

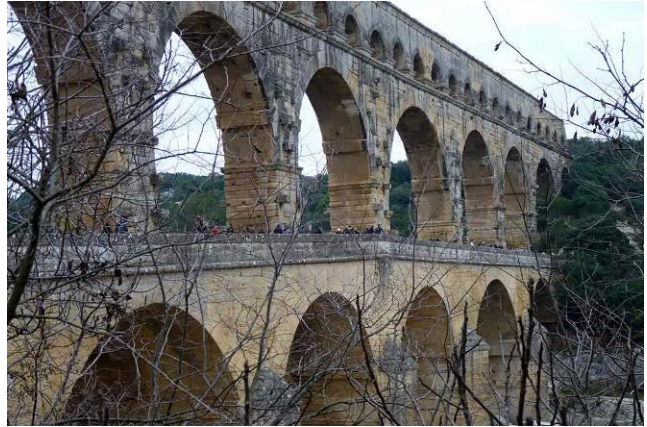
Provence at Christmas

Naturetrek Tour Report

22 – 29 December 2015



Alpine Accentor by Colin Brown



Pont du Gard by Kevin Tubb



Glossy Ibis by Colin Brown



Cattle Egret by Colin Brown

Report compiled by James Bray and Jessica Turner
Images courtesy of Colin Brown and Kevin Tubb



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Introduction

Day 1

Tuesday 22nd December

Marseille Airport to Hotel des Granges, Arles.

Calm, mild and broken cloud.

Following an uneventful flight from Heathrow to Marseille we made good progress to the Hotel des Granges, which can be found just to the north of Arles in the heart of Provence. With an hour of daylight left we wandered along a track from the hotel enjoying the mild and calm conditions and some nice birding. Corn Buntings perched up on wires and flocks of Skylarks flew overhead calling. Cetti's Warblers sang from within thick cover but remained typically elusive. As we walked back to the hotel Kevin heard a Little Owl calling but it too remained out of sight.

The dinner was the first of many delicious meals served by Marie-Jo and Bruno and as we relaxed after the journey we looked forward to the holiday, with a good weather forecast bolstering our anticipation. With winter providing spectacular flocks of waterbirds, mouth-watering altitudinal migrants and the chance of rare mid-winter wanderers we had much to look forward to in an area that offers very varied habitats, and beautiful scenery and light.

Day 2

Wednesday 23rd December

The Camargue

Mild and warm, a few very brief showers in the morning, calm with broken cloud in the afternoon.

After a leisurely breakfast we headed off for our first full day's birdwatching, crossing the river Rhone on our way to the east side of the Camargue. Our first stop was at Mas d'Agon, one of the most productive freshwater marshes in the old delta of the Rhone. Egrets and Marsh Harriers regularly flew past, Water Rails squealed from within the reed beds and a large flock of Cranes flew past, bugling away as they passed. A flock of over 90 Glossy Ibis feeding in the marsh was a real treat as we were all able to have prolonged views of them, as well as to watch Curlew feeding alongside them to demonstrate their comparatively small size.

A stop with the large saline Étang de Vaccarès on one side of the road and pools and saltmarsh on the other was very productive. A flock of over twenty Red-breasted Mergansers and a large, densely packed flock of Coot entertained us on Vaccarès. On the inland side a male Stonechat perched up quite close to us, whilst a ringtail Hen Harrier quartered the marshes, a Peregrine flushed large flocks of Lapwing, Golden Plover and Black-tailed Godwits in the distance, and both White and Black Storks were seen in flight briefly.

A walk at the marshland reserve of La Capellière was relatively quiet, with Penduline Tits and Cetti's Warblers calling frequently but only putting in fleeting appearances. A large flood did provide us with excellent views of a dozen Black-necked Grebes, together with Little and Great Crested Grebes allowing us to study the differences in size and shape. We enjoyed our picnic at the reserve in very pleasant temperatures with a flock of calling Teal providing a lovely background soundtrack.

From La Capellière we made our way south towards the sea, stopping at another marsh where large flocks of duck included Pintail and Wigeon, and we managed to find two Purple Swamphens feeding out in the open. Marsh Harriers and another ringtail Hen Harrier kept the ducks on their toes. Arriving at the salt pans, it soon became apparent that there were large flocks of waders feeding close to the road. They allowed good views and we were soon admiring large numbers of Kentish Plovers and Little Stints, both of which were more common than the Ringed Plovers and Dunlins that accompanied them. A Green Sandpiper posed nicely, though a Dartford Warbler that was associating with a pair of Stonechats proved far harder to see well. A large number of gulls were flying in to the salt pans to roost, many of which were Mediterranean Gulls, and we were soon enjoying superb views of large numbers of this rather beautiful gull at roost. As the sun dipped below the Mediterranean in calm conditions our last bird of the day revealed itself to be a first-year Slender-billed Gull, which, surprisingly, was our only record of this species during the trip.

