

## Day trip in the Minervois (34 & 11)

21<sup>st</sup> May 2021

**Guide of the day:** Karline Martorell accompanied by Philippa Benson

**Participants:** 5

**Weather conditions:** quite cloudy weather but with some sunny intervals and a light wind, temps ranging from 10°C to 20°C+

**Highlights of the day:** Alpine swift, Red-rumped swallow, Crag martin, Blue rock thrush, Woodchat shrike, Golden oriole

### Itinerary and birding spots of the day

We spent the day in the Minervois between Minerve and Caunes-Minervois to look for swallows and swifts, among other species. So we started with a good walk in the old cathare city of Minerve. The old stone houses and the very high bridge are really interesting for rock species. So we had good views of Crag martin (flying constantly above our heads and landing on walls in the sun), Red-rumped swallow (2 individuals flying sometimes near us, but never for a long time), Blue rock thrush (a young male landed not far from us), and Rock sparrow (active on the village roofs).



Near the café, we were surprised to find a Barn swallow nesting very close in the entrance of a building. The adults were really not shy and perched just above our heads just for our viewing pleasure.

Then we walked through the garrigue above the village, where we saw a beautiful Whinchat, showing really well and then a nice Woodchat shrike with a Corn bunting beside it.



With the wind picking up, the weather improved for migration allowing us to see a group of Honey buzzard (about 20 circling on a thermal). Meanwhile, a Short-toed eagle spent its time hunting above the open areas surrounding the village.



After our picnic lunch near the Gorges de la Cesse, we had a quick walk to the cliffs to look for some rock based species. Here we found a beautiful male Blue rock thrush in breeding plumage.

Then we went to Caunes-Minervois. Unfortunately we didn't see many birds although there were plenty singing, which seriously increased the bird list. This allowed us to familiarise ourselves a little with several bird songs. The best sightings were a pair of Crag martin nesting under the church porch and a Golden oriole flying above the open grasslands. No Black woodpecker for today but Andy ticked his first woodpecker in France – a Great spotted. 😊

52 species for this day trip in the Minervois, is not too bad for fairly similar habitats.

## Bird List 21/05/21

English Name	French Name	Scientific Name
European Honey Buzzard	Bondrée apivore	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>
Common Buzzard	Buse variable	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Short-toed Snake Eagle	Circaète Jean-le-Blanc	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Épervier d'Europe	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Common Kestrel	Faucon crécerelle	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Common Wood Pigeon	Pigeon ramier	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove	Tourterelle turque	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Common Cuckoo (H)	Coucou gris	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
Alpine Swift	Martinet à ventre blanc	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
Common Swift	Martinet noir	<i>Apus apus</i>
Eurasian Hoopoe	Huppe fasciée	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Pic épeiche	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
Common House Martin	Hirondelle de fenêtre	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>
Eurasian Crag Martin	Hirondelle de rochers	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>
Red-rumped Swallow	Hirondelle rousseline	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>
Barn Swallow	Hirondelle rustique	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Grey Wagtail	Bergeronnette des ruisseaux	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
White Wagtail	Bergeronnette grise	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Mistle Thrush	Grive draine	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
Song Thrush (H)	Grive musicienne	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Common Blackbird	Merle noir	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Blue Rock Thrush	Monticole bleu	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>
Common Nightingale (H)	Rosignol philomèle	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
European Robin (H)	Rougegorge familier	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Common Redstart	Rougequeue à front blanc	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Black Redstart	Rougequeue noir	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Whinchat	Tarier des prés	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
Zitting Cisticola	Cisticole des joncs	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Eurasian Blackcap	Fauvette à tête noire	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Sardinian Warbler	Fauvette mélanocéphale	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
Subalpine Warbler (H)	Fauvette passerinette	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>
Western Bonelli's Warbler	Pouillot de Bonelli	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>
Common Firecrest (H)	Roitelet à triple bandeau	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>
European Pied Flycatcher	Gobemouche noir	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
Eurasian Blue Tit	Mésange bleue	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Great Tit (H)	Mésange charbonnière	<i>Parus major</i>
Long-tailed Tit (H)	Mésange à longue queue	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
Short-toed Treecreeper	Grimpereau des jardins	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>

English Name	French Name	Scientific Name
Woodchat Shrike	Pie-grièche à tête rousse	<i>Lanius senator</i>
Western Jackdaw	Choucas des tours	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>
Northern Raven	Grand Corbeau	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Eurasian Magpie	Pie bavarde	<i>Pica pica</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 Chaffinch	Pinson des arbres	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
European Serin	Serin cini	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
Corn Bunting	Bruant proyer	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>
Cirl Bunting (H)	Bruant zizi	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>

***52 species***

\* (H): species just heard



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