



# Honeyguide

## WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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**French Pyrenees**  
**8 – 15 June 2015**

**Holiday participants**

Jan and John Croft  
Christine and Oliver Dix  
Daphne Seaton and Celia Bartram  
Carol and Mike Mitchell  
Joan and Peter Truckle

**Leaders**

Chris Durdin and Ivan Nethercoat

Our hosts in the French Pyrenees: Odile and Philippe Pujo, Hotel La Brèche de Roland

[www.pyrenees-hotel-breche.com](http://www.pyrenees-hotel-breche.com)

Report by Ivan Nethercoat with additions by Chris Durdin.

Bird list by Ivan, others by Chris.

Photos by Ivan Nethercoat (IN), Chris Durdin (CD), Christine and Oliver Dix (C&OD)  
and John and Jan Croft (JC), all taken during the holiday.

Cover: the pretty bits are Pyrenean thistle at Tourmalet, orchids and Tofield's asphodel at Gavarnie,  
and moss campion at Troumouse (CD).

The group in the rain at Gèdre-Dessus (JC) shows how it sometimes was!



Above: the Brèche de Roland, from the Hotel La Brèche de Roland (CD).  
The cloud is a reminder of the mixed weather this year.

This holiday, as for every Honeyguide holiday, also puts something into conservation in our host country by way of a contribution to the wildlife that we enjoyed. The conservation contribution this year of £40 per person towards lammergeier protection was supplemented by gift aid and some additional funds in the charity's account, and we were able to give €1000 (about £769) to the LPO's Gwenaëlle Plet in Gèdre.

Including a donation earlier this year to the LPO in the Camargue, this gives us a running total for donations to LPO of £22,733 since 1991. As at June 2015, the total for all conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 was £101,743.

## Daily diary

### June 8 – travel to Gèdre

A later flight than previous years brought us down into Lourdes airport in hot mid-afternoon heat, a welcome change from a cool UK but ominous clouds lurked over the mountains we were about to drive towards. After collecting the vehicles we set off on the hour's drive to the hotel. The dark clouds soon produced heavy rain, which turned to marble-sized hail – *la grêle* in French, we learnt – and strong wind. It was the loudest and wettest journey to the hotel that the drivers had experienced. We had a short stop not far from the hotel and fortunately by the time we arrived there the rain and hail was over. As well as stretching legs and getting a feel for the area that was to be home for the next week, this unassuming lay-by allows some of the best views of the spectacular Pyrenean saxifrage, with its impressive spikes of white flowers just a few feet above the road. Black-veined moths fluttered among yellow rattle, a six-spot burnet moth drifted by and those in 'bus 1' showed the others a 'passenger' they had rescued in the form of a hummingbird hawkmoth.

We moved on to the hotel with time to rest and unpack before the first of many excellent meals.

### June 9 – around Gèdre and Lac des Gloriettes

We set off this morning on foot. The beauty of our base is that we can start this by walking out of the door and around the village.

As we gathered outside the hotel, Chris spotted an Oberthur's skipper on a downpipe. As we watched it sunning itself in the heat of a sunny Pyrenean morning, Oliver looked to the sky and to our surprise found a young lammergeier drifting overhead. This all-dark bird was then joined by a paler adult. Not a bad start and we hadn't even got off the hotel drive yet. A few yards away one of the meadows runs alongside the road, giving a great introduction to some of the common flora – yellow rattle, bladder campion and small scabious.



Looking down on the Hotel La Brèche de Roland,  
Le Grotte (pink) and the Héas River (JC)



Griffon vulture diving (JC)

There are two rivers that come together in Gèdre. The Héas is crossed by a bridge just a few yards from the hotel and was home to a dipper this morning, while in the trees above serins trilled their welcome. Walking on to the second bridge over the Gavarnie – the *Gave de Gavarnie ou Pau* on maps – an adult lammergeier drifted overhead again, followed by a buzzard, but a flurry of aerial activity on the skyline also caught our eye as a kestrel mobbed a golden eagle which eventually perched on the ridge and allowed a distant but clear telescope view. This second bridge is known by Honeyguide as 'dipper bridge' and, sure enough, after a few moments waiting one bird flew beneath the bridge and landed downstream.

Chimney sweeper moths drifted across the meadows as we climbed gently up to the higher levels of the village and all around was the chirping of field crickets and a general 'buzz' of insects, abundant in the mixture of grasses and meadow plants. And again, lammergeiers appeared, two adults this time, much lower than before. Wall lizards basked in the strong sun by the roadside as black redstarts perched at eye level on chimney tops alongside white wagtail.

As we started the path down back to the hotel, a firecrest put on a brief show and then it was a welcome stop in the garden of the bar Le Grotte for drinks. We admired the ramonda growing on the rocks above the rushing river and the menu's eccentric translation into English (for example, 'low quotations of natural ox', 'wings of a crystallized duck' and 'throuth and its sauce crémated in the curry'). Back at the hotel we collected packed lunches and then took a short drive to the Lac des Gloriettes.

The hot sun and clear skies gave way to darker clouds and rumbles of thunder as we set off on the circuit of the lake, a man-made reservoir to supply the water for the hydro scheme in Gèdre. It's held back by an impressive dam across the valley that also provides easy level access to the other side of the valley and a very pleasant walk, 1.3 km according to the sign but we suspect about three times that distance in reality.

A male wheatear appeared briefly on a wall by a building, disappeared and was then replaced by a beautiful male rock thrush carrying food. Green tiger beetles ran in front of us on the path and in the grass a pearl-bordered fritillary posed for cameras. Up in the skies a raven flew up into the cliffs and proceeded to harass a lammergeier. A golden eagle then appeared and flew below as the lammergeier dropped its meal which the eagle then caught in mid air, turning onto its back in a typical food pass fashion, although far from typical between species. Whether this was just a very quick thinking eagle or whether it had learned to intercept lammergeiers bone-dropping we don't know.



