Introduction

This was a family holiday and one which followed the more restful form of the trip we undertook to Andalusia in 2009. We rented a gîte, La Maison Rever, for two weeks in Ferrière, just south of Foix in the Ariege valley and spent the time walking in the mountains, enjoying the scenery and visiting the historic towns and castles associated with the Cathar history of this part of France.

I had previously visited Foix in 1977 whilst on a French exchange whilst at school. Obviously the whole area had changed and my memories were vague to say the least. I had stayed in Sabarat and Le Mas D’Azil near St Girons, but even a return visit did little to spark any recognition.

The area has the advantage of being on the “green” side of the mountains and covers elevations from near sea level to up to 3000m. Most of our time was spent between 500-2000m and this change of habitat and elevation made the best of the biodiversity of the area.

Although my principal interest remains bird-watching, I was expecting (and found) that little birdlife was evident. Therefore the emphasis over the two weeks was to see a mix of wildlife with a priority to any Butterflies and Odonata I could find. That being said, I was also especially keen to see Citril Finch, especially after the split from Corsican Citril had left me without this European endemic on my list.

In all it was a successful and relaxed trip. The area was found to be full of flowering meadows and butterflies were plentiful. Clouds of butterflies becoming the usual accompaniment to our walks. The weather was abnormally hot with day time temperatures around 34-35 °C and with night time temperatures still high. The sunshine only really broke on the last Saturday, and at the end of our visit, a number of trees were showing signs of thermal stress.

All of the walks we did were taken from “Randonnees en Pays Cathare” by Jacques Jolfré, which provided a good guide– even though all the text was in French and the timings were more suited to the experienced mountain walker than a nature hike.
August 12th – Travel Gatwick Toulouse with Easy Jet. Drive to Foix & Ferriere. Arrived in Gite at just after 5pm. Stroll in local fields.

August 13th – Spent the day around Foix and an afternoon drive up to the Col de Peguere (1375m) and the Col de Port (1249m)

August 14th – Drive into the mountains and walk up to the Etang D’Izouret at 1647m starting from the parking at 1150m

August 15th – Trip to Montsegur and walk up to the castle at 1200m

August 16th – Stayed around Foix, visited the Pont Diable and Montoullieu

August 17th – Walk around Roquefixade through the limestone ridge and Beech woods from 700-1000m via Coulzonne.

August 18th – Morning trip to St Giron and the market and then on to Le Mas D’Azil and Sabarat

August 19th – Drive to Mirepoix and then cross country to Puivert via the Lac Montbel.

August 20th – Trip to Andorra via Ax les Thermes & Encamp. Walk near Grau Roig and drive through to Andorra la Vella.

August 21st – Walk up towards Fourcat up to Pic de la Lauzate starting around 1200m heading to 1800m

August 22nd – Day trip to Carcassonne

August 23rd – Stayed around Foix, visited the Pont Diable & Chateau de Foix.

August 24th – Walk around Lorcat up to St Bartholomew Chapel at 1236m

August 25th – The only cold and wet day of the trip. Visit to the Grotte de Niaux

August 26th – Tidied up Gite, leaving at 11am. Drive to Toulouse stopping at Venerque for Lunch. Flight back to Gatwick
Site Comments

Ferriere - this is a southerly suburb of Foix that was until recently a separate hamlet. It is clear that the area is very like any other in this part of the Ariège, both has the advantage of being an extension of the southward path of the valley. The village sits below the limestone cliffs and wooded hill sides and a number of flower filled hay meadows were present (until they started to cut them around the middle of our stay). There is nothing to say that sightings that I had here could not be replicated in any other village in the area.

Col de Peguere and Col de Port. A circular drive took us through the edge of the Pyrenees to the South and West of Foix and through two passes that were both included in this year’s Tour de France. The views to the south were spectacular and the wooded slopes were surprisingly verdant.

Roquefixade – A charming village beneath a limestone cliff, upon which is perched the ruins of a Castle. The walk up from the village to the ruins and then around to Coulzonne peaked at 1004m and covered a mix of habitats included Beech woodland, flowering meadows and Juniper and Box scrub. Butterflies were plentiful and in one of the places we found both Dryad and Great Banded Grayling to be plentiful.

Etang D’Izourt – A mountain area and a walk that crossed the GR10, and headed into the corries beneath the high peaks of the French Andorran border. This is a walk that is a straight up and back but the scenery is spectacular and rapidly you progress through the remaining trees and into alpine meadows. A good mix of high mountain butterflies was present.