The drive back to the hotel was very easy and we then spent the evening enjoying a delicious meal, happy that our first day of the trip had gone well and that we had had good views of some very nice species.

Day 3

Thursday 24th December

The Camargue

Odd brief light shower, mainly overcast, moderate southerly wind.

This was the one day of the trip that we had a cold wind all day; however, it eventually improved our birding. We headed for the west side of the Camargue today, our first stop being to check a flooded road-side stubble field. We managed to find a few Water Pipits amongst larger numbers of Meadow Pipits and White Wagtails, though they did prove rather elusive as they fed in cover more than the other two species were doing. A second stop at a larger set of lakes was great fun, as the lakes were covered in ducks as well as over thirty Bewick's Swans. This species seems to have become more common down here in winter and, with the flock containing a few first-year birds, maybe they'll continue to make the journey all the way south for a while yet.

The bumpy drive round the top of the Étang de Vaccarès can be very good for raptors and waders and, whilst water levels weren't ideal for the waders, Kevin did find a first year Peregrine perched within one hundred metres of the track. We all had superb views in beautiful light, allowing us to see all the plumage details of this spectacular bird. We arrived at Stes. Maries de la Mer, a small town on the Mediterranean, in need of warm drinks, but did pause briefly to look out over the sea to watch a procession of Yelkouan Shearwaters flying offshore, presumably driven close to land by the brisk southerly wind.

Warmed up by our drinks, we headed a short way along the beach to another area that can be good for waders, but again there was no exposed mud. However, three Black-necked Grebes were feeding in a channel within ten metres of us, allowing amazing views, their fiery red eyes blazing despite the rather overcast conditions. Sandwich Terns and Gannets were feeding offshore, and a pair of Crested Larks showed well in the car park.

We had another relaxed picnic lunch in a sheltered spot at the Pont du Gau reserve. The background chorus this time was provided by hundreds of Greater Flamingos, and Firecrest and Goldcrest put in brief appearances in the trees above us. Having finished our picnic, we wandered around the reserve being serenaded and wowed by the dancing flamingos which seemed to be performing a massed pink ballet. We also searched for a colour ringed flamingo (DBC) that we have seen on the previous two trips. We weren't able to find DBC but we logged a good

number of colour rings and the researcher who runs the colour-ringing project told us that the oldest bird that we saw was born in 1981. We were also given the good news that DBC is still going strong at the ripe old age of 37!

The walk around the reserve took longer than anticipated, so we drove around some agricultural fields on the way back to Arles, and found some large flocks of Chaffinches and Corn Buntings feeding in the fields and a few large flocks of Cranes in the distance heading towards their night-time roosts.

We arrived back at the hotel with plenty of time to relax before our traditional Provençal Christmas meal, which was, as always, absolutely delicious. A few of us managed to save some space for the 13 puddings at the end of the meal, and everyone was able to raise a glass for the toast and to thank Marie-Jo for a superb meal. The traditional log was carried to the fire by the oldest and youngest members of the group to wish us all good health for the coming year.

Day 4

Friday 25th December

La Caume, Les Baux-de-Provence, Hotel D'Oulivie

Calm, mild, a few sunny spells.

Whilst the itinerary is kept very flexible on this trip to allow for changeable weather, we often head for the range of limestone hills near to Arles called Les Alpilles on Christmas Day. It might be because we hope that we've been good enough for Father Christmas to give us a Wallcreeper as a Christmas present, or it might be that a café in Les Baux serves good coffees with beautiful views and is always open on Christmas day!

Whatever the reason, we arrived at the car park at La Caume in good spirits with calm conditions and occasional breaks in the clouds for our walk up the hill. Short-toed Treecreepers, Firecrest and Crested Tits called frequently but proved elusive as we walked up the hill, and we saw a Crossbill and a small group of Siskins flying over. Rosemary was flowering abundantly, and the air was fragrant with Thyme, Lavender and other herbs.

On arriving at our usual spot, we began scanning the surrounding slopes and almost immediately picked up some distant Crag Martins. Better was to come within minutes as the resident pair of Bonelli's Eagles appeared above the opposite hill. They drifted closer and closer and slowly passed us almost overhead, providing sensational views. We then searched unsuccessfully for an Eagle-Owl that we had been told about, but the diversion did allow us to find some Giant Orchids (in bud), and to have lovely views of a Red Admiral butterfly.

