

# Gibraltar & Tarifa - Whales, Dolphins and Autumn Migration

Naturetrek Tour Report

10 - 14 September 2010

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The 2010 Naturetrek Group

Report and image compiled by Simon Tonkin and David Morris



Naturetrek Cheriton Mill Cheriton Alresford Hampshire SO24 0NG England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

F: +44 (0)1962 736426

E: [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

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Tour leaders:	Simon Tonkin David Morris
Participants:	Marian Clamp Ros Steel Margaret Long John Long Barbara Cross Becki Coleman Dan Hobbs Alec Watson Kay Watson Carol Atkinson Mary Ellam Peter Ellam Bruce Bolton Liz Bolton David Hastings Lesley Lee

## Day 1

Friday 10th September

### Gibraltar – Algarrobo

After a slight delay in leaving Gatwick we arrived in fine spirits at Gibraltar airport where we met with Frank who importantly had our lunch! We proceeded to arrange minibuses whilst some people waited in the airport and others walked across the border into Spain to the nearby coffee shop. After the paperwork was arranged and luggage loaded we headed off into Spain.

After negotiating the strange one way system in and out of Gibraltar we drove towards our hotel at La Cordiniz. Raptors were already being spotted en route with Short-toed Eagle and Black Kite being seen briefly. We went to the concealed raptor watch point; Algarrobo, which is named after the rare Carob Tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*) that grows next to the observation point. We hoped we would be sheltered from the Levante wind here and the raptors would think the same way! We weren't to be disappointed as we are able to observe Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Short-toed and Booted Eagles, 1 Osprey, Honey Buzzards, Lesser Kestrels and Hobby. We decided to take one of Frank's excellent picnics here, eating and drinking whilst being treated to superb views of Short-toed Eagles and 200+ Bee-eaters 'quipping' overhead. It was certainly worth the bumpy ride up the eroded track! After lunch we headed to our hotel at La Cordiniz and those keen-eyed members of the group were able to spot Cattle Egrets and Montagu's Harriers.

At arrival the Spotless Starlings were there to greet us, looking like starlings that don't use shampoo! After everybody had settled in we enjoyed our well earned evening meal followed by viewing the House Geckos and Preying Mantis to be found on the hotel walls, together with Kuhl's Pipistrelles foraging around the lights in the hotel car park before settling down for the evening.

## Day 2

Saturday 11th September

### Sartuario – Los Lances – Algarrobo

We woke to yet another bright and sunny day but the Levante was again very strong and so we decided to head to Sartuario where we could hopefully witness some more raptor passage. It was fairly quiet but we had good views of Griffon Vultures and Black Kites along with some walking Serrano ham! A Hobby worked the sheltered hillside and much to our awe we observed it hunting.

Following this we headed into the town of Tarifa and parked up close to the beach near to Los Lances, negotiating our way through the travellers camp there, which has received many complaints from the local conservation organisations due to waste affecting the fragile intertidal ecosystem here. Whilst here we were blasted by the wind and this made viewing very difficult whilst walking along the boardwalk. However, we able to get views of Crested Lark and familiar wading bird species with a great comparison between Ringed and Kentish Plovers. Whilst heading back along the boardwalk a Dinghy Skipper was spotted also being buffeted by the Levante wind.

From Los Lances - dodging the showers - we headed back to Algarrobo watch point where we joined staff and volunteers from Migres in observing the many raptor species passing through. It was likely with the Levante that these birds would not be crossing, but this didn't stop us getting some excellent views of many of the species we had seen the day before. This time we were able to watch Short-toed Eagles hovering very close and large numbers of Booted Eagles. After having a leisurely lunch here we ensured we made the most of the raptors on show. We then decided to head back to the hotel to enjoy some down time before having dinner.

## Day 3

Sunday 12th September

### Los Lances – La Pena - Algeciras Bay

During the previous evening meal Becky revealed that she had never seen a Hoopoe and it was something of a childhood dream to see one. So our first stop was an attempt to see this species which can often be observed around the paddocks and gardens at Los Lances. We looked very hard but no Hoopoes! Heading out to the viewing screen we had great views in the scope of Audouin's, Western Yellow-legged Gulls and several wading bird species to compare. David spotted some Fiddler Crabs on the beach and we all enjoyed fine views of them in the scope. When we headed to the vehicles some at the back of the group spotted a group of Spoonbills flying through. More Bee-eaters went over and we had three Crested Larks and Fan-tailed Warblers amongst the grass and scrub.

We headed back past the hotel to a brief stop at the visitor centre just beyond the La Pena observatory, where we could see the various displays in the visitor centre and walk up the hillside where we observed Nightingale, Sardinian Warblers and Fan-tailed Warbler.

From here we had a brief stop back at the hotel before proceeding to Tarifa, and then onto Algeciras Bay where we headed out into the bay in search of cetaceans. The strong Levante wind inhibited us going out of the bay but we weren't too disappointed as we had views of Common Dolphin and the 'floating dustbin lid of the sea'; the Ocean Sun Fish, which is called the moon fish in every other language! We had two of these very close alongside the boat.

## Day 4

Monday 13th September

### Tarifa – Gibraltar

After checking out of the hotel we headed to the drained farmland area of La Janda, from where we checked several of the fields for birds, still with a mind on finding Becky her Hoopoe - we found not one but two! White Storks were in profusion in the fields whilst Black Storks were observed flying through. We also observed flocks of Glossy Ibis here and several Montagu's Harriers including a melanistic bird, which is a fairly rare occurrence.