Lac Mountbel – This reservoir is north of Puivert and is relatively dead as far as birdlife is concerned. A small drying pool to the side by the parking below the village of Mountbel was the only point of interest. Here Odonata were buzzing around although I missed some of them as they moved so fast! Also of interest was enormous number of frogs and the only Lesser Purple Emperor of the trip.

Montsegur – A spectacular setting – a ruined castle on a Pog standing high above the surrounding hills. The walk up is steep and provides a real experience of the history of the dramatic siege in the thirteenth century. The area around the castle is covered in flower strewn meadows and butterflies were plentiful.
Pic de Lauzate – although apparently a similar area to the other local hills, the walk up to the Pic de Lauzate (and on to Fourcat if you wish) showed a different area of the highlands. The parking is well marked, if remote above Mercus. The mountains though are more rounded and have heather clad upper slopes. This was the only location for Camberwell Beauty and Silver spotted Skippers were plentiful. Birds of Prey were also plentiful with a family of Kestrels and parties of migrating Honey Buzzards. We had the only Lammergeier and Golden Eagle of the holiday from here. In addition we had the strange site of a Marsh Harrier joining the same thermal as the Lammergeier.

Lorcat – A village above Tarascon accessed off the road to Ax les Thermes. There is a pleasant circular walk up to the Chapel of St Bartholomew and along the Chemin de Croix that gives spectacular views across the upper Ariege Valley. The area was full of Butterflies.

Andorra – A new country for the listing but one which has changed massively since my last visit. The only road is lined with Ski resorts all the way from the border to Andorra La Vella itself. The capital looks out of place and much investment has improved the skiing facilities but taken away the charm of the place. We pulled off the main road along the access to Grau Roig and walked in the alpine valley along the stream below the road. This area had a number of butterflies and the only Citril Finches, Crossbills and Western Bonelli’s warblers of the trip.
**Bird Species list**

**Mallard** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Seen at St Girons, Carcassone and on the Ariege throughout.

**Red-legged Partridge** (*Alectoris rufa*) – a covey of 6-8 birds was flushed from Bracken on the walk down from Pic de la Lauzate on 21st.

**Great crested Grebe** (*Podiceps cristatus*) – 2 were on the lake on the Ariege north of Foix on Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) – Seen on the way to St Girons on 18th and then again on the way to Carcassone on 22nd.

**Little Egret** (*Egretta garzetta*) – Only seen on the trips from and to Toulouse with fly-overs on both dates.

**Osprey** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – a single was seen from the Gite, heading south along the Ariege Valley, on 15th.

**European Honey-buzzard** (*Pernis apivorus*) – an obvious migration was progressing during our visit. Passage birds were along the Ariege and on the peaks with parties of up to nine birds heading south on most days.

**Black Kite** (*Milvus migrans*) – one was above Ferriere on 17th and another was seen en-route to Carcassone on 22nd.

**Red Kite** (*Milvus milvus*) - First seen from Montsegur on 15th. Another was over the Gite on 25th.

**Lammergeier** (*Gypaetus barbatus*) – a single adult bird seen near Pic de la Lauzate on 21st.

**Eurasian Griffon** (*Gyps fulvus*) – the commonest of the vultures. First seen over the cottage on the 13th. Seen almost daily with birds around Ferriere, Pic de Lauzate, and Lorcat.

**Short-toed Eagle** (*Circaetus gallicus*) – seen regularly with one perched above Gite on 15th, one over Le Mas D’Azil on 18th, another near Puivert on 19th, and finally one Pic de la Lauzate 21st.

**Eurasian Marsh Harrier** (*Circus aeruginosus*) – A single was seen, strangely on the same thermal over Pic de la Lauzate as the Lammergeier on 21st.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** (*Accipter nisus*) – One over the Gite on the 13th, and another hunting across the Etang D’Izourt on 14th were the only records.

**Northern Goshawk** (*Accipter gentilis*) – a pair were soaring above the Gite on 13th.

**Eurasian Buzzard** (*Buteo buteo*)– seen almost daily, but more common lower down than in the high mountains, that being said one was seen in Andorra on 20th.

**Golden Eagle** (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – a single sub-adult bird was seen from Pic de la Lauzate on 21st.

**Booted Eagle** (*Hieraaetus pennatus*) – One was over the Gite on 15th and another was seen en-route to Carcassone on 21st.