Having had our picnic lunch at the bottom of the hill (complete with a Firecrest in the surrounding trees again), we headed to Les Baux-de-Provence, a hill-top village in one of the most beautiful spots in southern France. The hills that Les Baux is perched on provide winter refuge for a number of special altitudinal migrants, foremost of which is the superb Wallcreeper. We only had to wait a few minutes before we found one low down in front of us, giving us wonderful views on the limestone cliffs. A second bird then appeared, allowing yet more opportunities to enjoy the flashing red wings, the long and curved beak, and to marvel at its rock-climbing abilities.

A bonus appeared in the form of an Alpine Accentor that dropped down onto the rock face not far from where we stood; however, it disappeared all too quickly. We decided to head up into the town to the café but our walk

was interrupted by a third Wallcreeper being found on another cliff-face! Crag Martins showed very well before we found the café where we all relaxed for a while, very content with the incredible views that we'd had of our main target species. A brief walk around the village found us in the manger square, together with two Alpine Accentors that provided sensational views in our telescopes. It wasn't just us that enjoyed the accentors as they stayed for long enough for us to show the birds to some of the local tourists as well.

With dusk approaching, we headed to our regular Eagle-Owl site, but were very disappointed on arrival to find that two people were rather noisily rock-climbing on the owl's favourite cliff-face. We stayed until near-dark in the hope that the owls might appear but the rock climbers were still there when it got dark, and the only sign of the owls that we had was a couple of distant hoots.

Despite the disappointment of the Eagle Owl, with overhead views of Bonelli's Eagles, prolonged views of two Wallcreepers and two Alpine Accentors, we had had another very good day in the spectacular scenery of Les Alpilles. Marie-Jo produced another superb meal to cap off a wonderful Christmas day in the south of France.

Day 5

Saturday 26th December

La Jasse, Mas Chauvet, La Crau, Étang des Aulnes, Peau de Meau

Calm, mild, a few sunny spells.

Today we headed for the grassy plains of La Crau, the ancient floodplain of the River Durance. The course of the Durance was redirected by tectonic movements over ten thousand years ago, leaving a stony plain that provides ideal habitat for a number of species that in France are only found on the Crau plains. It is a difficult site to bird in winter as the plain's birds congregate into elusive flocks, but it is also a fun place to spend the day as there are always plenty of birds around.

Our first stop was at La Jasse, an area that is bushier than elsewhere and therefore holds a few different species. Flocks of Goldfinch and Linnet buzzed about, and we found a Southern Grey Shrike perched in the distance. Seven Woodlarks flew up showing off their broad wings and short tails but, sadly, they didn't stay around for better views. We soon picked up the quiet, high-pitched calls of Rock Buntings, and whilst they initially proved difficult to get prolonged views of, we were soon enjoying superb views of this rather beautiful bunting, even ending up with a dozen perched up in a bush together.

Our next stop was in an area of arable fields on the edge of the plains, and we were immediately treated to flocks of hundreds of Corn Buntings and Goldfinches. Male and female Hen Harriers showed superbly, and then the find of the trip was made by Kevin as he found a Black-winged Kite perched up in a tree not too far from where we were standing. It stayed put for over thirty minutes allowing everyone really good views of this strikingly plumaged raptor. Although numbers are increasing in France, boosted by birds from the Iberian Peninsula, they are still fairly rare in France and this was the first that we have seen on these trips. A distant flock of ten Little Bustards kept on flying away from us, and were unfortunately the only ones that we saw all trip.

We took a short walk on the open plains of La Crau and saw good sized flocks of Meadow Pipits and Skylarks, and had some good views of Southern Grey Shrikes, before setting our picnic up in a nice quiet spot on the edge of the Etang des Aulnes. With the weather conditions being mild and calm again it was a lovely contrast to the rather wet and wild weather that we'd been having back in the UK.

After lunch we explored the large lake but it was unusually quiet, with just a single Pochard and three Tufted Duck (the only ones of the trip!) the only ducks on the lake. There were, however, plenty of Cetti's Warblers singing in the lakeside reeds to keep us entertained. We then headed off to have some hot drinks in the nearby town of St Martin de Crau. Moving back onto the plains of La Crau again, we stopped to admire a Little Owl that was perched on the top of a roadside barn. We then had a long but relaxed walk over the stony plain at Peau de Meau, enjoying the lovely weather and unusual habitat. A perched Merlin was very nice to watch in the telescopes but bird-wise the walk was rather quiet and, unfortunately, we didn't connect with any Pin-tailed Sandgrouse.

With the setting sun casting a peach-glow over the landscape we headed back to the hotel for another relaxing evening, and an early night in preparation for our journey up to Mont Ventoux.

Day 6

Sunday 27th December

Mont Ventoux and Pont du Gard

Calm, clear skies, cold, becoming overcast as the day progressed.