Ramonda (IN)



Pearl-bordered fritillary (CD)



Spring gentians (CD)

Farther round and young southern smooth snakes gave brief views to a few of the leading group members while a Camberwell beauty was more obliging for everyone. We took in the perfumed pink flowers of garland flower and unscented alpenroses. Onwards and the narrow path on the edge of the lake led us alongside fragrant and marsh orchids, saxifrages and stands of tall asphodels before opening into more alpine pasture alongside the river. Greater butterwort and birdseye primroses gave shelter to young frogs in the damper patches, alpine choughs broke the skyline and mazarine and small blue butterflies took nutrients from the soil by the river.

Across the bridge and onto the return section, the thunder grew louder. Large stands of globe flowers looked impressive by the river and spring and trumpet gentians formed blue patches against the rocks and grass. In the background was the constant whistling of marmots, seen by a few but tricky to spot here. As the cloud came down it looked like we would get very wet but we were lucky and, a few drops apart, there was still no rain. We got to the vans without a drenching; others out at Gavarnie were not so lucky!

### **June 10 – Gèdre-Dessus**

We awoke to heavy rain that continued for much of the day. Ivan and Mike left early to take the Renault minibus to a garage in Sassis, near Luz St Sauveur: as we suspected, a top-up so the brake fluid reservoir was overfull stopped a warning that was coming on when the minibus was on steep slopes, soon sorted and without charge.

The threesome from Naturetrek staying at the hotel – Alan and Heidimarie with leader David Tattersfield – were also wondering what do on a wet day, so we invited them to join us on a walk to Gèdre-Dessus (upper Gèdre). Wet weather gear was donned and off we went for the short stroll up the hill from the square. The flora here is different to other areas, with a more Mediterranean feel, and the high views back down the valley put the village in context. Nettle-leaved bellflower on walls was followed by a range of flowers on the limestone slopes: the sermountain *Laserpitium siler*; the big, silvery-grey seedpods of *Fibigia*; Mediterranean spurge; sheets of three rock-roses (or four if you count a red-flowered subspecies); plus round-leaved restarrow, yellow woundwort, wild candytuft and Pyrenean hemp-nettle, to name just a selection. A walk up a narrow path and through a gate revealed the strangest plant of all: cone knapweed, which looks like a pine cone growing close to the ground.

We descended the steps and had coffee back at the hotel. We then decided to try Gavarnie for lunch as it was still wet. After packed lunches eaten in the minibuses we had an even wetter botanising stroll before retreating for a hot drink in a café. Some did a little shopping before we called it a day and returned to Gèdre, where we watched a DVD film about wallcreepers. Better weather forecast for tomorrow!

## June 11 – Col du Tourmalet

And better weather it was – so we were up and out for our usual prompt departure at nine o'clock to head for the Col du Tourmalet, well known by some as one of the highest passes on the Tour de France. Our route



Snowfinch (IN)

took us back down the valley to Luz St Sauveur and then via Barèges to start the long climb to 2115 m. Part way up the road there is a ski station, which was the farthest point we could reach two years ago, when there was a lot of snow in May. Chris in the lead minibus drew in here, having seen white flashes of snowfinches. We stopped to investigate and, sure enough, here was a splendid snowfinch feeding on the open ground a few feet away. After watching the bird for some time it was clear that it was nesting in one of the ski-lift pylons. Untroubled by us, it kept flying up and across the meadow and back to the pylon, showing the extensive white on the wings – a quite stunning sight, especially against the light. White wagtail and black redstart were also feeding on the ground and a high griffon patrolled the skies, while a kestrel hunted over the edge of an ice sheet far away.

Having passed many determined cyclists we reached the car park at the summit and walked to a small café overlooking the valley on the other side. The café was closed today but the walk was still productive with alpine and red-billed chough, kestrel, water pipit, wheatear, black redstart and two more pairs of snowfinches nesting in ski metalwork. The mountain pastures had sheets of white Pyrenean buttercups and occasional clumps of pink rock-jasmine. A startled marmot gave us a long view of his fast disappearing rear end as he scuttled down and across the grassy meadow below us.

We took a short walk past the statue of the cyclist to look down the route we had taken to the top, and then we set off down again. The Glère Valley is only a short distance away yet it feels a very different place, with grazing horses and cattle on open grassland in between pine and beech woodland that provide a rich area for wildlife. Firstly though, we had a 'recharge' in the café Chez Louisiette before eating picnic lunches, and were entertained by our hostess chasing away a herd of cows, including throwing her broom at a bull. After lunch, some went their own way and others pottered in the rougher and sometimes wet areas of pasture that lead, rather like a golf fairway, into the valley. Oliver and Christine set off on a different route and were rewarded with views of citril finch, and Joan reported finding woodruff in the woods. The main group enjoyed two huge wood ant nests and watching impressive medicinal leeches alongside tadpoles in a small pond. In the wetter areas of grassland there were the tiny but distinctive leaves of round-leaved sundews – they took some finding – plus Tofield's asphodel, bog violet and scores of orchids.



Round-leaved sundew (IN)

Distant rumblings of thunder gradually grew louder as a storm got closer and our visit was shortened somewhat as we took refuge in the café. Back at the hotel, the storm continued and Odile told us there was a 24 hour weather warning across 24 départements, with people being advised not to go out! Despite this, Gwenaëlle Plet from LPO came to give us an after-dinner talk about the work of LPO and the conservation of the lammergeier and other birds in this part of France and beyond. Her enthusiasm overcame any gaps in her English, with Christine chipping in with useful translations. Finally, Gwenaëlle received the conservation contribution from group members, this year topped up with other money from the Honeyguide Trust bringing the total donation to €1000 (see page 2).

## June 12 – Saugué and Ossoue Valley

We awoke to a bright morning and abandoned wet weather plans for charades or one of Chris's talks. Instead we set off to one of the nearest sites – the plateau at Saugué where the journey is always productive and dramatic. A stop by the road only a few minutes after leaving Gèdre gives great views back over the village and also a wonderful meadow and roadside verge. Being cooler this morning the butterflies were mostly absent at this point but fly, pyramidal and greater butterfly orchids made the stop worthwhile.

Farther on up the hill and we paused for a similar mix of dramatic landscape and wild flowers including elder-flowered orchid, this time mixed with a very obliging and aesthetically posed marmot and a tree pipit.

Where the road ends a path continues along the contour and gives a superb view of the Cirque de Gavarnie. We walked toward the cirque alongside meadows with sheets of horned violet, with alpine asters and burnt-tip orchids on drier patches. A red-underwing skipper posed beautifully on a narrow-leaved helleborine ... how apt it would have been if had been on one of the many butterfly orchids.



