

Day trip between Béziers, Portiragnes & Lespignan – Hérault (34)

22th April 2022

Guide: Karline Martorell accompanied by Philippa Benson

Participants: 5

Weather conditions: sunny day with a light wind, temps ranging from 10°C to 20°C

Highlights of the trip: Little bustard, Bearded tit, Black and Whiskered tern, Lesser kestrel

Itinerary and birding spots of the day

We started the day around the airport of Beziers. This is one of the main populations of the Little bustard in the Herault. The eastern end of the runway was quiet but we were teased by hearing our first Little bustard, without to be allowed to see it. Meanwhile, Tawny pipit and Corn bunting were singing in the chilly morning conditions. Then, we headed to the western end of the airport and as soon as we arrived, about 40 Little bustard were in flight. We were able to see this group very well and also a male on the ground near the runway.



Beziers airport with its Little bustard population © K.Martorell



Lovely poppies and a very cooperative Corn bunting © K.Martorell

On the way back to the car, we saw some very demonstrative Corn bunting singing on the fences and hunting in the flower-filled meadows. And what would Spring be without these beautiful poppies!

After this stop in open fields, we walked around Portiragnes in the Grande Maire Natura 2000 area, an area made up of lagoons, reed beds and salt marsh habitats. As we arrived, we saw a nice group of Glossy ibis quite close by in a field, accompanied by big flocks of Jackdaw and Starling, creating a great deal of activity to the field.



Flamingos landing and aflight of Mute swan with birders © K. Martorell

Here, we walked different tracks and we had excellent views of common species (Flamingo, Little egret, Black-winged stilt, Marsh harrier, Zitting cisticola...) but also less common species such as Purple swam hen, Purple heron, Black tern, Whiskered tern, and a nice subspecies of Yellow wagtail (*flavissima*). We saw many passerines on migratory stopover in the flooded fields, including Whinchat, Common redstart, Pied flycatcher and Northern wheatear. A great deal of activity for such a small Tamaris hedge!



Glossy ibis, Marsh harrier, Little egret, Zitting cisticola, Yellow wagtail flavissima, Linnet, and Winchat © K Martorell

We ended our day in Lespignan, a typical old Languedoc village where the pan tile roofs are favoured by quite a big colony of Lesser kestrel. From a highish view point, about ten individuals were seen. On some roofs we found pairs, which allowed us to clearly see the difference between male and female, but also the differences with the Common kestrel.



Lesser kestrel colonies in Lespignan © K. Martorell

We walked through many different types of habitat during the day, which allowed us to find 76 species. You can find the bird list below.

Bird List 22/04/22

Common name	French Name	Scientific name
Little grebe	Grèbe castagneux	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</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>Casmerodius albus</i>
Grey heron	Héron cendré	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple heron	Héron pourpré	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
White stork	Cigogne blanche	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
Glossy ibis	Ibis falcinelle	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
Greater flamingo	Flamant rose	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>
Mute swan	Cygne tuberculé	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Shelduck	Tadorne de Belon	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Egyptian goose	Ouette d'Egypte	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>
Mallard	Canard colvert	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Gadwall	Canard chipeau	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Shoveler	Canard souchet	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Garganey	Sarcelle d'été	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
Pochard	Fuligule milouin	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Red-crested pochard	Nette rousse	<i>Netta rufina</i>
Black kite	Milan noir	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
Marsh harrier	Busard des roseaux	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Montagu's harrier	Busard cendré	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
Common buzzard	Buse variable	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Kestrel	Faucon crécerelle	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Lesser kestrel	Faucon crécerellette	<i>Falco naumanni</i>
Red-legged partridge	Perdrix rouge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>
Moorhen	Gallinule poule d'eau	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Coot	Foulque macroule	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Purple swamphen	Talève sultane	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Little Bustard	Outarde canepetière	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>
Black-winged stilt	Echasse blanche	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Little ringed plover	Petit gravelot	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Lapwing	Vanneau huppé	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Green sandpiper	Chevalier cul-blanc	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Common sandpiper	Chevalier guignette	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Redshank	Chevalier gambette	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Whimbrel	Courlis corlieu	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Black-headed gull	Mouette rieuse	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
Yellow-legged gull	Goéland leucophée	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
Common tern	Sterne pierregarin	<i>Sterna hirunda</i>

Common name	French Name	Scientific name
Whiskered tern	Guifette moustac	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>
Black tern	Guifette noire	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
Wood pigeon	Pigeon ramier	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Collared dove	Tourterelle turque	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Hoopoe	Huppe fasciée	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Bee-eater (H)	Guêpier d'Europe	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
Woodlark (H)	Alouette lulu	<i>Lullula arborea</i>
Crested lark	Cochevis huppé	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
Common swift	Martinet noir	<i>Apus apus</i>
Barn swallow	Hirondelle rustique	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Tawny pipit	Pipit rousseline	<i>Anthus campestris</i>
White wagtail	Bergeronnette grise	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Yellow Wagtail (iberiae & flavissima)	Bergeronnette printanière	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Nightingale	Rosignol philomène	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
Common redstart	Rougequeue à front blanc	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Northern wheatear	Traquet motteux	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Whinchat	Tarier des prés	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
Stonechat	Tarier pâtre	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>
Sardinian warbler	Fauvette mélanocéphale	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
Fan-tailed warbler	Cisticole des joncs	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Cetti's warbler (H)	Bourscarle de Cetti	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
Reed warbler	Rousserolle effarvatte	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Willow warbler (H)	Pouillot fitis	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Pied flycatcher	Gobemouche noir	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
Great tit (H)	Mésange charbonnière	<i>Parus major</i>
Bearded tit	Panure à moustaches	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>
Magpie	Pie bavarde	<i>Pica pica</i>
Jackdaw	Choucas des tours	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Carrion crow	Corneille noire	<i>Corvus corone</i>
Starling	Etourneau sansonnet	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
House sparrow	Moineau domestique	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Tree sparrow	Moineau friquet	<i>Passer montanus</i>
Linnet	Linotte mélodieuse	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>
Goldfinch	Chardonneret élégant	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Serin (H)	Serin cini	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
Corn bunting	Bruant proyer	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>

76 species

(H) : species just heard

Thank you all for joining us and we look forward to
 seeing you next time for more fun birding!