Although it is not a long drive up to Mont Ventoux, we always try to leave early so that we have plenty of daylight hours to spend out in the field. Mont Ventoux and Pont du Gard offer spectacular scenery, some great birding, and lovely crêpes! The journey there was very easy, principally due to Hilary's excellent navigation skills, and we arrived on the lower slopes of Mont Ventoux with plenty of time to make the most of some beautiful weather.

Our first stop at the base of the mountain was on the edge of the woods that cloak the lower slopes of the mountain. There was plenty of birdsong with Blackcaps singing from dense cover and Serins singing from the tops of nearby trees, allowing us to watch this beautiful finch in the telescopes. A mixed flock of Fieldfare and Mistle Thrushes were very timid but did perch up for brief views. Moving up the mountain, we stopped in an area of mixed beech and spruce and were delighted by a Marsh Tit singing above our heads. The Redpolls that were seen from one of the minibuses turned out to be the red poles indicating the edge of the road, so sadly we couldn't add them to the bird list!

Carrying on slowly up the rather icy roads, we arrived near to the top of the mountain and had a lovely walk in crystal clear skies. Jessica took most of the group along the road where they had yet more good views of Marsh Tit as well as of the delightful Crested Tit. James and two others walked up the scree slope to the top of a ridge where the spectacular views were the only thing of note, until a flock of twenty Alpine Accentors swept by. Citril Finches were unfortunately very elusive today and we only had fly-by views. Hungry after our walk, we headed down to Chalet Reynard where we indulged in pancakes with a variety of delicious fillings in the mountain sunshine!

Moving on down the mountain, we found a lovely spot where the winter sunshine had found a way through the large beech trees; an ideal spot for a picnic. Whilst we were setting up the picnic, Kevin wandered off up a forest path and heard a Black Woodpecker calling. Once we had finished Kevin took us back up to the path and we tried calling the woodpecker back in. We were in luck and were treated to one fly-by inspection by this spectacular bird, and then to it indulging in its full range of calls from out of sight down the slope.

With time passing, we needed to head off to our next stop, the spectacular Roman aqueduct at Pont du Gard. Yet more skilled navigation by Hilary took us round the Avignon one way system, allowing us to arrive at the aqueduct with plenty of time to enjoy the architecture and the birds. We all wandered around the paths below the aqueduct as well as over it, but were soon congregating around the telescopes for some rather special views of our fourth Wallcreeper of the trip which was feeding and then preening quite low down on the aqueduct. The views were quite amazing as the bird was in sight for over half an hour, allowing us to really appreciate its beautiful plumage and even its very long thin claws.

As dusk approached flocks of Rock Sparrows hurtled in to roost in the cracks high up on the aqueduct, and a good sized flock of Crag Martins wheeled about high above the river. Tired from a long but very productive day, we headed back to the minibuses for an easy journey back to the hotel. We were all fairly tired after the long day but of course able to enjoy another delicious home-cooked meal by Marie-Jo and to reminisce about a very pleasurable day.

Day 7

Monday 28th December

The Camargue

Overcast and calm, cold first thing, warming up a little over the course of the day.

In the morning, most of the group headed for the eastern side of the Camargue again, although some of the group took advantage of the hotel's close proximity to Arles and headed in for a full day's sightseeing. In the afternoon most of the rest of the group followed them in to this beautiful old city, although James, Kevin and Jan went off to explore the local lakes.

The morning's birding was superb with vast flocks of waterbirds the theme. We stopped again at the Bewick's Swan lakes where duck numbers were even higher than they had been on our first visit. We were bowled over however by a huge flock of Glossy Ibis that flew past us; we estimated that there were over 160 in the flock! They landed out of sight but looked like they were heading round to Mas d'Agon, so we went there and found them so were able to have yet more excellent views of them. A Marsh Harrier feeding on road kill provided a good opportunity to study it on the ground.

Heading south towards the saline lagoons close to the sea, we made a couple of stops, the first of which provided us with slightly obscured views of a group of six Ruddy Shelduck on a small roadside pool. Whether they were genuine vagrants or part of a roving feral flock, they were still very beautiful birds. Our next stop produced an even more unexpected sighting, as a Squacco Heron (which should have been south of the Sahara) flew past us with a couple of Little Egrets for comparison.

In amongst the saline lagoons we quickly picked up a large mixed flock of Dunlin and Little Stints, together with large numbers of Flamingos. The end of a rather bumpy road took us to a spot where we could look over a series of lagoons that were teeming with birds. Whilst they weren't as close as they could have been, the number of birds was quite spectacular. Over 400 Avocets flew up at one point, our own snowstorm by the shores of the Mediterranean. Shoveler, Wigeon and Teal numbered in the several hundreds each and we managed to pick out over 30 Pintails and Red-crested Pochards amongst the huge flocks of ducks. More careful searching found our only 12 Greenshank and Redshank of the trip. Hen and Marsh Harriers were frequently seen patrolling the

saltmarsh vegetation, and we could just about make out Gannets cruising over the Mediterranean. Birds were being seen in every direction, so it was a great place to end up.