Reluctantly we had to leave to get our lunch at the raptor watch point; Algarrobo, where we again enjoyed the delights of the regions raptor spectacle, several dark clouds threatened but we were largely lucky when the sun began to shine once again. Kay and Alec spotted a Swallowtail Butterfly which provided a brief distraction from our lunch.

After lunch we headed once again to Algeciras Bay where we embarked on our boat trip to try and better the previous days tally of sea life. This time we headed a little further out and as soon as we were beyond Europa point we observed a large number of Scopoli's Shearwaters closely followed by fantastic alongside boat views of Common Dolphins, together with another two Ocean Sunfish. We were very pleased with this extra trip as our views were far better than the previous days. Common Dolphins were breaching all around the boat and we observed several pods with young calves. From Algeciras we headed into Gibraltar where we checked into our hotel and settled down for the evening.

## Day 5

Tuesday 14th September

### Gibraltar – London

Following breakfast we decided to head for the cable car, hoping to beat the several cruise ship passengers that were bound to disembark and head straight for the cable car! We were lucky enough to be one of the first in the queue and headed up to see the Barbary Macaques. In addition a Northern Wheatear greeted us and we had excellent views from above of Honey Buzzard passing through. On the way down we briefly saw a Blue Rockthrush that David spotted just before it hid behind the rocky crags.

From here we were able to have a walk around the botanical gardens before meeting up at the gardens gates and gift shop. A two-tailed Pasha was very obliging and showed very well outside the gift shop, allowing us to get some good photos. Looking up, hundreds of Booted Eagles with several Short-toed Eagles and Honey Buzzards were overhead, a fitting end to our trip, and from here we headed to the airport and then home.

## Species lists

Birds (H = heard only)

	Common Name	Scientific Name	September				
			10	11	12	13	14
1	Scopoli's Shearwater	<i>Calonectris diomedea diomedea</i>				50	
2	Gannet	<i>Sula bassana</i>				4+	
3	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			1	1	
4	Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>				2	
5	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	10	60	40	100+	
6	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	2	15	4	20+	
7	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			2	3	
8	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>			14	5	
9	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>				60	
10	Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>			17		
11	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>				30+	
12	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>				4	
13	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	10	30	20+	40+	
14	Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	8	10			
15	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	15+	30	20+	50+	
16	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	2	2	2	30+	
17	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		1		2	
18	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	3	6	40+	20+	
19	Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	2		6	70+	c.20
20	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	1	1			
21	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	200	250	300+	200+	150+
22	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	80	60	100+	c.50	70+
23	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	1	3	2	1	
24	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	2	2	2	1	
25	Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>		2			
26	Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	3	4	6+	7	
27	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>				1	
28	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		1	6		
29	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>		2			
30	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>			1		
31	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>			1		
32	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>		20	30		
33	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>			4		
34	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>			1		
35	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		1	1		
36	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>		2	4		
37	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		1			
38	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>			1	3	
39	Audouin's Gull	<i>Larus audouinii</i>				60+	
40	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus Melanocephalus</i>		10	4+	5	
41	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>			20+	40	
42	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	100+	50+	400+	c.400	
43	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>			3		
44	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>			40+	20	
45	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		6		6	
46	Feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	

	Common Name	Scientific Name	September				
			10	11	12	13	14
47	Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
48	Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>			10+	3+	
49	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>			1		
50	Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	2	3	4	30+	
51	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	4	6	2	5	
52	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>				1	
53	Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	200	300	50+	40+	
54	Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>				2	
55	Green Woodpecker (Iberian)	<i>Picus viridis sharpei</i>				1H	
56	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>		6	3	15+	
57	Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
58	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>		30			
59	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>				1	
60	Yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	3	20+	30+	50+	
61	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	1	1	2		
62	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	1	2	1	1	
63	Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>			2		
64	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>			1		
65	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>		6	5+	2	
66	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>				1	1
67	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>				1	1
68	Fan-tailed Warbler	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	1	3	6	8+	
69	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>				1	
70	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		1		20+	
71	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	3	8	7+	10+	1
72	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		1		1	
73	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>		1H			
74	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>		1			
75	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		1	1	3	
76	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		1		1	
77	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	200	400	100	300	
78	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	2	4			
79	Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		2			2
80	Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓			
81	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
82	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>				3+	
83	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		1	2		
84	Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>		1H	3	10+	
85	Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>				300	
86	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	✓	100	
87	Linnet	<i>Acanthis cannabina</i>				60+	
88	Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>				7	

## Cetaceans

Common name	Scientific name	September				
		10	11	12	13	14
Common Dolphin	<i>Delphinus delphis</i>			40+	c.150	
Ocean Sunfish	<i>Mola mola</i>			2	2	

## Butterflies &amp; Moths

Spanish Meadow Brown	Swallowtail	Hummingbird Hawkmoth
Red Admiral	Large White	Eyed Hawkmoth
Two-tailed Pasha	Speckled Wood	Smoky Wainscot
Dingy Skipper	Holly Blue	Crimson Footman

## Dragonflies

Southern Hawker	Lesser Emperor	Ruddy Darter
Migrant Hawker	Banded Groundling	Common Darter
Yellow-winged Darter		

## Mammals

Barbary Macaques	Kuhl's Pippistrelle Bat
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## Other Wildlife

Iberian Wall Lizard	Field Cricket	House Gecko
Preying Mantis	Fiddler Crab spp	

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