



Field Guides Tour Report

France: Camargue & Pyrenees 2015

Aug 29, 2014 to Sep 8, 2014

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For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).



Wallcreeper is always one of the most coveted species on this tour. To see one on a wall right near the town's parking lot was just insane! Photo by participant Kevin Watson.

After hearing so much about this great tour for so long, it was a blast to finally have a chance to guide it with Megan on short notice. Who doesn't like great birding, great food and wine, and great company?! Ah, but then there were those toll roads...

We started this lovely tour off in the south of France at the justly famous Camargue, near the picturesque town of Arles. The abundant wetland habitats here kept us busy during our stay, as did the very different habitats of the nearby Crau steppe and the Chains des Alpilles (where we enjoyed our fabulous picnic supper). Our list of highlight birds was a long one, but I should mention the thousands of Greater Flamingos that graced our visits near the coast, both Black and White storks overhead (including the big flock right over the highway!), decent numbers of lingering Squacco Herons, a few different Short-toed Snake-Eagles, that fabulous explosive flock of Little Bustards and cryptic Eurasian Thick-knees on the Crau steppe, elegant Pied Avocets, good numbers of both Slender-billed and Mediterranean gulls, gaudy migrant European Bee-eaters, a few uncommon Lesser Kestrels among the more common Eurasian Kestrels on the Crau, an uncharacteristically cooperative Cetti's Warbler, and a fine variety of other unfamiliar (to most of us) Western European passerines along the way. We were off to a great start by the time we hit the road for our next venue!

As we began to climb the impressive Pyrenees on our travel day (heading to the far southern edge of France, where it borders Spain), we made time to stop along the way to add a few special birds to our trip list, like a couple of Egyptian Vultures at a nest on a cliff face, a couple of Eurasian Griffons flying through the low clouds, our first Eurasian Blue Tits, the first of many sprightly European Robins, and a few more goodies before we made our way to the quaint mountain village of Gedre. After that one stop, we all knew that the birding here would be very different, but no less exciting, than what we had experienced up to that point on the tour.

The weather somewhat dictated the order of the sites that we visited in the following days, but we still enjoyed the various famous sites of this highly scenic region. Again, we had plenty to look at and enjoy, but none of our many birds enthralled the group as much as the remarkable Wallcreeper we spotted on the wall bordering the creek where we parked our vans on the day we visited the Cirque de Gavarnie! I suspect that Megan and the rest of us will have a tough time remembering this 2015 tour to France as anything other than 'The Wallcreeper Tour'!

But we did have many other fabulous birds during our four days in the area, including distant but thrilling Lammergeiers, loads of migrating European Honey-buzzards, multiple distinctive Red Kites, a fantastic pair of big Black Woodpeckers, both Red-billed and Yellow-billed choughs above tree line, entertaining White-throated Dippers, both Common and Black redstarts, several Dunnocks, a few confiding Alpine Accentors, and a surprising group of Ortolan Buntings, among many others.

Megan and I want to thank each of you for joining us on this wonderful tour; we know that some of you had waited years to get on this one -- thanks for your patience! We look forward to seeing you again on an upcoming tour soon. Happy Holidays!

--Dave

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*) – A common sight along the waterways of the Camargue.

COMMON SHELDUCK (*Tadorna tadorna*) – There's no mistaking this handsomely-patterned duck - a new one for many in the group.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*)

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (EURASIAN) (*Anas crecca crecca*)

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

RING-NECKED PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*) – A few folks in Megan's van got on this one as it flushed near the road. [I]

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) – Quite the contrast in size between this tiny grebe and the nearby Great Cresteds at the Camargue. In much of s. Asia, this bird has a bright yellow eye, unlike the dark-eyed birds that we saw.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE (*Podiceps cristatus*) – A few stripey youngsters as well. [N]

EARED GREBE (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – The Europeans call this one the Black-necked Grebe.

Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)

GREATER FLAMINGO (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) – After a couple of years of near zero breeding success in the Camargue, it was very apparent during our visit that they had a banner nesting season this year! Recently re-split from our American Flamingo.

Ciconiidae (Storks)

BLACK STORK (*Ciconia nigra*) – A few distant migrants seen in the Camargue.

