X				
58	Yellow-legged Herring Gull	<i>Larus (argentatus) cachinnans</i>			X	X		X	X

59	Black-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>				X			
60	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>					X	X	X
61	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

62	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>				X	X	X	X
63	Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>				1			

64	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>						X	
65	Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>						X	1
66	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridus</i>					X		

67	Lesser Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella rufescens</i>			X				
68	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>			X	X	X	X	
69	Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>							X
70	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>						X	

71	Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonopraque rupestris</i>						X	X
----	-------------	-------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	---	---

72	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>			X		X		X
73	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>					X		X

Systematic list number 2: Butterflies (9 species)

	Day		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Date		21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Papilionidae									
1	Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>	X				X		
Pieridae									
2	Small White	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>			X				
3	Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>						X	X
4	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>		X					
Lycaenidae									
5	African Grass Blue	<i>Zizeeria knysna</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nymphalidae									
6	Two-tailed Pasha	<i>Charaxes jasius</i>		X					
7	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>					X		
8	Painted Lady	<i>Cynthia cardui</i>						X	
Satyridae									
9	Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>		X			X		

Systematic list number 3: Other taxa

Crimson Speckled Moth *Utetheisa pulchella*

Death's-head Hawkmoth *Acherontia atropos* (caterpillar)

Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii*

Tropical tend-web Spider *Cyrtophora citricola*

Fiddler Crab *Uca tangeri*

Iberian Green Frog *Pelophylax perezi*

Moorish Gecko *Tarentola mauritanica*

Algerian Psammmodromus *Psammmodromus algirus*