

WILDLIFE TRAVEL



Spring 2024



all our profits are donated to conservation

Dear Wildlife Traveller,

At the time of writing, it's Valentine's Day, and another year is already well underway... how is it February already??

Despite the snow laying on the ground in sheltered spots on the hills, Spring is already well underway, with Skylarks singing, the first bumblebees of the year bumbling at the window, and the snowdrops already starting to look a little tired!

It's now just a week to go until our group head off to the sunshine and endemic succulent plants of Tenerife, followed not long after by a return to the spring orchids and singing tree frogs of Cyprus.

We look forward to travelling with many of you over the next year. For those who have yet to make their holiday plans for 2024, it's definitely not too late. While a good number of our holidays are already fully booked, there are still spaces available on the trips described over the following pages. If any of these holidays sound tempting, you can (as always) find full details on our website. And if you have any questions or queries about our trips, just give us a call: we are always happy to talk through the details of our holidays.

As always, we want to wish 'happy travels' to all Wildlife Travellers, and thank you for your continued support. We look forward to travelling with you!

Philip Laurie Chris



Cream-spot Tiger Moth, The Cevennes

UK, Europe and beyond...

This year's holiday programme is now well underway, having kicked off with a fully-booked visit to Tenerife. If you haven't booked your holidays for 2024 yet, then have a read through our plans for the year ahead, and why not join us? For full details of all our holidays, check our website, or give us a call.

CYPRUS: spring flowers on Aphrodite's island

20th-27th March 2024. Leader: Sarah Lambert
£1790, full board, single room supplement £130

Our traditional spring visit to the Akamas Peninsula in west Cyprus, timed to coincide with the best of the island's spring flowers, including plentiful orchids, as well as plenty of other interesting wildlife and visits to archaeological sites.

"orchid-oholic's glory at every step, leaders excellent" 2023

LESVOS: spring wildlife and easy birding

1st-8th May 2024. Leader: Philip Precey
£1995, full board, single room supplement £150

A relaxed introduction to the spring wildlife of the eastern Mediterranean. From our friendly base in the coastal village of Skala Kalloni, we will explore coastal wetlands, dry hillsides, shady chestnut forests and olive groves.

"fantastic flowers, unspoilt countryside, easy walking" 2023

THE DANUBE DELTA: Europe's greatest wetland

16th-24th May 2024. Leader: Mike Symes
£2280, full board, single room supplement £330

Our home in the Delta is a floating hotel, giving us access to the numerous side-channels, oxbow lakes and extensive reedbeds, filled with birds, from pelicans and herons to warblers and waders, along with plenty of other wildlife.

"brilliant!... delicious food... beautiful, tranquil delta" 2023

THE BURREN: wild flowers and ancient sites

25th May-1st June 2024. Leader: Charlie Rugeroni
£1995, half board, single room supplement £575

We return to the dramatic limestone scenery of western Ireland to find an abundance of wonderful wild flowers, visit soaring sea cliffs with their seabird colonies, encounter mysterious ancient monuments and enjoy great food!

"memorable in every way... a wealth of plants" 2023

THE CEVENNES & GRANDS CAUSSES by train

27th May-3rd June 2024. Leader: Kieron Huston
£2120, full board, single room supplement £170

A relaxed week of wild flowers and country walks in the rolling limestone plateaux of the Grands Causses and the rugged granite landscapes of the Cevennes, where orchids and butterflies abound and vultures soar overhead.

"beautiful, interesting landscapes... active but relaxed" 2023



Ophrys argolica subsp *elegans*

Masked Shrike, Lesvos



Scarce Chaser



The Burren



Wild Tulip, The Cevennes

ESTONIA: spring wildlife and orchids of the Baltic

28th May-4th June 2024. Leader: Laurie Jackson

£1995, full board, single room supplement £175

Late spring is a busy time on the Baltic: waders and wildfowl are heading north, while newly-arrived summer visitors will be setting up their territories. The meadows burst into flower, hopefully including spectacular displays of Lady's Slipper.

"a success... enjoyed the abundance of wildlife" 2019

VIENNA & WHITE CARPATHIANS: wildlife by train

1st-10th June 2024. Leader: Philip Precey

£2105, full board, single room supplement £150

We will take the train to Vienna, where we will look for wild hamsters and sousliks. From here, we travel north into the White Carpathians, low mountains with butterfly-filled forests and flower-rich meadows, between Czechia and Slovakia.