WHITE STORK (*Ciconia ciconia*) – We saw a few here and there during our stay in the Camargue, but the migrating flock of about 90 birds flying low over the expressway on our travel day to the west was really memorable!

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – The single bird coming in for a landing one morning at Gedre was a surprise there.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GRAY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*) – The Old World equivalent of our familiar Great Blue Heron.

PURPLE HERON (*Ardea purpurea*) – There's no mistaking this dark, colorful heron with the above Gray Heron.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Maybe a candidate for a split from our birds in the New World.

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*) – We saw plenty of these Old World equivalent to our familiar Snowy Egret, but the one puzzler was the mostly dark gray bird that we saw in the Camargue. The local eBird referee informed me that there have been a number of sightings of Little Egret X Western Reef-Heron hybrids from this area of France (which makes perfect sense, given this bird's plumage), so that's what we're going to call our bird!

CATTLE EGRET (IBIS) (*Bubulcus ibis ibis*) – This race is split by the Europeans and is called the Western Cattle-Egret by them.

SQUACCO HERON (*Ardeola ralloides*) – One field in particular (the field with all of the Northern Lapwings!) had a surprising number of these birds lingering during our tour.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – There was a little confusion at first, but we got on the right track in short order.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

LAMMERGEIER (*Gypaetus barbatus*) – We ended up seeing several of these distinctive and highly coveted Old World vultures (sometimes called the Bearded Vulture) in the Pyrenees, but none of them was particularly close. Still, our looks amid that spectacular setting were pretty thrilling!

EGYPTIAN VULTURE (*Neophron percnopterus*) – A quick stop along the roadside on our way to Gedre produced a pair of these on the cliff at a nest site. Birds like that are why spotting scopes were invented!

EUROPEAN HONEY-BUZZARD (*Pernis apivorus*) – We witnessed a few medium-sized flocks actively migrating through the passes in the Pyrenees, giving all of us great views at a number of different plumages.

EURASIAN GRIFFON (*Gyps fulvus*) – Likely our most common raptor in the Pyrenees, we had one day where we lost track of the the number of birds pouring through the low passes near our hotel in Gedre.

SHORT-TOED EAGLE (*Circaetus gallicus*) – We had several, but the most memorable was our first, silhouetted against the fading evening light as it sat atop a rock promontory near our picnic dinner spot. While the Brits still call this the Short-toed Eagle, the Clements checklist recently adopted the name Short-toed Snake-Eagle, to conform with the names of every other *Circaetus* in the world.

BOOTED EAGLE (*Hieraaetus pennatus*) – This soaring light-morph bird was a surprise, and welcome, find on our last full day just below the Col du Tourmalet.

GOLDEN EAGLE (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – Several fine studies of this noble raptor in the Pyrenees.

EURASIAN MARSH-HARRIER (*Circus aeruginosus*) – By far, our most common harrier on the tour. Eastern and Western Marsh-Harriers were just recently (re-)lumped.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER (*Circus pygargus*) – A few on the first half of the tour, especially at the Crau Steppe.

EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter nisus*)

RED KITE (*Milvus milvus*) – We had a couple of really great views of this distinctive kite once we got to the Pyrenees.

BLACK KITE (*Milvus migrans*) – Modest numbers of migrants were still headed through the Pyrenees during our visit. Rather similar to the above Red Kite, but it lacks the strong contrast in the wings and the tail isn't as deeply forked as that one.

COMMON BUZZARD (*Buteo buteo*) – We saw this one daily on this tour. Note that this one has recently been split into at least three species, with birds in the Himalayan region (now Himalayan Buzzard) and the birds across east Asia (now Eastern Buzzard) now being split from birds of the Western Palearctic.

Otididae (Bustards)

LITTLE BUSTARD (*Tetrax tetrax*) – WHEW!!! A second look at the private hunting property near the Crau yielded some pretty fantastic looks of a group of 18 of these declining bustards.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

EURASIAN MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus chloropus*) – Now split from our own Common Gallinule in the New World.

EURASIAN COOT (*Fulica atra*)

Burhinidae (Thick-knees)

EURASIAN THICK-KNEE (*Burhinus oedicnemus*) – Our second look was also key to our finding this one again before we left the area and headed to the Pyrenees. Note that birds from India east (Indian Thick-knee) are now split from this one. Often called the Stone Curlew.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-WINGED STILT (*Himantopus himantopus*) – Both this and the next are extraordinarily elegant shorebirds.