**Eurasian Kestrel** (*Falco tinnunculus*) – Seen on the journey to Foix from Toulouse on 12th. A family party kept us entertained at Pic de la Lauzate on 21st.
Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*) – the only record was two high over the Ariege valley above Lorcat on 24th.

Coot (*Fulica atra*) – a couple were on the lake north of Foix on the 19th.

Yellow legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*) – A single bird was at Carcassone on the River Aude on 22nd.

Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) – Common in the wood hills of the Pyrenean foothills. Seen daily.

Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – common in towns and villages throughout and seen daily.

Tawny Owl (*Asio otus*)– calling birds were heard around Ferriere on the nights of 24th & 25th.

Common Swift ( *Apus apus*) – Although relatively late in the season seen daily and often in large numbers. Often in the Ariege valley, birds were seen streaming north during the day, only to return South at dusk.

Alpine Swift (*Apus melba*) – three or four were over Pic de la Lauzate on 21st and then again at Lorcat on the 24th.

Wryneck (*Jynx torquilla*) – a single bird was heard around Lorcat on the 24th.

Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*) – The commonest Woodpecker and one which was heard and occasionally seen in most woodlands. Made to appear even more common as a particularly noisy pair frequented the Walnut tree opposite the gite.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos minor*) – One was in the Walnut tree opposite the Gite on the evening of 12th.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos medius*) – one was seen near Coulzonne on 23rd.

Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*)– one near Puivert on 19th.

Eurasian Crag-Martin (*Hirundo rupestris*) – common around Foix and other mountain areas. Also common at Mas D’Azil despite the relative low level, where they were nesting in the entrance to the Grotte.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) – seen daily

House Martin (*Delichon urbica*) – seen daily

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) – seen daily

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) – One was at Le Mas D’Azil in 18th, another was seen in Andorra near Grau Ruig on 20th.

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*) – a couple of birds were seen near Etang D’Izourt on 14th. Also in the heather of the Pic de Lauzate on 21st.

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*) – only seen in Andorra with a small party in the valley near Grau Roig on 20th.

Firecrest (*Regulus ignicapilla*) – far commoner in the mixed woods than its cousin. Found around Ferriere, Roquefixade and also Lorcat.
**Dipper** (*Cinclus cinclus*) – seen on the Ariege at the Pont Diable on both visits and also in Andorra around Grau Roig.

**Wren** (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) – One seen near Le Mas D’Azil on 18th.

**Duncock** (*Prunella modularis*) – seen and heard on the walk up to Etang D’Izourt on 14th.

**Blackbird** (*Turdus merula*) – seen around Ferriere and other villages throughout.

**Willow Warbler** (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) – Birds were around Montsegur on 15th, also in Andorra on 20th.

**Common Chiffchaff** (*Phylloscopus collybita*) – calling birds were at Lac Mountbel and near Puivert on 19th.

**Western Bonelli’s Warbler** (*Phylloscopus bonelli*) - Only seen in Andorra were at least two were in the valley near to Grau Roig.

**Melodious Warbler** (*Hippolais polyglotta*) – regularly seen and heard in the Walnut tree across the road from the Gite. A period of sub-song was also heard one evening.

**Blackcap** (*Sylvia atricapilla*) – the commonest warbler, seen daily and heard more frequently. A male and female were present daily in the walnut and fig trees opposite the cottage.

**Spotted Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa striata*) – a single was seen above the tree line on Pic de la Lauzate on the 21st.

**Pied Flycatcher** (*Ficedula hypoleuca*) – One was in the walnut tree at the Gite on 18th. A couple of noisy calling birds were found in Andorra on 20th and lastly another few were in the woods on the walk up to Pic de la Lauzate 21st.

**European Robin** (*Erithacus rubecula*) – seen around Ferriere in small numbers.

**Black Redstart** (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) – a common village bird and one was seen on the roof tops around the cottage throughout our stay. Also, not uncommon on the scree slopes and higher cliffs in the Pyrenees.

**Common Redstart** (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*) – only one was seen, between Roquefixade and Coulzonne on 17th.

**Common Stonechat** (*Saxicola rubicola*) – seen around Roquefixade on 17th.

**Long-tailed Tit** (*Aegithalos caudatus*) – a family party was seen at the Gite on 18th

**Coal Tit** (*Periparus ater*) – this pine specialist was seen above Roquefixade on 17th, and then in Andorra on 20th.

**Great Tit** (*Parus major*) – seen daily although still scarce. Most visible in the local Walnut tree.

**Blue Tit** (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) – seen around the Gite throughout, also above Roquefixade on 17th.