Six-spot burnet moths on a round-headed rampion (CD)



Red-underwing skipper underside and upperside, on narrow-leaved helleborine (CD)



There were singing whinchat and corn bunting and the sun had brought out numerous clouded Apollos and Piedmont ringlets. Clouded yellow, painted lady and small tortoiseshell added to the mix and there was the sound of a calling quail, apparently very close but elusive.

Lunch was taken at 'butterfly corner', a short drive back down the road, where the minibuses caught up with those who'd taken the opportunity to walk. Here were several green hairstreaks, purple-edged copper and burnet companion moths but perhaps the stars were three small elephant hawkmoths, freshly emerged and posing very obligingly for the cameras.

After lunch, the weather once again closed in but we persevered and continued onwards to the Ossoue valley. First stop was a convenient pull in beneath impressive cliffs at the head of the valley. A rock bunting was singing and perched on top of a pine. Above us four griffon vultures perched on the cliff and soon took to the air, followed by an adult lammergeier which circled the cliffs and perched for a while. A man from the National Park stopped for a chat: he was in the valley to monitor vultures and, looking through a 'scope, noted a lammergeier taking a drink.



Purple-edged copper (C&OD) and small elephant hawkmoth (JC)  
(the blue is Chris's shirt)



Top: Black vanilla orchid (CD)  
Left: Burnt-tip orchid (JC)

We took a drive further down the spectacular Ossoue valley as yet again the weather closed in. *Narcissus pseudonarcissus bicolor* daffodils caught Celia's eye and alongside these, found when she clambered up to take a photograph, were tiny rush-leaved narcissi. A search revealed a few black vanilla orchids poking out of the grass in damper areas, while alongside the river broad-leaved marsh orchids numbered in the hundreds.

The rain got harder and we drove on to the end of the valley but eventually retreated to the hotel for tea. A good day, just a little damp at times!

## June 13 – Cirque de Troumouse

Again a calm and dry morning, though cool, and John found a crested tit behind the hotel before breakfast.



Isard (IN)

One of the special sites for both its scenery and wildlife is the Cirque de Troumouse, located in the Pyrenees World Heritage Site and a short drive from the hotel. Our route followed the Héas river valley, past the turn for the Lac des Gloriettes and on and up into high pasture. On route we stopped by the Auberge du Maillet, though not for coffee ... the café wasn't yet open and anyway the aim was to be out while the weather was good. Here the view was not only spectacular but enhanced by isard, the Pyrenean chamois. At first they were hard to see but Oliver's sharp eyes spotted one way up on the mountainside, through the 'scope we noticed more alongside and then found one much lower down which allowed great views by all of us. There was also our first *Daphne mezereum* – our third Daphne species of the week to enjoy with ... Daphne!

Back in the vehicles we completed the short but steep drive to the edge of the cirque. Here the wind was cool but the clouds high as we set off across the meadows. The cirque here is huge with 3000m peaks forming the border with Spain. Crossing the meadows are several streams and there are numerous pools and damp areas of grass. On the drier areas gentians burst in blue patches and where the snow had last melted, Pyrenean buttercups formed white patches against the brown of sun-starved grass. We searched the first small streams and found Pyrenean brook newts, lurking under rocks and overhangs in calmer patches of water. These cold meadow streams are the only place this animal is found, part of the unique nature of the area.

Numerous paths cross the meadows to the scree of the cirque and we took a quiet and calm route to the right, weaving among large boulders and patches of rock with monkshood leaves preparing for spectacular autumn flowering. A tiny black vanilla orchid poked through the grass and Celia spotted "a rat" disappearing down a hole among a patch of rocks. This 'rat' was a snow vole, a common mammal of the area but wary and rarely seen.

Our point for turning back was an outcrop of rocks before the path dropped down to the scree. Here we waited and watched the tops of the rocks for alpine accentor but they appeared to elude us and the bulk of the group turned back. The stragglers however were lucky as suddenly two birds started singing and eventually one flew to 'our' outcrop and started feeding in among the grass. They gave great views in the 'scope but only for a few of us.

Back at the buses the temperature had cooled and the cloud was darker so we dropped down for picnics by the now open café, the Auberge du Maillet. It wasn't long before we went inside and hot chocolates were a popular choice as the rain came down again. It remained wet for the rest of the day. We drove up the road towards the Col de Tentes but poor weather, hail especially, meant it made sense not to go to the top. We descended, picked up the three brave walkers from the group, and had an earlier than normal return to the hotel. Back at base, Odile told us that an 'alerte orange' – amber alert weather warning – had been issued and we should expect more bad weather tomorrow.

## June 14 – Gavarnie

So much for weather alerts: it was the best day of the week. Despite the wet evening it was again a bright and clear morning and ideal to return to Gavarnie to walk towards the cirque. We had the usual excellent breakfast and then it was off to the buses to make the most of the sunshine in the morning for the walk to the cirque. Some 45 minutes later we departed, having been delayed by a 'raptorfest'. Two golden eagles were harassed by kestrels, there were five griffon vultures and two lammergeiers, with one adult lammergeier in front of the hill ahead of us: it then perched and sunned itself on the hillside giving excellent 'scope views and an opportunity for a bit of iPhone video. As the excitement died down, two short-toed eagles flew over. At last, we could leave!

Gavarnie's cirque today looked bigger and closer than our previous somewhat gloomy visit and the sun was holding well so off we set. With the navigation straightforward, we split into three groups. Daphne and Celia walked to the high café and beyond. Christine and Oliver also walked on and, among other things, encountered a snake that from later examination of photos was an asp viper. We all met each other at times and shared sightings. As for the main group, above us on the crags griffon vultures and alpine choughs took to the air, though having enjoyed birds of prey back at Gèdre, we didn't linger. As well as the flower-filled meadows, small rockfaces were a delight with livelong saxifrages, ferns and ramonda in the crevices.