"as good as we'd hoped... Martin did an excellent job" 2018

VERCORS: natural history of the pre-Alps, by train

3rd-10th June 2024. Leader: Phil Saunders

£2190, full board, single room supplement £125

There are many beautiful corners of France: with its limestone mountains, easy accessible sub-alpine flowers, a fine array of butterflies and the area's remarkable unspoilt character, the Vercors must rank amongst the best.

"beautiful scenery, excellent food... couldn't be better" 2022

TRANSYLVANIA: meadows, mountains and bears

14th-21st June 2024. Leader: Philip Precey

£2095, full board, single room supplement £250

Exploring traditionally managed hay meadows and wood pastures, visiting the Saxon villages of Viscri and Crit, limestone valleys and high alpine meadows of the Carpathians, with an evening visit to a bear-watching hide.

"a beautiful place to stay... Crit was fabulous" 2019

DERBYSHIRE: wild flowers of the Peak Fringe

24th-28th June 2024. Leader: Philip Precey

£940, full board, single room supplement £220

A relaxing break, based in the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, from where we spend our days walking through interesting limestone landscapes in search of the wild flowers, butterflies and industrial heritage of the area.

"excellent... informative yet friendly and informal" 2023

SUSSEX: high summer in southern England

30th June-5th July 2024. Leader: Michael Blencowe

£1255, full board, single room supplement £255

From our base in the High Weald, this holiday takes us in search of summer wildlife, from chalk downland and shingle beaches to the heaths of Ashdown Forest. We also visit Knepp Wildland with its Purple Emperors and White Storks.

"leaders first rate... Michael so knowledgeable" 2023



Lady's Slipper Orchid



Black-bellied Hamster, Vienna



The Vercors



Brown Bear, Transylvania

Common Redstart, Derbyshire



Marbled White

BULGARIA: easy birding on the Black Sea coast

10th-17th September 2024. Leader: tbc

£2025, full board, single room supplement £175

A week focusing on the southbound migrants of the 'Via Pontica' flyway along the Black Sea coast, with raptors overhead, waders thronging the coastal wetlands and bushes alive with warblers, flycatchers and chats.

"memorable birdwatching and good company" 2015

HUNGARY: easy autumn birding

18th-25th October 2024. Leader: Mike Russell

£2565, full board, single room supplement £200

Our return to the great plains of the Hortobágy in Hungary, catching the south-bound migration of thousands of cranes and geese, alongside resident Great Bustard and raptors. We will also search the forests for woodpeckers and owls.

"absolutely brilliant, one of the best trips I've been on" 2016

MOROCCO: autumn wildlife of mountains & coast

October 2024 (dates tbc). Leader: Laurie Jackson

£2025, full board, single room supplement £200

An autumnal return to southern Morocco. We will look for autumn bulbs amongst the Argan trees, watch Northern Bald Ibis and migrating birds along the coast, and find endemic reptiles, while immersed in the interesting local culture.

"Laurie was superb... such depth of knowledge" 2019

CYPRUS: autumn bulbs and ancient sites

20th-27th November 2024. Leader: tbc

£1895, full board, single room supplement £130

We return to Cyprus in search of autumn bulbs and other interesting plants, along with the resident birds and other wildlife of the island, while enjoying the autumn sunshine. As always, our base is a friendly, family-run hotel on the beach.

"beautifully sited hotel, food very enjoyable" 2023

NORFOLK: winter birding and natural history

9th-13th December 2024. Leader: Philip Precey

£1085, full board, single room supplement £200

This winter itinerary is designed to take in some of Norfolk's big gatherings of winter birds, with swirling flocks of winter geese, a massive crow roost and bugling cranes. We will also visit a Grey Seal breeding colony.

"accommodation very good... the seals a highlight" 2021

TENERIFE: spring flowers, wildlife and walking

March 2025 (dates tbc). Leader: Philip Precey

£price tbc, full board, single room supplement £200

We will explore the varied habitats of the island, from the arid coastal scrub to the evergreen laurel forests and the pine forests of Mount Teide. As well as the interesting flora, we will find endemic birds and take a whale-watching boat trip.

RETURNING TO TENERIFE, AFTER OUR FULLY BOOKED 2024 TRIP



Bittern, Bulgaria



Common Cranes, Hungary



Moussier's Redstart, Morocco



Prospero autumnale, Cyprus



Short-eared Owl, Norfolk



Canarina canariensis, Tenerife

MONGOLIA: steppe & Altai

Snow Leopards and so much more

14th-30th August 2024. Leader Philip Precey
£6995, full board, single room supplement £350

After our successful inaugural holiday in 2023, we are looking forward to returning to this little-known but wildlife-rich country, where our search for iconic mammals and exciting birds amongst jaw-dropping scenery promises some fantastic wildlife rewards.