**Crested Tit** (*Lophophanes cristatus*) – first seen were a pair above Roquefixade on 17th, a pair were seen in Ferriere on 18th and lastly they were common in Andorra on 20th.
Marsh Tit (*Poecile palustris*) – a family party were present in the woods above Ferriere throughout.

Eurasian Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*) – Although heard regularly around Ferriere throughout, the first sightings were above Roquefixade on the 17th.

Eurasian Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*) – a couple of birds were seen near to Grau Roig in Andorra on 20th.

Short-toed Treecreeper (*Certhia brachydactyla*)– only seen near Roquefixade with a couple on the 17th.

Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*) – heard and seen almost daily in low numbers, a family party frequented the Walnut tree opposite the Gite.

Eurasian Magpie (*Pica pica*) – seen daily in small numbers, usually singly or in pairs

Red-billed Chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*)– a pair were behaving territorially around the entrance to the Grotte de Niaux on the 25th as we waited to start the tour.

Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*) – seen on most days in small numbers

Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*) – seen on most days in small numbers.

Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) – seen infrequently from Ferriere southwards also in Andorra on 20th.

European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – seen on trips away from the Ariege valley to the lower farming areas but not seen around Foix or higher into the mountains.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) – Common in the villages and seen daily in small numbers

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) – scarce, first seen above Roquefixade on 17th, 2 were seen in Andorra on 20th and then a family above Lorcat on 24th.

Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) – a flock were active in the valley at Grau Roig in Andorra on the 20th.

European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) – the commonest finch and seen daily in all habitats

Serin (*Serinus serinus*)- seen near Pont Diable on 16th. Roquefixade on 17th

Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*) – Only seen in Andorra with a party feeding on thistles at the Col above Encamp on 20th.

Citril Finch (*Carduelis citrinella*) – a least eight birds were found during the walk near Grau Roig in Andorra on 20th.

Cirl Bunting (*Emberiza cirlus*) – a family party were around Ferriere throughout our stay.

**Mammals**

Not easy to find at this time of year, but a total blank in the mountains for any mammals.

Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) – only two were seen. One above Ferriere on 17th and another in Andorra on 20th.
Reptiles & Amphibians

Except for Lizards, which were literally everywhere, not much in evidence throughout although the lake at Mountbel was alive with frogs.

**Grass snake** (*Natrix natrix*) – a single small specimen was seen a Lorcat on 24th.

**Common Wall Lizard** (*Podarcis muralis*) – It is assumed that all of the lizards were of this species although others are possible in the Haut Pyrenees.

**Marsh Frog** (*Rana ridibunda*) – common in the drying pool at Lac Mountbel were assumed to be this species – although the similar species of Iberian Water Frog cannot be ruled out.

Butterflies

The spectacular numbers of Butterflies was one of the abiding memories of the trip as a whole. The main species by number were the Gatekeepers but the variety kept building throughout the holiday and with a bit more skill and understanding no doubt more species could be found. I struggled with identification and most had to wait until a reviewed the photos once I got home.

**Swallowtail** (*Papilio machaon*) – First seen in Ferriere on 12th & 13th, but common and approachable at Montsegur the next day. There after seen almost daily

**Scarce Swallowtail** (*Iphiclides podalirius*) – not as common as the previous species but seen well at Montsegur, Roquefixade, Pic de la Lauzat and Lorcat.

**Apollo** (*Parnassius apollo*) – 3 seen as fly pasts on the walk to the Etang D’Izourt on 14th.

**Large White** (*Pieris brassicae*) – common seen daily

**Small White** (*Artogeia rapae*) – common seen daily

**Bath White** (*Pontia daplidice*) – a single was seen in the village of Lorcat on 24th.

**Pale Clouded Yellow** (*Colias hyale*) – seen with the next species and had difficulty telling one from the other – certainly some of this species were present especially at higher altitude.

**Clouded Yellow** (*Colias croceae*) – a common butterfly and seen daily especially on higher ground. Telling this from Pale Clouded Yellow (or Berger’s) is complicated but most were thought to be this species and certainly the richer coloured ‘orangey-yellow’ ones definitely were.
**Brimstone** (*Gonepteryx rhamni*) – First seen around Le Mas D’Azil on 18th. Also on the walk to Pic de la Lauzate on 21st.

**Cleopatra** (*Gonepteryx cleopatra*) – a single above Le Mas D’Azil whilst we were looking for Dolmen was the only one seen.

**Wood White** (*Leptidea sinapis*) – first seen at the parking area for the Etang D’Izourt on 14th. Also seen around Pont Diable.

