

Day trip around the Gruissan area (11)

5th Mai 2021

Guide of the day: Karline Martorell accompanied by Philippa Benson

Participants: 8

Weather conditions: fine sunshine then clear weather but with a strong wind, temps ranging from 8°C to 22°C+

Highlights of the day: Purple swanphen, Spoonbill, White stork, Woodchat shrike, Common redstart, Yellow wagtail

Itinerary and birding spots of the day

This day trip started in the Grand Castelou domain with rather uncertain weather. But a few drops of rain and plenty of sun brought out a beautiful rainbow. It's against this backdrop that the observations began.

This protected area is a beautiful wet patchwork alternating riparian rows of trees, lagoons, salt marshes and reed beds. Whatever the season, there are always many species to look for.

So we started by scanning a row of big trees to find White stork and Grey heron nests. We found them but the very strong wind made the nests move alarmingly.



Then we walked along the track to the hide where the serious observations began. Here we had amazing views of a Purple swanphen unusually out in the open, six Spoonbill and around ten Glossy ibis, none of which are common species.

Some other species were seen during the walk and from the hide (Marsh harrier, Gadwall, White stork, Flamingo, Black-winged stilt, Swallow nesting in the hide).



After this good surprise, we headed for the île Saint-Martin where we walked through an agricultural plain between two rows of garrigue hills. Upon our arrival, a pair of Woodchat shrike gave us a nice demonstration on posts in the vineyard. Along a track lined with pine forests, a different group of species: many Goldfinch, Serin, Chaffinch (moreover, a very demonstrative female who absolutely wanted her photo in the trip report) but also Pied flightcatcher, Spotted flightcatcher and Common redstart.



Then we went to an interesting stone wall for the Ocellated lizard (and yes, birdwatchers but not only). There, we saw at first a young lizard sunning itself on a stone. After a good long look we found a female adult a little higher in the stone wall. We tried the approach game to be able to see them as close as possible. See the proof below!





After lunch time, we had a few more stops along the île Saint-Martin, with the Woodchat shrike as our constant companion. A stop was necessary at the level of a vine when we heard Yellow wagtails in migratory stopover. Surprise! Not just any Yellow wagtail, it was the Balkan subspecies (*Motacilla flava feldegg*). Really not common!

Then, we spent some time between l'étang de l'Ayrolle and the Salins de Gruissan. Here the sightings followed in quick succession: Little tern fishing and exchanging prey, Slender-billed gull, Kentish plover, Black-winged stilt, Little ringed plover, Dunlin, Little stint, Redshank and Avocet.

To end the day in style, a Yellow wagtail (suspecies *cinereocapilla* in photo below) landed on the roof of a hut just before we left.

A great end to a day that offered us a good diversity of habitats and species. The proof: 67 species is not so bad!



Bird List 05/05/21

English Name	French Name	Scientific Name
Gadwall	Canard chipeau	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Mallard	Canard colvert	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Red-crested pochard	Nette rousse	<i>Netta ruffina</i>
Common Shelduck	Tadorne de Belon	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Red-legged Partridge	Perdrix rouge	<i>Alectoris rufa</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>
White Stork	Cigogne blanche	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
Glossy Ibis	Ibis falcinelle	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	Spatule blanche	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
Greater Flamingo	Flamant rose	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>
European Honey Buzzard	Bondrée apivore	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>
Western Marsh Harrier	Busard des roseaux	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Common Buzzard	Buse variable	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Black Kite	Milan noir	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
Common Kestrel	Faucon crécerelle	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Eurasian Coot	Foulque macroule	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Purple Swamphen	Talève sultane	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Pied Avocet	Avocette élégante	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
Black-winged Stilt	Échasse blanche	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Little Ringed Plover	Petit gravelot	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Kentish Plover	Gravelot à collier interrompu	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Little Stint	Bécasseau minute	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Dunlin	Bécasseau variable	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Common Redshank	Chevalier gambette	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Yellow-legged Gull	Goéland leucopnée	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
Slender-billed Gull	Goéland railleur	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>
Black-headed Gull	Mouette rieuse	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
Little Tern	Sterne naine	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
Common Wood Pigeon	Pigeon ramier	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
European Turtle Dove	Tourterelle des bois	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
Common Swift	Martinet noir	<i>Apus apus</i>
European Bee-eater	Guêpier d'Europe	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
Crested Lark	Cochevis huppé	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
Common House Martin	Hirondelle de fenêtre	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>
Barn Swallow	Hirondelle rustique	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Western Yellow Wagtail	Bergeronnette printanière	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Common Blackbird	Merle noir	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Common Nightingale (H)	Rossignol philomèle	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
Common Redstart	Rougequeue à front blanc	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Cetti's Warbler (H)	Bouscarle de Cetti	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
Zitting Cisticola (H)	Cisticole des joncs	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Sardinian Warbler (H)	Fauvette mélanocéphale	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>

English Name	French Name	Scientific Name
Western Orphean Warbler (H)	Fauvette orphée	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>
Western Bonelli's Warbler	Pouillot de Bonelli	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>
Willow Warbler (H)	Pouillot fitis	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Spotted Flycatcher	Gobemouche gris	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
European Pied Flycatcher	Gobemouche noir	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
Great Tit	Mésange charbonnière	<i>Parus major</i>
Short-toed Treecreeper (H)	Grimpereau des jardins	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
Woodchat Shrike	Pie-grièche à tête rousse	<i>Lanius senator</i>
Eurasian Magpie	Pie bavarde	<i>Pica pica</i>
Carriion crow	Corneille noire	<i>Corvus corone</i>
Common Starling	Étourneau sansonnet	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Eurasian Golden Oriole	Loriot d'Europe	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
House Sparrow	Moineau domestique	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Rock Sparrow	Moineau soulcie	<i>Petronia petronia</i>
European Goldfinch	Chardonneret élégant	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Common Linnet	Linotte mélodieuse	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
Common Chaffinch	Pinson des arbres	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
European Serin	Serin cini	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
European Greenfinch (H)	Verdier d'Europe	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
Corn Bunting (H)	Bruant proyer	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>
Cirl Bunting	Bruant zizi	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>

67 species

* (H) : species just heard



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