Having had our picnic lunch in the shelter of the vans (the wind was a bit colder and brisker than we had been used to!), we headed back to the hotel. Those who went into Arles were able to relax and enjoy the narrow winding streets typical of Mediterranean towns, the newly restored Roman Amphitheatre and local café life, amongst other architectural delights.

Out in the countryside James, Kevin and Jan had a very relaxed walk between a canal and some ponds and had a very good afternoon's birding. A Firecrest at point-blank range set the pulses racing and, when a group of Green Sandpipers flew up from one of the pools, we realised that one of them was a Wood Sandpiper, another slightly unseasonal treat. We searched through large flocks of finches and ended up finding over 50 Bramblings, some of which stayed in the trees just the other side of the canal for long enough for us to have terrific telescoped views. As dusk approached, huge flocks of Jackdaws and Rooks headed south; it was an incredible sight with thousands of birds darkening the sky. Back towards the minibus, one of the lakeside trees was almost completely covered in Cattle and Little Egrets, as if finally winter snow had caught up with us!

With the group all reconvened back at the hotel, we had our final delicious meal, lovingly prepared by Marie-Jo. We all raised a toast to Marie-Jo and Bruno who had been fantastic hosts, had looked after us all so well, had cooked superb food, and had always been so friendly and helpful. We held a very informal vote for bird of the trip, and as seems usual for this trip, with so many highlights there were several contenders; however, Wallcreeper won the vote. Not so surprising, given the superb views we had had of three different birds. With a fairly early start necessary the next morning, we headed to bed with some very happy memories of a wonderful trip.

Day 7

Monday 28th December

Arles to Heathrow

The journey back to Heathrow was fairly uneventful and, although the security at Marseille was again a bit slower than ideal, all passengers made it to the plane with time to spare. And so, we all said our fond farewells at the end of a very enjoyable trip. The scenery and architecture of the south of France are both superb and contribute so much to the whole experience, and we mustn't forget the Black Bulls, White Horses and Flamingos that are so symbolic of the Camargue. The birding in some lovely weather was superb. There were so many highlights, but a few that have to be mentioned include the pair of Bonelli's Eagles overhead, the huge flocks of waterbirds, the Black Woodpecker on Mont Ventoux, a dozen Rock Buntings together in a bush, and four Wallcreepers over the course of the trip: all contributed to a wonderful way to spend a week in winter. This was a really enjoyable trip for Jessica and James to lead and we must thank the group for making the tour such a pleasure.

Species Lists

Birds (✓ = recorded but not counted)

	Common name	Scientific name	December						
			22	23	24	25	26	27	28
1	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		3	10		8		17
2	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>		20	8				8
3	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		1			2		
4	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>			1				
5	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>			5				6
6	Yelkouan Shearwater	<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>			20				
7	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓	✓	✓	20	30	80
8	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>							1
9	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓	✓	100+		8		400
10	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		150
11	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓	60+	✓			2	6
12	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓		2	1	✓
13	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>		2	2		1		
14	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>		1					
15	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>		90					160
16	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
17	Tundra (Bewick's) Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>			30				20
18	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		✓	✓		2		✓
19	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		✓					
20	Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		15	6				
21	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>							6
22	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>		30	✓				300
23	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
24	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>			30				100
25	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>		6					20
26	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>		25	✓				600
27	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		✓	✓				✓
28	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>							12
29	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>					1		
30	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>					3		
31	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>		22	7				5
32	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>			2				
33	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>					4		
34	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>		2	1	1	3		4
35	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		✓	✓		2		✓
36	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			1	1	1	1	2
37	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
38	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>					1		
39	Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>				2			
40	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
41	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		1	1				
42	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>					1		1
43	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	✓			3			
44	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		✓	✓				✓
45	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>		75	200	✓	50		20
46	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>		✓					✓
47	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓	✓		✓		✓

