

Day trip in the Minervois – Aude (11) and Hérault (34)

18th February 2021

Guide of the day: Karline Martorell accompanied by Philippa Benson

Participants: 5 birders

Weather conditions: weather worthy of England! Drizzle all morning, very cloudy in the afternoon, temps ranging from 8°C to 11°C+... felt much less!

Highlights of the day: Wallcreeper and Alpine accentor

Itinerary and birding spots of the day

We started the day with a walk through the beautiful village of Minerve. The day was very quiet for birds. Searching for Wallcreeper in the Brian Gorges, we just saw a male Kestrel sheltering on the cliff. Above the village, a small group of Crag Martin was seen flying. Once down at the stream, we saw a Blue rock thrush and then 2 Dippers (especially heard because too fast), White wagtail, and Grey wagtail.



Return to the car for a quick coffee and homemade cake stop.

Then we moved on to the village of Caunes-Minervois, our second spot of the day. After our picnic, sheltering under the porch of the Notre Dame du Cros church, we went searching in the gorges nearby, which is a known spot for Wallcreeper. And it was at the rendezvous! We were able to watch it creeping along the cliff face above the Cros stream for a good 10 minutes. An excellent view at quite close-quarters. The best view of the day!



Then, we walked along a forestry track hoping to see the Black woodpecker, but no one was home. We were accompanied by a variety of tits (Crested tit, Blue tit and Great tit). We all enjoyed getting a particularly good view of the Crested tit.

We finished our day trip with a short walk around the old Caunes-Minervois marble quarry (carrière du Roy – this marble was used at Versailles). We had a very nice view of an Alpine accentor, a fairly close individual perched on a dry stone wall. But after that, the lack of bird song reminds us that it's still winter.



But it was a very nice day despite the poor weather. A good team effort!
See the bird list below.

See you next time!



Bird List 18/02/21

English name	French name	Scientific name
Great Cormorant	Grand Cormoran	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Common Buzzard	Buse variable	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Sparrowhawk	Epervier d'Europe	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Kestrel	Faucon crécerelle	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Collared Dove	Tourterelle turque	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Wood Pigeon	Pigeon ramier	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Crag Martin	Hirondelle de rochers	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>
White Wagtail <i>subsp. alba</i>	Bergeronnette grise	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>
Grey Wagtail	Bergeronnette des ruisseaux	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Wren	Troglodyte mignon	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Dipper <i>subsp. cinclus</i>	Cinacle plongeur	<i>Cinclus cinclus cinclus</i>
Dunnock	Accenteur mouchet	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
Alpine accentor	Accenteur alpin	<i>Prunella collaris</i>
Robin	Rougegorge familier	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Black Redstart	Rougequeue noir	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Blackbird	Merle noir	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Mistle thrush	Grive draine	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Blue rock thrush	Monticole bleu	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>
Sardinian Warbler	Fauvette mélanocéphale	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
Blackcap	Fauvette à tête noire	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Firecrest (H)	Roitelet triple-bandeau	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>
Chiffchaff (H)	Pouillot véloce	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Blue Tit	Mésange bleue	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Great Tit	Mésange charbonnière	<i>Parus major</i>
Crested Tit	Mésange huppée	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>
Wallcreeper	Tichodrome échelette	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>
Short-toed Treecreeper (H)	Grimpereau des jardins	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
Raven	Grand Corbeau	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Jackdaw	Choucas des tours	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Starling	Étourneau sansonnet	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
House Sparrow	Moineau domestique	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Chaffinch	Pinson des arbres	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Serin (H)	Serin cini	<i>Serinus serinus</i>

33 species