PIED AVOCET (*Recurvirostra avocetta*)

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

NORTHERN LAPWING (*Vanellus vanellus*) – That big flock we saw in the Camargue was apparently a little early for for such a number of these.

KENTISH PLOVER (KENTISH) (*Charadrius alexandrinus alexandrinus*) – Now split from our familiar Snowy Plover in the New World.

COMMON RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius hiaticula*) – This one seemed to be the most common small plover on the flats at the Camargue this year.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius dubius*) – The bright yellow eye-ring on the adult usually stands out to help i.d. this one.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – The Old World equivalent of our familiar Spotted Sandpiper.

GREEN SANDPIPER (*Tringa ochropus*) – The New World counterpart is the Solitary Sandpiper.

COMMON GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*) – This one sounds and looks a lot like our Greater Yellowlegs.

WOOD SANDPIPER (*Tringa glareola*) – A close, injured bird gave us great looks in the Camargue at our N. Lapwing spot.

CURLEW SANDPIPER (*Calidris ferruginea*) – This and the Dunlin that follows are very similar when they're not sporting their fancy breeding colors, but this one always has noticeably longer legs and always shows a white rump.

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*) – Good numbers of migrating adults at the Camargue this year.

LITTLE STINT (*Calidris minuta*) – The only stint that we detected this year in the Camargue.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus lobatus*) – At least three of these scarce migrants this year in the Camargue.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

SLENDER-BILLED GULL (*Chroicocephalus genei*) – After striking out the first day on this distinctive gull, the second time we looked for it proved to be the charm this year. Watching our first adult swimming, flying, and hunting would have been plenty to keep us happy, but then we found 90+ others loafing on the sand on the salt flats and along the beach!

BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) – I'd normally say that this was the most common small gull of the tour, but after seeing 600+ Mediterranean Gulls on our first afternoon, I'm not so sure!

LITTLE GULL (*Hydrocoloeus minutus*) – Nice views of a couple of birds in the Camargue this year.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL (*Ichthyophaga melanocephalus*) – I was expecting maybe a few dozen of these local and distinctive gulls, so the numbers we saw really blew me away! Most of the birds that we saw were adults molting their primaries, but there were a few fancy juveniles mixed in, too.

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL (*Larus michahellis*) – I couldn't make any of the large gulls that we saw into anything other than this very common species.

LITTLE TERN (*Sterna albifrons*) – Nearly identical to our Least Tern.

GULL-BILLED TERN (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – The few adult that we saw were accompanied by food-begging juvs at the Camargue. [N]

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*)

BLACK TERN (EURASIAN) (*Chlidonias niger niger*)

WHISKERED TERN (*Chlidonias hybrida*) – Normally more common, we tried one last spot where Megan had had them before and wound up with distant - but decent - looks.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*)

SANDWICH TERN (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*)

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [H]

COMMON WOOD-PIGEON (*Columba palumbus*) – Every day in the Camargue, but only sporadically thereafter.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

Strigidae (Owls)

LITTLE OWL (*Athene noctua*) – One at our hotel near Arles was the only one seen on the tour.

TAWNY OWL (*Strix aluco*) [*]

Apodidae (Swifts)

ALPINE SWIFT (*Apus melba*) – Nicely overhead for most in the group during our picnic dinner. The largest swift in Europe, this one rivals the largest New World swifts in size.

COMMON SWIFT (*Apus apus*) – A pair or two only near Gedre in the Pyrenees.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

COMMON KINGFISHER (*Alcedo atthis*) – You often hear this little beauty before you ever see it!

Meropidae (Bee-eaters)

EUROPEAN BEE-EATER (*Merops apiaster*) – The big migrant flock overhead at the Crau Steppe was certainly memorable! Thankfully, a few of them alighted in some nearby trees for some scope looks.

Coraciidae (Rollers)

EUROPEAN ROLLER (*Coracias garrulus*) – We worked pretty hard for that first one, but we eventually got our fill in the coming days in the Camargue.