**Small Copper** (*Lycaena phlaeas*) – photographed in Ferriere on the 13th and 16th.

**Purple-edged Copper** (*Lycaena hippothoe*) – a few seen on the Etang D’Izourt on 14th.

**Long-tailed Blue** (*Lampides boeticus*) – around Ferriere in small numbers. Also at Lorcat on 24th.

**Geranium Bronze** (*Cacyreus marshalli*) – a single posed for photos in the Gite’s garden in Ferriere on 25th.

**Short-tailed Blue** (*Everes argiades*) – seen in the field across from the Gite on 12th and seen on subsequent visits there.

**Provencal Short-tailed Blue** (*Everes alcetas*) – only record were of one photographed on the road to the Col de Peguere on the 13th.

**Holly Blue** (*Celastrina argiolus*) – photographed on the route up to Col de Peguere on 13th.

**Chalkhill Blue** (*Lysandra coridon*) – probably the commonest blue at elevations from 1000-1500m. First seen on the walk to Etang D’Izourt and especially common above Lorcat.

**Adonis Blue** (*Lysandra bellargus*) – fairly common around Lorcat on 24th.

**Common Blue** (*Polyommatus icarus*) – photographed in Ferriere on 12th & 13th and probably overlooked elsewhere in the masses of Blues.

**Eros Blue** (*Polyommatus eros*) – Common around Etang D’Izourt on 14th.

**Lesser Purple Emperor** (*Apatura ilia*) – a single seen at the Lake at Mountbel on 19th.

**White Admiral** (*Limenitis camilla*) – one visited the Buddleia near our cottage on most days. Also seen as fly-bys near Roquefixade.

**Camberwell Beauty** (*Nymphalis antiopa*) – a single fly past was one of the highlights of the Fourcat walk on 21st.

**Large Tortoiseshell** (*Nymphalis polychloros*) – as above another flypast on the Fourcat walk.

**Peacock** (*Inachis io*) – seen at Mountbel and Puivert on 19th, Pic de la Lauzate on 21st.
Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) – not uncommon, especially around the blooming Buddleia and seen daily.

Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*) – a single was at Mountbel on 19th.

Comma (*Polygonium c-album*) – not uncommon at lower levels around woodland edges and on the buddleia blooms.

Map (*Araschnia levana*) - having only seen the first brood version before, this “half white admiral” had me confused. Seen on a few occasions around Ferriere and near Pont Diable.

Silver-washed Fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*) – the commonest Fritillary, probably due to its large size and behaviour of hanging around the plentiful roadside Buddleia and Meadowsweet.

Dark-Green Fritillary (*Argynnis aglaja*) – it was clearly near the season for this species and most seen were very tatty. Seen near Etang D’Izourt on 14th.

High-Brown Fritillary (*Argynnis adippe*) – as with the previous species most examples were tatty making the identification difficult. Seen in Ferrier on 13th and also near Ginabat on 23rd.

Queen of Spain Fritillary (*Issoria lathonia*) – first seen on the Buddleia around Ferriere and also on the walk to the Pic de la Lauzate

Shepherd’s Fritillary (*Boloria pales*) – photographed at Montsegur on 15th

Weaver’s Fritillary (*Clossiana dia*) – found in the hay fields in Ferriere throughout

Glanville Fritillary (*Melitaea cinxia*) – common in the hay fields around Ferriere on the 13th and 16th. Also near Puivert on 19th

Knapweed Fritillary (*Melitaea phoebe*) – seen in the meadow near Ginabat on 23rd and then in Ferriere the next day.
Spotted Fritillary (Melitaea didyma) – a single was photographed above Lorcat on 24th.
Heath Fritillary (Mellicta athalia) – seen in the meadow near Ginabat on 23rd.

Meadow Fritillary (Mellicta parthenoides) – photographed in the Ferriere meadows on 13th

Marbled White (Melanargia galathea) – despite trying to convert them into something more exciting – all the marbled whites appeared to be this species. First seen at Montsegur and thereafter regularly above the 1000m mark such as Lorcat and the Mount Fourcat walk.

Grayling (Hipparchia semele) – a couple were seen on the walk up the Pic de la Lauzate on 21st.

[The Hermit (Chazara briseis) – A probable was seen briefly at Mountbel when photographing dragonflies and it disappeared before I could confirm]

Dryad (Minois dryas) – first seen in the Ferriere meadows where an elusive female shot through. Around Roquefixade I managed to photo both a female (near the castle) and later a male (near the war memorial).