	Common name	Scientific name	December							
			22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
48	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		✓	✓			✓		✓
49	Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>		2						
50	Little Bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>						10		
51	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>								400
52	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		30						
53	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>		60						20
54	European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>		75	120					
55	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>		10						6
56	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		✓	80					150
57	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		✓						
58	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>		4						
59	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		300						5
60	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>		200						150
61	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		5	2					12
62	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		30						
63	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>								70
64	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>								3
65	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>			1					
66	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>		1						4
67	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>								1
68	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		1						1
69	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>		130	20					
70	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>		1						
71	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
72	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
73	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>			1					1
74	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>			15					
75	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
76	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		1		1	✓	✓	✓	✓
77	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
78	Eurasian Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>				h				
79	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	✓					1		
80	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		4	5			3	✓	6
81	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>							1	
82	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>			2		3			✓
83	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		1	✓		1	1	1	1
84	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓				✓			✓
85	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>				4	7	4		
86	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	✓	✓	✓		3			✓
87	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>				10		25		
88	Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>		✓	6					✓
89	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
90	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	1	2	30		✓	✓	✓	✓
91	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>				2	1			
92	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
93	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>				✓	✓	✓		
94	Alpine Accentor	<i>Prunella collaris</i>				4		20		
95	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
96	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
97	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>		6	6		12			✓
98	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	December						
			22	23	24	25	26	27	28
99	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>						6	6
100	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓			✓		✓	
101	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>						6	
102	Zitting Cisticola (Fan-tailed W.)	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>		✓			✓		
103	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
104	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>		1					1
105	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		1		✓	✓	✓	✓
106	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
107	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
108	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>			1	✓			1
109	Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			1
110	Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>		1					✓
111	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			5	✓	✓	2	
112	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>						5	
113	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>				✓		✓	
114	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
115	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
116	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>						✓	
117	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>						✓	
118	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>			✓	✓		✓	
119	Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>				3		1	
120	Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>					6		
121	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
122	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>				✓	✓		
123	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
124	Western Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	3000+
125	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>						1	
126	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
127	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>						✓	✓
128	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>			✓				
129	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
130	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>						25	
131	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
132	Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>							50
133	Citril Finch	<i>Carduelis citrinella</i>						3	
134	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>				2		10	
135	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>				3		✓	
136	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓
137	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
138	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>				15	40	30	✓
139	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>				2			
140	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	300		✓
141	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>		✓	✓		✓		✓
142	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>					12		

Insects

1	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>				1			
2	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>				1			
3	Egyptian Grasshopper	<i>Anacridium aegyptium</i>			1				
4	Honey Bee	<i>Apis mellifera</i>				✓			

	Common name	Scientific name	December					
			22	23	24	25	26	27

Mammals

1	Coypu	<i>Myocastor coypus</i>		✓	✓				
2	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>				✓			
3	Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>					✓		
4	Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>					3		
5	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>					2		

Plants

Nomenclature contained within this list follows the taxonomic amendments, based on DNA analysis, made by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the Missouri Botanic Garden, and following The Plant List, an internationally accepted list of vascular plant families, published and maintained by these two Institutions.

Scientific name

Common name

Location

GYMNOSPERMS

CONIFERS

Cupressaceae

Cupressus sempervirens
Juniperus communis subsp.
hemisphaerica
Juniperus phoenicea

Juniper Family

Italian Cypress
 Common Juniper
 Phoenicean Juniper

Often pencil-shaped; scattered
 Mt Ventoux
 Les Alpilles

Pinaceae

Pinus halepensis
Pinus nigra subsp. *laricio*
Pinus pinea
Pinus uncinata

Pine Family

Aleppo Pine
 Corsican Pine
 Stone or Umbrella Pine
 Mountain Pine

Common
 Scattered, often planted
 Usually coastal
 Mt Ventoux

ANGIOSPERMS

FLOWERING PLANTS

Pre-Dicots

Lauraceae

Laurus nobilis

Primitive Angiosperms

Bay Family

Bay Tree

La Capeliere

Eu-Dicots

Adoxaceae

Sambucus ebulus
Viburnum tinus

True Dicotyledons

Moschatel Family

Dwarf Elder
 Laurustinus

Albaron
 Les Baux, in flower

Amaranthaceae

Atriplex portulacoides
Sarcocornia fruticosa
Sarcocornia perennis
Suaeda vera

Pigweed Family

Sea Purslane
 Shrubby Glasswort
 Perennial Glasswort
 Shrubby Sea-blite

Salt steppe; low shrub with grey oval lvs
 Salt steppe and marsh, often red
 Salt steppe and marsh, mat forming
 Salt steppe; low shrub with 'bobbly' lvs