Upupidae (Hoopoes)

EURASIAN HOOPOE (*Upupa epops*) [*]

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

EURASIAN WRYNECK (*Jynx torquilla*) – A quick view for a lucky few in the Camargue before this migrant disappeared.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos minor*) – Another bird that didn't stick around long for the entire group to enjoy (though I doubt anyone really enjoyed their looks!).

MIDDLE SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos medius*) – Another woodpecker that we worked hard for that only a couple of folks glimpsed on our way to Toulouse.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos major*) – The most common of the three *Dendrocopos* woodpeckers that are possible along our route - though it certainly wasn't common! We all caught up with it on our final morning together.

BLACK WOODPECKER (*Dryocopus martius*) – A little persistence really paid off with super views in the scopes at a pair of these as we hiked back from the Cirque. Europe's largest woodpecker and the same genus as our Pileated.

EURASIAN GREEN WOODPECKER (*Picus viridis*) – I don't think we ever really 'nailed' this one, but we had a few looks of distant or flying birds on the tour.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

LESSER KESTREL (*Falco naumanni*) – We had our best looks at this uncommon species on our second visit to the Crau. There sure were plenty of kestrels to sort through to find this one!

EURASIAN KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*)

EURASIAN HOBBY (*Falco subbuteo*) – Good looks in flight.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*)

Laniidae (Shrikes)

SOUTHERN GRAY SHRIKE (*Lanius meridionalis*) – All of our birds at the Crau Steppe were pretty distant, but there was no doubt about the i.d.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

EURASIAN JAY (*Garrulus glandarius*) – Simply called the Jay in much of Europe.

EURASIAN MAGPIE (*Pica pica*) – Now split from our own Black-billed Magpie in N. America due to marked vocal and behavioral differences, and subtle plumage differences.

RED-BILLED CHOUGH (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*) – I think we ended up seeing more of these than the Yellow-billed Chough, but didn't run into numbers until we got to Col du Tourmalet.

YELLOW-BILLED CHOUGH (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*) – Fantastic studies of this alpine species at the Cirque de Gavarnie.

EURASIAN JACKDAW (*Corvus monedula*) – The most common corvid in and around the Camargue.

ROOK (*Corvus frugilegus*) – A couple of these distinctive corvids flew past our group one early morning before breakfast near Arles.

CARRION CROW (*Corvus corone*)

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Only at the highest elevations.

Alaudidae (Larks)

CRESTED LARK (*Galerida cristata*) – Mostly in flight in and around the Camargue. This and the next species enjoy wide ranges in the Old World, being found east to the Pacific in n.e. China.

SKY LARK (*Alauda arvensis*)

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – Called Sand Martin on this side of the Atlantic.

EURASIAN CRAG-MARTIN (*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*) – Excellent, close studies near Gedre.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – As expected, all of our birds on this tour were white-bellied.

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW (*Cecropis daurica*) – A few folks got on this distinctive swallow, from a considerable distance, in the Camargue.

COMMON HOUSE-MARTIN (*Delichon urbicum*) – Including a number of birds making their way south through the high passes in the Pyrenees.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

MARSH TIT (*Poecile palustris*) – This one came in for a quick look at the group, then became disinterested as we headed toward Toulouse on the final afternoon.

COAL TIT (*Pariparus ater*) – This one was the most responsive and confiding of the tits that we encountered on the tour. Excellent looks on our final morning!

CRESTED TIT (*Lophophanes cristatus*) – One particularly confiding individual on our hike to the Cirque.

GREAT TIT (*Parus major*) – Common as they were, this widespread species really gave us trouble on this trip, barely pausing long enough for decent looks.

EURASIAN BLUE TIT (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) – Several fine looks at this lovely tit. Note that the birds from the Canaries and from N. Africa have been split from the birds of Continental Europe eastwards.

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

LONG-TAILED TIT (*Aegithalos caudatus*) – A nice pick up on the final afternoon on our last stop before heading into Toulouse.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

EURASIAN NUTHATCH (*Sitta europaea*) – Nuthatches in w. Europe are pretty straightforward, with only one possible species away from Corsica.

Tichodromidae (Wallcreeper)

WALLCREEPER (*Tichodroma muraria*) – WOWWWW!!!!!! Unlikely to ever be replicated in terms of ease of hiking and viewing, the Wallcreeper next to where we parked our vans was more than Megan and I could have ever hoped for! We watched it for close to 20-30 minutes as it methodically worked the rock wall next to the stream, offering frequent views of its stunning sunburst wing pattern. Oh my!