Where the path climbs, near some of the National Park's information signs, a tree pipit perched and a red-billed chough fed actively. A black-veined white butterfly rested on one of the many common spotted orchids, now added to the list. In among the pine trees we tried to see crested tit and while they didn't show the detour from the path was rewarded with a lovely patch of lily-of-the-valley and the surprise plant of the day, edelweiss. 'Small and white' ... we couldn't resist singing.



Edelweiss (CD) and chough (JC)

The weather was still kind for this walk, clean and bright (like the edelweiss) and not too hot so we continued up toward the hotel/café that overlooks the cirque. As the path rose, the view changed again as we weaved among rocks and trees. This last climb is always a little taxing and best done when the café is open as the reward of a great view is much enhanced with a chair and a glass of shandy. From the terrace we looked across the last part of the route and up toward *la grande cascade*, the highest waterfall in France. For the eight of us in this group, this was our stopping point but other brave souls continued to the base of the pretty waterfall. We watched and had lunch before making our way back down the path.

We found firecrest, garden warbler, spring squill and wood white butterfly on the route down. A slight detour across the river took us to a meadow that is always rich and productive but this year especially so: hundreds of marsh orchids lined the streams with many fragrant and greater butterfly orchids, all against the magnificent backdrop of the cirque.

After soaking up this spectacle we again set off on the final part of the path back to a café in town. It was now mid-afternoon and the sun had stayed with us. As we neared Gavarnie it became cooler and we reunited with the rest of the group over tea, hot chocolate and coffee. The rain came down again but this time it didn't matter.

After dinner we shared the guitar and a few songs and at dusk, armed with a bat detector, some walked to the confluence of the two rivers. There were certainly common pipistrelles and probably another bat species at 45kHz.

### **June 15 – Bué valley, and home**

There was much excitement before breakfast as we finally added blue tit to the list!

It was another dry morning, thank goodness. The road we took to Saugué also forks to a high meadow at Bué, taking us alongside the hills and meadows we see from the hotel and then up into wooded hillside and ending in a steep meadow. The meadow held a secret: delicate frog orchids, hard to see among the grass until you see one and then more appear as your eyes get the idea of what to look for.



Frog orchid, yellow pea and Pyrenean toadflax (CD) all at Bué

We set off down the road to explore the woodland plants beside the track but first paused to watch a honey buzzard flying up the valley, then perching for a while and flying on. Yellow Welsh poppies, valerians, yellow pea, wood saxifrages, alpine and Pyrenean toadflaxes and many more plants lined roadsides or grew on banks. Some had walked on fairly quickly but all bar one were picked up as Chris and I retrieved the minibuses and drove back towards Gèdre. We stopped on the way back for pictures above the village before driving back to the hotel, where Peter was enjoying a beer having walked all the way. We had lunch in the meadow behind the hotel before saying farewell to Odile, our excellent hostess for the week.

Keen eyes on the journey back to the airport kept trying to add new birds and succeeded with magpie, little egret, swift, peregrine and grey heron interspersed with numerous black kites. Once the slow process through bag-drop was done it wasn't long before we were on the plane, though take-off was delayed on account of heavy rain. We returned safely and only a little late to Stansted.

Thank you for being a great group and shrugging off inclement weather in style.

Ivan and Chris

#### The best bits

After the checklists on the final evening, we collected holiday highlights, and here they are:

- Christine** Spectacular scenery; orchids and gentians; snowfinches in flight.
- Oliver** The sheer abundance of flowers; lammergeier views; citril finch.
- Carol** Orchids; thyme-leaved sandwort (Chris took her to see it on the hotel's steps); Mike's conversion to wildlife watching.
- Mike** The 'wonderful feel' to the holiday; the meadows; Ivan's photographic instruction.
- Jan** Lammergeier; snowfinch, St Bernard's lily; fairy foxglove; the walk at Gavarnie.
- John** The scenery; lammergeier; Ivan's photography help; snowfinches; alpine accentor.
- Joan** Lammergeier; the LPO talk; snowfinches; flower meadows; black-veined white; sunbathing marmot.
- Peter** Snowfinches; marmots; breathtaking scenery.
- Celia** Meadows; yellow wood violet; gentians; 'Judy Garland' flower; Ivan and her camera's exposure button; 'the rat' (you have to imagine that in a New Zealand accent), actually a snow vole.
- Daphne** Awesome scenery; carpets of Pyrenean buttercups; wonderful French cuisine.
- Ivan** Lammergeier; flower-rich meadows with lots of insects that you so rarely see at home.
- Chris** Snowfinches; edelweiss; the meadow at Gavarnie.



View from the Col de Tourmalet (IN)

On the final evening we also swapped a few lammergeier limericks, and here's one by Mike:

A young lammergeier called Fritz  
Said eating old bones is the pits  
So he made lots of money  
With some tour guides called Honey  
Now he dines every night at the Ritz.

