

Day trip between Ouveillan and Capestang – Aude (11)

19th February 2021

Guide of the day: Karline Martorell accompanied by Philippa Benson

Participants: 6

Weather conditions: very cloudy but no wind, temps ranging from 11°C to 15°C+

Highlights of the day: Stone curlew, Little bustard and Iberian grey shrike

Itinerary and birding spots of the day

We started the day with a quick look around the Fontcalvy ruins. Very quickly, we were treated to a beautiful male Hen harrier skydancing low over the fields. We walked around some agricultural fields to the sound of singing Woodlark and Skylark.



Then from a high point with a good view down over the agricultural plain we scanned for our target species. Between the vineyards and a filtration pond, 5 or 6 Stone curlew provided really excellent views out in the open, especially for this mostly nocturnal species. We watched them singing and flying over the filtration ponds for a good half-hour. Amazingly, a short while later we saw a group about 50 in flight. This was followed by good views of Corn bunting, Stonechat, finches (Goldfinch, Linnet, Chaffinch), and some early Sand martins. So, we continued along the tracks and thanks to Ian's sharp eyes, everyone got a good view of the Iberian grey shrike at the top of an Almond tree in blossom.





Before lunch, we decided to do a quick car-safari along a track amongst some fields... and there... A group of 14 Little bustard took of just in front of us and circled a few times before heading away. This is really quite uncommon for the Aude, where this species only occurs in small groups (5-6).

After lunch at the Fontcalvy ruins, serenaded by a large group of Jackdaws, we headed to the Capestang lagoon. On arrival, there was plenty of activity from a good view point overlooking the marshes/reed beds. Many Coot, Great cormorant, Lapwing, big group of about 100 Flamingo, some Glossy ibis, good numbers of Marsh harrier, Great white egret, Grey heron on the nest... Down amongst the reed beds we had really good views of small groups of Reed bunting. Now, "What's this song?" Ooooh... A Moustached warbler! Sadly but not surprisingly we didn't manage to see it. But to console us, a beautiful group of White storks passed over our heads.



To finish the day, we returned to the high point near Ouveillan, for a last chance at finding the Great spotted cuckoo. But it was in vain. Nevertheless, the day trip was a great success and gave us a taste of the upcoming spring. See the bird list below! Fifty three species is not too bad for this time of year.

Bird List 19/02/21

English name	French name	Scientific name
Mallard	Canard colvert	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Shelduck	Tadorne de Belon	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Red-legged Partridge	Perdrix rouge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>
Great Crested Grebe	Grèbe huppé	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Great Cormorant	Grand Cormoran	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Little Egret	Aigrette garzette	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Great White Egret	Grande Aigrette	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Grey Heron	Héron cendré	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Cattle Egret	Héron garde-boeufs	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
White Stork	Cigogne blanche	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
Glossy Ibis	Ibis falcinelle	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
Greater Flamingo	Flamant rose	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>
Marsh Harrier	Busard des roseaux	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Hen Harrier	Busard Saint-Martin	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
Common Buzzard	Buse variable	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Kestrel	Faucon crécerelle	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Coot	Foulque macroule	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Water Rail (H)	Râle d'eau	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>
Little Bustard	Outarde canepetière	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>
Stone-curlew	OEdicnème criard	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>
Northern Lapwing	Vanneau huppé	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Common Sandpiper	Chevalier guignette	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Yellow-legged Gull	Goéland leucophée	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
Black-headed Gull	Mouette rieuse	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
Collared Dove	Tourterelle turque	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Skylark	Alouette des champs	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Woodlark	Alouette lulu	<i>Lullula arborea</i>
Crested Lark	Cochevis huppé	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
Sand Martin	Hirondelle de rivage	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
White Wagtail	Bergeronnette grise	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Meadow Pipit	Pipit farlouse	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Mistle Thrush	Grive draine	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Song Thrush	Grive musicienne	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Blackbird	Merle noir	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Black Redstart	Rougequeue noir	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Stonechat	Tarier pâtre	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>
Cetti's Warbler (H)	Bouscarle de Cetti	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
Zitting Cisticola (H)	Cisticole des joncs	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Moustached Warbler (H)	Lusciniolle à moustaches	<i>Acrocephalus melanopogon</i>
Chiffchaff	Pouillot véloce	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Great Tit	Mésange charbonnière	<i>Parus major</i>
Iberian Grey Shrike	Pie-grièche méridionale	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>
Carrion Crow	Corneille noire	<i>Corvus corone</i>

English name	French name	Scientific name
Magpie	Pie bavarde	<i>Pica pica</i>
Starling	Étourneau sansonnet	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
House Sparrow	Moineau domestique	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Goldfinch	Chardonneret élégant	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Linnet	Linotte mélodieuse	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
Chaffinch	Pinson des arbres	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Serin (H)	Serin cini	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
Greenfinch	Verdier d'Europe	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
Reed Bunting	Bruant des roseaux	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>
Corn Bunting	Bruant proyer	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>

53 species

Thank you all for your participation and see you next time!