Apiaceae

Bupleurum fruticosum
Daucus carota
Eryngium campestre
Eryngium spinalba

Carrot Family

Shrubby Hare's-ear
 Wild Carrot
 Field Eryngo
 Silver Eryngo

Les Baux
 Scattered, in flower
 Scattered, dried stems
 Mt Ventoux, dried stems

Scientific name	Common name	Location
Araliaceae <i>Hedera helix</i> agg	Ivy Family Ivy	Scattered
Boraginaceae <i>Echium vulgare</i>	Forget-me-not Family Viper's-bugloss	La Crau, leaves
Brassicaceae <i>Cheiranthus cheiri</i> <i>Erysimum cf ochroleucum</i> <i>Iberis sempervirens</i> <i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i> <i>Sinapis arvensis</i>	Cabbage Family Wallflower A Treacle Mustard Evergreen Candytuft Wild Radish Charlock	Les Baux, walls, not in flower La Caume; yellow flowers La Caume, clustered white flowers La Caume; white flowers La Caume; yellow flowers
Buxaceae <i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	Box Family Box	Les Alpilles
Caprifoliaceae <i>Centranthus angustifolia</i> <i>Lonicera etrusca</i> <i>Scabiosa columbaria</i>	Honeysuckle Family Narrow-leaved Red Valerian Etruscan Honeysuckle Small Scabious	La Caume La Caume Les Alpilles
Caryophyllaceae <i>Dianthus sylvestris</i> <i>Silene latifolia</i> <i>Stellaria media</i>	Pink Family Wood Pink White Campion Chickweed	La Crau La Caume Scattered weed
Celastraceae <i>Euonymus latifolius</i>	Spindle Family Broad-leaved Spindle	Les Baux, fruiting
Cistaceae <i>Cistus albidus</i> <i>Fumana ericoides</i> <i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>	Rock-rose Family Grey Cistus Fumana Common Rock-rose	Les Alpilles, grey-leaved shrub La Caume, over La Caume, one in flower
Compositae (Asteraceae) <i>Anthemis maritima</i> <i>Bellis perennis</i> <i>Bellis sylvestris</i> <i>Carduus crispus</i> <i>Carlina acaulis</i> subsp. <i>caulescens</i> <i>Carlina corymbosa</i> <i>Centaurea aspera</i> <i>Conyza canadensis</i> <i>Filago (Evax) pygmaea</i> <i>Hyoseris radiata</i> <i>Jacobaea maritima</i> <i>Limbarda (Inula) crithmoides</i> <i>Onopordium acanthium</i> <i>Senecio vulgaris</i> <i>Silybum marianum</i> <i>Sonchus asper</i> <i>Taraxacum</i> agg.	Daisy Family Sea Mayweed Daisy Southern Daisy Wetted Thistle a large-flowered Carline Thistle a small-flowered Carline Thistle Rough Star Thistle Canadian Fleabane Evax Hyoseris Silver Ragwort Golden Samphire A Cotton Thistle Groundsel Milk Thistle Prickly Sow-thistle Dandelion	Les Saintes Maries de la Mer Widespread Scattered - a larger Daisy Les Alpilles Mt Ventoux, dried stems La Crau, dried stems Les Alpilles, a purple 'hardhead' Widespread throughout Camargue La Crau Scattered - Dandelion-like Les Baux Salt steppe - shrub, occ in flower La Crau, in flower Widespread Leaves, near hotel and elsewhere La Caume Widespread

Scientific name	Common name	Location
Convolvulaceae <i>Convolvulus cantabrica</i> <i>Cuscuta epithymum</i>	Bindweed Family Pink Convolvulus Dodder	La Caume La Caume, in flower
Cornaceae <i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	Dogwood Family Dogwood	Scattered, some in flower
Crassulaceae <i>Sedum dasyphyllum</i>	Stonecrop Family Fat Stonecrop	Chateau Reynard
Euphorbiaceae <i>Euphorbia characias</i> <i>Euphorbia cyparissias</i> <i>Euphorbia helioscopia</i> <i>Euphorbia pithyusa</i> <i>Mercurialis perennis</i>	Spurge Family Mediterranean Spurge Cypress Spurge Sun Spurge A Spurge Dog's Mercury	Widespread, large, just starting to flower Leaves, near hotel and elsewhere Les Alpilles Les Alpilles; shoots, occ flower Les Baux
Fagaceae <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> <i>Quercus coccifera</i> <i>Quercus ilex</i> <i>Quercus pubescens</i>	Oak & Beech Family Beech Kermes Oak Holm Oak Downy Oak	Mt Ventoux Les Alpilles, shrub with prickly leaves Widespread; evergreen tree Widespread
Geraniaceae <i>Erodium cicutarium</i> <i>Erodium malacoides</i> <i>Geranium molle</i>	Geranium Family Stork's-bill Mallow-leaved Stork's-bill Dove's-foot Crane's-bill	Les Alpilles Etang des Aulnes Les Alpilles, leaves
Lamiaceae <i>Calamintha nepeta</i> <i>Lavendula angustifolia</i> <i>Marrubium vulgare</i> <i>Nepeta cataria</i> <i>Origanum officinalis</i> <i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> <i>Salvia verbenaca</i> <i>Sideritis hirsuta</i> <i>Teucrium aureum</i> <i>Teucrium montanum</i> <i>Thymus vulgaris</i>	Dead-nettle Family Lesser Calamint Lavender White Horehound Cat-mint Marjoram Rosemary Wild Clary Sideritis Golden Felty Germander Mountain Germander Thyme	Les Alpilles, few flowers Les Alpilles, leaves La Caume; silvery leaves only La Caume, few flowers Albaron, leaves Les Alpilles, widespread La Crau, few flowers La Caume, cream flowers La Caume, silver foliage, some flowers Mt. Ventoux, leaves Les Alpilles, very aromatic
Leguminoseae (Fabaceae) <i>Coronilla juncea</i> <i>Coronilla minima</i> <i>Genista scorpius</i> <i>Medicago arabica</i> <i>Ononis minutissima</i> <i>Ononis spinosa</i> <i>Spartium junceum</i> <i>Trifolium pratense</i> <i>Trifolium repens</i> <i>Ulex parviflora</i>	Pea Family Rush-like Scorpion-vetch A dwarf Scorpion-vetch Scorpion Broom Spotted Medick Pygmy Rest-harrow Spiny Rest-harrow Spanish Broom Red Clover White Clover Small-flowered Gorse	Les Alpilles, greyish shrub, few pinnate lvs La Caume, yellow flowers, herbaceous Les Alpilles, spiny, with occ. flowers Les Baux, leaves La Caume; dwarf, yellow flower Les Baux; pink flowers Scattered; no leaves, occasional flowers Widespread Widespread Les Baux; flowering