## WILDLIFE LISTS

<b>BIRDS</b>	
<b>Grey heron</b>	On route to airport
<b>Little egret</b>	On route to airport
<b>Honey buzzard</b>	Possible at airport, and one seen at Bué
<b>Black kite</b>	Many seen on route from the airport
<b>Red kite</b>	On route as we got into the higher ground and at Gèdre
<b>Lammergeier</b>	Seen on all days except one
<b>Griffon vulture</b>	Seen most days
<b>Short-toed eagle</b>	Two hunting above Gèdre, seen on two separate occasions
<b>Golden eagle</b>	Adult pair around Gèdre, a younger bird at Lac de Gloriettes was seen intercepting a lammergeier food drop
<b>Common buzzard</b>	Seen on most days
<b>Kestrel</b>	Pair in Gèdre, mobbing golden eagle
<b>Peregrine</b>	Just one sighting, near airport
<b>Swift</b>	On route to airport
<b>Alpine swift</b>	At Gavarnie
<b>Quail</b>	Heard at Saugué
<b>Feral pigeon</b>	At Gavarnie
<b>Woodpigeon</b>	Seen on two days
<b>Collared dove</b>	At lower altitudes
<b>Green woodpecker</b>	Seen and heard in Gèdre, heard at Saugué
<b>Great spotted woodpecker</b>	Heard and seen near the hotel
<b>Skylark</b>	Heard at Saugué only
<b>Swallow</b>	On route to airport
<b>House martin</b>	Seen alongside crag martins in Gèdre
<b>Crag martin</b>	Seen daily; nesting in Gèdre
<b>Tree pipit</b>	Singing at Saugué and seen at Gavarnie
<b>Water pipit</b>	At all the higher altitude stops, feeding in snowmelt and wet areas of pasture
<b>Grey wagtail</b>	Gèdre, Gavarnie
<b>White wagtail</b>	Seen daily, and regular in Gèdre
<b>Dipper</b>	Gèdre and Gavarnie
<b>Wren</b>	Heard on several days
<b>Dunnock</b>	Around Gèdre, several in Val d'Estaubé
<b>Alpine accentor</b>	Two males singing at Cirque de Troumouse
<b>Robin</b>	Heard or seen on most days
<b>Black redstart</b>	Daily in Gèdre and at most locations
<b>Whinchat</b>	Saugué
<b>Northern wheatear</b>	At all the high altitude stops
<b>Rock thrush</b>	Adult male with food at Lac de Gloriettes; near Tourmalet; descent from Troumouse
<b>Blackbird</b>	Daily in Gèdre
<b>Song thrush</b>	Heard around Gèdre
<b>Mistle thrush</b>	In the Glère valley near Chez Louisiette and two other days
<b>Blackcap</b>	Heard daily, seen opposite the hotel
<b>Whitethroat</b>	Gavarnie
<b>Garden warbler</b>	Heard and seen in Gavarnie valley, near the hotel
<b>Northern chiffchaff</b>	Singing in the meadow area in the Gavarnie valley
<b>Great tit</b>	Recorded almost every day, feeding young behind hotel
<b>Blue tit</b>	Gèdre, final day!
<b>Coal tit</b>	In the pine woods at Gavarnie and at Gèdre-Dessus
<b>Crested tit</b>	Reported from behind the hotel
<b>Nuthatch</b>	At Gèdre and by car parking area at Gavarnie
<b>Red-backed shrike</b>	A male near Saugué
<b>Jay</b>	Seen on most days
<b>Raven</b>	Frequent over Gèdre and at most stops
<b>Carrion crow</b>	Gavarnie, Gèdre, not often seen
<b>Red-billed chough</b>	At Saugué and Gavarnie
<b>Alpine chough</b>	Flocks at Saugué, Val d'Estaubé, smaller numbers than previous years
<b>Magpie</b>	Just on the airport journeys
<b>Chaffinch</b>	Seen daily
<b>Linnet</b>	Saugué, Ossoue
<b>Serin</b>	Seen daily
<b>Citril finch</b>	Two in meadow at Glère valley
<b>Snowfinch</b>	Nesting at Col du Tourmalet lower ski station and near the café at the top
<b>House sparrow</b>	Seen daily
<b>Yellowhammer</b>	Saugué and around the snow melt at Tourmalet
<b>Rock bunting</b>	Ossoue
<b>Corn bunting</b>	Saugué

## MAMMALS

Alpine marmot

Snow vole

Soprano pipistrelle

Isard

Wild boar (rootings)

## AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

Common frog

Pyrenean brook newt

Common wall lizard

Southern smooth snake

Asp viper



Asp viper (C&OD)



Young southern smooth snake (CD)

## BUTTERFLIES

Swallowtail  
Camberwell beauty  
Meadow brown  
Speckled wood  
Orange tip  
Common blue  
Sooty copper  
Dingy skipper

Clouded Apollo  
Comma  
Large wall brown  
Large white  
Black-veined white  
Adonis blue  
Purple-edged copper  
Grizzled skipper

Painted lady  
Pearl-bordered fritillary  
Piedmont ringlet  
Small white  
Brimstone  
Mazarine blue  
Green hairstreak  
Oberthur's grizzled skipper

Small tortoiseshell  
Heath fritillary  
Small heath  
Wood white  
Clouded yellow  
Small blue  
Brown argus  
Red-underwing skipper

## MOTHS

*Metaxmeste phrygialis*  
Chimney sweeper  
Small elephant hawkmoth

Forester sp.  
6-spot burnet  
Black-veined moth

Lackey caterpillar  
Hummingbird hawkmoth  
Burnet companion

## OTHER INVERTEBRATES

*Hirudo medicinalis* medicinal leech  
*Helix aspersa* garden snail  
*Gryllus campestris* field cricket  
*Libellula quadrimaculata* four-spotted chaser  
*Nepa cinerea* water scorpion  
*Graphosoma italicum* Italian shield bug  
*Cicindela campestris* green tiger-beetle  
*Phyllopertha horticola* garden chafer  
*Bombus pascuorum* common carder-bee  
*Formica rufa* wood ant  
*Gerris* sp. (probably pond skater)

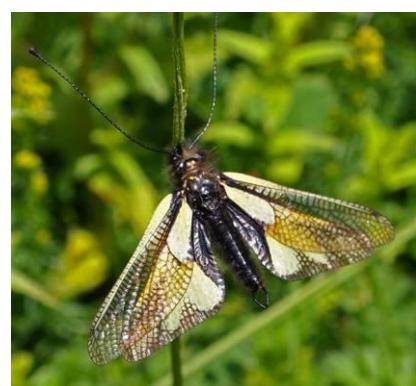
*Cepaea nemoralis* banded snail  
*Arion ater* a large black slug  
*Libellula depressa* broad-bodied chaser  
*Anechura bipunctata* an earwig  
*Libelloides coccajus* an ascalaphid  
*Pyrrhocoris apterus* fire-bug  
*Coccinella 7-punctata* 7-spot ladybird  
*Vespa crabro* hornet  
*Eucera* sp. a long-horned bee  
*Tipula maxima* a crane-fly



Clouded Apollo (IN)



Orange tip (JC)



Libelloides coccajus (JC)

## FLOWERING PLANTS

Some widespread and familiar species are omitted. NiF = not in flower.