The undoubted highlight of this trip is the very realistic chance to watch Snow Leopards, without needing to climb to uncomfortable altitudes. We will spend a week in the foothills of the Altai mountains, where local trackers help to increase the chances of a sighting.

Other exciting mammals we will be looking for include Przewalski's Horse, the shy Mongolian Saiga and Siberian Ibex, Pallas's Cat, Corsac Fox, Grey Wolf and more, while the fantastic bird life should include Pallas's Sandgrouse, Güldenstädt's Redstart, Azure Tit and Mongolian Ground Jay.

Our itinerary takes a more relaxed pace, and more wide-ranging wildlife focus than others: after all, there is so much more to Mongolia than just Snow Leopards.

"a phenomenal holiday... such special memories" 2023

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

wild flowers & endemic wildlife

3rd-20th September 2024. Leader: Laurie Jackson
£5175, full board, single room supplement £750

September is mid-spring in Western Australia, the perfect time to enjoy the remarkable flora of the region, 80% of which grow nowhere else. Banksias and Grevilleas, Hakeas and myrtles, kangaroo paws, wreath-flowers, trigger flowers and a bewildering diversity of orchids, plus oh so many more, combine to create a colourful floral extravaganza.

Setting off from Perth, we will explore flower-rich coastal heathlands, the rugged gorges of the Murchison River, towering Karri-Tingle and Jarrah-Marri forests, the dry eucalypt woodlands of Dryandra and the mallee shrub of the southern coast.

Accompanied by expert botanical guide Mark Hanger, we will discover the magnificent array of wild flowers in the state, while also enjoying the wider natural history of the area: the itinerary will give us plenty of opportunity to see many of WA's mammals, including the endearing Quokka and magnificent Southern Right Whales, interesting amphibians and reptiles and many of the state's endemic birds.

"ten out of ten... mind blowing! A brilliant trip" 2014



Snow Leopard cubs, Mongolia



Güldenstädt's Redstart, Mongolia



Jargalant Mountains, Mongolia



Banksia coccinea, WA
Stirling Range NP, WA



Thelymitra antenifera, WA

COSTA RICA

easy birding and natural history

19th November-4th December 2024. Leader: Mike Symes
[£5645, full board, single room supplement £500](#)

Costa Rica is a natural history paradise, as discovered by those who travelled with us on our previous 12 visits to this biodiverse country, where the wildlife will captivate both the new and the more seasoned traveller as we explore coastal forests and mangroves, cloud forests, rainforests and dramatic volcanic cones.

At La Selva Biological Station in the Caribbean lowlands we join local conservationists to gain an insight into conservation work in the Tropics. The exciting Tortuguero National Park on the Caribbean coast is not accessible by road but, travelling by boat to our lodge, we have a wonderful tour through the waterways. Moving to the Talamanca mountains, we explore high cloud forest with a chance to see the Resplendent Quetzal! We then move to the Pacific coast, visiting the dry forests in the west of the country, home to Scarlet Macaw and several species of monkey, and the American Crocodiles of the Tarcoles River. We finish our holiday at Poas Volcano where there are spectacular tropical rainforests and beautiful waterfalls.

"wonderful, a holiday I will remember for many years" 2017

BOTSWANA

Victoria Falls, Chobe & Okavango

17th-28th March 2025 Leader: Laurie Jackson
[price tbc, full board, single room supplement tbc](#)

A wonderful 'safari' exploration of the pristine wilderness habitats of northern Botswana, to enjoy some of the most spectacular wildlife to be found anywhere in Africa.

Our trip starts at the mind-blowing Victoria Falls in Zambia, before crossing over into Botswana, where we will find some of southern Africa's finest wildlife habitats. Our itinerary ends in the depths of the Okavango Delta: a dream destination for any wildlife enthusiast.

This region boasts some excellent game viewing, especially in Chobe where large herds of African Elephant, Cape Buffalo and a wide variety of antelope gather. With luck, we may find Leopard, Lion and Cheetah, and we will be visiting areas where the rapidly declining African Wild Dog can still be found. Birding too is most rewarding: the Delta region is one of the last refuges of the endangered Wattled Crane and the main habitat for the near endemic Slaty Egret, as well as being one of the best places to see the magnificent Pel's Fishing Owl.