Scientific name	Common name	Location
Oleaceae	Olive Family	
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash	Etang des Aulnes
<i>Olea europaea</i>	Wild Olive	Scattered throughout
<i>Phillyrea angustifolia</i>	Narrow-leaved Phillyrea	Scattered throughout
Papaveraceae	Poppy Family	
<i>Chelidonium majus</i>	Greater Celandine	Les Baux, yellow flowers
Plantaginaceae	Plantain Family	
<i>Globularia alypum</i>	Shrubby Globularia	Les Baux - dead flower-heads
<i>Plantago coronopus</i>	Buck's-horn Plantain	Salt steppe
<i>Veronica persica</i>	Common Field Speedwell	Pont de Gau, in flower
Plumbaginaceae	Thrift Family	
<i>Limonium cf narbonense</i>	A Sea-lavender	Salt-marshes and steppes
Ranunculaceae	Buttercup Family	
<i>Ficaria verna</i> agg.	Lesser Celandine	Albaron, leaves
<i>Helleborus foetidus</i>	Stinking Hellebore	Mt Ventoux
Rosaceae	Rose Family	
<i>Amelanchier ovalis</i>	Juneberry	La Caume
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn	Scattered
<i>Potentilla repens</i>	Creeping Cinquefoil	Road verges
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn	Mt Ventoux, lower slopes
<i>Rosa canina</i> agg.	Dog Rose	Widespread
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble	Widespread
Rubiaceae	Bedstraw Family	
<i>Rubia peregrina</i>	Wild Madder	La Capeliere
Salicaceae	Willow & Poplar Family	
<i>Populus alba</i>	White Poplar	Scattered
<i>Populus tremula</i>	Aspen	Scattered, pale grey bark
Scrophulariaceae	Figwort Family	
<i>Verbascum sinuatum</i>	Wavy Mullein	La Crau; rosettes of grey wavy leaves
Tamariscaceae	Tamarisk Family	
<i>Tamarix</i> spp	Tamarisk	Widespread (but several v similar spp)
Urticaceae	Nettle Family	
<i>Parietaria judaica</i>	Pellitory-of-the-Wall	Les Baux; walls
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle	Widespread
<i>Urtica pilulifera</i>	Roman Nettle	Les Baux
Monocots	Monocotyledons	
Araceae	Arum Family	
<i>Arum italicum</i>	Italian Arum	Scattered
Asparagaceae	Asparagus Family	
<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i>	Butcher's-broom	Mt Ventoux

Scientific name	Common name	Location
Juncaceae <i>Bolboschoenus maritimus</i>	Rush Family Sea Clubrush	Scattered in Camargue, coastal
Orchidaceae <i>Himantoglossum robertianum</i>	Orchid Family Giant Orchid	La Caume in bud; rosettes at E. des Aulnes
Poaceae <i>Arundo donax</i> <i>Phragmites australis</i>	Grass Family Giant Reed Common Reed	Widespread in Camargue Widespread in Camargue
Smilacaceae <i>Smilax aspera</i>	Smilax Family Smilax	Les Alpilles;a spiny creeper
Xanthorrhoeaceae <i>Asphodelus fistulosus</i>	Asphodel Family Hollow-stemmed Asphodel	La Crau; tufts of fine leaves only
FUNGI: <i>cf Laccaria amethystina</i> <i>Geastrum</i> sp.	FUNGI: Amethyst Deceiver an Earthstar	La Caume La Caume

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Group birding by Colin Brown