### Dicotyledons

*Acer campestre*  
*Acer pseudoplatanus*

*Aegopodium podagraria*  
*Bupleurum falcatum*  
*Conopodium pyrenaicum*  
*Daucus carota*  
*Eryngium bourgatii*  
*Heracleum sphondylium* ssp. *pyrenaicum*  
*Laserpitium siler*  
*Myrrhis odorata*  
*Peucedanum ostruthium*

*Vincetoxicum hirundinaria*

*Achillea millefolia*  
*Adenostyles alliariae* ssp. *pyrenaica*  
*Antennaria dioica*  
*Aster alpinus*  
*Bellis perennis*  
*Carduus carlinoides*  
*Carlina acanthifolia*  
*Centaurea montana*  
*Centaurea nigra*  
*Cirsium eriophorum*  
*Centaurea palustre*  
*Hieracium lanatum*  
*Hieracium pilosella*  
*Homogyne alpina*  
*Lactuca perennis*  
*Lactuca serriola*  
*Leontopodium alpinum*  
*Leucanthemum* (or *Tanacetum*) *corymbosum*  
*Leucanthemum vulgare*  
*Leuzea conifera*  
*Mycelis muralis*  
*Petasites albus*  
*Tragopogon pratensis*  
*Tussilago farfara*

*Betula pendula*

*Echium vulgare*  
*Myosotis alpina*  
*Myosotis discolor*  
*Pulmonaria officinalis*

*Arabis turrita*  
*Cardamine amara*  
*Cardamine impatiens*  
*Cardamine raphanifolia*  
*Cardamine resedifolia*  
*Erysimum decumbens*  
*Fibigia clypeata*  
*Iberis amara*

*Buxus sempervirens*

*Campanula trachelium*  
*Jasione montana*  
*Phyteuma orbiculare*  
*Phyteuma pyrenaicum*

*Lonicera periclymenum*  
*Lonicera pyrenaicum*  
*Sambucus ebulus*  
*Sambucus nigra*  
*Sambucus racemosa*

*Arenaria grandiflora*  
*Arenaria serpyllifolia*

### Aceraceae

Field maple

Sycamore

### Apiaceae

Ground elder

Sickle-leaved hare's-ear

Pyrenean pignut

Wild carrot

Pyrenean eryngo

Hogweed

A sermountain

Sweet cicely

Masterwort

### Asclepiadaceae

Swallow-wort

### Asteraceae

Yarrow

Adenostyles

Cat's-foot

Alpine aster

Daisy

Pyrenean thistle

Cardabelle (= acanthus-leaved carline thistle) NiF

Perennial cornflower

Black knapweed

Woolly thistle

Marsh thistle

Woolly hawkweed

Mouse-ear hawkweed

Alpine (=Purple) colt's-foot

Blue lettuce

Prickly lettuce NiF

Edelweiss

like a many-headed ox-eye daisy

Ox-eye daisy

Cone knapweed

Wall lettuce

White butterbur NiF

Goat's-beard

Colt's-foot NiF

### Betulaceae

Silver birch

### Boraginaceae

Viper's-bugloss

Alpine forget-me-not

Changing forget-me-not

Lungwort

### Brassicaceae

Towercress

Large bittercress (purple-flowered form)

Narrow-leaved bittercress

Radish-leaved bittercress

Mignonette-leaved bittercress

a treacle-mustard

very silvery hairy, big oval pods, at Gèdre-Dessus NiF

Wild candytuft

### Buxaceae

Box

### Campanulaceae

Nettle-leaved bellflower

Sheep's-bit

Round-headed rampion

a spiked rampion with slaty blue flowers

### Caprifoliaceae

Honeysuckle

Pyrenean honeysuckle

Dwarf elder

Elder

Alpine elder

### Caryophyllaceae

Large-flowered sandwort

Thyme-leaved sandwort

<i>Cerastium cerastoides</i>	Starwort mouse-ear
<i>Dianthus deltoides</i>	Maiden pink
<i>Dianthus monspessulanus</i>	Fringed pink
<i>Gyposophila repens</i>	Alpine gypsophila
<i>Paronychia polygonifolia</i>	
<i>Silene acaulis</i>	Moss campion
<i>Silene alba</i>	White campion
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red campion
<i>Silene nutans</i>	Nottingham catchfly
<i>Silene vulgaris</i>	Bladder campion
<i>Spergularia rubra</i>	Sand spurrey
<i>Stellaria holostea</i>	Greater stitchwort
<b>Chenopodiaceae</b>	
<i>Chenopodium bonus-henricus</i>	Good King Henry
<b>Cistaceae</b>	
<i>Helianthemum apenninum</i>	White rock-rose
<i>Helianthemum canum</i>	Hoary rock-rose
<i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>	Common rock-rose
<i>Helianthemum nummularium</i> ssp. <i>pyrenaicum</i>	with pink flowers
<b>Clusiaceae (Hypericaceae)</b>	
<i>Hypericum nummularium</i>	Western St. John's-wort NiF
<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	Perforate St. John's-wort
<b>Corylaceae</b>	
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel
<b>Crassulaceae</b>	
<i>Sedum acre</i>	Biting stonecrop
<i>Sedum album</i>	White stonecrop
<i>Sempervivum tectorum</i>	Common houseleek
<b>Cuscutaceae</b>	
<i>Cuscuta</i> sp.	Dodder NiF
<b>Dipsacaceae</b>	
<i>Knautia dipsacifolia</i>	Wood scabious
<i>Scabiosa columbaria</i>	Small scabious
<b>Droseraceae</b>	
<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>	Round-leaved sundew NiF
<b>Ericaceae</b>	
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	Bearberry
<i>Erica arborea</i>	Tree heather NiF
<i>Rhododendron ferrugineum</i>	Alpenrose
<b>Euphorbiaceae</b>	
<i>Euphorbia amygdaloides</i>	Wood spurge
<i>Euphorbia characias</i>	Large Mediterranean spurge
<i>Euphorbia cyparissias</i>	Cypress spurge
<b>Fabaceae</b>	
<i>Astragalus monspessulanus</i>	Montpelier milk-vetch
<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>	Kidney vetch
<i>Hippocrepis comosa</i>	Horseshoe vetch
<i>Lathyrus laevigatus</i>	Yellow pea
<i>Lathyrus</i> sp.	an everlasting pea
<i>Lathyrus montanus</i>	Bitter-vetch
<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	Meadow vetchling
<i>Lotus (corniculatus) alpinus</i>	Alpine birdfoot-trefoil
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Birdsfoot-trefoil
<i>Medicago sativa</i>	Lucerne (=alfalfa)
<i>Ononis natrix</i>	Large yellow restarrow
<i>Ononis rotundifolia</i>	Round-leaved restarrow
<i>Robinia pseudacacia</i>	False acacia
<i>Trifolium alpinum</i>	Alpine clover
<i>Trifolium campestre</i>	Hop trefoil
<i>Trifolium incarnatum</i>	Crimson clover
<i>Trifolium ochroleucon</i>	Sulphur clover
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red clover
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White clover
<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Tufted vetch
<i>Vicia sepium</i>	Bush vetch
<b>Fagaceae</b>	
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	Sweet chestnut
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech
<i>Quercus petraea</i>	Sessile oak
<i>Quercus pubescens</i>	Downy/white oak
<b>Fumariaceae</b>	
<i>Corydalis solida</i>	Tuberous corydalis
<b>Gentianaceae</b>	
<i>Gentiana acaulis</i>	Trumpet gentian
<i>Gentiana alpina</i>	Southern gentian
<i>Gentiana verna</i>	Spring gentian