"absolutely brilliant... our best wildlife trip ever!" 2019



Snowcap, Costa Rica



White-faced Capuchin, Costa Rica



Red-eyed Tree Frog, Costa Rica



Leopard, Botswana



African Elephant, Botswana



Wattled Crane, Botswana

Future plans: 2025 & beyond

We are making plans to visit a trio of real 'once in a lifetime' wildlife destinations over the next year, including a return to Galapagos (postponed from 2024) and Sri Lanka, and our first ventures to West Africa and the frozen continent of Antarctica. We have put our planned exploration of Southern Ecuador on hold, for now, until the situation in Ecuador normalises.

GALAPAGOS: cruising in Darwin's footsteps

Spring 2025 (dates tbc). Leader: Philip Precey

Our cruise will take in the eastern islands of the archipelago, notably Espanola, home to almost all the world's nesting Waved Albatrosses and Genovesa, with its tree-nesting Red-footed Boobies and friendly fur seals.

Our planned 2024 trip to the 'enchanted islands' had to be postponed following local difficulties in Ecuador. Our new itinerary avoids the need to spend time on the mainland.

"exceeded my (high!) expectations... the ideal leader" 2023

GABON: birds and mammals of West Africa

Summer 2025. dates and leader tbc

We are excited to be making plans for our first venture into West Africa, with our friends at Birding Africa. As well as some exciting rainforest birding, we expect to find some fantastic mammal sightings, including the opportunity to track a troop of Mandrill, one of Africa's most exciting primates.

NEW ITINERARY FOR 2025

ANTARCTICA, SOUTH GEORGIA & THE FALKLANDS

January/February 2026. dates and leader tbc

Travelling with our friends at Oceanwide Expeditions, this expedition cruise will set off from Ushuaia, in the far south of Argentina, and travel across to the Falkland Islands and the remote South Georgia before heading down to the Antarctic peninsula. Along the way we expect to see at least six species of penguin, as well as albatrosses and elephant seals, whales and dolphins, and plenty more.

Philip will be taking this trip in early 2025, so keep an eye on our social media for updates from the Southern Ocean, for a taste of what we can expect in 2026.

NEW ITINERARY FOR 2026

SRI LANKA: endemic wildlife and easy birding

Winter/Spring 2025. dates and leader tbc

An introduction to the wildlife of Sri Lanka, visiting a range of habitats from species-rich rainforests to dry grasslands and lush wetlands. We will look for the island's endemic birds and diversity of mammals, including Asian Elephants, endemic monkeys and Blue Whales on a whale-watching boat trip.

"exceeded expectations... fabulous food" 2018



Scarcie Swallowtail, France



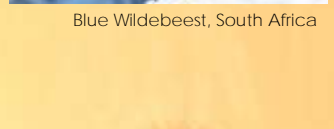
Great Frigatebird, Galapagos



Mandrill



Gannet Penguin, Antarctica



Blue Wildebeest, South Africa

Our 2025 holiday programme is set to include two flight-free holidays, carried over from 2024 to give us time to complete our recceing: we're sure they will be worth the wait.

DORDOGNE: spring natural history by train

May 2025. Leader: Laurie Jackson

An exploration of the limestone causses, woodlands and lush river valleys of south-west France: our days will be spent enjoying butterflies, dragonflies and orchids, while our evenings will no doubt feature great food and local wines.

BAVARIAN ALPS: wildlife and walking, by train

June 2025. Leader: Philip Precey

From the scenic alpine town of Mittenwald, we take advantage of the local trains and cable cars to give us direct access to the woods, alpine meadows and valley fens in search of the flowers, butterflies and birds of the area.

We also hope to return to La Brenne after 2024's inaugural visit, as well as both the Cevennes and the Vercors.

Elsewhere in Europe, we are looking into new itineraries, following recent visits by our leaders.

SLOVENIA: wild flowers and mountain wildlife

June 2025. dates and leader tbc

An opportunity to explore the alpine meadows, woodlands and valleys of western Slovenia, with an interesting mix of Mediterranean and Alpine species set amidst some of Europe's most stunning scenery.

NORTHERN SPAIN: Asturias & the Picos de Europa

June 2025. dates and leader tbc

Spending time in the stunning gorges and mountain meadows of northern Spain, our visit is bound to feature a great range of wild flowers and butterflies, as well as a chance of finding some exciting mammals: Wild Cat, Brown Bear and Grey Wolf are all at home in the area.

Spare time during the spring and summer is always a tough thing to come by, but we are hoping to squeeze in visits to Madeira, the Azores, Sicily and the Greek island of Kythnos over the season, to finalise some new island itineraries.

As ever, if there is anywhere that you, our travellers would like to see featured in our holiday programme, please do let us know...