Great Banded Grayling (Kanetisa circe) – first seen on the Buddleia at Ferriere on 13th and thereafter seen daily, mainly below 1000m.

Mountain Ringlet (Erebia epiphron) – Photographed in Andorra on 20th

Common Brassy Ringlet (Erebia cassioides) – relatively common on the high meadows above the tree line. Seen around the Etang D’Izourt on 14th and in Andorra on 20th.

Gavarnie Ringlet (Erebia gorgone) – photographed on the walk to Etang D’Izourt on 14th.

Meadow Brown (Maniola jurtina) – a common species of the lower meadows and also in open woodland. Seen daily.

Gatekeeper (Pyronia tithonus) – by far the commonest butterfly and seen in enormous numbers daily. Disturbing 30-40 individuals from a single small flowering bush was one of the abiding memories of the holiday.
Small Heath (Coenonympha pamphilus) – common on the walk up to the Etang D’Izourt on 14th and also on the Pic de la Lauzate on 21st.

Pearly Heath (Coenonympha arcania) – seen on the walk up to Etang D’Izourt on 14th.

Speckled Wood (Pararge aegeria) – common on woodland edges and seen daily. All were of the brown and orange pattern familiar on the continent but strange compared to the British version.

Wall Brown (Lasiommata megera) – not uncommon on the limestone cliffs and other rocky areas and seen in typical locations at Montsegur, Roquefixade, and Lorcat

Large Wall Brown (Lasiommata maera) – one photographed at Montsegur on 15th.

Oberthurs Grizzled Skipper (Pyrgus armoricanus) – a couple were around St Bartholomew’s chapel above Lorcat on 23rd.

Rosy Grizzled Skipper (Pyrgus onopordi) – found in the high meadows around the Etang D’Izourt on 14th.

Safflower Skipper (Pyrgus carthami) – one was photographed at our lunch stop above Lorcat on 24th.

Marbled Skipper (Carcharodus larvatherae) – found in the lower meadows on the walk up to the Etang D’Izourt.

Dingy Skipper (Erynnis tages) – seen on the trip up to the Col de Peguerue on 13th.

Silver Spotted Skipper (Hesperia comma) – seen initially on the walk up to Etang D’Izourt on the 14th and then again on the Pic de la Lauzate on 21st.

Large Skipper (Ochlodes venatus) – first seen on the trip to Col de Peguerue on 13th. Also found at lower elevation of the walk to Etang D’Izourt on 14th and in Ferriere on 24th.

Odonata

Dragonflies were relatively scarce but a few hawkers were seen and a smattering of other species. Most remain unidentified and only those that were photographed or distinctive are covered here.

Western Demoiselle (Calopteryx xanthostoma) – first seen on the drive up to Col Peguerue on 13th. A pair was at the grotte at Le Mas D’Azil on 18th and then on the last day they were common at the lunch stop at Venerque on the Ariege.

Dainty Damsel (Coenagrion scitulum) – photographed at the Lac Mountbel on 19th.

Emperor (Anax imperator) – common at Lac Mountbel

Lesser Emperor (Anax parthenope) – seen on the walk up to the Pic de la Lauzate on the 21st and also above Lorcat on 24th.

Golden ringed Dragonfly (Cordulegaster boltonii) – although the Sombre species is more likely at high elevations, all photos of these
seemed to show *boltonii*. A single was seen near the Col de Peguere on 13th and then two were seen on the walk up to the Etang D’Izourt the next day. Lastly one was seen on the walk up to the Pic de la Lauzate on 21st.

**Black tailed Skimmer** (*Orthetrum cancellatum*) – one was photographed above Ferriere and appears to show an old female of this species.

**Scarlet Darter** (*Crocothemis erythraea*) – one was photographed at Lac Mountbel on 19th

**Other insects**

There were a number of day flying moths that were seen around the area – most noticeable of these were the Hummingbird Hawk Moths. These were seen daily and were particularly fond of the buddleia and also the thistles.

A Praying Mantis (*Mantis reglosa*) was found in Ferriere on the evening of the 12th, but could not be refound when I had my camera with me.

Beetles, including these red striped ones and bees were also common in the flowering meadows. However most noticeable were the enormous numbers of Grasshoppers that were everywhere. Most noticeable were two types – both looking identical except one had red wings and the other blue when they hopped and glided away.

Mention should also be made of the Saddle-backed Bush Cricket that was found above Lorcat.

*Martin Pitt – September 2012.*