*Erodium cicutarium*  
*Geranium molle*  
*Geranium phaeum*  
*Geranium pusillum*  
*Geranium pyrenaicum*  
*Geranium robertianum*  
*Geranium rotundifolium*  
*Geranium sanguineum*  
*Geranium sylvaticum*

*Ramonda myconi*

*Globularia nudicaulis*  
*Globularia repens*

*Acinos alpinus*  
*Ajuga repens*  
*Galeopsis pyrenaica*  
*Lamiastrum galaeobdolon*  
*Lamium maculatum*  
*Prunella grandiflora*  
*Salvia verbenaca*  
*Stachys recta*  
*Teucrium pyrenaicum*  
*Thymus serpyllum*

*Pinguicula grandiflora*

*Linum catharticum*

*Viscum album*

*Malva moschata*  
*Malva neglecta*

*Fraxinus excelsior*

*Orobanche gracilis*

*Oxalis acetosella*

*Chelidonium majus*  
*Meconopsis cambrica*  
*Papaver rhoes*

*Plantago media*

*Polygala vulgaris*

*Polygonum viviparum*  
*Rumex acetosa*  
*Rumex acetosella*  
*Rumex scutatus*

*Androsace (carnea) laggeri*  
*Androsace chamaejasme*  
*Lysimachia nemorum*  
*Primula elatior*  
*Primula farinosa*  
*Primula integrifolia*  
*Primula veris*

*Aconitum anthora*  
*Aconitum napellus*  
*Aquilegia vulgaris*  
*Caltha palustris*  
*Clematis vitalba*  
*Helleborus foetidus*  
*Helleborus viridis*  
*Hepatica nobilis*  
*Ranunculus acris*  
*Ranunculus bulbosus*  
*Ranunculus pyrenaeus*  
*Ranunculus repens*  
*Thalictrum aquilegifolium*  
*Trollius europaeus*

### **Geraniaceae**

Common storksbill  
Dovesfoot cranesbill  
Dusky cranesbill  
Small-flowered cranesbill  
Pyrenean cranesbill  
Herb Robert  
Round-leaved cranesbill  
Bloody cranesbill  
Wood cranesbill

### **Gesneriaceae**

Ramonda

### **Globulariaceae**

Leafless-stemmed globularia  
Creeping globularia

### **Lamiaceae**

Alpine calamint  
Bugle  
Pyrenean hemp-nettle  
Yellow archangel  
Spotted dead-nettle  
Large self-heal  
Wild clary  
Yellow woundwort  
Pyrenean germander  
Wild thyme

### **Lentibulariaceae**

Large-flowered butterwort

### **Linaceae**

Purging (=fairy) flax

### **Loranthaceae**

Mistletoe

### **Malvaceae**

Musk mallow  
Dwarf mallow

### **Oleaceae**

Ash

### **Orobanchaceae**

Slender broomrape

### **Oxalidaceae**

Wood-sorrel NiF  
Greater celandine  
Welsh poppy  
Common poppy

### **Plantaginaceae**

Hoary plantain

### **Polygalaceae**

Common milkwort

### **Polygonaceae**

Alpine bistort  
Common sorrel  
Heath sorrel  
French sorrel (=Rubble dock)

### **Primulaceae**

Pink rock-jasmine  
Ciliate rock-jasmine  
Yellow pimpernel  
Oxlip  
Birdseye primrose  
Entire-leaved primrose  
Cowslip

### **Ranunculaceae**

Yellow monkshood  
Monkshood NiF  
Columbine  
Marsh marigold  
Traveller's-joy  
Stinking hellebore  
Green hellebore  
Hepatica NiF  
Meadow buttercup  
Bulbous buttercup  
Pyrenean buttercup  
Creeping buttercup  
Great meadow-rue  
Globe-flower

*Reseda lutea*  
*Reseda glauca*

*Alchemilla alpina*  
*Alchemilla vulgaris*  
*Amelanchier ovalis*  
*Cotoneaster integrifolius*  
*Crataegus monogyna*  
*Dryas octopetala*  
*Fragaria vesca*  
*Geum urbanum*  
*Geum pyrenaicum*  
*Potentilla erecta*  
*Potentilla montana*  
*Prunus mahaleb*  
*Rosa canina*  
*Rosa glauca*  
*Rosa pimpinellifolia*  
*Rubus fruticosus*  
*Rubus idaeus*  
*Sanguisorba minor*  
*Sorbus aria*  
*Sorbus aucuparia*

*Asperula (or Galium) hirta*  
*Cruciata laevipes*  
*Galium (mollugo) album*  
*Galium aparine*  
*Galium pyrenaicum*  
*Galium odoratum*  
*Galium verum*

*Populus tremula*  
*Salix elaeagnos* (= *S. incana* = *S. rosmarinifolia*)

*Saxifraga aizoides*  
*Saxifraga aretioides*  
*Saxifraga granulata*  
*Saxifraga exarata*  
*Saxifraga hirsuta*  
*Saxifraga longifolia*  
*Saxifraga paniculata*  
*Saxifraga umbrosa*