The Dordogne



Spring Gentian

Lago Enol, Picos de Europa



Trocaz Pigeon, Madeira

Ostrich



Team news: leaders & guides

We were very pleased to welcome Sussex-based naturalist Michael Blencowe to the Wildlife Travel team in 2023. Ever since he was knee-high to a Speckled Bush-cricket, Michael has been passionate about wildlife. His childhood was immersed in the Devon countryside, clambering around rockpools, hiking the coastal cliff paths or wandering the tors of Dartmoor in search of Ring Ouzels and Dippers.

Michael moved to Sussex in 1992 where he has worked for a number of local conservation charities, including a long stint at Sussex Wildlife Trust, and has gained a unique insight into the wildlife and best wildlife sites in Sussex.

His stories of Great Auks, Xerces Blues and other extinct species were recently published in his book *Gone*, which was praised by Chris Packham, honoured in the British Birds and British Trust for Ornithology top 10 'Best Bird Books of the Year', as well as being 'Book of the Week' in Womelsdorf Community Library, Pennsylvania (no less!).

Since co-leading our Lesvos and Norfolk tours last year, Norfolk-based naturalist James Lowen has been particularly active in his 'other' career as a writer. The second edition of his best-selling book *52 Wildlife Weekends* was runner-up for *Travel Guidebook of 2023* in the British Guild of Travel Writers' Awards. His new field guide, *Birds of Spain*, came out in January and *Birds of France* will follow this summer.

In between writing, editing the journal of the Neotropical Bird Club, giving talks to local groups on the joys of moths and, of course, leading for Wildlife Travel, he'll be building a new bookcase to house his new publications...

Peterborough-based botanist and photographer (and, of course, Wildlife Travel leader) Sarah Lambert is currently Artist in Residence with the Langdyke Countryside Trust.

The Trust is a conservation organisation protecting the natural and cultural heritage of 'John Clare' country, an area between Peterborough and Stamford, in north Cambridgeshire. Sarah will be spending her time as Artist in Residence making monthly visits to the Trust's reserves, camera in hand, to find and share creative inspiration amongst the reserves' wildlife.

During 2025, James and Sarah will both be sharing their passion for, and knowledge of, photography with Wildlife Travellers on several photography specials, holidays with more time set aside for the photographers amongst us to hone their skills.



Michael Blencowe



James Lowen



Sarah Lambert



Ecologist, and sometime Wildlife Travel leader, Dom Price works on a range of endangered species in the UK with The Species Recovery Trust and gave us an insight into a couple of projects he is working on at the moment.

To many people the noise of singing Cicadas is one of the quintessential soundscapes of being on holiday, from the dry scrublands of the Mediterranean all the way to the lush forests of the tropics. But what a lot of people don't realise is that it is a sound you would have been able to hear in the south of England as recently as a few decades ago. The Species Recovery Trust are now starting a two-decade project to bring that sound back, and this summer Dom will be heading to the mountains of Slovenia hoping to catch enough adults to form a captive breeding population for eventual release back into the New Forest.

We will be running a new holiday to La Brenne in 2024 with local guide Jason Mitchell. Jason was born and raised in Devon where he developed a passion for birds and other wildlife, most notably dragonflies and butterflies. From his earliest volunteering experience on the Exe Estuary, he dreamt of working in nature conservation. After working with the RSPB, Kent Wildlife Trust and others, Jason moved to central France with his wife and children in 2013. La Brenne was an obvious choice having visited the Loire Valley with his French wife over many years, during which time he fell in love with the 'Land of a Thousand Lakes'. Now well-established as a nature guide, he specialises in wildlife tours within France but also leads more widely across Europe.

Looking ahead to 2025, we will be running our first Wildlife Travel holiday in Slovenia, in the capable hands of local guide Mikaela Toczek. Mikaela is an experienced expedition leader and after many years exploring Slovenia, hiking, snowshoeing and climbing, she moved there in 2021 with her young family from their home in Wales, and set up her company More to Explore. **She can't wait to show us around her beautiful home.**

We will also be visiting the Spanish region of Asturias with Luke Massey. Luke is a wildlife photographer and filmmaker, and his family bought a 13-hectare holding in 2018 ahead of a move to Spain to start their own small-scale rewilding project, Wild Finca. You can find out more about Wild Finca on Episode 28 of the Knepp Wildland Podcast (and you can also hear about all things Harvest Mouse with Laurie on Episode 26).



Dom Price



Jason Mitchell, La Brenne



Luke Massey, Asturias



Rufous-collared Sparrow





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thank you for travelling with us

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