Certhiidae (Trecreepers)

EURASIAN TREECREEPER (*Certhia familiaris*) – Nice views of a very cooperative bird at Foret Le Lienz on our final morning.

SHORT-TOED TREECREEPER (*Certhia brachydactyla*) – Seen well in the small patch of roadside trees where we took our lunch near Carcassonne.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

EURASIAN WREN (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) – We found a cooperative individual at Le Lienz on our final morning. No split from Winter and Pacific wrens of the New World. I wonder how many species of 'Eurasian Wrens' there are in the Old World?

Cinclidae (Dippers)

WHITE-THROATED DIPPER (*Cinclus cinclus*) – Fabulous studies along the rushing stream below Gedre. [N]

Regulidae (Kinglets)

GOLDCREST (*Regulus regulus*) – Quite a lot like our own Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

FIRECREST (*Regulus ignicapilla*) – We scored on both of the mainland European kinglet species within minutes of each other on our hike to the Cirque above Gedre.

Cettiidae (Bush-Warblers and Allies)

CETTI'S WARBLER (*Cettia cetti*) – After hearing several of these skulkers, we chanced upon a particularly bold individual in the Camargue on our third day there.

Phylloscopidae (Leaf-Warblers)

WILLOW WARBLER (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) – Only one bird in the parking lot of our hotel near Arles early on. Normally one of the most common and widespread of the migrant passerines on this tour.

COMMON CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus collybita*) – Unrecorded on this tour until we arrived in the Pyrenees. *Phylloscopus* warblers don't get much plainer than this one!

Acrocephalidae (Reed-Warblers and Allies)

EURASIAN REED-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*) – Persistence paid off with excellent studies of a pair of these skulkers in the Camargue.

Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies)

ZITTING CISTICOLA (*Cisticola juncidis*) – An ever present voice in all of the grassy and weedy habitats in the Camargue area. Often called the Fan-tailed Warbler in Europe, but that name is correctly reserved for *Basileuterus lachrymosus* in Mexico.

Sylviidae (Sylviid Warblers)

BLACKCAP (*Sylvia atricapilla*) – Easy once we got into the Pyrenees, as Megan promised. Note that the new Clements name for this one is Eurasian Blackcap (to differentiate it from the Bush Blackcap of s. Africa).

GARDEN WARBLER (*Sylvia borin*) – Sounding quite a bit like a Blackcap, we had a tough time pinning this one down for a good look in the Camargue.

SARDINIAN WARBLER (*Sylvia melanocephala*) – Largely unresponsive at this season, the birds that we tried for at the Camargue were interested just enough to give a few folks some frustratingly brief views before they disappeared.

GREATER WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia communis*) – On the grounds of our hotel in Gedre.

SPECTACLED WARBLER (*Sylvia conspicillata*) – These birds behaved better than the Sardinian Warblers did at the Camargue, even giving most of us good looks in the scopes!

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa striata*) – A single bird put in a brief appearance in the Vallee d'Ossoue below the Gavarnie ski area.

EUROPEAN ROBIN (*Erithacus rubecula*) – Very common once we got to the Pyrenees and one of my personal favorites on the tour.

EUROPEAN PIED FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula hypoleuca*) – Other than the Barn Swallow, this was probably the most common migrant passerine on the tour.

COMMON REDSTART (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*) – It was nice to see this species in a direct comparison to the similar Black Redstart in the Pyrenees.

BLACK REDSTART (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) – Everywhere at the highest elevations in the Pyrenees.

RUFOUS-TAILED ROCK-THRUSH (*Monticola saxatilis*) – That big boulder field below the ski area proved to be a good place for a picnic lunch and to see this rock-loving species. Another one of the many species that we saw on this tour whose range extends from w. Europe to near the Pacific Ocean in China.

WHINCHAT (*Saxicola rubetra*) – We had a couple of close looks at this open country species.

EUROPEAN STONECHAT (*Saxicola rubicola rubicola*) – Now a separate species (once again!) from the Siberian Stonechat to the east.