*Antirrhinum majus*  
*Bartsia alpina*  
*Erinus alpinus*  
*Euphrasia alpina*  
*Linaria alpina*  
*Linaria supina*  
*Pedicularis palustris*  
*Scrophularia canina*  
*Scrophularia nodosa*  
*Scrophularia pyrenaica*  
*Rhinanthus minor*  
*Verbascum densiflorum*  
*Veronica beccabunga*  
*Veronica chamaedrys*  
*Veronica ponae*  
*Veronica serpyllifolia*

*Atropa belladonna*  
*Solanum dulcamara*

*Daphne cneorum*  
*Daphne laureola* ssp. *philippii*  
*Daphne mezereum*  
*Thymelea tinctoria* ssp. *nivalis*

*Tilia platyphyllos*

*Centranthus ruber*  
*Valeriana montana*  
*Valeriana officinalis*  
*Valeriana pyrenaica*  
*Valeriana tripteris*

### Resedaceae

Wild mignonette  
Pyrenean mignonette

### Rosaceae

Alpine lady's-mantle  
Lady's-mantle  
Snowy mespilus  
Wild cotoneaster  
Hawthorn  
Mountain avens  
Wild strawberry  
Wood avens or herb bennett  
Pyrenean avens  
Tormentil  
a white cinquefoil  
St Lucie's cherry  
Dog rose  
Blue-leaved rose  
Burnet rose  
Blackberry/bramble  
Raspberry  
Salad burnet  
Whitebeam  
Rowan

### Rubiaceae

Crosswort  
Upright hedge bedstraw  
Goosegrass  
a cushion bedstraw  
Woodruff  
Lady's bedstraw

### Salicaceae

Aspen

### Saxifragaceae

Yellow mountain saxifrage NiF  
Yellow saxifrage  
Meadow saxifrage  
Musky saxifrage  
Kidney-leaved saxifrage  
Pyrenean saxifrage  
Livelong saxifrage  
Wood saxifrage

### Scrophulariaceae

Snapdragon  
Alpine bartsia  
Fairy foxglove  
Eyebright  
Alpine toadflax  
Pyrenean toadflax  
Marsh lousewort or red rattle  
Alpine (= French) figwort  
Common figwort  
Pyrenean figwort  
Yellow-rattle

Brooklime  
Germander speedwell  
Pyrenean spiked speedwell  
Thyme-leaved speedwell

### Solanaceae

Deadly nightshade  
Bittersweet or woody nightshade

### Thymelaeaceae

Garland flower  
Spurge-laurel  
Mezereon  
'La passerine des neiges'

### Tiliaceae

Large-leaved lime

### Valerianaceae

Red valerian

Valerian  
Pyrenean valerian

<i>Verbena officianalis</i>	<b>Verbenaceae</b>	Vervain
<i>Viola biflora</i>	<b>Violaceae</b>	Yellow wood violet
<i>Viola cornuta</i>		Horned pansy
<i>Viola palustris</i>		Bog violet
<i>Viola pyrenaica</i>		Pyrenean violet
<i>Viola tricolor</i>		Wild pansy
	<b>Monocotyledons</b>	
	<b>Cyperaceae</b>	Cotton-grass
<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>	<b>Dioscoreaceae</b>	Black bryony
<i>Tamus communis</i>	<b>Iridaceae</b>	English iris NiF
<i>Iris latifolia</i>	<b>Liliaceae</b>	Round-headed leek St Bernard's lily Asphodel Lily-of-the-valley Dipcadi Yellow gagea Pyrenean hyacinth Martagon lily NiF Rush-leaved narcissus Daffodil Pyrenean squill NiF Spring squill Tofield's asphodel
<i>Allium sphaerocephalon</i>	<b>Orchidaceae</b>	Pyramidal orchid Dark red helleborine (in bud) Narrow-leaved helleborine Frog orchid Common spotted-orchid Broad-leaved marsh-orchid Elder-flowered orchid Broad-leaved helleborine (leaves) Fragrant orchid Common twayblade Black vanilla orchid Bee orchid Fly orchid Early purple orchid Burnt-tip orchid Greater butterfly-orchid
<i>Anthericum liliago</i>		
<i>Asphodelus albus</i>		
<i>Convallaria majalis</i>		
<i>Dipcadi serotinum</i>		
<i>Gagea fistulosa</i>		
<i>Hyacinthus amethystinus</i>		
<i>Lilium martagon</i>		
<i>Narcissus assoanus (=juncifolius)</i>		
<i>Narcissus pseudonarcissus bicolor</i>		
<i>Scilla liliohyacinthus</i>		
<i>Scilla verna</i>		
<i>Tofieldia calyculata</i>		
<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>		
<i>Epipactis atrorubens</i>		
<i>Cephalanthera longifolia</i>		
<i>Coeloglossum viride</i>		
<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>		
<i>Dactylorhiza majalis ssp. alpestris</i>		
<i>Dactylorhiza sambucina</i>		
<i>Epipactis helleborine</i>		
<i>Gymnadenia conopsea</i>		
<i>Listera ovata</i>		
<i>Nigritella nigra</i>		
<i>Ophrys apifera</i>		
<i>Ophrys insectifera</i>		
<i>Orchis mascula</i>		
<i>Orchis ustulata</i>		
<i>Platanthera chlorantha</i>		
<i>Briza media</i>	<b>Poaceae (very incomplete)</b>	Quaking-grass
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>		Cocksfoot
<i>Nardus stricta</i>		Mat-grass
<i>Abies alba</i>	<b>CONIFERS</b>	Silver fir
<i>Larix decidua</i>		European larch
<i>Pinus nigra ssp. salzmannii</i>		Pyrenean black pine
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>		Scots pine
<i>Juniperus communis</i>		Juniper
<i>Asplenium adiantum-nigrum</i>	<b>FERNS</b>	Black spleenwort
<i>Asplenium ruta-muraria</i>		Wall-rue
<i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>		Hartstongue Fern
<i>Asplenium septentrionale</i>		Forked spleenwort
<i>Asplenium trichomanes</i>		Maidenhair spleenwort
<i>Ceterach officinarum</i>		Rusty-back fern
<i>Cystopteris fragilis</i>		Brittle bladder fern
<i>Phegopteris connectilis</i>		Beech fern
<i>Polypodium vulgare</i>		Common polypody
<i>Polystichum lonchitis</i>		Holly fern
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>		Bracken