NORTHERN WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) – Quite common on the Crau Steppe and above treeline near the ski area.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EURASIAN BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*) – All of the thrushes proved to be quite scarce on this trip this year, but this one was probably seen by most in the group.

SONG THRUSH (*Turdus philomelos*) – Megan and maybe a few others saw this one briefly at Le Lienz on our final morning.

MISTLE THRUSH (*Turdus viscivorus*) – Some saw a small group of these fly over the vans along the road above Gedre one morning, but that was all we could muster for this one.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Prunellidae (Accentors)

ALPINE ACCENTOR (*Prunella collaris*) – We coaxed in a very confiding family group of these uncommon birds along the trail to Port de Boucharo. #3000 for Peggy!

DUNNOCK (*Prunella modularis*) – Several excellent studies of what is sometimes called the 'Hedge Sparrow'. Probably the easiest and most widespread of all the Accentors in the world.

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL (*Motacilla flava*) – Most of the wagtails we saw in the Camargue area were this species, now split from Eastern Yellow Wagtail (with more splits likely to come).

GRAY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla cinerea*) – Typically found singly away from open country and farmland and often found foraging along mountain streams or in the middle of the road in the highlands.

WHITE WAGTAIL (*Motacilla alba*) – A few of these on the tour, but the group walking around the parking lot in Gedre was pretty impressive! Also known as Pied Wagtail in w. Europe.

TAWNY PIPIT (*Anthus campestris*) – Mostly in open, flat areas of the Camargue that were essentially devoid of vegetation.

TREE PIPIT (*Anthus trivialis*) – A few flybys, and a few on the wires at our hotel near Arles were all that we found.

WATER PIPIT (*Anthus spinoletta*) – Very common above Gavarnie. This was what we used to call our familiar American Pipit until it was split from this Old World species quite some time ago.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

YELLOWHAMMER (*Emberiza citrinella*) – A few of us saw one of these below Gedre while some folks ventured into the local grocery store.

ROCK BUNTING (*Emberiza cia*) – One decent view of an adult in the Valle d'Ossoue. Finding any of these buntings if they're not vocal can be a bit tricky!

ORTOLAN BUNTING (*Emberiza hortulana*) – A surprise find on our hike to the Port de Boucharo - most of these had left the area by the time we visited.

CORN BUNTING (*Emberiza calandra*) – Nice looks at this big, dull bunting out on the Crau Steppe.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

COMMON CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla coelebs*) – Nice looks at this widespread species once we got to the Pyrenees.

EURASIAN BULLFINCH (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) – This one's a real sucker for a poor whistled imitation! Great views of a couple of birds in the Pyrenees, but no fancy adult males, unfortunately.

EUROPEAN GREENFINCH (*Chloris chloris*) – Peggy spotted a few of these perched in a dead treetop early on in the Camargue for our only look.

RED CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*) [I*]

EURASIAN SISKIN (*Spinus spinus*) – I think Bob B. and I were the only ones to get on this one as we hiked up to the Cirque.

EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH (*Carduelis carduelis*) – We had this one several times in the Camargue region, but it was never really nailed down by the group.

EURASIAN LINNET (*Carduelis cannabina*) – Several birds in the same boulder field that hosted the Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush below the Gavarnie ski area.

CITRIL FINCH (*Serinus citrinella*) – Poor looks for a few in the group at the Cirque.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*)

EURASIAN TREE SPARROW (*Passer montanus*) – Just a few at our hotel near Arles.

MAMMALS

OLD WORLD RABBIT (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) – Rabbits and hares were in short supply on this tour!

EUROPEAN BROWN HARE (*Lepus europaeus*)

ALPINE MARMOT (*Marmota marmota*) – The introduced population in the Pyrenees seems to be doing just fine! [II]

EDIBLE DORMOUSE (*Glis glis*) – Excellent views for the hardy few who ventured to the edge of the woods near our hotel in Gedre.

NUTRIA (*Myocastor coypus*) [I]

STOAT (SHORT-TAILED WEASEL) (*Mustela erminea*) – A surprise for some amongst the rocks in the Vallee d'Ossoue near Gedre.

PYRENEAN CHAMOIS (ISARD) (*Rupicapra pyrenaica*) – The scopes sure came in handy for our looks at these distant goats. We even made some friends when we stopped to look!

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 161 bird taxa and 7 mammal taxa